ASSESSING QUALITY ASSURANCE PRACTICES IN HIGHER EDUCATION IN GHANA: THE CASE OF PRIVATE UNIVERSITIES

by

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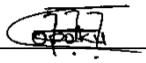
Signature:  **Date**: 28th January,2026

This thesis has been submitted for examination with our approval as university supervisor.

DEDICATION

This work is dedicated, with deep love and admiration, to my two wonderful sons, Kweku Owusu Tackie and Nana Yaw Adu Tackie, whose presence in my life has been both a blessing and a guiding light.

This work is not just an academic exercise or a personal achievement; it is an offering. An offering born out of lived experience, quiet reflection and the hope that someday, when you are older, you will read these words and understand that you were not just in the background of this journey, but at its very centre.

May this dedication be a small token of my deep gratitude for your unspoken contributions to my thoughts, resilience and growth. You boys are the reason this work exists. I dedicate it to you with all the love in my heart.

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El-Roi, EI- Roi, EI- Roi the God who sees me: to you be the Glory.

ABSTRACT

This study examined quality assurance (QA) practices within private universities in Ghana. The study was guided by the positivist paradigm and anchored in the Total Quality Management (TQM) Theory, drawing on the quality management approaches of Crosby, Deming, Feigenbaum, Ishikawa, and Juran. The study examined quality assurance practices, staff and student perceptions of QA, compliance with Ghana Tertiary Education Commission regulations, and the impact of QA on student performance and satisfaction. Additionally, it identified the challenges that private universities face in complying with QA regulations.

The study employed a quantitative research approach with a descriptive cross-survey design, utilising questionnaires administered to registrars, QA staff, deans of students, lecturers, and students from 10 selected chartered private universities in Ghana. Data were analysed using descriptive statistics (mean and standard deviation to assess the handling of QA and perceptions of roles; percentages and frequencies for adherence and challenges) and inferential statistics (Ordinal Probit Regression for impact on academic performance and satisfaction).

The key findings indicate a generally positive perception of QA practices among various stakeholders, with a strong belief that QA helps universities achieve their missions and enhances their reputations. However, significant gaps were identified, particularly regarding the availability of good internet facilities and the perceived adequacy of academic and staff resources. The study found strong adherence to Ghana Tertiary Education Commission requirements across most practices, including periodic programme evaluations and curriculum reviews. Despite this, challenges persist, including misconceptions about QA, manpower shortages, inadequate infrastructure, and resistance to compliance. The analysis also revealed a significant positive effect of QA practices on students' academic performance and satisfaction, with improvements in teaching quality and curriculum review being strong contributors to this effect.

The findings underscore the need for targeted interventions, including enhanced training, improved resource allocation, and fostering a supportive institutional culture, to strengthen QA practices in Ghana's private higher education sector.

Key terms: Higher education, private universities, quality assurance, total quality management, higher education institutions, academic performance, stakeholder perception, quality management, higher education accreditation, Ghanan Tertiary Education Commission

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AUQA	Australian Universities Quality Agency
CHE	Council for Higher Education
CHEA	Council for Higher Education Accreditation
CWQC	Company-Wide Quality Control
DAQA	Directorate of Academic QA
DHET	Department of Higher Education and Training
ENQA	European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education
EQA	External Quality Assurance
EUR-ACE	European Accredited Engineer
FET	Further Education and Training
FETAC	Further Education and Training Awards Council
FINHEEC	Finnish Higher Education Evaluation Council
FINEEC	Finnish Education Evaluation Centre
GES	Ghana Education Service
GTEC	Ghana Tertiary Education Commission
HE	Higher Education
HEIs	Higher Education Institutions
HEQC	Higher Education Quality Committee
ICT	Information and Communication Technology
IHENQ	Irish Higher Education Quality Network
IIEP	International Institute for Educational Planning
IMPALA	Impact Evaluation of Quality Management in Higher Education
INQAAHE	International Network for QA Agencies in Higher Education
ISO	International Organisation for Standardisation
JAHMK	Jyväskylä University of Applied Sciences
JAMK	Jyväskylä University of Applied Sciences
JAMKO	Student Union of Jyväskylä University of Applied Sciences

JSE	Johannesburg Stock Exchange
KNUST	Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology
KP	Koforidua Polytechnic
MoE	Ministry of Education
MOOCs	Massive Open Online Courses
NAB	National Accreditation Board
NaCCA	National Accreditation and Curriculum Assessment Authority
NQAAC	National QA and Accreditation Commission
NQF	National Qualifications Framework
NUC	National Institutions Commission
OECD	Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development
PDCA	Plan, Do, Check, Act
PHEIs	Private Higher Education Institutions
QA	Quality Assurance
QC	Quality Control
QMS	Quality Management System
R^2	R-squared
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
SEM	Stuttgart Evaluation Model
SET	Science, Engineering and Technology
SPSS	Statistical Package for the Social Sciences
TQM	Total Quality Management
UCC	University of Cape Coast
UDS	University for Development Studies
UG	University of Ghana
UMaT	University of Mines and Technology
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation
UNISA	University of South Africa
URC	University Rationalisation Committee
UTCB	Universitatea Tehnică de Construcții București
UTC	Technical University of Civil Engineering
VIF	Variance Inflation Factor

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

1.1 INTRODUCTION

Formal education is the primary institutional mechanism for fostering individuals' knowledge and skills and is crucial for utilising human and material resources for national development (Al-Amri & Wong, 2019). Modern economic and social development has become more skill-intensive globally, necessitating increasingly higher levels of education, technical competence, and computer literacy (Utkirov, 2023). A nation's socioeconomic and industrial revolutions are typically taught more intensively and meaningfully at higher education institutions (HEIs) (Neema-Abooki, 2022). Universities can produce a pool of graduates who can support the political and socioeconomic development of global, regional and local economies. The development of the human capital required for regional and global prosperity is a major responsibility of HEIs both private and public (Mensah, 2022). Public universities are unable to meet the rising demand for higher education on their own; hence, the private sector has been given permission to provide this service (Gavu, 2025). The delivery of university education has been opened to the commercial sector to broaden access to higher education worldwide (UNESCO, 2017).

Quality assurance (QA) in higher education has emerged as a significant global concern as a result of the rapid growth, internationalisation, and commercialisation of tertiary education institutions. Governments and international organisations, including UNESCO and the OECD, have increasingly reinforced accreditation and evaluation mechanisms to promote accountability, maintain academic standards, improve institutional performance, and enhance graduate employability (Karakhanyan, Pedró, & Kinser, 2025). Modern QA approaches now place greater emphasis on continuous improvement, learner-centred education, the quality of digital learning, research output, and global competitiveness rather than focusing solely on regulatory compliance (Lennon, Kinser, & Vibert, 2025). Within Europe, initiatives such as the Bologna Process and the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA) have facilitated the harmonization of standards and recognition of qualifications, whereas North America continues to depend largely on independent accreditation bodies (Uvalić-Trumbić, 2022). Similarly, countries in Asia and Africa are increasingly strengthening national QA agencies to enhance institutional credibility, regional competitiveness, and international recognition (Hou, Zhang, & Abdullah, 2025).

Current global developments in QA further stress outcome-based education, international benchmarking, stakeholder engagement, and the alignment of higher education with labour market demands (Prades, Gover, & de Labastida, 2025). Moreover, globalisation has heightened the relevance of cross-border education and international accreditation, encouraging institutions to align their QA systems with internationally accepted UNESCO/OECD standards (Ogunbanjo & Olajide, 2025). Nevertheless, many developing countries continue to encounter challenges such as insufficient funding, inadequate infrastructure, shortages of qualified personnel, and ineffective monitoring systems, all of which hinder the successful implementation of QA policies (Al-Qaimari, 2025). Consequently, quality assurance is increasingly viewed worldwide as a strategic instrument for promoting institutional excellence, transparency, innovation, and global relevance in higher education.

The widespread adoption of quality assurance in African higher education has been driven by rapid knowledge expansion, rising enrolments, resource constraints, increased competition among institutions, and growing stakeholder demands (Mbati & Beauty, 2024; Woldegiorgis, 2022). Globally, tertiary education systems have recently prioritised the standards of teaching and learning as a key strategic concern (Asiyai, 2022; Zhuravel et al., 2021).

The quality of higher education is becoming increasingly important to governments and other parties involved in education (Kayyali, 2023). To meet their demands for quality, higher education stakeholders have pushed for the establishment of QA within HEIs. The regulatory body liable for ensuring QA in higher education in Ghana is the GTEC. All public and private HEIs in the country must be certified by the GTEC, which is also responsible for ensuring that they abide by QA laws (GTEC, 2019). Private universities are required to meet the same quality assurance standards as public institutions but face distinct challenges due to limited funding, inadequate infrastructure, and difficulties in attracting and retaining qualified staff, especially in scarce-skill areas (Aboagye, Yawson & Essah, 2020).

Challenges undermining private universities include financial instability leading to closures, lawsuits over unaccredited programmes, admission of underqualified students, and the use of fraudulent academic credentials (GTEC, 2023). When a student is enroled in a programme at a HEI, the quality of their educational experience has a big impact on their capacity to earn money after graduation. Thus, when creating and implementing QA policies, managers of HEIs must consider the concerns of key stakeholders, such as students.

The topic of QA has been extensively discussed by higher education stakeholders over the past decade (Tetteh et al., 2021). This is partly because stakeholders in higher education demand graduates of the highest calibre who can fit in any relevant workplace, both locally and internationally. HEIs must design and implement adequate QA procedures to reassure students, the government, parents, businesses and higher education authorities that graduates are suitably prepared to meet human-resource requirements.

1.2 RATIONALE FOR THE STUDY

A newly updated study mapped the ongoing growth in global demand for higher education through 2040 and projected that by that point, there would be nearly 600 million students enroled in universities worldwide (Saikia, 2024). The total number of students in higher education is expected to reach nearly 380 million by 2030, 472 million by 2035 and more than 594 million by 2040, all up from roughly 216 million in 2016 (UNESCO, 2018). This might translate into a rise of 378 million students over the course of 24 years (UNESCO, 2018). Since many students, faculty members, programmes and HEIs are moving throughout the world through global networks, there is an increasing need for QA in international universities (Stukalo & Lytvyn, 2021; Suleiman, 2023). HEIs use QA as a driving force for success in higher education. However, many countries find it particularly challenging to guarantee that educational programmes are of a high standard that can simultaneously meet both national and international requirements (Darling-Hammond, 2021). According to information on the Ghana Tertiary Education Commission's website, Ghana has 105 private university colleges and 10 privately chartered universities (GTEC, 2023). Due to the growth of private colleges, higher education is now more broadly accessible; however, some of these institutions' standards and quality have drawn criticism. Since it is predicted that the expansion will continue, it is essential to investigate the ways in which private HEIs are run to ascertain the standard of education they provide.

1.3 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Higher Education (HE) plays a critical role in national development by enhancing a country's competitiveness and contributing to economic, political, social, and cultural transformation (Javed & Alenezi, 2023). The importance of quality in HE is further reinforced by Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG 4), which seeks to ensure equitable access to quality tertiary education by 2030. In line with this global agenda, Ghana has experienced rapid expansion in private higher education, with 118 private universities currently in operation, representing

approximately 82% of all universities in the country (GTEC, 2023). This expansion has significantly increased access to higher education and contributed to human capital development.

However, the rapid growth of private universities has raised serious concerns regarding the quality of education being delivered and the effectiveness of quality assurance (QA) systems within these institutions. The problem is particularly significant because the increasing enrolment in private universities means that a large proportion of Ghanaian students are now being educated within institutions whose quality standards and compliance with regulatory requirements have been questioned (Arthur & Kuranchie, 2022; Esseh et al., 2024). If these quality concerns are not adequately addressed, graduates may lack the competencies, skills, and knowledge required for the labour market, thereby affecting students, employers, industries, and the broader national development agenda. Weak QA practices may also undermine the credibility and reputation of Ghana's higher education system both locally and internationally.

The magnitude of the problem is evident in the numerous challenges associated with the rapid expansion of private universities, including weakened regulatory oversight, inadequate infrastructure, shortage of qualified academic staff, commercialization of education, and compromised academic standards (Yalley & Dodoo, 2022). Studies have further shown persistent difficulties in implementing QA systems effectively, including resistance to compliance, insufficient institutional capacity, and lack of adequate quality monitoring mechanisms (Anyidoho, 2023; Tsedzah, 2022; Fynn, 2022). Despite the existence of Ghana Tertiary Education Commission (GTEC) regulations and institutional QA policies, concerns remain about whether private universities consistently adhere to these standards and whether such practices positively influence student outcomes and satisfaction.

The COVID-19 pandemic further exposed weaknesses in QA systems within higher education institutions by disrupting conventional teaching and learning methods and compelling universities to adopt online and hybrid learning approaches. This transition heightened concerns about the ability of institutions to maintain academic standards, monitor teaching effectiveness, and ensure quality learning experiences in changing educational environments. Effective QA mechanisms have therefore become increasingly necessary to safeguard educational standards and institutional credibility.

Although previous studies have examined governance, teaching, learning, and regulatory frameworks in higher education, limited empirical research has specifically focused on how QA practices are implemented, maintained, and perceived within Ghana's private universities. In particular, there is insufficient evidence regarding the extent of compliance with GTEC requirements, the effectiveness of QA practices in enhancing student academic performance and satisfaction, and the challenges institutions face in implementing QA systems. This gap in knowledge makes it difficult for policymakers, regulators, and institutional managers to develop targeted interventions to strengthen quality assurance in Ghana's private higher education sector. Therefore, this study sought to examine QA practices in private universities in Ghana and identify areas requiring improvement to enhance educational quality and institutional effectiveness.

1.4 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1.4.1 Main Research Question

In the context of the above narrative problem, the main research question that this study seeks to address is formulated as follows:

What are QA practices in private higher education institutions in Ghana?

To address this more comprehensively and guide the study, the following sub-questions were posed.

1.4.2 Sub-Questions

1. What is the state of QA practices among private universities in Ghana?
2. How do staff and students at private universities in Ghana perceive the role of QA?
3. To what extent do private universities in Ghana comply with the GTEC regulations on QA?
4. How does QA affect students' academic performance and satisfaction?
5. What challenges do private universities in Ghana face in complying with QA regulations?

1.5. AIM OF THE STUDY

The aim of this study is to examine QA practices in private higher education institutions in Ghana.

1.5.1 Objectives of the Study

To address the above aim more clearly, this study seeks to pursue the following objectives.

1. To evaluate the state of QA practices among private universities in Ghana.
2. To examine how staff and students at private universities in Ghana perceive the role of QA.
3. To determine the extent to which private universities in Ghana comply with the GTEC regulations on QA.
4. To assess how QA affect students' academic performance and satisfaction.
5. To determine the challenges private universities in Ghana face in complying with QA regulations.

1.6 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

This study is significant at multiple levels. At the institutional level, it provides private universities in Ghana with critical insights into the effectiveness of their QA systems. The findings can help these institutions strengthen their strategies for planning, monitoring and evaluating academic delivery by identifying gaps and highlighting best practices. Such improvements are crucial for establishing institutional credibility, enhancing student learning experiences and enhancing overall educational standards. At the policy level, the research provides evidence directly relevant to the GTEC, the Ministry of Education and other regulatory bodies and development partners. The findings can guide capacity-building efforts, inform regulatory reforms and support data-driven decision-making to ensure that the private HE sector aligns with national development goals. In particular, the study speaks to Ghana's commitment to Sustainable Development Goal 4 (Quality Education), which emphasises inclusive and equitable access to quality learning opportunities and the development of lifelong learning systems. At the scholarly level, this research contributes to the relatively limited body of literature on QA in the private HE sector of sub-Saharan Africa. It provides context-specific insights from Ghana, a country where private universities now constitute the majority of HE providers. This contribution is particularly important given the limited empirical work on private universities in sub-Saharan Africa and the critical role they play in national development agendas.

1.7 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The primary interest of this study is in the QA procedures followed in Ghana's HE. According to Hallinger and Walker (2017), several well-established models and theories explain the

functioning of QA procedures in HE. QA ideas have been extensively researched and studied. Based on the literature, it seems that HEIs use well-accepted QA methods and concepts. Some of these include Cheng and Tam's Seven Multi-Models of Quality in Education (1997) and the TQM theory (1986). The focus of this study, specifically QA techniques in HE, is significantly influenced by these interconnected models and theories. However, TQM theory (1986) is deemed the most suitable framework for this study because it has been utilised most frequently to explain various aspects of QA techniques. It emphasises the importance of ongoing development for all aspects of an organisation's operations and outputs. Total Quality Management theory in HE represents a shift from a traditional, process-oriented approach to one that is more student-focused, data-driven and outcome-oriented. By embracing TQM principles, educational institutions can strive for continuous improvement in the quality of education and services they provide to students, faculty and staff. The theory is discussed in detail in Chapter 2.

1.8 PRELIMINARY LITERATURE REVIEW

Kayal and Kahilife (2025) examined the influence of quality assurance practices on institutional ranking and international accreditation in a Saudi higher education institution. Using thematic analysis and data collected through sixteen semi-structured interviews with quality practitioners, deans, and department heads, the study found that quality assurance practices improve educational quality, graduate employability, institutional reputation, and compliance with international accreditation standards. The study further emphasised the importance of documentation, consistency, and adequate resource allocation in implementing effective quality assurance systems.

Similarly, Pham, Nguyen, Pham, and Ta (2022) investigated the effectiveness of internal quality assurance systems in improving academic program quality in Vietnamese higher education institutions. Using 715 survey responses and 46 interviews, the study revealed that although institutions had established basic quality assurance structures and instruments, the results of quality assurance processes were not consistently utilized for continuous quality improvement. The researchers therefore recommended strengthening the use of internal quality assurance outcomes to enhance educational quality.

Eaton (2021) studied the role of quality assurance in maintaining the important values of higher education such as academic freedom, institutional independence, and social responsibility. The study showed that quality assurance helps institutions improve teaching, learning, innovation,

and equal access to education, especially during challenges such as the COVID-19 pandemic and issues of social inequality.

Hauptman Komotar (2020) examined the relationship between global university rankings and quality assurance in higher education. The study found that university rankings mainly focus on numerical indicators and accountability, making them less effective in improving institutional quality. The study also revealed that rankings and accreditation systems can create differences among institutions instead of promoting real quality improvement.

Saeed (2018) investigated the impact of quality assurance on academic performance at Ishik University in Iraq. Using questionnaires, interviews, and content analysis, the study found that quality assurance practices improved teaching, learning, research productivity, and the university's ranking. However, the study also identified some challenges affecting the implementation of quality assurance practices.

Utuka (2012) compared the QA policies and practices in HE in New Zealand and Ghana to determine New Zealand's practices that might be applicable to the Ghanaian context or propose a course for the Ghanaian government to deliberate on for development. The study found that despite the National Accreditation Board's positive impact on quality assurance in Ghana's higher education sector, quality management processes remain demanding and require further improvement. This indicates that achieving Ghana's tertiary education reform goals requires urgent policy attention to both national quality oversight and institutional quality systems.

Moreover, Alomenu (2023) evaluated the QA practices of tertiary institutions in Ghana using descriptive and qualitative methods. The author tracked the students from the admission stage through instruction, evaluation and graduation while examining quality controls at each stage, utilising the framework for the student life cycle. Based on the research findings, steps have been taken to improve the quality operations at Koforidua Technical University. The research suggested that firms that provide QA services help Koforidua Polytechnic and other institutions of higher learning develop an internal quality culture.

Furthermore, Odjidja (2023) evaluated the internal QA processes at selected private universities in Ghana, with the aim of developing a quality assurance model for the HE sector. Using mixed methods research, the researcher found that existing internal QA practices primarily focused on planning and implementing the plan. The study concluded that private

universities need to strengthen their monitoring and evaluation, data collection and response to feedback and benchmarking tools.

Seniwoliba and Yakubu (2015) also examined the implementation challenges of QA in public universities in Ghana, focusing on the University for Development Studies (UDS), using a qualitative case study design. Data was collected through in-depth interviews, document analysis and participant observation schedules. The study revealed that the Directorate of Academic QA (DAQA) undertakes numerous activities aimed at ensuring QA and enhancing quality within the university. The findings suggest that UDS has undertaken pragmatic ways to ensure high standards in its processes. However, the implementation challenges of QA include staffing and offices, a quality culture, physical and financial resources, commitment and support for QA, and the absence of a current strategic plan.

Given the study's focus on private universities in Ghana, it is essential to explore the unique challenges, practices and perspectives within this sector. Previous studies have largely concentrated on public institutions, and private universities may have distinct QA dynamics that require examination. The studies cited above employed qualitative research methods, such as interviews and document analysis, to explore QA practices. The current study on QA practices in private universities in Ghana employed quantitative methods, enabling it to address the unique context of private institutions. It also examines policy implications and provides recommendations specifically tailored to private universities in Ghana. However, these recommendations are applicable to similar contexts in the private and public sectors.

1.9 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND DESIGN

1.9.1 Research Paradigm

The research adopted the positivist paradigm because of its objective and empiricist stance. Socioeconomic phenomena can be investigated objectively with the aid of the positivist philosophy, and the interrelationships between variables can be made apparent (Ali, 2024). Makhanya et al. (2023), Hatch (2023), and Ronkainen et al. (2021) collectively assert that this philosophy is based on unvarnished facts and offers a dispassionate interpretation of the study. The positivist perspective allowed the researcher to stay objective and separate from the investigation. According to Block (2023), this shows that the philosophy avoids undue human intervention in the situation under study. Consistent with this paradigm, quantitative research methods were employed because they ensure objectivity and utilise quantitative tools,

including various statistical approaches, for data analysis. As such, the study's analyses and findings are quantifiable and observable. The research examined actual data on quality assurance practices in HE in Ghana with a focus on private universities.

1.9.2 Research Approach

Quantitative research approach was adopted because it promotes objectivity and relies on numerical techniques, including statistical analyses, to evaluate data. This approach was deemed suitable for evaluating Ghana's methods for ensuring quality in HE. The method emphasises the systematic collection of numerical data and the application of statistical tools to identify relationships among variables (Leavy, 2022). Compared to qualitative research, the results from the quantitative method are more reliable, accurate, valid, and generalisable (Ussif et al., 2020; Sriram, 2023).

1.9.3 Research Design

The study employed a descriptive cross-sectional survey design, which enabled the collection of staff and student perspectives on the identified themes. This design required the systematic collection of data from individuals to address the research questions (Bloomfield & Fisher, 2019). A descriptive survey was therefore deemed the most appropriate approach for examining the QA practices used by private higher education institutions in Ghana to promote quality education. Beyond outlining the characteristics of the phenomenon, descriptive research seeks to interpret the prevailing conditions, contexts and experiences of individuals or institutions. As noted by Walliman (2021), descriptive research aims to test hypotheses or to provide evidence on the existing state of a subject.

This study employed a descriptive survey design because of its relevance to education. Descriptive research helps the examination of contemporary issues affecting students, teachers, administrators, curricula, and the teaching-learning process, and supports the development of practical solutions to such challenges (Bloomfield & Fisher, 2019; Wang & Cheng, 2020). The descriptive survey approach was particularly suitable because it allows data collection from a large population, which aligned with the study's sample of students and teachers. To minimise potential limitations associated with descriptive surveys, the researcher conducted a pilot test of the questionnaire. This step helped identify, clarify and revise ambiguous items. Furthermore, the study assured participants of anonymity and confidentiality, which encouraged them to provide objective and truthful responses.

1.9.4 Population and Sampling

The target population for the study comprised all 105 private universities in Ghana. Participants drawn from these institutions included 105 registrars, 420 QA staff, 105 deans of students, 3 360 lecturers, and 1 050 students (members of the Student Representative Council (SRC)). The study selected these groups because they play critical roles in the creation and implementation of QA practices and polices within their respective universities.

A purposive sampling method was used to select 10 chartered private institutions that had been in operation for at least 10 years and were completing the required paperwork for reaccreditation. The study identified these ten private universities as notable because of their institutional size, access to resources, broader political and socioeconomic context, and level of advancement in implementing QA systems. The selection of these institutions followed the National Accreditation Board's Legislative Instrument (NAB LI 1984) requirement, which mandates that private universities operating for at least ten years must obtain a presidential charter to function as fully recognised private universities.

The study also included 100 SRC executives, in addition to 10 QA officers, 10 registrars and 10 deans of students purposively chosen from private institutions. This is consistent with Walliman's (2021) assertion that the researcher can use purposeful sampling to create an information-rich case. The basic random approach (lottery method) was also employed to randomly select lecturers from the faculties and departments of selected universities. This plan was implemented to guarantee that each lecturer had an equal chance of being selected.

1.9.5 Instrumentation and Data Collection Techniques

The study used the questionnaire as the primary data collection instrument because it provides a fast means of obtaining large amounts of data from respondents. Since questionnaires rely largely on self-reported information, they can generate more accurate responses while also safeguarding participants' anonymity and privacy. This instrument was particularly appropriate given the large sample size, as conducting interviews with every participant would have been impractical and costly in terms of time and resources (Clark et al., 2021). Despite these advantages, questionnaires present certain limitations. Ambiguously worded items or terms with multiple interpretations can lead to misunderstandings and responses that do not align with the researcher's intent. To address these concerns, the researcher carefully considered all factors that could influence the instrument's validity and reliability. Each questionnaire

contained a concise introduction that explained the response procedure, the type of information required, provided clear completion instructions and assured participants of anonymity and confidentiality. The study employed a questionnaire developed on a four-point Likert-type scale. The items focused on the condition of QA practices, stakeholders' perceptions of these practices, levels of compliance with GTEC requirements, and the challenges faced by QA units. Respondents indicated their views by selecting one option on a scale of 1 to 4 that best reflected their level of agreement with each statement.

A letter of introduction from the University of South Africa was obtained prior to administering the questionnaire to confirm the study's validity. To facilitate the process of contacting potential research participants, an initial letter was sent to the heads of selected private universities. Subsequently, the researcher distributed copies of the introduction letter, requesting that individuals residing within the research region participate in the study, along with the participant consent form. The primary consideration in selecting the participants is their familiarity with the research topic (themes). Before data collection commenced, the researcher explained the research aim to the participants and guided them on how to complete the questionnaires. After explaining the research process, an appropriate day and time were selected for administering the instrument.

The researcher attached a cover letter to the questionnaire, requesting full cooperation and assuring participants of confidentiality and anonymity, in order to meet the ethical requirements of the research. The respondents were given 20 minutes to complete the survey. Data was collected over a period of one to three days from each of the 10 institutions due to logistical challenges and the respondents' tight schedules. When a respondent had queries about the data collection process that they did not fully understand, the researcher was on hand to assist.

1.9.6 Data Analysis and Interpretation

The study analysed respondents' data to ensure that the assumptions of normality and homogeneity were not violated. During data screening, the researcher excluded incomplete questionnaires through a sorting process. The study applied the following scoring scheme to categorise valid responses: strongly disagree (1), disagree (2), agree (3), and strongly agree (4). Data from respondents were analysed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS), employing both descriptive and inferential statistical techniques. The analysis reported the main variables and different levels of respondents' perceptions using these statistical

methods. Additionally, the study examined respondents' demographic characteristics using frequency counts and percentages.

Table 1.1: Summary of Data Analysis

Research Question/ Hypothesis	Data Analysis Technique
1. What is the state of QA practices among private universities in Ghana?	Mean and Standard Deviation
2. How do staff and students at private universities in Ghana perceive the role of QA?	
3. To what extent do private universities in Ghana comply with the GTEC regulations on QA?	Mean and Standard Deviation Percentages and Frequencies
4. How does QA affect students' academic performance and satisfaction?	Ordinal Probit Regression Percentages and Frequencies
5. What challenges do private universities in Ghana face in complying with QA regulations?	

Source: Researcher's Construct (2024)

1.9.7 Reliability and Validity

The researcher conducted a pilot study at a private higher education institution in the Ashanti Region to assess the validity and reliability of the questionnaire. The study selected more institutions from this region because it hosts a higher concentration of private universities than any other part of the country. Private universities in the Ashanti Region exhibit features comparable to those in other regions, particularly regarding student enrolment and the availability of academically and administratively qualified staff. Among the various challenges facing these institutions, QA remains a central concern.

To establish the questionnaire's validity and reliability during the pilot phase, the researcher consulted the supervisor for guidance. Following this, the researcher revised the instrument to ensure that it accurately captured the intended data. The study analysed the quantitative data using SPSS, which was also used to code and input the questionnaire responses. The reliability analysis produced a standardised Cronbach's alpha coefficient of at least 0.80 for each item on the questionnaire. According to George and Mallery (2018), the overall alpha coefficient criteria are as follows: >.9- Excellent, >.8- Good, >.7- Acceptable, >.6- Questionable, >.5- Poor, and .4-Very poor.

1.9.8 Research Ethics

The researcher implemented the following procedures to ensure compliance with research ethics. First, the researcher applied for ethical clearance from the Research Ethics Committee of the College of Education at UNISA for approval of the study (Appendix II). These steps were designed to protect participants' rights and maintain the highest standards of confidentiality. The researcher also ensured that respondents' privacy remained fully protected throughout the study. Before data collection, the researcher explained the purpose of the study to all participants and informed them of their right to refuse participation.

Participation in the study was entirely voluntary, and participants could withdraw at any stage without facing any consequences. In line with confidentiality requirements, the study respected respondents' right to hold views that differed from the study's conclusions, while withholding their names and any other sensitive or personal information. Participants were informed that taking part was optional. Non-participation would not result in any penalties or loss of benefits to which they were otherwise entitled, and they could discontinue their participation at any time without any repercussions.

1.10 LIMITATIONS AND DELIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

1.10.1 Limitations of the Study

This study, like all empirical research, was subject to certain limitations that were beyond the researcher's control. The use of a questionnaire as the primary instrument for data collection restricted the depth and spontaneity of participants' responses. While questionnaires are effective for generating standardised data across a large sample, they provide limited opportunities to probe underlying causes or capture nuanced perspectives that may emerge in more interactive methods, such as interviews or focus groups. Additionally, the reliance on self-reported data introduces the possibility of response bias, as participants may have offered socially desirable rather than entirely candid responses. These methodological constraints may have affected the richness and comprehensiveness of the findings.

1.10.2 Delimitation of the Study

To maintain the focus and feasibility of the research, certain boundaries were set. First, the study was confined to private tertiary institutions listed by the NAB (now GTEC). This decision was informed by the rapid expansion of private higher education in Ghana, which currently

accounts for approximately 82% of universities nationwide, thereby making it a critical sector for investigating issues of quality assurance (QA). Second, the study targeted registrars, deans of students, QA leaders, and students within these institutions. These groups were selected because of their strategic roles and access to institutional processes: registrars oversee administrative functions, deans interact directly with students, QA leaders ensure academic standards are maintained, and students experience the system first-hand. Their perspectives were therefore considered most relevant for generating insights into institutional QA practices. Although this delimitation excluded other stakeholders such as faculty members and policymakers, the researcher minimised this limitation by selecting participants with adequate knowledge and experience in QA practices, thereby ensuring the collection of relevant and reliable data. This approach also allowed for a more focused and coherent exploration of the research objectives.

1.11 DEFINITION OF KEY CONCEPTS

- Higher Education: HE refers to the level of education that follows secondary schooling, typically provided by universities, colleges and other institutions of learning. It involves advanced and specialised instruction, often leading to degrees, diplomas or certifications.
- Private Universities: Private universities are institutions of HE that are owned and operated by private organisations or individuals rather than being funded and controlled by the government.
- Quality Assurance: According to Neema-Abooki (2022), QA is an organised and systematic assessment process that examines a programme or institution to verify if established standards for infrastructure, scholarship and education are being met, upheld and continually improved.
- Public Universities: Public universities are HE institutions that are mainly funded, owned and operated by the government.
- Public University College: Public university colleges are government-owned, funded, and governed, but they are smaller than full public universities.
- Private Colleges: Private colleges are institutions of higher education that are owned, financed, and administered by people, organisations, or religious entities rather than governmental bodies.

- Private Higher Education Institutions: Private Higher Education Institutions (PHEIs) are universities, colleges, or specialised institutions owned and operated by private persons, organisations, or religious entities, as opposed to government control.
- Privately Chartered Universities: Privately Chartered Universities are higher education institutions established, owned, and administered by private entities, organisations, or religious institutions, operating under a charter conferred by the government or a national accreditation authority.

1.12 CHAPTER OUTLINE

This thesis is organised into seven chapters. Each chapter focuses on the topics indicated below.

Chapter 1: Introduction and Background

This opening paragraph introduces the study and provides the background and context of private universities and QA procedures in Ghana's HE. The chapter reviews the preliminary literature along with the theoretical framework guiding the study. It also presents the problem statement and research questions, and outlines the quantitative methodology, sampling methods, and ethical procedures used to protect participants' rights during data collection. The chapter also outlines the limitations and delimitations of the study, defining the key terminology used.

Chapter 2: HE, QA, and the Emergence of Private Universities

Chapter Two discusses higher education, quality assurance (QA), and the emergence of private universities. It explains that quality assurance has become an important aspect of higher education globally because it helps maintain academic standards, improve teaching and learning, and ensure institutional accountability. The chapter highlights that the growth of private universities was influenced by the increasing demand for higher education, limited admission spaces in public universities, and government efforts to expand access to tertiary education. The chapter further explains that private universities play a major role in supporting national development by increasing access to higher education and producing skilled graduates. Additionally, the chapter reviews related empirical studies on quality assurance practices in higher education and identifies gaps in previous research.

Chapter 3: QA Practices in HE: An International Perspective

The chapter reviews scholarly literature and global perspectives on quality assurance (QA) in higher education, focusing on its roles, principles, challenges, and implementation in higher education institutions (HEIs). It discusses internal and external QA practices, standard QA procedures, and quality management approaches used in institutions such as JAMK. The chapter also examines the effects of QA processes, student perspectives, challenges affecting QA implementation, and the impact of QA on higher education institutions, while identifying gaps the study seeks to address.

Chapter 4: Research Methodology and Design

The study methodology for gathering data is discussed. A description of the chapter and justification for choosing the descriptive survey as the study's research design are provided. Also covered in this chapter are techniques for selecting the study sample, sampling techniques, and tools (including questionnaires and document analysis). Reliability, validity and difficulties encountered during pilot testing are also addressed in this chapter. This chapter revisits data collection methods, data analysis and ethical concerns.

Chapter 5: Data Presentation, Analysis and Interpretation

The data from the questionnaire are presented and analysed in line with the sub-research areas of the study. In each of the five categories formed from the subjects of sub-research, the study's findings are compared to the body of literature.

Chapter 6: Discussion of Findings

This key findings of the study in reference to the research objectives and the existing body of literature are discussed in this chapter. The discussion is structured around the main thematic areas that emerged from the analysis in Chapter Five, each of which aligned with the study's sub-research questions.

Chapter 7: Summary, Conclusions and Recommendations

Conclusions are drawn after presenting the findings of each sub-research question in the study. There are also ideas or suggestions for improving QA procedures in Ghanaian HE, especially in private universities.

1.13 CHAPTER SUMMARY

This chapter introduced the study, situating it within the context of HE in Ghana, with emphasis on the rapid growth of private universities and the evolving frameworks of QA. It outlined the background and rationale for the study, leading to the identification of the research problem and the formulation of the guiding study questions, aims and objectives. The theoretical framework underpinning the study was also highlighted as a lens through which the investigation was shaped. In addition, the chapter provided an overview of the methodological direction, including the research design, sampling strategies and ethical considerations, while clarifying the study's limitations and delimitations. The chapter also established the foundation for a systematic inquiry into QA practices in private universities by defining key concepts and setting clear boundaries. The next chapter presents the theoretical framework and reviews the literature on HE, QA, and the emergence of private universities in Ghana.

CHAPTER 2

HIGHER EDUCATION, QUALITY ASSURANCE AND THE EMERGENCE OF PRIVATE UNIVERSITIES

2.1. INTRODUCTION

The preceding chapter provided the context for this study and background. It also emphasised the importance of strong QA processes to improve the current state of private universities in Ghana. In addition, the chapter presented the research questions, aims, and objectives, including the goal of assessing how closely private universities in Ghana follow the quality assurance regulations set by the National Accreditation Board/Ghana Tertiary Education Commission (GTEC). This chapter presents a review of local literature on HE, QA, and the emergence of private universities. This study begins by explaining the theoretical framework, which is based on TQM theory. This theory underpins the research. It then provides the overview history regarding higher education in Ghana, the rise of private universities in the country, and the specific characteristics of private university colleges in Ghana. Finally, it examines QA agencies in African higher education institutions, and then focusses on QA agencies within Ghanaian higher education. The next section examines GTEC, QA in African HEIs, the concept of QA, the relationship between quality and QA, and various QA models. It further highlights external and internal quality assurance approaches, as well as specific strategies employed in HE to ensure quality.

2.2 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Many established models and theories describe the functioning of QA processes in HE (Hallinger & Walker, 2017). HEIs have adopted different approaches to QA, drawing from theoretical perspectives such as the market regulation model, the self-regulation model, the command-and-control model, stakeholder theory (Freeman, 1984), and TQM theory (Deming, 1986; Kigozi & Ko, 2019; Nogueiro et al., 2023). Each of these frameworks offers valuable insights into the conceptualisation and operationalisation of quality in HE.

The command-and-control model, rooted in compliance and external regulation, tends to prioritise accountability to state agencies but risks undermining institutional autonomy and innovation. The self-regulation model grants institutions significant autonomy in defining and monitoring quality, yet it can create inconsistencies in standards across institutions. The market regulation model introduces competition as a driver of quality; however, in contexts where

education is considered a public good, it can exacerbate existing inequalities. Stakeholder theory emphasises the importance of balancing the diverse interests of students, employers, governments and society; however, it does not, by itself, prescribe mechanisms for continuous improvement.

Total quality management (TQM) theory provides a more holistic and operationally grounded framework for this study. TQM emphasises a culture of continuous improvement across all institutional processes, with quality seen as the responsibility of every member of the organisation rather than the remit of external regulators alone. This aligns well with the current study's focus on examining QA methods in HE, where systemic and sustained improvement is essential. Moreover, TQM's emphasis on customer (or stakeholder) satisfaction, process optimisation and institutional learning renders it particularly suitable for HE contexts that are increasingly required to demonstrate accountability, responsiveness and innovation. TQM was adopted as the guiding theoretical lens due to its conceptual relevance, adaptability to higher education contexts, and ability to integrate accountability, autonomy, and stakeholder engagement within a continuous improvement framework.

2.2.1 Total Quality Management Theory

The word quality is derived from the Latin term *qualis*, meaning "of what kind." This etymology underscores the central challenge in HE: determining the "kind" of education that institutions should deliver and whether it meets societal expectations. Yet, quality is conceptually elusive because it is interpreted differently across contexts and stakeholders (Harvey & Green, 1993; Srikanthan & Dalrymple, 2003). In HE, quality is often perceived as excellence, fitness for purpose, value for money, or transformation, and each lens presents distinct implications for QA (Harvey & Williams, 2010; Vlasceanu et al., 2004). These multiple meanings complicate the development of universally accepted quality frameworks, particularly in education, where outcomes are intangible and subjective (Barnett, 1992; Dill, 2010).

Quality assurance refers to the planned, systematic and preventive processes put in place to ensure that educational standards and institutional objectives are achieved consistently. QA is often described as a "feed-forward" process because it focuses on preventing problems before they occur through planning, monitoring, policy development, training, evaluation and continuous improvement mechanisms (Harvey & Green, 1993; Vlasceanu et al., 2004). In higher education, QA therefore emphasises proactive strategies designed to improve teaching, learning, assessment, governance and institutional performance before deficiencies emerge.

In contrast, quality control (QC) refers to the reactive processes used to identify, measure and correct deficiencies after they have occurred. QC is commonly regarded as a "feed-back" mechanism because it focuses on inspection, verification, measurement and corrective action after educational processes have already been implemented (Oakland, 2014; Sallis, 2014). While QA focuses on prevention and continuous improvement, QC focuses more on detecting errors, deviations or non-conformance with established standards. Although the two concepts are closely related and complementary, QA is broader and more proactive, whereas QC is narrower and more corrective in orientation. In HE, QA may involve curriculum design, accreditation systems and staff development, while QC may involve examination moderation, audit reports and external reviews used to identify weaknesses requiring corrective action.

Systematic attention to quality emerged prominently in the mid-20th century through the work of Deming (1982), Juran (1986), Crosby (1979, 1984), Feigenbaum (1951, 1961, 1983), and Ishikawa (1985). Their definitions illustrate divergent but complementary perspectives. For instance, Feigenbaum (1951) equated quality with "value" and later coined the term "total quality control," emphasising organisation-wide responsibility. Crosby (1979, 1984) emphasised "conformance to requirements" and later introduced the concept of "defect avoidance," focusing on error prevention. Juran and Gryna (1988) framed quality as "fitness for use," prioritising customer needs, while Ishikawa (1985) advanced participatory approaches through quality circles and root-cause analysis. Collectively, these scholars emphasised that quality is not static but dynamic, requiring continuous improvement (Deming, 1986; Oakland, 2014).

The transition from "total quality control" to "total quality management" in the 1980s was significant (Dale et al., 2007; Feigenbaum, 1983). Substituting "control" with "management" reflected the shift from external inspection to internal commitment, acknowledging that quality must be embedded across an organisation's culture and processes. This evolution is particularly relevant for HEIs in Ghana, where external regulatory enforcement is in place through the NAB (2019), but the internalisation of quality practices remains uneven (Amaral & Rosa, 2010; Bruce-Twum, 2023).

Total Quality Management distinguishes itself from other models by emphasising continuous improvement, stakeholder satisfaction, and collective responsibility (Dahlgaard-Park, 2011; Sallis, 2014). In contrast, compliance-driven models such as command-and-control risk reduce QA to bureaucratic reporting (Harvey, 2002; Stensaker, 2007). Self-regulation models

prioritise autonomy but risk inconsistency in standards across institutions (Newton, 2002; Rosa & Amaral, 2014). Market regulation approaches promote competition but can exacerbate inequities, especially in contexts where education is a public good (Morley, 2013; Teixeira et al., 2017). Stakeholder theory emphasises the multifaceted nature of interests in HE (Freeman, 1984; Jongbloed et al., 2008), but it lacks prescriptive mechanisms for ongoing quality improvement. By integrating accountability, process optimisation and institutional learning, TQM provides a more holistic and operational framework.

Despite the strengths mentioned above, TQM is not without limitations. Its strong emphasis on customer satisfaction has been critiqued for reinforcing the commodification of education (Morley, 2013; Naidoo & Jamieson, 2005). This is particularly sensitive in Ghana, where private HE institutions are often criticised for prioritising market growth over academic excellence (Arthur & Kuranchie, 2022; Esseh et al., 2024). Moreover, TQM originated in manufacturing, raising concerns about its direct applicability to higher education unless it is carefully contextualised (Harvey & Williams, 2010; Srikanthan & Dalrymple, 2003). For example, the notion of "defect avoidance" may not adequately capture the transformative role of universities in fostering critical thinking and civic responsibility.

Despite these challenges, TQM remains a robust and adaptable framework for this study. It integrates principles of accountability, stakeholder engagement, and process improvement, critical for addressing the gaps in QA identified in Ghana's private universities (Arthur & Kuranchie, 2022; Bruce-Twum, 2023). Unlike stakeholder theory, which recognises interests without prescribing processes, TQM operationalises stakeholder involvement into structured feedback mechanisms (Oakland, 2014; Sallis, 2014). Unlike market-based models, it promotes systematic improvement without sacrificing equity (Dill, 2010; Teichler, 2008). Thus, while requiring contextual adaptation, TQM provides the most suitable theoretical lens for examining how private higher education institutions in Ghana assess and implement QA practices.

2.2.2 Crosby's Approach to Total Quality Management (1979)

The concepts of "zero defects" and "do it right the first time," and for defining quality as "conformance to requirements" is widely associated with Philip B. Crosby, (Crosby, 1979). Crosby's industrial experience informed his quality philosophy and the pragmatic practices he advocated (Crosby, 1979; Permana et al., 2021). He argued that customers must specify expectations precisely so that organisations can measure conformance and thereby manage

quality objectively, a position that has informed accreditation criteria and many process-based assurance systems (Arcaro, 2024).

Crosby's emphasis on prevention and conformance focuses attention on reducing variation in repeatable processes and on preventing defects before they occur. This preventive thrust resonates with the broader TQM literature, which locates continuous improvement as a recurring cycle of planning, implementation, measurement, and corrective action (Al-zoubi et al., 2022; Permana et al., 2021). In practical terms, Crosby's prevention orientation can be read alongside iterative improvement models (for example, why prevention maps onto PDCA: Plan = set clear requirements; Do = implement preventive systems and training; Check = measure non-conformance and the cost of poor quality; Act = remove root causes and standardise improvements). Contemporary reviews of TQM implementation highlight that prevention and cyclical improvement remain core practices in diverse sectors, including services and education (Al-zoubi et al., 2022; Maganga & Taifa, 2023).

The four absolutes of quality management by Crosby emphasise conformance to requirements, prevention, zero defects, and measuring the cost of non-conformance as a concise managerial framework for quality control (Crosby, 1979). His quality management maturity grid (uncertainty → awakening → enlightenment → wisdom → certainty) offers a staged view of organisational change and helps managers assess progress across constructs such as leadership understanding, problem handling and the cost of quality (Arcaro, 2024; Crosby, 1979).

Crosby's 14-step programme outlines a prescriptive managerial roadmap for embedding quality through leadership commitment, prevention, measurement, training, recognition, and continuous improvement (Crosby, 1979). Empirical and review studies confirm that structured, multi-step programmes and formal leadership commitment are common success factors in quality initiatives across sectors (Abbas & Kumari, 2023; Al-zoubi et al., 2022; Baig et al., 2021).

While Crosby's approach offers clarity and managerial traction, several critiques and contextual caveats are necessary before transplanting his prescriptions directly into HE, and specifically into private universities in Ghana, as outlined below.

- Crosby's techniques and metaphors originate in manufacturing; education is a service with intangible, emergent learning outcomes. Several authors caution that manufacturing-

derived tools require careful redefinition of constructs such as “defect” and “zero defects” when applied to education (Maganga & Taifa, 2023; Vasudevan, 2021). In HE, a “defect” might be better conceptualised as a failure to meet agreed-upon learning outcomes or graduate attributes, rather than a discrete production fault that changes measurement and prevention strategies.

- Crosby stresses management leadership and responsibility, but recent QA scholarship highlights the importance of participatory mechanisms that include students, faculty and other stakeholders (Freeman et al., 2021; Uludağ et al., 2021). Studies of student participation in QA underline the normative and practical benefits of participatory feedback loops that extend beyond purely managerial control (Uludağ et al., 2021). Thus, applying Crosby in private HEIs requires mechanisms that meaningfully involve academic staff and learners rather than relying solely on centralised managerial edicts.
- Crosby’s prevention strategies (training, supervision, and investment) assume available resources and managerial capacity. Resource-based perspective studies show that educational institutions with limited financial and human resources struggle to implement comprehensive prevention systems without external support or reallocation (Vasudevan, 2021). For Ghana’s private universities, which, as the problem statement shows, often expand rapidly but are variably resourced, Crosby’s model will need adaptation to resource realities (Akanmu et al., 2023; Vasudevan, 2021).
- Crosby’s emphasis on conformance and the “customer” can, if unmodified, reinforce a consumer-provider framing that risks commodifying education (Banerjee, 2022). In contexts where private provision is accused of prioritising enrolment and revenue, strict adherence to a “customer satisfaction/conformance” logic may inadvertently validate transactional behaviours rather than transformative education (Banerjee, 2022; Kanan et al., 2023).
- Quality practice today intersects with digital transformation and Quality 4.0 approaches (Maganga & Taifa, 2023; Mohamed Hashim et al., 2022). Integrating Crosby’s prevention and measurement emphases with digital QA tools (data dashboards, learning analytics) offers potential benefits but requires new capabilities, governance and attention to data ethics and equity (Maganga & Taifa, 2023).

Crosby’s approach contributes practical strengths relevant to private HE in Ghana, including a clear managerial focus on defining requirements (e.g., learning outcomes), routinising prevention (supervision and curriculum design), and utilising the cost of non-conformance as

a management metric (Crosby, 1979). However, for the model to be valid and useful in this study, it must be adapted in three ways: (1) redefine "defect" in pedagogical terms and map it to measurable learning outcomes (Vasudevan, 2021); (2) embed participatory QA mechanisms so students and faculty contribute to requirement-setting and measurement (Freeman et al., 2021; Uludağ et al., 2021); and (3) align Crosby's prevention and measurement with digital Quality 4.0 tools to enable real-time monitoring and resource-efficient interventions (Maganga & Taifa, 2023; Mohamed Hashim et al., 2022). Methodologically, this study can evaluate the adapted Crosby-informed practices using contemporary empirical methods (Magno et al., 2024), and by assess leadership and capability factors that affect implementation (Abbas & Kumari, 2023; Baig et al., 2021).

Crosby's prescriptive clarity, zero defects, prevention, management responsibility and cost-of-quality measurement offer useful tools for operationalising QA in private HEIs. Yet, as this review shows, these tools must be critically reframed for educational aims, resource realities, participatory governance and digital transformation if they are to support sustainable improvements in Ghana's private universities (Banerjee, 2022; Vasudevan, 2021). The remainder of this thesis will examine how the elements of Crosby's approach are operationalised in Ghanaian private universities, and whether adapted practices yield the measurable improvements in learning and institutional processes that Crosby envisioned.

2.2.3 Deming's Approach to TQM (1982)

Edwards W. Deming's systems-oriented approach has become a central pillar in modern quality management discourse and continues to inform TQM debates in service sectors, including HE. Deming (1986) viewed quality as meeting customer needs through reducing system variation and designing organisational systems that promote cooperation, learning, and effective process management. Contemporary literature treats these contributions as transferable principles that require reinterpretation in service and knowledge contexts rather than literal transplant from manufacturing (Yaroshchuk, 2022).

Deming advocated that continuous improvement emerges from leadership commitment and structured cycles of problem-solving. The Plan–Do–Check–Act (PDCA / PDSA) cycle, commonly associated with Deming, operationalises iterative improvement by linking planning, implementation, monitoring and corrective action (Zhong et al., 2023). Recent studies show PDCA-like cycles being embedded in curriculum review, assessment moderation and

programme quality loops, though authors caution that the "Check" stage in universities must be defined as valid measures of student learning, not only administrative compliance (Hayati, 2024; Schellekens, 2023). In other words, PDCA's efficacy in HE depends on translating process checks into meaningful pedagogic indicators and ensuring the "Act" responses are feasible within institutional resource envelopes (Yahiaoui et al., 2022).

Deming's 14 points remain widely cited as leadership and cultural prescriptions for systemic change. Empirical work since 2019 has consistently reiterates that management commitment, the removal of fear, investment in training, and an emphasis on long-term aims are recurring success factors in quality initiatives (Liu et al., 2023; Texeira-Quiros et al., 2022). Nevertheless, recent scholarship also raises critical caveats:

- Deming's ideas were formed in industrial settings; HE produces emergent learning outcomes, complex social goods and professional judgement. Applying Deming requires redefining constructs such as "defect" and "inspection," so they reflect pedagogical failures (e.g., misalignment between intended learning outcomes and assessment) rather than discrete production faults (Yahiaoui et al., 2022).
- Deming gives a central role to leadership, but contemporary QA literature emphasises participatory governance where academics and students are co-producers of quality (Hayati, 2024; Yaroshchuk, 2022). In universities, overly top-down application of Deming's prescriptions can alienate faculty and reduce the legitimacy of QA measures; thus, leadership must pair directive vision with inclusive mechanisms for faculty and student voice.
- The long-term system investments Deming calls for (training, data systems, leadership development) require resources and managerial capacity. Studies on TQM in service contexts indicate that implementation fidelity correlates strongly with resource availability and managerial capability, an important consideration for rapidly expanding private HEIs with uneven resourcing (Makhanya et al., 2023; Texeira-Quiros et al., 2022).
- The contemporary shift toward Quality 4.0 and digital QA tools means Deming's iterative logic can be amplified by analytics and dashboards, but only if governance, data literacies and ethical safeguards are in place (Makhanya et al., 2023; Schellekens, 2023). Digitalisation offers promise for more timely "Check" stages, but also introduces new governance and equity challenges.

Given the study's focus, Deming's approach offers a useful orientation: leadership-driven, systemic QA that emphasises measurement and iterative improvement. However, for Ghanaian private universities, this approach should be adapted as follows:

1. Convert Deming's "check" into pedagogically meaningful indicators (alignment of intended learning outcomes, graduate employability, learning gain measures) and combine quantitative metrics with qualitative evidence from students and employers (Schellekens, 2023; Texeira-Quiros et al., 2022).
2. Design governance that preserves academic professional judgement while ensuring management provides vision and resources, thus avoiding alienation and enhancing legitimacy (Yaroshchuk, 2022; Hayati, 2024).
3. Use affordable, targeted digital tools to operationalise PDCA loops (e.g., simple dashboards for retention and assessment results), accompanied by capacity building and data governance measures (Makhanya, 2023; Schellekens, 2023).

Deming's systemic leadership and PDCA framework offer a strong basis for higher education quality assurance but must be adapted to the service-oriented, participatory, and resource-constrained context of private universities in Ghana. The rest of this thesis will examine whether Deming-derived practices are evident in Ghanaian private universities and whether they contribute to measurable improvements in learning and institutional processes.

2.2.4 Feigenbaum Approach to TQM (1983)

Armand V. Feigenbaum's (1991) work on TQC laid the foundation for what later evolved into TQM. He conceptualised quality not as the responsibility of a single unit, but as an organisation-wide process in which every member, from top executives to junior staff, shares responsibility for outcomes. In his view, customer use defines quality, and institutions must therefore embed mechanisms for prevention rather than relying solely on inspection after production or service delivery has occurred. Although his early writings originated from industrial and manufacturing contexts, Feigenbaum's principles have been widely adopted across service industries, including HE, as institutions increasingly implement quality management practices to enhance their performance and accountability.

Contemporary scholarship has revisited and adapted Feigenbaum's propositions for the education sector. For example, recent systematic reviews and empirical studies confirm that

his emphasis on institution-wide responsibility, continuous improvement, and top-management commitment remains a central pillar of quality management in HE (Kigozi & Ko, 2019; Van Kemenade et al., 2020). Feigenbaum's metaphor of the "hidden factory," which describes the waste and inefficiency caused by rework and non-conformance, resonates with the research showing how the costs of non-quality manifest in universities through student attrition, reaccreditation penalties, and reputational damage (Nogueiro et al., 2023). By making these "invisible" costs visible, institutions can justify investment in robust QA systems.

Feigenbaum's conceptualisation is particularly significant for private HE institutions in developing countries. Studies in North Africa and South Asia have demonstrated that TQM can yield measurable benefits in graduate employability, research productivity and community engagement, but only when industry-derived frameworks are carefully adapted to educational settings (Rahman & Nasrin, 2024; Yahiaoui et al., 2022). For Ghanaian private universities, this adaptation requires rethinking the notion of the "customer." Unlike in manufacturing, the higher education "customer" is not limited to the fee-paying student but also includes employers, professional bodies, government regulators and society at large. As Khuram et al. (2023) argue in a bibliometric review of QA research, contemporary approaches increasingly frame quality in terms of societal impact, suggesting that Feigenbaum's principle of customer-defined quality must be interpreted in multidimensional terms.

At the same time, Feigenbaum's focus on prevention rather than inspection finds practical application in the QA of HE. Institutions that embed formative assessments, proactive curriculum review and continuous student support can be seen as operationalising his prevention-oriented philosophy. During the COVID-19 pandemic, for instance, studies showed that prevention in HE had to expand to include digital resilience and technological readiness, reinforcing the relevance of Feigenbaum's principles in a rapidly changing context (Idan, 2023). However, implementation is not without challenges. Research across developing countries highlights persistent barriers, including weak leadership commitment, inadequate resources and limited staff capacity, all of which undermine the successful implementation of TQM practices in educational institutions (Rahman & Nasrin, 2024; Yahiaoui et al., 2022).

The enduring strength of Feigenbaum's approach lies in its holistic vision of quality as a collective and systemic responsibility. His insistence on top-management commitment and cost-consciousness provides private higher education institutions with tools to build stronger cases for institutional investment in QA. At the same time, the limitations of his model are

equally clear. The manufacturing origins of TQC risk-reducing education to a commodified service, if applied uncritically, and its reliance on measurable standards must be supplemented with qualitative and mixed methods approaches to capture outcomes such as critical thinking, citizenship, and social engagement that are central to the mission of universities (Khuram et al., 2023; Van Kemenade et al., 2020).

In sum, Feigenbaum's model remains a cornerstone of TQM scholarship and continues to shape debates on QA in HE. For this thesis, its relevance lies in adaptable principles rather than industrial transfer, particularly institution-wide responsibility, prevention over inspection, and recognition of non-quality costs for sustainability. These insights provide both a theoretical foundation and a practical lens for evaluating QA practices in private universities in Ghana.

2.2.5 Ishikawa Approach to TQM (1985)

Ishikawa's contribution to TQM lies in promoting company-wide quality control and introducing practical problem-solving tools such as quality circles and the cause-and-effect (fishbone) diagram. Modern reviews and implementation guides show that these elements remain influential because they reframe quality as a collective, organised activity (not simply an inspection task) and because they provide concrete, repeatable methods for discovering root causes and mobilising staff to solve them (Kumah et al., 2024; Tagaram & Chen, 2024).

Ishikawa's insistence that "everyone" participates in quality, from senior management to frontline staff, and his promotion of small, employee-led groups (quality circles) both aimed to create continuous, incremental improvement and stronger internal feedback loops. Contemporary empirical work confirms that when quality circles are implemented with genuine staff ownership, facilitation and institutional support they can improve practice, foster professional development and increase psychological well-being among participants; but that their effectiveness depends heavily on design features (protected time, training, skilled facilitation, linkage to managerial decision-making) rather than simply the label "quality circle" (Chutia et al., 2021; Rohrbasser et al., 2022). In HE contexts specifically, classroom-level quality circles and student quality circles have been used as pedagogic and QA interventions, enhancing student engagement and producing actionable feedback for teaching improvements when they are embedded in a wider support structure (Saaid, 2020).

The Ishikawa diagram is a practical complement to quality circles: it helps groups structure brainstorming, categorise potential causes (e.g., People, Processes, Materials, Environment, Measurements) and move from vague complaints to testable root-cause hypotheses (Kumah et al., 2024; Tagaram & Chen, 2024). Recent studies have extended this basic use into digital and pedagogical design. A 2024 study adapted the fishbone approach into a "fishbone digital learning design" method that scaffolds constructive alignment, helping teachers map what they can and cannot influence in online course design (Li, 2024). Such methodological adaptations indicate the continuing practical value of Ishikawa's tools beyond manufacturing and show how they can be integrated into contemporary HE problems (curriculum misalignment, student retention, placement outcomes).

However, the literature also emphasises important limitations and conditions. First, Ishikawa's tools are not plug-and-play; quality circles and fishbone analyses require investment, time for meetings, training in problem-solving methods, skilful facilitation and feedback loops so that findings lead to resource allocation or policy changes. Realist syntheses of quality circle programmes highlight that, absent managerial commitment and organisational mechanisms to act on circle outputs, the process can generate frustration and tokenistic participation rather than sustained improvement (Rohrbasser et al., 2022). Second, the transfer of manufacturing metaphors into HE must be done carefully: HE's "product" is complex and partly intangible (learning, research, graduate attributes), so root-cause thinking must accommodate educational values and epistemic diversity rather than reduce quality to narrow process metrics (Ülker, 2023). Third, there are political and cultural risks: without safeguards, participatory tools can be co-opted into managerialist QA, used to legitimise external metrics and market-oriented accountability rather than to cultivate pedagogic quality (González Bravo et al., 2022).

For private HE in Ghana, these lessons suggest a measured and contextualised adoption strategy. Ishikawa's emphasis on broad participation and simple, visible analytical tools is attractive because private institutions often require low-cost, scalable methods for diagnosing problems (e.g., student attrition, placement shortfalls and curriculum-industry misalignment). Ghanaian practitioners have recently produced accessible expositions of the fishbone tool (Kumah et al., 2024), and classroom-level implementations of quality circles provide local evidence that the method can be effective in teaching contexts (Chutia et al., 2021). But implementation must address three contextual constraints: (a) capacity, staff and middle managers need training in facilitation and RCA (root-cause analysis); (b) time and incentives,

circles and RCA require scheduled time and recognition in workload models; and (c) managerial responsiveness, findings must feed into resources, course review cycles and accreditation reporting if participation is to be meaningful rather than symbolic (Li, 2024; Rohrbasser et al., 2022).

In practice, Ishikawa's approach can be operationalised within this thesis' study of QA practices by (1) treating quality circles as both a diagnostic and an engagement mechanism, e.g., student/faculty circles that gather recurring classroom feedback and escalate systemic issues to programme committees; (2) using fishbone diagrams in case studies as a structured technique for analysing concrete QA problems (low pass rates, poor practicum coordination, weak graduate employability); and (3) evaluating implementation against success conditions in the recent literature (training, facilitation, managerial action, measurable follow-up) rather than assuming outcome. Doing so aligns the original spirit of Ishikawa (education through continuous, collective problem-solving) with contemporary digital and QA pressures in HE (Kumah et al., 2024; Li, 2024; Tagaram & Chen, 2024).

2.2.6 Juran's Approach to TQM (1988)

Juran's (1988) contribution to TQM remains influential in shaping contemporary understandings of quality improvement in HE and organisational management. Unlike Deming, who emphasised cultural transformation, Juran focused on enhancing the quality of existing systems through structured managerial processes rather than radical institutional change. His approach integrated quality into the strategic planning process, emphasising that management, rather than frontline employees, bears primary responsibility for systemic quality challenges (Al-Faruq et al., 2023; Ozsen et al., 2023). This perspective remains relevant in HE, where governance structures and leadership decisions frequently determine the success or failure of QA systems (Yahiaoui et al., 2022).

Central to Juran's philosophy is the quality trilogy, comprising quality planning, quality control and quality improvement. Recent scholarship affirms the applicability of this model in education and service-oriented institutions, particularly for its emphasis on continuous identification of quality issues, goal setting, and the iterative improvement of processes (Al-Zoubi et al., 2023). Importantly, Juran argued that poor quality outcomes are often linked to inadequate planning, suggesting that institutions must move beyond reactive measures toward proactive quality strategies (Sesay & Sesay, 2024). This highlights a critical gap in many HEIs

in Sub-Saharan Africa, where quality policies exist but are often not systematically integrated into institutional planning.

A distinguishing feature of Juran's approach is its managerial orientation. He emphasised that top management must establish a quality council responsible for driving institutional quality policies, initiating training programmes, and forming improvement teams. Recent studies support this assertion, demonstrating that managerial commitment, empowerment, and recognition continue to be key drivers of sustainable quality improvement (Pratt & Shaughnessy, 2021). Delegation is also central to Juran's framework: while management provides vision and resources, responsibility for problem-solving should cascade downward to enable staff at all levels to contribute to quality goals (Noreen & Mahmood, 2021). In the context of HE, this suggests that university councils and leadership must create enabling environments while empowering faculty and administrative units to innovate within QA frameworks.

Juran also emphasised the trade-off between cost and quality, suggesting that organisations must identify an "optimum quality level" that balances affordability with customer expectations. Contemporary research reinforces this, noting that effective quality management requires aligning institutional performance indicators with stakeholder expectations to maximise value creation (Sesay & Sesay, 2024). In HE, this resonates with the need to balance tuition affordability with the provision of high-quality teaching, infrastructure and student services.

Crucially, Juran emphasised the importance of understanding customer needs, arguing that quality should be measured not only by adherence to standards but also by fitness for purpose and customer satisfaction. In modern scholarship, this user-centred orientation aligns with the growing recognition of students as primary stakeholders whose feedback and outcomes should inform institutional quality frameworks (Al-Faruq et al., 2023; Al-Zoubi et al., 2023). For instance, customer-driven feedback loops are increasingly embedded in QA systems to ensure that academic programmes and services remain responsive to societal and labour market demands.

Beyond the Trilogy, Juran proposed ten steps to quality improvement, ranging from building awareness and setting goals to training, communication, recognition and sustaining momentum. Contemporary applications of these principles emphasise their continuing value in

embedding quality into organisational culture, particularly through systematic reporting and benchmarking (Ozsen et al., 2023). However, scholars also critique Juran's approach for its strong managerial focus, arguing that while leadership commitment is indispensable, sustainable quality outcomes in HE require broader participatory cultures that involve students, staff, and external stakeholders in meaningful ways (Yahiaoui et al., 2022).

Juran's managerial approach remains highly relevant, but it must be contextualised for today's HE environment. His emphasis on planning, leadership accountability and customer orientation provides a valuable lens through which to analyse QA practices. Nevertheless, reliance on top management without cultivating distributed leadership and staff engagement risks creating compliance-driven rather than innovation-driven quality systems. For this study, Juran's framework offers both strengths, particularly in highlighting strategic planning and leadership accountability, as well as limitations that must be examined when applied to HEIs in Ghana and beyond.

2.2.7 Critique of Total Quality Management (TQM)

Total quality management (TMA) has been widely promoted in HE as a coherent framework to organise continuous improvement, align institutional processes with stakeholder expectations, and strengthen accountability. Empirical syntheses and meta-analyses nonetheless show a mixed picture: while many studies report positive associations between TQM practices and institutional outcomes, implementation in HE routinely encounters significant conceptual, organisational and contextual barriers (Nasim, Sikander, & Tian, 2020; Yusuf, 2023). A careful critical appraisal of these findings is essential for a study that examines QA practice in Ghana's private universities.

First, at the level of evidence, recent systematic reviews and meta-analyses point to uneven research coverage and mixed effect sizes. Nasim et al.'s (2020) systematic review of two decades of TQM research in HE highlights that most studies concentrate on teaching and learning and on institutions in advanced economies; they under-represent research engagement, industry relations and institutions in developing countries. Complementing this, Yusuf's (2023) meta-analysis reports a strong overall effect for TQM on "quality" metrics across studies, but also emphasises heterogeneity across contexts and measurements. Together, these reviews indicate that claims of universal TQM success must be tempered by contextual sensitivity: what "works" in one national or institutional setting often does not transfer without adaptation.

To minimise the effect of this limitation on the present study, the researcher contextualised TQM within the realities of Ghanaian private universities rather than treating the model as universally transferable. The study therefore did not assume that TQM practices function identically across all HE systems. Instead, the researcher examined how TQM principles interact with local institutional conditions, resource availability, regulatory structures, and organisational cultures within Ghana's private HE sector. This contextual approach helped to reduce the risk of applying TQM principles uncritically.

Second, a recurring theme in the literature is the implementation gap, which is attributed to factors such as leadership, culture, resources and metrics. Several empirical studies and reviews identify weak or inconsistent top-management commitment, insufficient capacity building, and a focus on compliance rather than learning as central inhibitors (Al-Amri & Wong, 2019; Utkirov, 2023). Where senior managers treat TQM as a reporting/performance-management exercise, the processes become bureaucratic checklists rather than drivers of pedagogic or research improvement (Al-Zoubi et al., 2023; Utkirov, 2023). In short, TQM initiatives tend to stall when the organisational culture, incentive structures and human-resource investments needed for sustained change are absent. To address this concern, the study did not examine QA practices solely from a managerial or policy perspective. Multiple stakeholder groups, including lecturers, students, registrars, deans of students and QA heads, were included in the study to capture broader institutional experiences regarding QA implementation. This helped the researcher to assess whether QA practices reflected genuine institutional improvement efforts or merely compliance-oriented administrative procedures. The inclusion of diverse stakeholder perspectives therefore reduced the possibility of relying exclusively on official institutional narratives about QA effectiveness.

Third, there is a theoretical and normative critique that is particularly relevant for HE: the manufacturing origins and customer orientation of classic TQM can be misaligned with the purposes and values of universities. Scholars have criticised the translation of industrial quality metaphors into academic contexts, arguing that an excessive emphasis on customer satisfaction and quantifiable metrics risks commodifying education, eroding collegial governance, and narrowing intellectual missions (Morley, 2023). Morley's analysis of neoliberal managerialism demonstrates how managerial logics can supplant academic judgement and reframe education as a market transaction, a concern particularly relevant to private providers operating in competitive tuition markets. To minimise this limitation, the study adopted a broader

understanding of quality within HE rather than reducing quality to customer satisfaction alone. The study conceptualised quality in terms of accountability, continuous improvement, stakeholder engagement, teaching effectiveness, student learning experiences and institutional development. Furthermore, the study recognised students, academic staff, regulators and society as important stakeholders in the quality process rather than viewing students only as customers. This broader interpretation helped to align TQM more appropriately with the educational mission of universities.

Fourth, the literature exposes methodological and measurement problems. Studies use diverse operationalisations of "quality" (student satisfaction, graduate employability, research outputs, accreditation scores), producing inconsistent findings and limiting comparability; this has led reviewers to call for more rigorous, mixed methods designs that can capture both process changes and intangible educational outcomes (Nasim et al., 2020; Yahiaoui et al., 2022). Yahiaoui et al.'s (2022) mixed methods study of Algerian universities, for example, finds significant positive paths between TQM practices and specific outputs (graduates, research) but also documents qualitative barriers (capacity gaps, uneven participation) that moderate those effects. The researcher addressed this limitation by operationalising QA practices using multiple dimensions and indicators derived from the literature and GTEC quality standards. Rather than relying on a single measure of quality, the study examined perceptions of QA practices, institutional compliance, stakeholder involvement, academic performance, student satisfaction and implementation challenges. This multidimensional approach strengthened the comprehensiveness of the analysis and reduced the limitations associated with narrow conceptualisations of quality.

Fifth, practical constraints, cost, staff workload, turnover and the scale of change required, are non-trivial. Implementation consumes managerial time and resources (training, data systems, process redesign), and these investments can be prohibitive for smaller private institutions or those with fragile finances (Al-Amri & Wong, 2019; Utkirov, 2023). Furthermore, the pressure to demonstrate short-term, quantifiable outcomes (for regulators, accreditors, and prospective students) can divert attention away from longer-term developmental goals, such as research quality or curricular reform. The study recognised these practical constraints as important contextual realities within Ghana's private universities. Consequently, the researcher interpreted the findings within the institutional and resource limitations confronting the participating universities rather than evaluating institutions against idealised TQM conditions.

This contextual interpretation reduced the risk of making unrealistic assumptions regarding institutional capacity and implementation effectiveness.

The rapid expansion of private universities in Ghana, with concern over standards and variable internal QA capacity, makes these critiques operationally important. The pattern from the literature suggests three cautionary conclusions for Ghanaian private HEIs: (1) adopting TQM as an accreditation-compliance tool without addressing institutional culture and leadership will produce superficial gains; (2) transplanting industrial metrics without adapting them to academic purposes risks commodification and loss of academic autonomy; and (3) resource constraints and staff development needs require phased, locally-tailored TQM strategies rather than wholesale adoption of off-the-shelf models (Al-Zoubi et al., 2023; Nasim et al., 2020; Morley, 2023).

2.3 CONCEPTUAL REVIEW

2.3.1 Historical Overview of Higher Education in Ghana

Modern university system in Ghana is a product of both colonial-era initiatives and post-independence expansion policies that sought to match HE supply with national development goals. The University College of the Gold Coast, established by ordinance on 11 August 1948 and later transformed into the University of Ghana, provided the original institutional nucleus from which subsequent expansion evolved (Ayelazuno & Aziabah, 2021). Rapid population growth and increased school completion led to expanded tertiary provision, with Kumasi College of Technology becoming a university in 1961 and the University College of Cape Coast gaining autonomy in 1971 (KNUST; UCC). These early expansions set a precedent for state-led upgrading and the formation of specialised institutions to meet national labour and teacher education needs.

Policy reform in the late 1980s and early 1990s formalised expansion and regulatory change. A University Rationalisation Committee and subsequent White Paper (1991) recommended structural and governance reforms, which led to the creation of national QA and coordinating bodies, as well as a new emphasis on institutional diversification and financial sustainability (Agyepong et al., 2024). In recent years, the regulatory landscape has undergone further evolution: the NAB and its related councils have been consolidated under the Ghana Tertiary Education Commission (GTEC), which now publishes institutional and programme

accreditation data and plays a primary role in QA oversight (GTEC, 2023). This institutional and regulatory trajectory explains why Ghana today has an array of provider types, public universities, technical universities, colleges of education, and a substantial private sector, and why QA is necessarily multi-layered.

Although quantitative expansion increased access, it also led to persistent inequalities and capacity challenges. National reviews and empirical studies show that growth has been geographically and socially uneven, with private and new providers concentrated in urban and southern regions, while students from poorer, rural, and northern populations remain underrepresented (Ayelazuno & Aziabah, 2021). The combination of massification and diversification places two specific stresses on QA arrangements that are important for your thesis: first, regulators face growing administrative workloads and complexity when accrediting heterogeneous provider types; second, many institutions, especially newer private providers, have limited internal QA infrastructure and human-resource capacity to translate accreditation requirements into sustained quality practice (Swanzy et al., 2023).

Finally, historical policy choices created persistent institutional forms (affiliation, mentorship, and phased chartering) designed to manage risk as new providers emerge. These mechanisms have practical implications for QA implementation: affiliation can facilitate capacity building through mentor oversight, but can also institutionalise uneven or compliance-focused relationships that prioritise credentialing over internal quality culture. These dynamics underline the central empirical question of this study: how private HEIs in Ghana assess and operationalise QA practices in the face of historical expansion, regulatory layering and resource constraints (GTEC, 2023; Tsevi, 2021).

2.3.2 The Emergence of Private Universities in Ghana

In most regions of the world, individual owned HE institutions are expanding and growing quickly. Although numerous factors have contributed to the sector's rise, the British Council (2019) identifies massification and funding as the primary causes. The growth of private higher education has been driven by rising demand for access and a shift toward viewing higher education as a private rather than a public good. Since 2000, the number of private HE institutions in the nation has increased dramatically, which is consistent with the general rationale, as well as national political and ideological developments.

According to UNESCO (1998) and (2007), there were 137 million students enroled globally in 2005, up from 82 million in 1995 and 13 million in 1960. Tsevi (2021) asserts that one distinguishing aspect of this development in numerous locations, especially in Sub-Saharan Africa, is the rise of private HE institutions. According to UNESCO (2006), the private sector is particularly important in three regions: East Asia, Sub-Saharan Africa and Latin America. The creation of independent higher education sector in Sub-Saharan Africa has been viewed as a way to increase access to the field and is integrated into sector reform initiatives (Dei et al., 2023). Boateng et al., 2024, suggest that this occurrence is the outcome of a global shift away from state control and management. They argue that this trend reflects a different belief in the effectiveness of open market systems for allocating resources adequately. Alomenu (2023) asserts that Ghana's status is comparable to that of other countries in terms of reforms and growth in higher education. A University Rationalisation Committee (URC) was established by the Ghanaian government in 1987 to provide recommendations for changes to the administration, curriculum and financial support of higher education in Ghana. The Committee worked from 1986 to 1988 before submitting its concluding report in 1988. The Committee conducted a detailed analysis of the state of Ghana's tertiary education and made recommendations for improving the sector's demoralised and depressed position at the time. The government released a White Paper in 1991 outlining changes to the tertiary education system in response to the Committee's report. This action clarified the state's obligation to the latest policies, both in Ghana and internationally. The policy changes were divided into four principal policy domains. One of these goals was to significantly expand the HE system. This expansion aimed to address the needs of both employers and school leavers, and to provide more people with opportunities that had previously been unavailable to them (Boateng et al., 2024). Since the mid-1980s, there has undoubtedly been considerable development in Ghana's higher education sector. Not only have these developments shown that there are more undergraduate students than ever before, but also that postgraduate education is expanding at an unprecedented rate. Additionally, in response to the rising student enrolment, private university schools have swiftly grown.

There are now 106 authorised private higher educational institutions located throughout the country, according to the NAB. Theological colleges, professional and specialised institutions, tutorial colleges, university colleges, and institutions that grant diplomas are among the various types of private HE institutions that fall under this category (GTEC, 2023). These establishments are either privately-funded (owned by one person, a group of people, or a

private organisation) or they get funding from religious organisations (Yalley & Dodoo, 2022). Private higher education in Ghana is offered by Christian and Islamic institutions. A significant number of colleges and universities are supported by Christian organisations. For instance, the 7th-day Adventist church founded the first authorised private university college, which is today known as Valley View University. The majority of privately run organisations in the nation operate for profit. They offer programmes in market-friendly academic areas and primarily rely on fees from students as their primary source of funding for the universities (Ayelazuno & Aziabah, 2021).

Before starting their activities, these private institutions must be registered with NAB and receive accreditation from GTEC. In the case of Ghana, Tsevi (2023) claims that the precise pattern is for private institutions to start as university colleges associated with state owned universities, which assist as guides for a while. Some of the organisations are connected to or work in conjunction with universities abroad. To guarantee that the associate schools are properly certified and supervised, this connection with degree-awarding public universities is necessary (Ansah & Swanzy, 2019). This suggests that the justification for QA is to prevent the growth of disengaged, for-profit organisations that are devoid of the competence and desire to provide appropriate quality. The application for the university college accreditation includes the recommended name, a description of the available educational resources, and a three-year plan for achieving the institution's goals. A letter of temporary permission is granted after an inspection, verification, and verification of the new private university college's premises. A private institution can only obtain institutional accreditation if, including but not limited to, satisfies the minimum standards for degree, diploma and certificate level entry; the least enrolment level; and the minimum standards for faculty. The president of the nation bestows institutional charters. A private institution can receive a charter if it has met all conditions and has been linked with a coaching institution for not less than 10 years, according to the NAB (GTEC, 2023). The curriculum of a private university is eligible for accreditation if, among other things, it specifies the minimal standards for student entrance, describes the courses and establishes guidelines for student performance. Additionally, for educational programmes to be accredited, they must follow national education laws.

The shortcoming of private colleges is their failure to meet the NAB standards regarding recognised schools offering unapproved programmes. In a similar vein, it has come to light that certain certified private colleges frequently enrol students who do not meet the basic standards

(GTEC, 2023). Private colleges and their satellite campuses often lack accreditation, yet they begin marketing to the public as though they do, presenting another problem.

2.3.3 Characteristics of Private University Colleges in Ghana

In Ghana, the private sector of HE is the one that is increasing and rising most quickly. They enrol more students than public universities, but their share of the nation's overall student enrolment is less than that of the public institutions. The fact that they lack the infrastructure to enrol more pupils is a hurdle for them.

Alomenu (2023) asserts that the objectives and focus of private universities' functioning differ significantly from those of state institutions. Due to their nature as for-profit organisations, they are compelled to provide courses that are in high demand on the market for HE as well as for graduate jobs. The events organised by these institutions often exhibit either a religious or commercial bent (Yalley & Dodoo, 2022). According to Alomenu (2023), these schools only offer a limited number of courses and are best characterised as "boutique" institutions as opposed to the public university system's "supermarket model." These degrees often have specialisations in business studies, humanities, information and communication technology which reduces the need for extensive infrastructure. Additionally, it is not as difficult to gain admission to private universities. This is a result of the fact that admission to public colleges was often refused by the majority of students in private institutions. The overall admission score for students accepted into private colleges is low. The likelihood exists that students in private institutions may have inferior academic profiles to their peers in public universities, as highlighted by Fynn (2022).

Once more, the private colleges' ability to teach is what is more important. The necessary personnel and professors are absent from several of these institutions. Many of these schools place a considerable emphasis on adjunct professors from business or public universities who work part-time as instructors. Additionally, some of their employees and instructors lack the necessary training and expertise to teach in colleges. Ansah and Swanzy (2019) assert that this dependence on part-time instructors and adjunct lecturers, regardless of their location or philosophical inclination, is a shared trait of private universities.

2.3.4 Quality Assurance Agencies in Ghanaian Higher Education

As more private schools began offering postsecondary education and concerns arose about their performance, QA in HEIs in Ghana commenced in the early 1990s (Alomenu, 2023). The

scenario in Africa entailed an increasing population's need for HE, the government's inability to supply it, and, as a result, a shift towards the boom of private HE. Despite this, the Ghanaian government would have been able to keep up with the demand had it not been for the 1980s economic crisis and World Bank pressure to shift public education spending to schools, thereby shifting responsibility for financing HE expansion to private stakeholders (Dei et al., 2023). The government did not initially establish a robust public framework for private HE as it emerged. Instead, it had as its guiding principle that private stakeholders should choose the pace. That would be a way to quickly growth the number of qualified applicants' access to HE, which is a public interest objective.

The government, students, and general public immediately became concerned about quality as a result of the private sector's rapid expansion in HE. When the government and other parties considered QA, they often envisioned assessments of programmes and institutions that involved a systematic comparison of performance to norms in academic and infrastructure-related areas. Regardless of concerns about the overall or worsening quality of public HE, there was a broad consensus that the government sector already has internal QA systems and standards in place. Governmental realities at the time also occasionally made it awkward for the government to confront long-standing public university policies and interests. Both internal and external QA were planned. The internal component ensures that a programme or institution has procedures that direct its values and goals. The external component, on the other hand, would be carried out by other groups. Accreditation, audit, and assessment of quality are examples of external quality assurance procedures (Anyidoho, 2023).

Irrespective of governmental objectives, private entities frequently perceived the quality assurance process as a means to validate their standing. Previous studies on higher education quality assurance (HEQA) identifies enhancement and accountability as the principal objectives of national quality assurance bodies. Nevertheless, recent observations suggest that most national QA organisations currently prioritise accountability over improvement (Tsedzah, 2022; Tetteh et al., 2021). Recently, there has been considerable discussion on striking a balance between accountability and progress in HE QA (Adusei, 2025; Gavu, 2025; Mensah, 2022). Neema-Abooki (2022) suggests that a national QA organisation should incorporate the internal (focused on improvement) and external (focused on accountability) requirements of higher education institutions (HEIs). Moreover, Glover et al. (2025) argue that if external quality assurance mechanisms, like the standards for programme approval and design, are too strict, HEIs might not be able to respond quickly or creatively to new needs.

2.3.4.1 National Accreditation Board of Ghana (NAB) / Ghana Tertiary Education Commission

The National Accreditation Board (NAB) is a public organisation that reports directly to the Ministry of Education (MoE). It is, in addition to other matters, responsible for accrediting both private and state tertiary institutions regarding the quality and content of their programmes. It also develops, in discussion with the right bodies or institutions, polices and conditions for the appropriate functioning of its bodies and the sustaining of permissible standards. Additionally, it is responsible for determining the equivalencies of degrees, credentials and other certificates granted in Ghana and abroad.

In 1993, the Ghanaian government established the National Accreditation Board (NAB) following the passage of the NAB Law 1993 (PNDCL 317) to support the advancement of improved higher education administration as a QA Agency (GTEC, 2023). According to Mensah (2022), the legislation has subsequently been superseded by the Tertiary Institutions (Establishment and Accreditation) Regulation, 2010 (LI. 1984), which operationalises the NAB Act, 2007 (Act 744). The National Accreditation Board Act, 2007 (Act 744 of the Parliament of the Republic of Ghana), held their mandate while assigning NAB the added duty of publishing the list of private and public accredited establishments and programmes at the commencement of every year. The board also suggest to the President whether to award a charter to a private university and carry out any additional responsibilities that are established by the education Minister.

The organisation is run by a board that includes a chairman, representatives from the Heads of Assisted Secondary Schools, University of Cape Coast (UCC), University of Ghana (UG), UDS, University of Mines and Technology (UMaT) and Conference of Polytechnic Principals (COPP).

Around 186 authorised public and private postsecondary schools that provide one- and two-year professional certifications, two and three-year diplomas, four-year degrees and postgraduate degrees are listed by the NAB. According to the NAB, in 2016, the nation had twelve public institutions, two of which were brand-new. With over 300 000 students enroled in Ghana's HEIs across a wide range of academic and professional fields, more than two-thirds of whom attend public universities, the country's postsecondary institutions are currently home to over 300 000 students.

In recent years, there have been significant changes to the public universities in Ghana. Degree programmes are multiplying and becoming more accessible (GTEC, 2023). However, given the extremely constrained resource situation, the quick rise in the gross enrolment rate has had an impact on the general level of educational activities. To address concerns about quality in the education sector, successive governments have prioritised this through their quality agency, NAB.

HE in Ghana has undergone several reforms aimed at increasing its responsiveness to society, although the institutions still face significant challenges. The "education policy triangle" of education (access, quality, and affordability/cost) in HE is notable among them. In addition to the population growth rate (access), the bad economic climate and financial restrictions (cost), and the quality management system (quality), there is a rising demand for postsecondary education (Neema-Abooki, 2022). Therefore, as noted by Alomenu (2023), the desire to boost enrolment in Ghanaian HEIs has come at the price of quality. The question, therefore, becomes whether the national QA agency is fulfilling its mission in accordance with the goals that motivated its founding in such a setting.

2.3.5 Quality Assurance in African Higher Education Institutions

The historical foundations of many African nations are found in their colonial past (Zoogah, 2021). Nearly all of the early institutions, according to Fafunwa and Aisiku (2022), were affiliated with their colonial parent university, which had duties related to assuring quality. An illustration of this is the University College of the Gold Coast, which is today known as the UG. These ties were broken as several of the nations attained independence. After that, the internal systems of the institutions were responsible for QA (Gavu, 2025). Through the initiatives of various professional associations working in fields such as engineering, medicine, architecture, law and accounting, QA outside of institutions was developed. These associations established criteria for certifying programmes in their respective fields. In addition, nations such as Ghana, Nigeria, South Africa and Egypt initiated the process of establishing national agencies to supervise, regulate, and set standards for their HEIs (Fafunwa & Aisiku, 2022).

Woldegiorgis (2022) claims that in Nigeria, the regulatory body for all institutions is the National Universities Commission (NUC), founded in 1962, with a primary focus on QA. The Council for Higher Education (CHE), responsible for quality control, was inaugurated in Kenya in 1985. In response to the HE Act, 101 of 1997, the South African CHE was founded as an autonomous statutory authority in May 1998. CHE is responsible for ensuring quality in HE

and training (Mbati & Beauty, 2024). There are currently national QA organisations in at least 20 African nations. Some of these nations are: Botswana, Cameroon, Zimbabwe, Egypt, Namibia, Ethiopia, Sudan, Ghana, Kenya, South Africa, Liberia, Mauritius, Nigeria, Madagascar, Mozambique, Tanzania and Tunisia. This list does not include several French-speaking nations that have a centralised system for QA.

2.3.6 The Concept of Quality Assurance

All planned and systematic actions carried out as part of the quality control system that can be proven to provide customers confidence that a good or service will meet their standards for quality are referred to as QA (Zhuravel et al., 2021). Thus, according to Kayyali (2023), QA denotes the organised and methodical measures deemed essential to deliver to consumers with sufficient assurance that a commodity will meet their quality needs. Institutional management and customers are the two main groups that gain from QA efforts. These stakeholders have a vested interest in ensuring that quality standards are met in advance.

This is done to confirm the availability of the necessary resources and the competence of the employees executing the activity. An effective way to confirm that quality criteria are sufficient to satisfy the requirements for quality is to utilise a QA system. Together, QA and quality control ideas include the following topics:

1. The attainment of quality prerequisites should be deliberate.
2. Adequate means to achieve quality requirements must be offered and implemented throughout the organisation.
3. Attainment of quality requirements should be checked frequently (to give way for correct action to be taken, when necessary).

2.3.6.1 QA as a planned and systematic review of programmes

According to Kwarteng (2022), QA is a deliberate and logical evaluation process that assesses a programme to determine if accepted principles of instruction, bursary and structures are being accomplished, preserved and improved. It is also affirmed by Fedouis, 2022 as an organised and deliberate process which is the duty of everyone in an educational establishment, even though programmes and priorities are set out by senior management. Hence, QA should be an unending continuous course. QA, for instance, is an orderly examination of learning programmes to make sure that appropriate educational benchmarks, student support and institutional development are being upheld, according to Greere (2023).

2.3.6.2 Quality assurance as an all-embracing term

According to Aburizaizah (2022), the term "QA" is also used to refer to all the procedures, guidelines and practices employed to uphold and advance the standards of HE. Similar to how QA focuses on both responsibility and improvement, Stukalo and Lytvyn (2021) present a detailed explanation of QA as a regulatory mechanism. The availability of the required established procedures, first supported by a strong value culture, is a prerequisite for QA efforts. Quality is ensured by the use of quality management, improvement, control, and assessment (Saihi et al., 2023).

2.3.6.3 Quality assurance as a continuous process

QA is conceptualised by the International Institute for Educational Planning (IIEP, 2006) as a continual process of reviewing, assessing, monitoring, assuring, maintaining, and enhancing the quality of HE systems, institutions, or programmes (Suleiman, 2023). By delivering information and judgement (no rating) through a standardised procedure and set of predetermined standards, QA focuses on both responsibility and improvement as a regulatory mechanism. QA refers to a variety of evaluation processes devised to uphold university standards and foster student educational opportunities at a level that students can readily accept. A continual process called QA enables an institution to ensure that the standards and calibre of its educational offerings are being upheld or improved. Schellekens et al. (2023) define quality assurance as ensuring that academic standards meet national and international benchmarks and that teaching, research, and community engagement satisfy stakeholder expectations.

Regarding social service, which is the delivery of higher education, HEIs are accountable to both the public and their administration. In their effort to achieve their predetermined goals, the larger society calls for the realisation of accepted standards. To guarantee assurance in the educational services offered by academic institutions under the auspices of appropriate bodies and experts, QA refers to planned and systematic processes (Commonwealth of Australia, 2009). To ensure that educational services consistently meet consumer expectations, key authorities and entities have devised a series of activities known as QA. Wilger (1997) holds a similar perspective. According to him/her, QA refers to a systematic procedure through which a university guarantees that the teaching and learning process meets the criteria set.

2.3.6.4 QA as internal and external phenomenon

External or internal quality control is also possible. Institution's policies, strategies, programmes, and tools for certifying that it is justifying its tenacities as well as the principles that concern, HE generally or to the profession or discipline in part is internal quality assurance (IQA). The external QA refers to the actions of an external body that assesses a university's processes or programmes to decide whether they meet the established benchmarks. Internal and external QA are closely related, as they work in tandem and complement each other. Internal QA depends on external QA, while external QA inspires internal QA to make changes and new advancements (Mello Silva & Vargas, 2022).

2.3.6.5 Quality assurance as a culture

In conceptualising quality assurance in HE, several writers (Lathifah et al., 2022; Pramana et al., 2021) put a strong emphasis on learning. For instance, Ngoc et al. (2023) described QA as the process by which a company verifies that the circumstances are right for students to meet the criteria specified by the training company. According to Greere (2023), QA practices are crucial because they help universities develop into learning organisations. If this is the case, the underlying pedagogical assumptions of QA regarding the links between teaching and learning come into sharper focus. According to Stukalo and Lytvyn (2021), QA refers to a commitment to fostering a culture of quality within a HE institution, where everyone is aware of their role in maintaining and enhancing the institution's quality. In other words, in 2005, QA was defined as "all those attitudes, objects, actions and procedures, through their existence and use, and together with the quality control activities, which ensure that appropriate academic standards are being maintained and enhanced in and by each programme" by the International Network for QA Agencies in HE (INQAAHE) (p.13).

2.3.6.6 Quality assurance as a tool for ensuring stakeholder confidence

Some scholars, such as Barnett (1992), Boyle and Bowden (1997), and Harvey (2002) view QA in HE as a practice of building their public's trust that the delivery, idea, procedure and results meet standards or exceed minimum criteria. According to Kwarteng (2022), QA in HE involves the continual creation and application of procedures, ethos and policies that point to preserve and improve quality, as defined by stipulated ideals and stakeholder demands. Accordingly, Mgaiwa (2021) emphasised that any QA programme should focus on evaluating input, process and outcomes if HE is considered a system. QA is the process of providing

stakeholders with assurance that the services (inputs, processes, and outputs) they receive meet or exceed their expectations. Lalendle and Matshoba (2023), who view QA as a catch-all term for any type of external quality monitoring, assessment or review, share this concern. It can be explained as the process of ensuring that stakeholders understand that the provisions (inputs, procedures, and outputs) meet expectations or the necessary benchmarks.

2.3.6.7 Quality as a tool for accountability and improvement

These descriptions encompass topics such as standard and quality maintenance and improvement. However, despite the differences in viewpoints, a unifying theme appears to be present. Another way to think of a QA system in HEIs is the entirety of resources, structures, policies, procedures, values/attitudes, and activities committed to guaranteeing the continual progress of the quality of learning processes (Lipman, 2023). According to proponents of QA, accountability is essential not just to appease external stakeholders but also as a prerequisite for development, particularly in undergraduate education (Dwangu & Mahlangu, 2021). The Further Education and Training Awards Council (FETAC, 2007) argues that improvement, resulting from the routine monitoring of services provided, should be at the core of any QA procedure. This implies that QA plays both intrinsic and extrinsic functions in bringing about improvement, upholding responsibility and fostering dialogue between the system and its surroundings. QA, according to Garwe (2021), is a systematic, controlled, and ongoing focus on quality, encompassing both quality maintenance and enhancement. This is the consensus among the majority of writers on the topic of QA (Antony et al., 2022; Tolmachev et al., 2021).

However, addressing the issue of QA is challenging, primarily due to misunderstandings about its scope and implications. The definitions offered in this chapter help to clarify this controversy. All operations that are connected to defining and ensuring quality are included in QA, taken in its broadest definition. It also entails raising the standards of HEIs, which supports the adoption of an all-inclusive strategy generated from the institution's strategic goals, aligns with its internal quality culture, and meets external standards for QA. In this study, quality assurance is understood as a continuous, systematic internal and external review process aimed at accountability, improvement, stakeholder confidence, and a sustained culture of quality. Leveraging on Valencia-Arias et al.'s (2023) definition of QA, which is a deliberate and methodical examination of a programme or institution to evaluate whether accepted principles of instruction, bursary and infrastructure are being met, preserved and upgraded.

This is due to the strong emphasis on all of the fundamental challenges that apply to all QA definitions.

2.3.7 Quality and Quality Assurance

According to Newton, as reported by Carvalho et al. (2023), the word "quality" moved or was obtained from its new recognised business and technical contexts in the 1980s into the field of HE, together with additional expert and public service contexts. Since quality is a nebulous and contentious notion, defining it in HE can be difficult (Arslan, 2025). There is no single meaning of the phrase in the literature that is unquestionably acknowledged. Quality, according to Ilyasov et al. (2023), is a value judgement that is viewed differently by various stakeholders, including lecturers, employers, administrators, students and government. As its attractiveness, quality is a matter of taste and judgement (Zhuravel et al., 2021). Quality, particularly in HE, is difficult to define, but according to Asiyai (2022), there are a few key concepts that the phrase revolves entirely around. The four definitions of quality are:

- quality as a process (the result of structures and technicalities is not one-time but continuous systematics); and
- quality as a culture (recognises the mindset, values and behaviour of the organisation or community)
- quality as absolute (set and consider quality as universal values of excellence);
- quality as relative (explained in relation to context, expectations and comparison of relative standards)

Kwarteng (2022) observed that while various notions of quality have their role, educational institutions are mainly involved with quality as a cultural aspect. Additionally, Javed and Alenezi (2023) outlined five basic quality philosophies that are relevant to HE. These include excellent quality, flawless quality, suitability for purpose, value for money and quality as transformation. However, it seems that HE does not fit most of these categories. For instance, as HE does not want to develop graduates who are devoid of flaws, as noted by Ferdousi et al. (2022), the dimension of quality as excellence is invalid.

I also define "quality" as "up to standard," which refers to the position of QA in private institutions, determining whether they adhere to criteria set by the institution and QA authorities. QA has gained importance on a worldwide scale, particularly in HE and is receiving more attention than ever before. Neema-Abooki (2022) notes that accreditation and

quality assurance in higher education aim to ensure high-quality teaching, support lifelong learning, align skills with labour market needs, and uphold internationally recognised academic standards.

2.3.7.1 Quality assurance models

According to Hafeez et al. (2022), QA systems and change, in general, do not work in a vacuum; instead, they are influenced by a wide variety of circumstances, standards and orientations that shape the entire range of HE amendments within a particular environment. This aims to show that the government, commerce (in society), and the ethos of the HE institution itself all seem to have an impact on developments in HE today. The function of a HE institution nowadays, according to Lathifah et al. (2022), represents the set of priorities expressed by various advocacy groups. This is especially true considering the growing number universities partners, many of whom have conflicting interests in academe. The QA systems that ultimately prevail depend on the balance among the conflicting interests of the government, the society and the institution itself. The research suggests that there are three main models of QA in HEIs (Acevedo-De-los-Ríos & Rondinel-Oviedo, 2022). These three models are Market Regulation, Command-and-Control and Self-regulation and.

2.3.7.1.1 Command-and-control model

The state must negotiate public expectations of HEIs within an educational system where the state contributes a significant portion of the financing required by universities. Governments require academic institutions to be responsible, effective and of high quality. When it comes to institutional autonomy and changes being pursued throughout the HE sector generally, they have quite distinct effects on institutions. Furthermore, the universities lose their liberty to pursue their lines of inquiry and academic independence due to this state supervision. According to Magalhães and Veiga (2023), the governing function of the state can range from tight government interference to oversight role or an advisory role.

Wu et al. (2025) noted that the command-and-control model represents a governmental effort to exert control over HEIs. To assure quality in HEIs in this situation, the government establishes strict rules and/or standards, and HEIs are subject to penalties for violating them. The regulation of state colleges in the US is an illustration of this concept.

2.3.7.1.2 Self-regulation model

Universities have historically defended their identity as ivory towers, a valued sense of academic autonomy, and their role in the creation and transmission of information. Universities are distinctive as institutions because of the unique nature of their role, which entails producing and disseminating knowledge to enhance human learning and educate students. All HEIs place a strong emphasis on the act of inquiry. Its realisation requires the intellectual community concerned to be granted the requisite level of autonomy, independence, and social responsibility (Zhang et al., 2022).

HEIs have autonomy under the self-regulation model. The degree programmes they provide are created by them, as is the curriculum. It is believed that because HEIs are managed by experts, they will act in a morally responsible manner. These autonomous institutions are referred to as stakeholder universities, claims Bylieva et al. (2021). Identifying and building partnerships with strategic partners such as funding organisations, the government, industry, research councils, foundations, charitable organisations and professional bodies is the responsibility of a stakeholder university. In contrast to buffered universities, Wild and Grassinger (2023) refer to this kind of institution as socially rooted. In the increasingly erratic and unpredictable global economy, such colleges must be well-connected. In reality, institutions intentionally choose to be networked to thrive in a climate where government support is continuously declining. To determine which are the most important and how much weight the institution should give to each contact, "relationships with professional bodies, employers and employers' organisations will have to be mapped." (Zimmerman, 2023).

It is essential to note that a university will be required to respond to more external constituencies as it progresses toward becoming a stakeholder institution. Since the institution must consider the interests of multiple stakeholders when making strategic decisions, the nature of this responsibility is multifaceted (Omarchevska et al., 2022).

2.3.7.1.3 Market regulation model

Within the Market Regulation Model, there is a connection among market competitiveness and educational institutions. Students make educative decisions as a result of market competition for HE. While the poorest HEIs fail, the finest ones succeed. According to Fernandes and Singh (2022), market-related values promote informal corporate leadership approaches, the commercialisation of education, institutional efficiency and revenue

maximisation, all of which are thought to be caused by strong rivalry between individual owned and public HE educators. The needs of the labour market are used to frame standards of excellence and quality concerns from a commercial viewpoint. Institutions compete with one another for patronage, attempt to enrol as many students as possible, provide diverse academic programmes on both part and full-time courses, and seek to accomplish more with limited resources. All of these procedures have an immediate impact on the delivery of institutional quality.

Market ideologies promote commercial interests that prioritise profits over people, as emphasised by Karam et al. (2021), and they favour corporate management techniques that place a heavy emphasis on managers making decisions rather than academics. Market philosophies support legislation that liberalises and deregulates national markets to increase economic efficiency. Javed and Alenezi (2023) argue that the market's reliance on sensory equipment that detects money and profits leads to a failure to protect the needs of individuals without financial means during this process. The market discussion influences an instrumental perspective on QA in HEIs, as universities are increasingly being conducted more and more like business companies. This strategy, according to Fafunwa and Aisiku (2022), starts with the institution's mission and then defines the tasks that must be performed to carry it out, along with the goals for each function. The quality of the programmes is then ensured through the introduction of a QA system.

While working to attain organisational aims and objectives is acceptable, Mbati and Beauty (2024) argue that this popular strategy is too mechanical to be useful in an organisation focused on teaching. The pursuit of such goals and objectives is conducted in a materialistic manner that compromises an institution's fundamental epistemic ideals. Additionally, by employing such an instrumental approach, an institution's QA efforts strive to fulfil the previously stated purposes and objectives of the institution, which pursues a rather narrow perspective of QA. It is essential to recall that academic departments at universities are now often viewed as profit centres, a consequence of the infiltration of market ideology into HE. Their ability to raise funds for the institution is a key factor in determining their success. This practice affects the types of degrees academic institutions run and the number of students they decide to enrol, aiming to reach specific financial goals. Institutions thus become more focused on numbers than quality in their programme offerings. Academic ideals, not an economic justification, should be the primary motivator for reforms and quality.

Garwe's (2021) observation is consistent with Dwangu and Mahlangu's (2021) classic triangle of coordination, that proposes three main mechanisms for modifying or controlling behaviour in academic institutions: professional self-regulation (also known as "the academic oligarchy"), state regulation, and market forces. To establish how HEIs are steered and the significance of all force in directing these systems, Lipman's (2023) model is employed. In concurring with Ussif et al., (2020), Ngoc et al. (2023) recognised that the government, the academia and the society are the main variables impacting the value in HE.

2.3.7.2 External and internal quality assurance

2.3.7.2.1 Internal (institutional) QA

Between "internal" and "external" QA is one distinction that has to be taken into account. Studies on quality assurance in HE, according to Yuzkiv et al. (2022), have primarily focused on internal and external evaluation, two distinct yet interconnected topics. Asiyai (2022) noted that QA systems can be categorised as externally regulated (regulated by an external body), self-controlling (controlled by the institution or supplier of the learning programme), or a combination of the two. Internally driven QA for self-improvement, according to Mhlanga (2008), is characterised by self-enlightening evaluation, is grounded in professionalism, adopts the institutional interface of an institution, and supports its programmes mostly on integrity. QA of this kind must prioritise ... a transformative approach to quality (Pujiarti et al., 2023). Internal quality control focuses on the policies and procedures created by a facility to ensure the calibre of the education it offers. The procedures are essentially created and run by the institution itself, while such systems may be a response to law or outside influences. Internal quality control aims to enhance institutions and assess internal accountability. It encompasses all institutional activities that prioritise quality control and growth across all areas of the institution's operations. Weiss et al. (2021) observed that internal QA primarily focuses on academic concerns, involving the collection of information or data on the usefulness of activities, the value of those activities, and methods for ensuring quality within the institution.

Pramana et al. (2021) uses the words "QA" to refer to internal quality control and defines it as a wide perception that includes all institutional dimensions of the curriculum and courses that aid in quality academic excellence. They added that when anything is claimed to be "quality assured," it is presumed that it has passed a pertinent measure or assessment that is detailed in the institution's system of quality assurance. The benchmark or assessment may be

checked with outside standards established by an expert group, an external quality assurance organisation, or by law. Self-assessment significantly improves the quality of college services offered to students, according to Wild and Grassinger's (2023) study, and it also supports many management activities, including evaluation.

2.3.7.2.2 External quality assurance (EQA)

When it comes to the rules that institutions must adhere to, which are frequently necessary and not mandatory, QA policies that are rooted in management and upward accountability norms serve as the foundation for externally driven QA (Adusei, 2025). Institutions evaluate quality based on its value for the money and suitability for the intended use. Performance standards are set from the same standpoint as performance metrics. The term "external quality assurance" refers to the procedures established and conducted by a third-party institution, often mandated by law, to evaluate the quality of education provided by HEIs. Accountability is the main goal of these external standards. Internationally, EQA in HE has seen significant changes during the past 20 years (Mensah, 2022; Zoogah, 2021). Since external monitoring has been a long-standing practice in Western and industrialised nations, these nations often have extensive experience with EQA systems. According to recent research, developing countries have achieved varying degrees of success and experience in implementing EQA procedures adapted from developed countries (Fernandes & Singh, 2022; Pramana et al., 2021).

2.3.7.2.3 Advantages of EQA system

One may argue that external validation provides many benefits. First, according to Helda and Syahrani (2022), it enables institutions to achieve their own goals and offers a guarantee of excellence. Most of the time, institutions need to respond to questions while also adhering to the standard operating procedures of external organisations. As a consequence, the institution prepares a self-study that helps to raise the calibre of the institution. The evaluation of an institution's educational offerings by independent specialists helps the nation's tertiary educational system's position and reputation abroad (Camilleri, 2021). Second, it ensures that resources from taxpayers, businesses and students are allocated to support organisations and programmes that meet minimum quality standards. According to Kandiko Howson and Kingsbury (2023), systematic and comprehensive QA helps build a reputation for an organisation and improves its appearance. It comprises stated benchmarks for success, documented processes and established mechanisms for unambiguous accountability for

results. Greater public trust, happier kids, effective procedures and confident staff are probably the outcomes. Higher-quality education, study materials and interactions between students and the institution's employees are more likely to result in improved learning outcomes.

2.3.7.2.4 Disadvantages of EQA

The acceptance of QA among academics varies (Tolmachev et al., 2021). According to departmental research on the effects of QA methods, academics exhibit a variety of behaviours in response to what they recognise as performance-based change motivated by the standard-based plan (Duarte & Vardasca, 2023; Hafeez et al., 2022). In a study done by Newton (2002), who researched to ascertain scholars' attitudes regarding the implementation of QA in the UK indicated that, scholars do view quality as "intrusion, inspection and as conformist behaviour."

Numerous academics have challenged the current external evaluation schemes. While Worthington and Hodgson, as cited in Garwe (2021), contended that quality assurance's ostensible goal was to "improve service provision but in reality, it is a subtle form of "panoptic" power, control, and surveillance over the academic labour process" (p. 2?). Mgaiwa (2021) claimed that accreditation is primarily about the transfer of authority from the scholars to the directors of an educational institution. In support of this claim, Aburizaizah (2022) noted that the fundamental result of bureaucratically structured external evaluation systems is the power they exert over academics. The top-down management styles prevalent in HE demonstrates this control. By actively including every member of the staff within the organisational framework, QA aims to increase the quality of programmes.

According to (Asiyai, 2022; Ferdousi et al., 2022; Javed & Alenezi, 2023), regular quality audits have fostered an ethos of adherence and uniformity to the regulatory standards of EQAAs. However, there has only been a limited effect on progress and positive change at the level of instruction. Additionally, the EQA process is often quite expensive for both institutions and outside organisations, and as a result, tertiary institutions have had to incur additional expenses to meet the EQA standards (Zoogah, 2021). Costs associated with substantial sections of resources being devoted to QA procedures have been displaced as a result; this has occurred at a time when institutional financing has decreased. According to Lathifah et al. (2022), implementing QA practices and procedures in any firm is a difficult task. Although it may be simple to plan and record quality activities and concepts, implementing them can be a challenging task. The World Declaration on HE (UNESCO, 2019) states that external review and internal self-evaluation, carried out overtly by

independent professionals, if possible, with global specialists, are essential for improving standards.

2.3.8 Approaches of Quality Assurance

According to Mohzana et al. (2024), at least four streams of activity can be identified as current techniques for ensuring quality at colleges and universities. Several methods have been employed to introduce quality management in HEIs. According to Jarrell and Kirby (2024), a generic model exists that illustrates how many national systems employ similar strategies. There is no single model of QA, but several components are shared by all different approaches to QA (Elken & Stensaker, 2023). A variety of techniques for QA have been developed in HE, encompassing numerous methodologies (Livingston, 2023). These include general approaches to QA, including quality assessment, quality control, quality audit, accreditation, ISO, benchmarking and TQM, as well as more focused tactics or strategies like field visits, self-evaluation, colleague review, third-party examination and learner evaluation of instruction.

2.3.8.1 Quality audit

According to the Australian Universities Quality Agency [AUQA] (2005, p. 1), a quality audit is a "systematic and independent examination to determine whether activities and related results comply with planned arrangements and whether these arrangements are effectively implemented and suitable to achieve the objectives." To ensure they are thorough enough to serve their intended purposes, the process entails systematically reviewing an institution's QA procedures. In short, it is a check to determine if the organisation is suitable for the declared objectives. A quality audit is therefore an effort to ensure that an organisation meets its own goals (Zipfel et al., 2023). It assesses how effectively the organisation is pursuing its own implicit and explicit goals. Similarly, according to Haddade et al. (2024), the primary goal of most quality audit procedures is to encourage organisations to engage in self-evaluation and improvement. This is because it is believed that a high-quality organisation can self-evaluate its strengths and flaws and take appropriate remedial action. This is so that there are no external criteria established by the audit to compare the organisation against. Its conclusion does not entail a fail-or- pass judgement, but rather a review of an organisation against its standards and goals.

2.3.8.2 Accreditation

Combining the concepts of external standards and peer review, Emmanuelle (2023) asserts that accreditation and programme evaluations personify the more conventional techniques. A programme or institution is generally accredited to determine whether it meets the requirements set out by the accrediting authority. Accreditation is defined as a process of evaluation and appraisal that permits a HE programme or institution to be standard or qualified as complying with standards, according to Magd and Kunjumuhammed (2021).

Additionally, accreditation serves as a tool to ensure and enhance the quality of HE by supporting institutions and programmes through the adoption of a set of criteria established by peers, according to the Council for Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA, 2010). This indicates that a university or set of academic courses that has fulfilled an accreditation evaluation has the educational, learner services and other institutional support required to help students meet their learning objectives. According to Garwe et al. (2024), accreditation is a mechanism for recognising educational institutions that fulfil performance, integrity and quality requirements. Accreditation is a status and a procedure, according to the American Psychological Association (APA, 2014). Accreditation serves as a status that informs the public that a programme or institution meets the quality requirements set forth by an accrediting body. Accreditation is a process that demonstrates an institution or programme's recognition by the accrediting agency. To achieve this recognition, an institution or programme must be dedicated to self-study and external peer review, not only meeting standards but also continually seeking ways to improve the quality of education and training offered.

Two forms of accreditation are mentioned by the Maryland HE Commission (2011): institutional accreditation and specialised or programming accreditation. A whole college is accredited if it has institutional accreditation. This enhances the college's overall reputation. Nguyen et al. (2021), support this idea, noting that accreditation is specific to an institution and not transferable, lend credence to this. Certain specialised professional programmes may be accredited separately from their parent school through specialised and programmatic accreditation. According to approved criteria, each authorised school is allowed to provide only those programmes that have been accredited (GTEC, 2023). The guarantee that the overall features of the institution have been assessed and deemed satisfactory is provided by the emphasis on institutional accreditation. The assurance that the elements of a specific

programme fulfil the requirements for external certification is also provided by the emphasis on specialised accreditation.

The goal of accreditation, according to Duarte and Vardasca (2023), is to ensure the quality of a facility and its programmes and to facilitate ongoing improvement. According to Aldoseri and Sharadgah (2021), certification should help increase accountability and transparency, allowing public or private spending to be justified. As a result, certification increases public trust that HEIs are providing products of a high grade. This is underscored by CHEA (2010), that society recognises certification of programmes that are committed to specified requirements aimed at enhancing the quality of the organisation and its career-oriented programmes and that the institutions successfully execute them. This specifies that the stakeholders will place their trust in an organisation that can provide results. In other words, a postsecondary institution's accreditation is an indication of its success. For instance, Ghana's national government establishes accreditation systems, which are then regulated by the NAB and held to minimal standards. Institutions and the academic programmes they offer are accredited by NAB. Owners of tertiary institutions are granted institutional accreditation when they meet the requirements, have built the necessary resources, and are deemed prepared to offer recognised programmes.

Emmanuelle (2023) posits that an institution's accreditation hinges on a thorough assessment of its mission, governance structure, administrative efficacy, physical infrastructure, and financial standing. An evaluation is typically conducted to ascertain an institution's compliance with the stipulated minimum standards. This process facilitates a comprehensive appraisal of the overall teaching and learning environment.

2.3.9 Total Quality Management (TQM) Philosophy

This method of quality control in HE remained the first, created for businesses, particularly those in the industrial sector. TQM places a strong emphasis on continuous improvement and systems analysis. It was developed based on the groundbreaking work of Deming (1986). Customer satisfaction is a concept that TQM also places a strong emphasis on, in addition to continuous improvement (Kigozi & Ko, 2019).

TQM, according to Van Kemenade et al. (2020), is a strategy for enhancing a company's overall efficiency and adaptability. It is essentially a method of setting up and integrating the entire business, encompassing every department, activity and individual at every level. To

fulfil the demands of the customers and the organisational goals, TQM is a comprehensive strategy that aims to integrate all areas of the business. To address the requirements of consumers, it needs the active engagement of all employees within an organisation. Nogueiro et al. (2023) in his/her study described TQM as a "philosophy by which management systems can direct the efficient achievement of the objectives of the organisations to ensure customer satisfaction and maximise stakeholder value"

As demonstrated by Dale et al. (2016) and illustrated in Figure 2.1, the history of quality management evolved through four stages of progression, highlighting that quality control is a subset of QA, which in turn is a component of total quality management. To guarantee that the institution continually meets or exceeds customer needs, TQM is an operational framework and a collection of collaborative domains that are organised and controlled (Rahman & Nasrin, 2024). Yahiaoui et al. (2022) describe TQM as a system of organisational values and philosophies focused on attaining quality and meeting or exceeding the expectations of internal and external stakeholders in higher education.

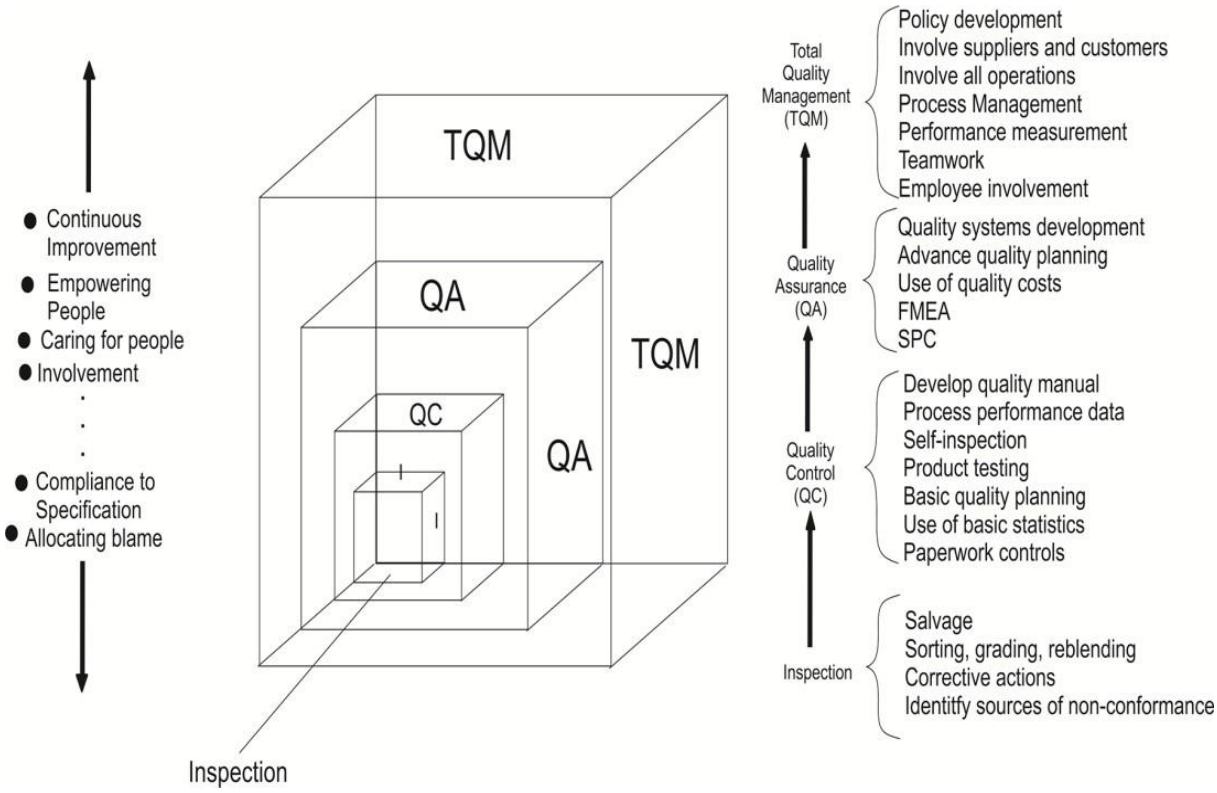

Figure 2.1: The Four Levels in the Evolution of TQM

Source (Dale et al., 2016)

Feigenbaum (1983), who is acknowledged for coining the term, specify that the TQM model has influence on an institution's overall quality system and to maintain consistent improvement in the supply of commodities that meet customer satisfaction. TQM can be viewed as the process of aligning all functions, tasks, and procedures within an organisation (Idan, 2023). To ensure complete customer satisfaction, TQM encompasses the practice of quality measures throughout the entire procedure and all controlling activities. TQM focuses on ensuring quality in all facets of organisational operations. Doing things correctly the first time, pursuing continuous improvement, meeting customer expectations, and ensuring that every employee takes quality seriously are more crucial (Texeira-Quiros et al., 2022).

TQM definitions have been discussed above; however, numerous additional definitions have been proposed by researchers, all of which emphasise customer satisfaction and continual improvement. In particular, Liu et al. (2023) distinguished TQM as an inclusive style for achieving operational excellence by integrating planning, organising, activity evaluation and collective participation at each level and focusing on prevention rather than inspection, TQM addresses the need for management to embrace a strategic perspective on quality.

TQM is a holistic and unified approach to directing an organisation to enable it to continuously satisfy customer demands and achieve continuous improvement in all areas of its operations (Al-zoubi et al., 2022). TQM is a continuous improvement process for people, groups, and entire businesses (Maganga & Taifa, 2023). TQM differs from other management methodologies in that it places a strong emphasis on ongoing improvement. To meet or exceed customer expectations, Kanan et al. (2023) defined TQM as an integrated approach that focuses on safeguarding and enhancing processes while ensuring defect prevention at all stages and in all aspects of the organisation. According to Freeman et al. (2021), TQM is a shared engagement for all individuals in an institution and relates to processes to deliver quality services that satisfy and are likely to surpass the demands and expectations of their numerous clients.

According to Arthur and Kuranchie (2022), the constant development of abilities, collaborations, procedures, quality of goods and standards of service is a key component of TQM's commitment to fostering an organisational culture. Continuous quality and knowledge of the organisational environment are stressed in Kreitner's concept. Makhanya et al. (2023) define TQM as an organisational effort to improve structures, infrastructure, behaviours, and methods to consistently enhance quality and competitiveness in meeting customer needs.

Finally, Nogueiro et al. (2023) restated that total quality management is a collection of organisational practices intended to instil best practices throughout the organisation and guarantee that customer needs are consistently achieved or exceeded.

TQM is viewed as a theory and a collection of operational standards for managing an organisation in the study of literature on quality (González Bravo et al., 2022). In this context, TQM's tools, processes, ideas, and principles have been highlighted as two crucial components (Bruce-Twum, 2023). The "hard side" of TQM refers to the tools and procedures, while the "soft side" refers to the concepts. The term "TQM" first emerged in the 1980s, when it was recommended to use the word "management" instead of the word "control" that Feigenbaum had used in the 1950s, as it was thought that quality was something that should be managed rather than controlled. To ensure complete client satisfaction, it refers to the integration of quality practices and procedures to the entire process and all management activities.

According to Esseh et al. (2024), it is challenging to come up with a one definition for TQM; instead, it is preferable to present the guiding principles for TQM operations. TQM has various meanings, but what is important is that top management applies the core ideas in a way that is acceptable for the context of a given organisation. TQM can be summarised in this research as a management approach for an organisation that prioritises the needs of its clients and engages all staff members in ongoing development. Every employee of a company or organisation takes part in a TQM effort to enhance their workplace's procedures, services and culture. To incorporate the quality discipline into institutional culture and operations, it utilises strategy, data and effective communication. Customer-focusedness is one of TQM's key goals, and it is increasingly recognised as a process for aligning everyone in an organisation around ongoing development (Van Kemenade et al., 2020). TQM also aims to increase employee morale and productivity. It is crucial to understand what TQM is and how it can be applied to HE.

TQM is made up of three words, according to Rohrbasser et al. (2020). "Total" denotes that all parties, including consumers, are participating. Every department, activity and individual at every level of the organisation is involved. By highlighting each person's participation in the organisation, Ülker (2023) also sees "total" in the concept. TQM is a comprehensive approach that acknowledges that every member of the organisation plays a role in some way to the final deliverables provided to the customer. While "management" suggests that senior executives are dedicated, the term "quality" also implies that the exact needs of the client are satisfied (Saaid, 2020).

Top management is thought to have ultimate accountability for quality. The quality development procedure must start with management's involvement to quality, as managers construct the organistional mechanisms that define how goods and services are created and produced. The efficiency of staff work is seen to be directly related to the standard of the systems that managers design (Tagaram & Chen, 2024). Deming's idea of transformational quality management was given the moniker TQM, which is one quality framework that can be characterised as a comprehensive organisational framework (Sesay, 2024).

According to the philosophical explanation provided by Al-Zoubi et al. (2023), TQM comprises three key components, as indicated in Figure 2.1, which lend the acronym TQM a more significant meaning.

2.3.10 International Organisation for Standardisation (ISO)

International quality management standards and recommendations are contained in ISO 9000. ISO are the international quality benchmarks that firms must adhere to guarantee customer satisfaction through their product. According to Marsden and Shahtout (2024), ISO 9001:2000 offers guidance for organisations aiming to develop their quality management systems. The primary objective is to facilitate the optimisation of operational procedures, so allowing companies to produce superior services or products.

The current educational system follows ISO 9000 standards. Abdelaziz (2024) and Hillberry et al. (2025) suggest that the growing focus on quality assurance (QA) is partly due to efforts to implement the ISO 9000 quality management system in schools. This approach aims to improve adherence to established standards for course design, teaching methods, and meeting student needs. Therefore, the adoption of ISO 9000 could be seen as having some benefits for education. Hien and Vu (2023) posit that a key benefit lies in the cultural transformations within an organisation, alongside shifts in employee perspectives on business principles, thereby fostering heightened awareness of quality-related issues. This, in turn, is expected to cultivate a more pronounced focus on client requirements. Furthermore, Panthee (2022) highlights another advantage: the encouragement of educational institutions to embrace a more systematic methodology in their administrative processes, facilitated by ISO standards.

2.3.11 Specific Strategies Used in Higher Education for Ensuring Quality

2.3.11.1 Self-assessment and self-reviews

Self-assessment develops beyond certification, which only makes binary assessments, and involves an evaluation that yields graded judgements regarding excellence in this respect (Akour & Alenezi, 2022). According to Sillat et al. (2021), procedures for self-assessment or self-review were developed by American accreditation organisations. These procedures are the institution's in-house evaluation and operations to produce a self-evaluated report before the start of the third-party assessment.

Self-assessment/appraisal is a continuous procedure used by HEIs to assess their strength, determine their weakness and other areas for development, and gradually implement the required changes (Alt & Raichel, 2022). It should have a distinct emphasis, giving top priority to areas the institution believes are essential for achieving superior educational outcomes. According to Mensah (2022), proper management practice requires that all organisations have suitable institutional evaluation and development framework plans in place, and that submitting them to a third- party provides valuable control for organisations to keep their plans current. The staff members who must address quality concerns are given control over the assessment process through self-evaluation, which also strengthens their dedication to quality improvement when flaws are identified. Nieminen's (2024) study supported the idea that faculty members are more likely to become motivated to support the department's growth when they are actively participating in assessment. Self-studies are cost-effective, internally driven, and promote staff ownership, increasing the likelihood that recommended improvements will be implemented.

2.3.11.2 Peer review

Peer evaluation by colleagues or outside specialists in HE is not a recent development. It is an academic procedure that has been in use for some time, particularly in the field of research. The choice of panel members for the review is a crucial factor to consider before initiating a peer review, ensuring the authenticity of the process. On the one hand, the fact that peers are considered "colleagues" raises doubts about the credibility of the review process to individuals outside of HE, according to Ruben et al. (2022). Peers are "competitors," on the other hand, which diminishes the validity of the evaluation process in HE. If external reviewers are aware of and respectful of the institution's principles and procedures, peer review, combined with

self-study, as noted by Jaafar et al. (2024), will be a highly effective quality management technique. Additionally, it is essential to inform the panel members that their primary responsibility during the review process is to support the institution being assessed in its efforts to further enhance its internal procedures.

2.3.11.3 The site visit

An institution's operations and procedures are evaluated for quality and value through a periodic process of external evaluation and review conducted by a QA agency. A site-visit team, according to Moore (2022), often consists of individuals from various professions and associations who are systematically evaluated and carefully selected based on the context and character at both the institutional and programme level. The mission of the team visiting is to assess the programme and the institution taking into consideration the goals and offer recommendations informed by its own expertise and outside perception on the extent to which criteria are satisfied.

In general, reviews of institutions are conducted periodically, such as every five years. However, accrediting bodies have the authority to examine any of their member institutions' programmes at any time, especially if they have reason to believe that the institution in question is not meeting the minimum requirements. This authority is enacted in the NAB Act 2010 (LI. 1984), which, mandates them to visit any institution at least once every five years. This is also the situation in Ghana. NAB also maintains the right to examine any significant changes, such as the extension of off-campus options or a move from undergraduate to graduate programmes. This is how accrediting organisations continuously supervise their member institutions and programmes accountable to the public and their broad stakeholders.

2.3.11.4 External examiners

Duarte and Vardasca (2023) assert that external assessment frameworks are still in trend and are recognised as an effective way to ensure the quality of education provided. External examination systems are not a new approach to QA in HE; they have been well-established for a long time (Asiyai, 2022). Reimann et al. (2024) claim that the two primary goals of external examiner systems, namely, to "ensure that degrees awarded by different institutions are comparable concerning (national) academic standards and treat students fairly by ensuring a certain distance between teachers and those who assess their achievements" (p. 3), justify

their continued use. They additionally contend that these may not be the only justifications for the use of third-party examination systems.

2.4 CHAPTER SUMMARY

The section begins with an examination of local literature on HE, QA, and the development of private universities in Ghana. It provides insight into the specific challenges and dynamics within the Ghanaian HE landscape. The section also introduces the theoretical framework chosen to underpin the study, which is the TQM. It elaborates on the significance of TQM principles in the context of QA in HE. A historical overview of development of HE in Ghana is presented. This historical context sets the stage for understanding the evolution and current state of private universities within the Ghanaian education system. This section examines the emergence of private universities in Ghana, shedding light on the factors that have contributed to their growth and significance in the HE landscape. The chapter examines the distinctive characteristics of private university colleges in Ghana, highlighting aspects that distinguish them from public institutions. A broader perspective is provided by discussing QA agencies in African HE, offering insights into regional and continental efforts to ensure educational quality. Focusing specifically on Ghana, this section examines the role and functions of QA agencies, with an emphasis on the Ghana Tertiary Education Commission (GTEC). The concept of QA is defined and elaborated upon, establishing a clear understanding of its significance in HE. The distinction between the terms "quality" and "QA" is explored, highlighting the multifaceted nature of quality in HE. The chapter concludes with an overview of various QA models used in HE globally, providing a framework for understanding the strategies and approaches employed to ensure educational quality. The literature review sets the stage for the subsequent chapters, aligning the study within the context of Ghana's HE system, QA mechanisms and the theoretical underpinning of TQM. It provides a comprehensive understanding of the research landscape and prepares the reader for the empirical investigation that follows. In the subsequent chapter, international perspectives on QA practices in HE is assessed, including the perception of the roles of QA, conformance to QA requirements as well as the challenges of QA in HEIs.

CHAPTER 3

QUALITY ASSURANCE PRACTICES IN HIGHER EDUCATION: AN INTERNATIONAL PERSPECTIVE

3.1 INTRODUCTION

In the previous chapter both internal and external practices and QA mechanisms used by higher educational institutions in Ghana to enhance teaching and learning was reviewed. Similarly, a theoretical framework underpinning the study was presented. This chapter examines scholarly literature and international (global) perspectives on QA in HE, including the roles of QA, conformance to its requirements and the challenges related to QA in HEIs. The review explores the principles for effective implementation of QA in HEIs. It explores the established principles that underpin effective QA processes in HEIs. Additionally, the strand examines standard QA in higher education with a focus on clarity and coherence as major principles that enhance higher-QA in HEIs.

The review further highlights the standard EQA practices in HE and presents the associated procedures related to EQA. Additionally, the review analyses and conceptualises the views of previous studies and other researchers on quality management approaches employed at Jyväskylä University of Applied Sciences (JAMK) in relation to teaching staff. Specifically, it explores and analyses the following QA processes along with their intended and unintended negative effects: (1) the Finnish quality system audit, (2) international programme accreditation, particularly EUR-ACE, (3) internal cross-evaluation of degree programmes, and (4) the student feedback system. The review further explores the perspective of students across diverse schools and countries. Finally, they explored the challenges that bedevil QA in HEIs and the impact of QA on HEIs and a chapter summary that summarises the review and the void the study seeks to fill.

3.2 QUALITY ASSURANCE PRACTICES IN HIGHER EDUCATION

In higher education landscape, quality assurance practices play a pivotal role in ensuring universities meet national standards and foster academic excellence. In this section, principles for effective implementation of QA in HEIs are discussed.

3.2.1 Principles for Effective Implementation of QA in HEIs

Quality assurance in HE relies on established principles for its effective implementation

and cannot function independently (Beerkens, 2018). HEIs, given their diverse nature, may adopt their own set of principles to facilitate QA mechanisms. However, Frazer (1994) has proposed four QA principles, mentioned below, that HEIs should consider. Frazer's extensive experience in enhancing quality in HE across 25 countries, in collaboration with organisations such as the British Council, World Bank, Council of Europe, Dutch Validation Council, European Centre for HE, European University Association, and OECD (Hellenic American Union, 2005), has solidified his reputation as a key figure in establishing the INQAAHE (Hellenic American Union, 2005). The principles proposed by Frazer encompass the following aspects:

1. Each member within the organisation bears the responsibility for upholding the quality of the product or service, ensuring that substandard items are rejected at source, preventing them from reaching quality controllers.
2. Each member within the organisation shares the responsibility for enhancing the quality of the product or service.
3. Each member within the organisation comprehends, utilises and takes ownership of the existing systems that facilitate the maintenance and improvement of quality.
4. Management (and occasionally the customer or client) regularly evaluates the validity and reliability of the quality-checking systems.

Adherence to these principles is crucial for the effective implementation of QA in HE, ensuring continuous enhancement of educational standards. These principles of QA in HE transforms the institution into a self-reflective community comprising teachers, students, senior managers and support staff, all of whom actively participate in and strive for continuous improvement (Kayyali, 2023). Despite numerous advancements in the field, Frazer initially proposed these principles; they remain relevant in the context of HE. Institutions such as the Irish HE Quality Network (IHENQ) (2005), established in 2003, have redefined and expanded upon these principles. Furthermore, they align with the current emphasis on QA as a cultural aspect rather than a one-time event, as advocated by Vettori (2023). In this perspective, quality is integrated into institutional practices, becoming the responsibility of everyone involved and contributing to the success of QA efforts (Williams & Harvey, 2015).

3.2.2 Standard Quality Assurance in Higher Education

High-QA is characterised by clarity and coherence, and it significantly enhances the practices of HEIs (Baporikar & Sony, 2019). While HEIs and QA agencies are encouraged to identify

and share their own effective QA practices, established organisations such as the European Association for QA in HE (ENQA) and the INQAAHE (Lemaitre & Karakhanyan, 2020) have developed standardised QA practices that can serve as models for Ghanaian HEIs and the NAB (Ghana's EQA agency). This study focused on ENQA's good practices for HEIs and QA agencies, which were discussed in the following sections.

Standard QA practices have been developed by the European Association for QA in HE (ENQA). The first practice proposed by ENQA pertains to establishing policies and procedures for QA (Gibbs et al., 2017). It recommends that HEIs have clear policies and associated procedures in place to ensure the quality and standards of their programmes and certifications. Furthermore, they should actively foster a culture that recognises the significance of quality and QA.

The second practice focuses on the authorisation, examining, and performance review of university courses and certifications (ENQA, 2009). HEIs are expected to have formal mechanisms to authorise, periodically review performance and monitor their courses and certifications. ENQA's (2009) third practice focuses on the assessment of students. Students should be evaluated using published criteria, regulations and procedures. For instance, students should receive clear information about assessment strategies, examinations and other assessment methods.

The ENQA (2009) also emphasises QA of teaching staff. HEIs should employ qualified and experienced staff, ensuring that they meet minimum competency levels. Institutions should also ensure that the resources available for supporting student learning are sufficient and appropriate for each programme offered.

The ENQA's practice relating to information systems emphasises the importance of collecting, analysing, and utilising relevant information for effective programme management (ENQA, 2009).

Finally, ENQA underscores the significance of public information (ENQA, 2009). HEIs are encouraged to regularly publish up-to-date, unbiased and objective information about the programmes and certifications they offer.

3.2.3 Standard External Quality Assurance in Higher Education

The ENQA (2009) presents practices related to EQA. The incorporation of internal quality assurance procedures into EQA is advocated (ENQA, 2009). When conducting EQA activities, the effectiveness of an institution's internal QA should be taken into consideration. Evaluating an institution's internal policies and procedures is crucial for determining compliance with established standards.

ENQA recommends that the aims and objectives of quality assurance procedures should be established prior to the development of the processes themselves, involving all relevant parties, including HEIs. These aims and objectives should be published along with a description of the procedures to be employed (ENQA, 2009). Formal decisions resulting from EQA activities should be based on explicit published criteria that are consistently applied.

It is crucial that QA processes are fit for purpose (ENQA, 2009). Each EQA process should be specifically designed to achieve its intended aims and objectives. Reports should be published in a clear and easily accessible format. Decisions, commendations or recommendations within the reports should be readily identifiable. Moreover, QA processes that include recommendations or require subsequent action plans should have predetermined follow-up procedures that are consistently implemented.

Lastly, the EQA of institutions and/or programmes should be conducted in a cyclical manner. The duration of the cycle and the review procedures to be employed should be clearly defined and published in advance.

3.3 CONCEPTUALISATION OF QUALITY ASSURANCE

The conceptualisation of QA in tertiary education encompasses diverse perspectives and frameworks, shaping how institutions define, implement, and evaluate quality standards. Understanding the conceptual underpinnings of quality assurance is crucial for effective implementation in higher education institutions.

3.3.1 The View from Jyväskylä University of Applied Sciences, Finland

This portion examines quality management approaches employed at Jyväskylä University of Applied Sciences (JAMK) in relation to teaching staff. Specifically, it explores and analyses the following QA processes along with their intended and unintended negative effects: (1)

international programme accreditation, particularly EUR-ACE, (2) the Finnish quality system audit; (3) internal cross-evaluation of degree programmes, and (4) the feedback system from student.

3.3.1.1 The Finnish QA system

According to Finnish legislation, HEIs have a legal obligation to conduct external evaluation regularly of their quality systems (Ali & Hermansyah, 2024). The general QA process relies on comprehensive audits of quality systems. These audits focus on the processes and procedures employed by HEIs to uphold, improve and augment the standard of their education and supplementary undertakings. Typically, these reviews are carried out by the Finnish Education Evaluation Centre (FINEEC), previously known as the Finnish HE Evaluation Council (FINHEEC). (Zaskaleta, 2020). However, Finnish HEIs also have the option to request audits from recognised audit organisations abroad. FINEEC serves as an independent expert body, supporting the Ministry of Education and Culture and HEIs in matters related to impact assessment. Also, it is an associate member of ENQA and has been included in the European QA Record in support of HE (López et al., 2022).

3.3.1.2 Quality system audit

FINEEC completed a review of JAMK and conferred it a valid quality label for a period of six years, commencing on March 27, 2013. JAMK's quality system meets the state standards for quality management of HEIs and aligns with the European principles and proposals for QA in third-level education. The review of JAMK was the initial global review carried out in English during the subsequent round of checks in Finland.

Based on the perspective of the HEI staff, there is often a perception that the primary objective of the compliance systems review is to determine whether the entire organisation meets the standard "national/global quality criteria" prepare for the institution's operations (Kooli, 2019). Positive audit results provide the institution with the "permission" to continue its work, signifying that the overall quality meets the standard level (Kooli & Abadli, 2022). The audit outcomes can be utilised by staff in aspects such as marketing programmes and services and scientific research funding applications. It allows the employees to evaluate their university with counterparts, despite the fact that the audit results are not quantifiable but rather qualitative benchmarks.

In HEIs independent quality assurance systems audits involve the mainstream personnel. The auditing process, along with the necessary preparations, requires staff members to familiarise themselves, at least to some extent, with the institution's QA structure. The audit process and its preparation are typically transparent and personnel are enlightened about the ongoing activities (Kumar, 2017; Polyakova et al., 2020). The significance of quality work is emphasised, leading to increased knowledge and dialogues about quality and its role in the operations of the institution (Kooli & Abadli, 2022). In the best cases, an external quality systems audit process can foster a sense of unity within the organisation, as it highlights shared interests, objectives, and standards (Kobets et al., 2021).

From a different perspective, staff members sometimes view the quality systems audit as a necessary but undesirable task, participating due to a lack of choice, without perceiving concrete benefits at the individual academic staff level. Preparing for the review often compels significant effort, and employees may evaluate the cost-benefit ratio associated with the quality audits (Biju & Nair, 2017; Che et al., 2020). The information provided about the audit results may also be limited at the employees' level, which can contribute to hostile sentiments about the process. Frequently, quality procedures developed to catch up with external standards may result in bureaucratic processes and fail to provide relevant information at the grassroots level.

3.3.1.3 International programme accreditation

The main requirement for ensuring quality in HE rests with each individual HEI. In Finland, quality system audits have been utilised to ensure that institutions take on their rightful responsibility and have suitable procedures in place to guarantee the quality of each degree programme. (Alkhateeb et al., 2018) To date, accreditations of programme have not been included in the Finnish QA toolkit. Not long ago has FINEEC initiated reviews for voluntary engineering programme. FINEEC is accredited to grant the EUR-ACE (European Accredited Engineer) label to engineering degrees that successfully attain compliance in their reviews on engineering programme (Suomela et al., 2022). JAMK's two engineering programmes, namely the Degree Programme in Mechanical Engineering and Logistics Engineering and have been awarded the EUR-ACE label (Schintke et al., 2021). The impact appraisal conducted in the IMPALA project mentioned earlier is linked to the certification procedure of the Degree Programme in Mechanical Engineering. One among the numerous significant advantages of accreditation programme is its international validation. This acknowledgement can be leveraged on in global positioning of the programme and in global collaborations, such as

double-degree partnerships with international HEIs. Additionally, since international programme accreditations are relatively new in Finland, particularly in the field of technology, with only a few accredited programmes, internationally accredited programmes possess a distinct feature that sets them apart from other Finnish programmes (Zaskaleta, 2020). From an internal perspective within HEIs, it appears that accreditation requirements sharpen the development and implementation of programme curricula, particularly in the following areas:

- Thoroughly studying the wants of various publics, including students, industry and job markets.
- Precisely describing educational objectives, learning outcomes, and programme execution, including the assessment processes, in accordance with international requirements outlined by the selected accreditation criteria.
- Describing programme implementation resources and ensuring they are aligned with programme objectives, results and the enactment procedure.

Regarding the initial accreditation cycle, well-defined regulations are established for subsequent institutional programme approvals. These necessities emphasised the need for employees to keep the programme up to date. The processes in accreditation additionally stimulates research and development work, fostering discussions concerning "academic quality" among employees and prompting each teacher to consider the stages they employ to accomplish organisational goals in their work (Schintke et al., 2021). Preparing for accreditation demands significant effort. As global academic accreditations are recently established concept in Finland, there have been extensive discussions nationally and internationally about the advantages and disadvantages (Jokila, 2020). Some argue that the process is a waste of resources without tangible benefits, while others believe that academic programmes/degrees offered will not advance without accreditation. Thus, staff members lack definitive proof regarding the value of programme accreditations.

3.3.1.4 Internal cross- evaluation of degree programmes

JAMK introduced its private approach to enhancing the quality of academic programmes in 2004, known as the "cross-evaluation of the degree programmes" (Nasim, 2020). All degrees at JAMK have undergone cross-evaluation on one occasion, following the fundamental assessment model for HE established in Europe. The cross-evaluation process consists of several key stages, including self-evaluation, evaluation visits, evaluation reports, feedback sessions, activity development and follow-up meetings. The teams for cross-evaluation are

composed of representatives from different student representative, schools and support services to conduct the evaluation. The approach is rooted in collegial support, the principles of improvement-led evaluation and the sharing of best practices. The evaluation outcomes are made publicly available.

As is the case with the global/international curriculum certification procedures in Finland, JAMK's internal benchmarking exercises have focused on the degree level. The objectives of these cross-evaluations have been to ensure consistent excellence across JAMK's education offerings and to enhance the staff members' understanding of quality by involving a wide range of personnel (Ashwin, 2022). The cross-evaluations have proven efficient in identifying areas for improvement in the academic programmes, such as pedagogical development, student involvement and e-learning in planning. From the perspective of staff's this process has augmented their knowledge of other JAMK programmes and facilitated the opportunity to learn from one another. This is possible because appraisals are conducted by staff members from all units within JAMK. However, staff members also perceive internal cross-evaluations and extensive documentation as demanding work. Furthermore, since cross-evaluations have primarily focused on overall academic programme or degree level, individual lecturers may not directly value the process in relation to their own work but one contributing factor is that the communication of improvement actions following the evaluation has not always been clear and transparent (Leiber et al., 2020).

3.3.1.5 Student feedback system

In Finland, student feedback is commonly given priority in assessing the value of teaching and learning processes. JAMK has implemented a comprehensive student feedback system in its degree programmes, focusing on feedback methods used in bachelor's programmes. These methods include middle of the course feedback in the School of Technology and institution-wide mechanisms such as end-of-course evaluations, annual study feedback, ministry reporting, graduate follow-up surveys, and student union feedback initiatives.

In the School of Technology at JAMK, teachers have the flexibility to collect mid-term feedback in their preferred manner, using it as a basis for adjusting their course implementation. This mid-course feedback is collected for all module and has offered lecturers with valued and instant insights, including the suitability of their teaching methods. Students have cherished the chance to provide immediate opinion to their lecturers and have found it comfortable to reach out to them.

JAMK also employs standardised end-of-course feedback, selected by the department head, to support teachers in their teaching development. The feedback aims to facilitate changes in course implementation at the discretion of the teacher. However, if the average feedback for a module is less than a certain level (lower on a scale of 1-4 or currently 2.6), the teacher discusses necessary improvement measures with the department head. The school's quality officer monitors the impact of these improvement measures. While the course feedback response rates from students have sometimes been low, hindering further analysis, some students have expressed scepticism about the efficacy of providing feedback, believing that it will have no impact.

JAMK gathers feedback from students at the end of their studies in first year and also collects feedback upon graduation form the Ministry of Education and Culture. Equally, these forms of feedback are valuable for decision-making regarding the development of degree programmes. Rather than obtaining separate feedback from staff on graduates' education, JAMK gathers related information directly from the graduates themselves through a placement follow-up survey conducted one year after graduation.

JAMKO, the student union, actively participates in the quality management of education. The union organised twice-a-year feedback weeks on different campuses, providing students with an opportunity to interact directly with department heads and teaching staff. During such events, student response is collected and a report summarising the response is discussed in school quality teams.

Generally, staff members have found the student response systems effective in programme development work. Lecturers show great interest in the outcomes of varied feedback methods, particularly when the feedback is aimed right to their own work, viewing it as a tool for their professional development. Response rates for alumni feedback surveys, conducted one year after graduation, typically range from 45% to 50%. However, these internal alumni surveys often provide general information that is not specific enough for the implementation work of a particular HE programmes.

3.3.2 The View from Universitatea Tehnică de Construcții București, Romania

Drawing on insights from the teaching staff's perspective, this section provides a brief overview of the QA procedures employed in the Romanian HE system, with a specific emphasis on the Technical University of Civil Engineering Bucharest (Universitatea Tehnică

de Construcții București, UTCB) in Bucharest, Romania. Additionally, it addresses both the intended and unintended adverse effects that may arise from these QA procedures, shedding light on their implications and discussing them in detail.

3.3.2.1 The Romanian quality assurance system

Following the endorsement of the Bologna Declaration (1999) and the Prague Declaration (2001) and the subsequent enactment of the Quality Law in 2006 from the Romanian government's, QA has emerged as a systematically addressed concern in Romanian HE. To facilitate external quality evaluation at both the institutional and degree-programme levels, the Romanian Agency for QA in HE (ARACIS) was established in 2005 as a self-governing public institution of public importance.

In Romanian HE system, QA is primarily managed by universities, departments, academic staff and administrative services. Its overarching objective is to continuously enhance scientific research and administrative service processes and the quality of education.

3.3.2.2 General aspects regarding quality assurance at UTCB

QA procedures in Romania, similar to those in many other countries, are built upon a peer-review and stakeholder approach. These procedures encompass various steps, including on site visit, the submission of a self-evaluation report, peer assessment reports and a subsequent follow-up process. Notably, institutional accreditation and programmes, referred to as the German 'system accreditation', places significant emphasis on adherence to predefined criteria. In Romania, the HR law outlines the key quality domains and principles that serves as references, namely educational effectiveness, institutional capacity and total quality management.

Within the context of institutional quality assurance evaluations conducted by a site visit panel, comprising both study programme evaluators and institutional evaluators, assesses a minimum of 20% of the accredited programmes offered by the HEI. Currently, the Technical University of Civil Engineering Bucharest (UTCB) undergoes EQA conducted by the Romanian Agency for QA in HE (ARACIS), while internal evaluation system is carried out by the UTCB's Quality Management Department, which reports directly to the UTCB Rector.

ARACIS's independent quality management mechanism includes six steps covering authorisation, accreditation, and periodic assessment of study programmes and institutions, including teacher training, master's and doctoral programmes.

The implementation of EQA processes at UTCB has had a significant impact on the development of internal QA mechanisms. These mechanisms influence the identification of pending issues and the continuous improvement in institutional scholarship. UTCB recognises the fundamental role of QA criteria and procedures in accommodating to the prevailing needs of the economic and social environment. It acknowledges that competitive institutions at both local and global levels have consistently enhanced and promoted QA procedures.

To conform to the regulatory standards, UTCB executes definite actions, such as monitoring and evaluations of the quality of scholarly activities, self-evaluations of learning pathways to evaluate the faculty, and university - level assessments. The management: Administration Council, Senate, and Quality Management Department of UTCB actively work to meet the performance indicators outlined in ARACIS's 'Performance Standards and Indicators' methodology. UTCB's regulation and certification of the quality control system are based on the SR EN ISO 9001:2008 standard and the Agreement SR IWA 2:2006, which upholds the correlation of ISO quality control system with practices in the education sector at the tertiary level, including teaching and research activities.

The aims of QA at UTCB, as conceptualised by the faculty, include improving the quality of teaching pedagogy, educating faculty on QA and total management in teaching and research activities, improving key performance indicators, increasing the number of scholarly publications by UTCB faculties in international peer-reviewed journals, increasing scientific research activities at the department level, promoting the UTCB image and applying the SIMCEC (UTCB, 2015) information system for QA purposes.

The evaluation of teaching staff is a continuous priority at UTCB. To enhance the professional quality and performance of teaching staff, the university has implemented the 'Evaluation of the Professional Performances of the Teaching Staff' procedure. This evaluation is conducted in accordance with an approved evaluation programme and criteria established by the UTCB Senate.

The assessment takes into account the faculties activities and students' assessments. Scientific analysis of teaching activities and student feedback, along with skills taxonomy, is conducted,

leading to proposals for continuous development of faculty members. The assessment principles encapsulate teaching activity, scientific research, innovation, cognitive extension and technology transfer, contributions to UTCB's endowment or dividend, local and global recognition and activity within the research community.

Students also contribute to the evaluation of teaching staff through questionnaires, which are annually collected from a representative sample. The students' opinions regarding the educational process provide valuable feedback to the evaluated academic staff, enabling them to address any identified issues. Although the survey results are not publicly disclosed, they are stored at the department level. The significant improvement in survey ratings following feedback demonstrates the usefulness of this approach.

The assessment of faculty has led to improved interactions between teaching professionals in various university activities and an advanced emphasis on achieving the standardised criteria and quality indicators.

UTCB has executed the 'Audit of Disciplines', a system for monitoring and evaluating the teaching process within disciplines. This audit guarantees a comprehensive and academic rigour of the teaching and learning processes, offering remedial actions to enhance the educational experience. The process contributes to the incessant improvement of study programmes, a vital element of the university's operations. The Audit of Disciplines follows a methodology approved by the UTCB Senate, which regulates the methods, techniques, values and methods of valorisation for the audit.

The auditing of disciplines yields various key benefits. It guarantees alignment of acquired knowledge with preceding and succeeding disciplines. It balances the volume of knowledge with class contact time, individual study hours, and allocated credits. It ensures coherence between application content and course content. It also verifies the effectiveness of teaching methods and materials. Finally, it identifies areas for improvement in course content, teaching strategies, and assessment methods.

In summary, the Technical UTCB in Romania uses both institutional and international quality assurance procedures. The Romanian Agency for Quality Assurance in HE (ARACIS) conducts external evaluations, while UTCB's Quality Management Department oversees internal QA. These procedures involve self-evaluation reports, on-site visits, peer assessments and follow-up processes. The university implements various activities to ensure quality,

including audits, evaluations of teaching, learning and scholarly activities. The assessment of faculty is a sustained priority, with learner's feedback playing an important role. The university also carries out audits of disciplines to evaluate and improve the teaching and learning activities. These QA mechanisms aim to improve the quality of teaching, research and overall academic activities at UTCB.

3.3.3 Quality Assurance and its Impact Analysis: The Perspective of Internal Quality Assurance

Examining specific institutional contexts can illuminate the practical implications of quality assurance mechanisms.

3.3.3.1 The view from Jyväskylä University of Applied Sciences (JAMK), Finland

This section of the study outlines the quality assurance techniques implemented in the Finnish higher educational system, specifically on JAMK, from the views of JAMK's quality assurance staff. Furthermore, both intentional and unintended adverse consequences of the QA methods are emphasised and examined.

3.3.3.1.1 Quality system audit

JAMK has undergone two Quality System Audits, one in 2006 and the other between 2012 and 2013 (Hämäläinen et al., 2006; Hazelkorn et al., 2013). From the perspective of institutional quality assurance, several beneficial impacts have been observed. A considerable amount of groundwork had been laid before the audit team arrived. Preparing for an audit often boosts staff understanding of total quality management and practices. Moreover, the consistency of quality work practices improves during the preparatory phase, which includes self-assessment and updating relevant documentation. Following the audit team's visits, and particularly after their departure, the HEI receives feedback regarding the areas where its QA system requires further development. This naturally helps to focus on the goals of growth. Moreover, the university's compliance with the standards of the European-level QA system is confirmed after the audit process.

The assessing processes may not always provide easily quantifiable information about its effects, nor do it always offer easily quantifiable recommendations for improvement. The university, however, need to offer recommendations after the assessment. It is the duty of the university to follow up and execute these recommendations. In the case of JAMK, the auditing

body holds a mid-term seminar three years after the audit, but this does not provide detailed information about progress or impact.

The university's main goal is to get a clearer understanding of how the audit affects the quality and development of the entire institution. This has already been done by FINEEC on a national level (Hazelkorn et al., 2013).

During the course of the assessing procedure, the audit team reviews the outcomes of pre-audits. The team evaluates the implementation status of the recommendations. Furthermore, FINEEC administers a post-audit survey, seeking, for instance, insights on enhancing the audit process to better fulfil the university's standards. The Finland quality assurance audit is executed by FINEEC through an enhancement-focused methodology. For JAMK, this method does not only lead to the outcome of the audit but also provides information concerning the quality of JAMK's total quality assurance system, which was done using diverse criteria. The audit also explains strategies for the system's continued development.

FINEEC has published an analysis of the initial audit reports conducted in Finland (Overberg, 2020). Based on this publication and additional report collected through these processes, the Finnish audit system may be considered as a success. Audits as assessments emphasises on continuous improvement and have gained broad recognition among Finnish higher education institutions. They have implemented comprehensive total quality management systems, and their management displays a strong commitment to excellence, while students also actively engage in this endeavour. Audits have influenced a critical role in strengthen Finnish higher education by enhancing quality and operational cultures within higher education institutions, encouraging a sense of community and a shared commitment to the institution and inspiring institutions to engage in experiential learning.

3.3.3.1.2 International programme accreditations

JAMK has in recent times secured international accreditation for a specific segment of its academic courses, as described above. Accreditation has brought about numerous new quality assurance methods to the courses. Preliminary observations from the accreditation of the business course suggests that the accreditation has aided the implementation of development initiatives within the course. Several enrichments have been implemented, particularly in the formulation of intended learning outcomes.

JAMK regards international accreditations as important factor for the future purposes, especially in relation to the comprehensive total quality framework of the institution and the responsibility to uphold the quality of each individual study programme. Nevertheless, the primary concerns for improvement are whether JAMK can successfully leverage on the gains chalked in accreditation processes and to what extends. Does JAMK genuinely enhance improvements in total quality from the students' perspective? For instance, will the QA activities lead to improved experiential learning for students?

3.3.3.1.3 Internal cross-evaluation of degree programmes

The cardinal goals of the institutional cross-evaluation (as described above) were to decide the enhancement of the degree programmes and to create a culture of excellence within the university. The assessment done by FINEEC largely absorbed the quality system at the institutional level rather than the individual level of the degree courses. Even though follow-up visits were done for each of the degree courses, the real effect remained somewhat ambiguous.

However, in ensuing analysis of the effects, a comparatively straightforward questionnaire was deployed for cross-assessment of the participants. According to the survey, it can be concluded that the execution of cross-evaluations has achieved its intended purposes. Concurrently, the utilisation of assessment outcomes in subsequent development processes has not steadily been evident or systematically executed. Nevertheless, the cross-assessment process has improved staff capabilities, strengthened the university's total quality culture and thus, promoted engagement in the JAMK community. The original framework of cross-evaluation and assessment method is considered efficient; however, the challenge exists in the weighty workload necessary to perform the assessments (Gamage, 2020).

The institutional cross-assessments of degree courses were not pursued applying the same strategy following the original round of assessments. JAMK initiated the development of a new framework for periodic programme assessments. The revised evaluations will integrate viewpoints from both institutional and external assessors. JAMK has now introduced the regular assessments of degree-conferring education adopting a novel and cost-efficient model.

3.3.3.1.4 Student feedback system

JAMK University utilises multiple student feedback systems. The objective was to develop a system that incorporates the key stages of students' academic careers, spanning from

matriculation through graduation, thereby encompassing the student life cycle. The objective was to provide instructors with pertinent feedback regarding their performance in individual courses, to assess and enhance student outcomes, and to foster increased student accountability for academic quality.

Annual administration of student surveys across all available courses necessitates a substantial resource commitment. Consequently, a reduced quantity of feedback is collected; the guiding standard mandates that each instructor receives feedback from a minimum of two courses annually.

Does the feedback system exert influence on both pedagogical practices of instructors and the educational experiences of students? Successful implementation of feedback necessitates the consistent application of enhancement strategies by educators. While not encompassing all collected feedback, the effect is observable, as demonstrated by the survey results' evolution. This system is intended primarily for utilisation by educators. The outcomes generated by the feedback system are disseminated to educators and the departmental chairperson. The outcomes can be assessed annually at the course and degree program levels.

Focusing solely on student satisfaction is insufficient for quality improvement, as students often are unaware of how their feedback is used, particularly when actions occur much later. Alternative methods for providing students with immediate counter-feedback exist (e.g., the counter-feedback feature within the course feedback system); however, their effective utilisation is not consistently observed.

3.3.3.2 The view from the University of Stuttgart, Germany

This part of the study gives a brief overview of the quality assurance procedures employed within the German higher education system, with specific emphasis on the University of Stuttgart (UniS). It is presented from the viewpoint of UniS’s QA personnel, and it emphasises and describe both the expected and unexpected effects resulting from the implementation of these QA processes.

3.3.3.2.1 The Stuttgart evaluation model and study programme review

The prevailing upgrading of processes and quality of output creates the foundation of the Stuttgart Evaluation Model (SEM) (Leiber et al., 2020), which constitutes the main element of the University of Stuttgart's total quality management system for learning and instruction.

German law prescribes regular periodic accreditation, which may be obtained through either the programme-based 'Programmakkreditierung' or the system-based 'Systemakkreditierung'. In the preliminary scenario, all academic programmes of an institution are contingent on accreditation within a selected cycle. In the latter scenario, the institution deploys its own total quality management processes that replace programme accreditation with an institutional accreditation procedure. The complete quality management system is consequently subject to system-based accreditation. In 2012, the University of Stuttgart received system accreditation from the Swiss Agency for Accreditation and Quality Assurance and has since been ongoing in enhancing its institutional quality management system.

The development of the SEM began in 2007. The SEM functions across three interrelated levels: study modules, study programmes, and the university-wide system of teaching and learning (Figure 2.1). Rules, procedures, and responsibilities are outlined in a policy approved by the university senate in 2010 and consequently reviewed in 2014 (UniS, 2014). An essential aspect of the SEM is that data derived from surveys and statistical sources are embedded at each evaluation level by appropriate stakeholders, including students, educators, and deans.

The SEM is established on self-assessment. Individuals responsible for a particular module or study programme are also assigned with its assessment. Key stakeholders are also engaged but generally undertake the role of advisor or moderator in this self-assessment process. Based on SEM expertise, this augments ownership and safeguards against impulsive conclusions by third parties, such as when comparing elements that are not comparable.

The SEM, however, is not solely confined to institutional and self-assessment methods. It also demonstrates certain external mechanisms. Assessments may be classified as external when the individuals involve in the evaluation are not responsible for executing the evaluation itself. The primary external assessment within the SEM is the evaluation of the study programme. It is carried out for each study programme at intervals of four to six years and includes two external assessments. A formal institutional assessment is carried out by the institutional quality assurance team, accentuating compliance with established protocols and the inclusive implementation of the SEM institutional evaluation processes. Besides, a subject-content assessment is performed by an external evaluator who possesses proficiency in the appropriate programme area. The subject-content assessment focuses on learning outcomes, the currency of the programme, and the overall potential for improvement.

3.3.3.2.2 Working mechanisms, effects and impact in the SEM

Frequently, assessments and reviews are predicated upon implicit understandings and assumptions regarding effective strategies and identified requirements. In infrequent instances, well-supported hypotheses concerning operational mechanisms and both intended and unintended (adverse) consequences serve as the basis for evaluation methodologies. To perform a comprehensive impact analysis, it is necessary to analyse and delineate the fundamental mechanism of a quality management system. Sequel to the framework of the IMPALA project, a case study was conducted on the SEM study programme review to scrutinise its goals and operational processes. The predominant goals of the study programme review are to:

- serve as a substitute to external programme accreditation;
- assess course-oriented content within each programme (through a written report prepared by an external authority);
- assess the extent of SEM process implementation (via an assessment conducted by the university's quality management unit);
- record the constant improvement in the study programmes in recurring cycles for both internal and external stakeholders.

The specific goals of the study programme review are to ascertain whether:

- study programme curricula align with global standards of excellence.
- formal requirements specified by national Accreditation Council (AC, 2013) are satisfied;
- study programmes exhibit a history of innovative pedagogical methods.
- planned objectives of the university are included into curriculum development.
- deliberations regarding the ongoing improvement of study programmes are introduced at both the programme and rectorate levels.

Drawing upon an understanding of the various goals and implementation procedures inherent in the study programme review, a number of hypotheses concerning the operational mechanisms of the review can be posited.

- The external expert's written report serves as a catalyst for the study program's development.

- The programme's focus on selecting external experts fosters a high degree of approval for the resulting outcomes and commendations.
- Internal procedures, encircling formal organisational evaluations, guarantee the configuration of study programmes with both internal and external formal requirements.
- Provision of results from internal quality assurance processes to the external expert allows the external report to focus purposely on subject-matter-specific aspects.
- Drawing upon the existing reports and regular self-assessment procedures in the context of programme review enhances cognisance of reporting requirements and the quality of process execution (Krooi et al., 2024).
- An understanding of the participation of an external expert will enable a more desperate evaluation of the study programme within the study programme board.

The purposes and postulations concerning the operational mechanisms of the study programme review reinforced the improvement of the review instrument for the Stuttgart component of the IMPALA project. These activities provided the quality management team with a valuable opportunity to refine their understanding of review procedures.

3.3.3.3 Meta-evaluation in HE: Design, Implementation and Impact

The development and maintenance of quality management systems are inherently complex and costly endeavours. Substantial resources will be required for this initiative and must be furnished in conjunction with those already designated for existing responsibilities The implementation of quality management systems represents a significant transformational undertaking for any organisation, thereby engendering substantial institutional change costs. Consequently, it is imperative to conduct periodic assessments of the project, implementation, and effect of all quality as management procedure to enhance results.

3.3.3.3.1 Design

Credible evaluation procedures constitute the foundation of a vigorous quality management system. Although the IMPALA project is grounded in theory-based approaches (Chen, 1990) to assess the effect of EQA, theoretical considerations are essential in the opening phases of developing any quality management procedure or system. The system accreditation in Germany aims at assessing whether the quality management system is proficient of safeguarding that the qualification objectives and quality standards of study programmes are accomplished (AC, 2013, p. 14). This assessment of newly developed procedures via external

audits and ongoing peer review can assist an institution in establishing techniques that are academically vigorous. Only through the establishment of specific definitions of functioning mechanisms can the assessment of these procedures' design be conducted.

3.3.3.3.2 Implementation

The right implementation of QA instruments and processes is essential to the attainment of any quality assurance system. Most instruments require different stakeholders to:

- undertake individual preparatory tasks prior to the procedure;
- demonstrate respect during the procedure and remain informed about their respective roles;
- efficiently apply the results of the process to create alternatives for change;
- implement actual modification (which requires considerable effort).

In practice, well-designed programmes frequently do not achieve the intended outcomes owing to inadequate or erroneous implementation by the responsible actors. Programmes that depend on the involvement of decentralised actors frequently encounter challenges such as low motivation, limited access to accurate information regarding proper implementation, and a deficiency of resources necessary for effective execution.

When this is taken back to the world of HEIs, a careful examination of the operation of the different programmes is vital in order to plan assessment procedures that are conventional and that can be properly executed by decentralised implementers (Minke et al., 2013; Hazelkorn & Gibson, 2019). To engage in this type of implementation evaluation, one must have relevant knowledge of who is in charge of which aspect the programme. Therefore, a comprehensive examination of the operational mechanisms will build the foundation for this project.

3.3.3.3.3 Impact

The planned and unexpected (undesirable) outcomes of quality management are frequently overlooked in thorough consideration until they manifest. Nonetheless, to effectively assess procedure outcomes among the existing condition and the desired future condition, it is essential to have a well-defined and comprehensive idea of the desired future. Within academic quality management in higher education institutions domain, measurable pointers are meticulously established to demonstrate the effectiveness of a specific course of study. These pointers reflect the outcomes of numerous pedagogical frameworks and teaching and learning processes and may demonstrate certain effects attributable to the programme. Those

accountable for the quality management procedure should adhere consistently to the same line of reasoning. Alterations pertaining to quality management protocols or assessments must be meticulously supervised and appropriately documented. These findings may be employed to enhance inefficient procedures or frameworks and to demonstrate effectively operating quality management initiatives to pertinent stakeholders, thereby augmenting their endorsement.

3.3.3.4 QA and its impact analysis: The perspective of students

Within this part of the study, the evaluation of QA procedures and their consequent impact analysis are scrutinised from an academic standpoint. Following a comprehensive overview, the discourse centres on the viewpoint of the students at UTCB

3.3.3.4.1 The general view

Also, it is widely acknowledged that students constitute a preeminent stakeholder group within higher education. Similarly, this principle should also apply to the implemented QA policies. Consequently, the most significant ultimate outcome of academic QA in education is the fulfilment of a primary objective: enabling the proficient and personal development of learners enroled in higher educational institutions throughout Europe. Quality assurance initiatives are directed towards learning programs, the equilibrium between theoretical and practical application, curriculum consistency, instructional methodologies, and student-instructor communication to facilitate the improvement of effective teaching and learning experience.

Thus, the objectives of QA procedures, both at the individual and institutional level, must be aligned with the strategic goals of the tertiary institution and the needs of its students. The primary objectives, along with other sub objectives, can be delineated to characterise the intended effects of QA, particularly within the domain of pedagogy.

- Modernise institutional curricula for instance:
    - specifically describe the overarching proficiencies and area of study as well as multi-skilled knowledge aspired to; establish the connection between curricula and competencies acquired during undergraduate education and those obtained at the master's level;
    - improve the quality of practical courses and apprenticeships, particularly by involving departments and faculty councils with greater responsibility to foster the development of pertinent partnerships; AND

- achieve an equilibrium between the duration of student engagement in hands-on and academic activities.

- Engineer innovative ways of teaching, learning and assessment techniques, for example: modifying teaching approach (lecture, experiential learning, interactive course, practical demonstrations, project-based, media presentation) focusing on the type of course; expand students' knowledge; support assessment forms with curricula and instructional objectives.
- Add to the accessibility of educational courses, for instance an expansion in specific postgraduate programmes content and creating a wide-ranging, purposeful continuous learning framework.
- Advance the student-centred learning experience and management for example:
  - Put in place the most appropriate forms of entrance examinations for all discipline and levels of education in the institution;
  - establish a collaborative relationship with students by actively involving them in pertinent decision-making processes undertaken by the institution's governing bodies relating to teaching and learning, student accommodation, student involvement in research ventures, educational scholarships, and projects implementation; AND
  - enhance and advance engagement between graduates students and the corporate community.
- Constantly examine the institution's professional accomplishments in order to expand the value of academic work in teaching and learning as well as scientific research.

These objectives can only be attained if conforming to QA procedures (external or internal), including information systems, steady monitoring and evaluation, and plan–do–check–act pedals for quality enhancement, are executed within the HEI.

3.4 PERCEPTION OF THE ROLES OF QA

The effectiveness of QA in higher educational institutions largely hinges on stakeholders' understanding and perception of its roles and purposes. Examining the contexts of Australia and Canada offers insights into ways of quality assurance mechanisms as perceived and executed in established higher educational systems.

3.4.1 Quality Assurance in Australia and Canada

Since this study assesses quality assurance in Ghanaian higher education, this section will briefly draw from the good experiences of Australian and Canadian teaching and learning quality attributes in HE sectors and their alignment with the quality issues discussed earlier. The attributes are concurrently evaluated in reference to the previously discussed concepts of quality. The Higher Educational institute in Australia is juxtaposed with the Canadian Higher Educational institute, which has been integrated into this analysis due to its distinctive characteristics. The standard of Australian HE is evaluated through an analysis of scholarly literature concerning stakeholder perceptions and the national quality assurance framework published over the past twenty-five years.

3.4.1.1 Quality assurance in Australian HE

It is not overbearing that a singular concept about quality exclusively aligns with any specific Higher Education context; consequently, a synthesis of quality concepts by diverse authors may potentially serve as a comprehensive framework for quality.

In contrast, a survey conducted by Gill et al. (2022) assessed perceptions of quality within higher education, specifically comparing Turkish and Australian academics specialising in business studies. The research revealed that the perspectives of Turkish academics concerning quality were associated with Harvey and Green's (1993) conceptualisation of quality, while the viewpoints of faculty members surveyed in Australia demonstrated a closer alignment with the concept of suitability for purpose. The findings of both studies were derived from questionnaires informed by Harvey and Green's (1993) conceptualisation of quality (Gill et al., 2022). However, these conclusions are derived exclusively from the perspective of a single stakeholder group: faculty. Although this research offers insights into quality perceptions within a specific stakeholder group in Australia, its findings should not be generalised to encompass other stakeholder groups, such as non-teaching university staff, employers, quality assurance personnel, or students.

In providing a more comprehensive understanding, Ramsdenss (1991) study, which examined students' perceptions of teaching quality in Australian universities, was also reviewed. Ramsden's (1991) study exhibited a parallel with the present research, as both investigations targeted the entirety of Australia's higher education sector; additionally, the authors of the former study devised the Course Experience Questionnaire (CEQ) (Ramsden, 1991). Another

similarity was the substantially reduced sample size of both staff and student participants relative to total study population of faculty and students within Australian universities. The students' responses were also transmitted directly to the researchers. Additionally, only two institutions were ultimately chosen to pilot the final iteration of the questionnaire (CEQ). The research report references the involvement of 100 students (Ramsden, 1991) in the initial phase; however, the number of participating staff members is not specified. The 57-items questionnaire was developed according to the five criteria (Ramsden,1991) which may be reviewed as consistent with the quality model proposed by Harvey and Green (1993), including suitable for purpose, excellence and value for money.

Notwithstanding, Ramsden's (1991) study concentrated on staff and student assessments of instructional effectiveness, thereby omitting considerations such as curriculum validity, contemporary relevance, learning outcomes, quality assurance protocols, and career readiness integration. Moreover, the student survey utilised a questionnaire employing a Likert scale for responses, encompassing five choices (Ramsden, 1991). However, provisions for subjective feedback were absent. The concluding phase of the survey was implemented throughout Australia, and the responses provided by both staff and learners were analysed to ascertain the legitimacy of the CEQ (Ramsden, 1991). The findings imply that response on instructional quality, irrespective of the method of collection, can contribute to the enhancement of lecturers' performance through their professional development. This aligns with a specific dimension of quality, as proposed by Harvey and Green (1993), although the present study concentrated solely on the perspective of the lecturers.

This implies that students' perspectives on the higher education experience have gained significance as universities increasingly focus on student needs (Robert, 1996). Given the increasing emphasis on student-centred pedagogy, there is a persuasive rationale for according greater weight to student perspectives in assessing the value of higher education. This phenomenon is exemplified in a study examining students' perceptions of educational quality in Australia (Robson, 2024), although the research focusses specifically on higher education within the context of property studies. Given the prevailing focus on improving pedagogical effectiveness and cultivating industry-specific competencies within Australian universities, this research investigated the correlation between effective teaching practices and overall student satisfaction (Kumar & DeCuir-Gunby, 2023). The authors regarded these categories as a significant metric of students' perceptions regarding the quality of instruction and learning, and consequently, as an effective instrument for evaluating the educational quality within that

particular domain. This perspective is grounded in the tenet that judgements regarding the standard of higher education are exclusively in the scope of the individual undergoing or having undergone the process directly (Gonzales et al., 2012).

The quality assurance framework for higher education in Australia is primarily based on institutional self-regulation, supplemented by external audits. Until 2011, the Australian Universities Quality Agency (AUQA) conducted these external assessments. Subsequently, the Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency (TEQSA), an independent national regulator, assumed responsibility, incorporating the functions of AUQA (TEQSA, 2017). Ashraf (2020) presents evidence-based observations indicating that AUQA and Australian institutions evaluated quality based on the concept of 'suitable for purpose,' with the provider defining the purpose, and/or 'value for money.' This illustration indicates that Australian authorities and universities emphasise quality, as reflected in a combination of the two quality concepts articulated by Harvey and Green (1993). Notwithstanding the discussions above, the creation of the Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency (TEQSA) in 2017, with the focus on clear objective to "protect and enhance Australia's scholarly reputation for and international competitiveness in higher education" (Joshi, 2018), appears to position it within a reform framework. TEQSA's (2017) objective to augment the standing and global competitiveness of Australian higher education transcends functional suitability and corresponds with Harvey and Green's (1993) conceptualisation of quality as transformation. Furthermore, a demonstrable connection exists with the concept of value for money (Harvey & Green, 1993), as the implementation of this incentive allowed institutions to achieve predetermined objectives, thereby qualifying them for supplementary base funding commencing in 2011 (Joshi, 2018).

Moreover, the Australian regulatory framework relies on institutional adherence to the Higher Education Standards Framework (TEQSA, 2017). These standards encompass explicit requirements pertaining to instruction and pedagogy, alongside other considerations, and are "established implicitly within the curriculum, instructional methodologies, and student expectations" (Thompson-Whiteside, 2012). Calma and Dickson-Deane (2020), referencing the Australian Higher Education Standards Framework, posit that terminology such as 'quality', 'standards', 'excellence', and 'criteria' frequently exhibits considerable overlap and is often employed without explicit definition. As previously addressed within this chapter, it is important to acknowledge that although standards are associated with the concept of fitness for purpose (Harvey & Green, 1993), they can encompass a broad array of attributes, particularly

when contrasted with the concept of quality, such as fitness for purpose, where the establishment of a benchmark may encompass a range of expectations, from minimal to exceedingly high.

3.4.1.2 Quality in Canadian HE

Contrary to Australia, which employs a unified method along with national approaches or structures, Canada it appears there is no national accreditation authority. There is no centralised national system and dedicated Ministry of Higher Education, no across-the-board national higher education policy, nor national machineries for quality assessment or accreditation of higher educational institutions (Yingqiang & Yongjian, 2019). Conversely, Canada employs a stratified framework for the assurance of quality standards in its higher educational sector (Universities Canada, 2017).

Nearly all universities in Canada are regulated by local legislation; nonetheless, each institution possesses independent authority concerning its academic autonomy and formulates its own polices on quality issues and protocols derived from internally established standards and procedures (Universities in Canada, 2017). Furthermore, universities in Canada operate within a set of benchmarks that are uniformly recognised among the higher educational institutions in Canada (CICIC, 2017), indicating that all higher institutions in Canada maintain shared values, scholarly track records and benchmarks.

These systems may be interpreted as an increased degree of autonomy, and consequently responsibility, attributable to higher educational sector in Canada. Granting such a degree of independence permits universities in Canada to implement pioneering approaches to regulation and assurance. Indeed, although certain institutions implement in-house quality assurance procedures, selected local jurisdictions have established dedicated bodies to assess excellence in educational delivery (Idris et al., 2022). In place of a non-existence centralised national framework on quality assurance, the majority of the local jurisdictions have implemented remarkably similar systems for the assessment and accreditation of universities (Idris et al., 2022). This approach, in which all universities in Canada execute a similar framework, conveys an imprint of identical standards across the Canadian higher educational sector, though it is ostensibly presented as a result of the autonomous practices of individual universities in quality assurance. The established principles and harmonised quality assurance frameworks within Canadian higher education embody the notion of quality as suitability for intended purpose, as delineated by Harvey and Green (1993). Other conceptions introduced by Harvey and Green

(1993), including 'value for money' and 'transformation', were not immediately apparent in the analysed documents.

3.5 QA CHALLENGES IN UNIVERSITIES

Numerous scientific investigations have been carried out in South Africa for instance within the domains of private HE sectors over the past years (Baumgardt & Lekhetho, 2013; Tankou et al., 2019). Only few address the problems that private higher education institutions (PHEIs) in South Africa face in handling QA and, more specifically, programme accreditation. The Higher education quality committee (HEQC) in South Africa undertook a preliminary study in 2003 to obtain insight into the non-public higher educational institutions. Its findings revealed the numerous quality shortcomings in most of the PHEIs (Cele, 2005; CHE, 2003a). Again, the study revealed that, greater proportion of these institutions, demonstrate insufficient knowledge and fail to implement national policies and regulatory frameworks for quality assurance in HE. It further recognises that majority of these institutions had infrastructural limitations to facilitate high-quality teaching and learning, as well as a deficit in internal QA processes.

Recent empirical research with convergent findings, also contributed to the multifaceted nature of the QA institutional legal framework in place (Baumgardt & Lekhetho, 2013; DHET, 2013b; Drinóczi, 2012; Tamrat & Teferra, 2020). The accreditation policy framework, its structure and standards also appear to represent systemic difficulties for several PHEIs. Many of the concerns embedded in the technical framework reports on accreditation and procedures involving the accreditation procedure itself, with emphasis on the prescribed timeframes, the criteria including how they are understood and applied, and the assessment process highlighting the scientific review mechanism by colleagues scholars (Cele, 2005; CHE, 2003a; Cosser, 2002; Gouws & Waghid, 2006; Selesho, 2013; Soudien, 2007; Tamrat & Teferra, 2020). Additional challenge relates to increase in stakeholder involvement in QA process in HEIs. There seem to be a growth of stakeholder involvement, professional associations and groups, and in some instances adherence to regulatory measures and legislation which does appear to be complicated and perplexing (Baumgardt & Lekhetho, 2013; CHE, 2004a; CHE, 2004b; DoE, 2002b; Tamrat & Teferra, 2020).

CHE (2004e) identified several major concerns about South African HE in the first decade of democracy. These encompass the ambiguous relationship regarding labour market demands and programme offerings, as well as the acknowledgement of inadequate scientific foundation, engineering and technological advancement (SET) within the PHE sector. It further added the

unequal teaching and learning experiences, primarily due to insufficiently trained personnel, inadequate planning for practical learning, and a deficit in educational infrastructure and institutional support. A related issue is the general absence of internal quality assurance frameworks, which suggest that institutions exhibit insufficient comprehension of national policies and legislative requirements. Furthermore, it raises a concern that some of the qualifications from private providers are better positioned within the FET band of the NQF than the HE band (CHE, 2004e). Whereas some scholars maintain that higher education should meet labour market and societal needs, others contend that this responsibility should rest with industry or other education sectors (CHE, 2004e; MoE, 2001; Tewari & Ilesanmi, 2020).

In a recent study, Mouton et al. (2021) in their study identified several barriers to efficient running of higher educational institutions in South Africa. Even though the study focused primarily on government- financed public tertiary education, some of the pertinent limitations they mentioned relate to entry-level admissions to HE and the duties of HEIs to ensure the provision of quality education for national and institutional purposes. Additional, Mouton et al., (2021), highlighted the governance of HEIs, improvement in academic performance, shifting academic roles, dealing with international students enroled in South Africa, expansion of distance education and facilitation of access for increase in enrolment.

Badat, (2010) in his study identified planning as one of the major challenges faced by HEIs. In a study by Van Deventer and Kruger (2010), planning encompasses identifying possible limitations, making decisions and policy formulation in addition to setting of mission, vision, aims, objectives. For instance, programme accreditation process requires PHEIs to deliver a detailed plan by outlining the implementation structure for accredited programmes. HEIs are also required to submit evidence of infrastructure, staffing and other resources prior to programme accreditation (CHE, 2004a; DHET, 2013b).

Funding has also been identified as one of the challenges faced by PHEIs. Most PHEIs are compelled to generate their own revenue to run their activities. In view of this, marketing has become a major challenge to HEIs in getting students to enrol (Harvey, 2007). Subsequently, Baumgardt & Lekhetho, (2013) identified the cost of compliance as one of the major challenges faced by PHEIs which continues to pressurise many PHEIs (; CHE, 2003a; CHE, 2015b; Fielden, 2008).

Revenue generated internally by institution is referred to as funding within the scope of private HE. Therefore, the management of resources is a key factor within the PHEIs. Resource

mobilisation and prudent management include plans and projects, preparation budgets, projecting and mobilising required revenues, monitoring cash flow and expending, managing funds, review finances and reports, and comparing costs (Potgieter et al., 2011). Prudent resource management focuses largely on financial resources. Resource management involves, management data systems and information communication technologies (ICTs) as well as human resources (Baumgardt & Lekhetho, 2013). For instance, on the Johannesburg Stock Exchange (JSE), several PHEIs (or some companies working with the PHE sector) or big business entities are featured, but some are not. It could be seen that funding and financial needs are among the key obstacles for many PHEIs in the sector. But for some seminaries higher institutions, funding is deriving by donations, the bigger PHEIs appear to be ran mainly by profit motive, rather than any national values or any other obligation (Nieuwenhuis, 2016).

Majority of PHE sector players shy away from offering high-end programmes such as medicine, engineering, etc as a result of resource allocation and financial support, complicated and exorbitant infrastructure costs, professional and expertise for the delivery of such programmes (Altbach, 2012). Instead, they focus on programmes that require minor infrastructural costs, such as those in the arts and humanities (CHE, 2004e; Hénard & Mitterle, 2010; Varghese, 2006). The high-end programme delivery is significantly influenced by financial factors (CHE, 2004b; CHE, 2014a; Welch, Reed & NADEOSA, 2004; Zaki & Rashidi, 2013). With upscale focus of distance programmes, there is the need for increase investment into ICT resources, which pose financial burdens on PHEIs who wish to excel in the delivery of their distance programme. This does not only relate to funding but also total quality management issues. Due to the competitive nature of HE landscapes, PHEIs have been compelled to invest more into trend-setting information systems to harness effective e-learning. These involve several e-learning systems; Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs); online student-support systems such as learning management systems; and the creation of wide-ranging campus information platforms to help PHEIs in attaining their premeditated goals, among other ventures (CHE, 2014a; Kayyali, 2023; Naidoo, 2011).

The trial with the distance approach does not essentially lie in the manner it is offered, but mainly in the methods of teaching and the learning strategy that supports it. Majority of PHEIs appears not to start by curriculum designers or planners but by experts in the various field (often from the industry) desiring to provide learners with the requisite for the world of work. Often, these players have inadequate knowledge or understanding of the HE and programme design principles applicable to their discipline. Additionally, Mouton et al. (2013) emphasised

that in improving HE through distance education mode, the faculty and learners are mostly separated by time and space (UNESCO, 2002). Distance education thus gives opportunities for entry to HE and offers substitute choices for successful teaching and learning, while concentrating on managing knowledge rather than merely delivering information within a programme, especially in the 21st century. The teaching and learning enterprise should mirror on the multifaceted environment in which the learners are anticipated to function, enabling them to own the teaching and learning processes (Naidoo, 2011). Therefore, it is a learner-centred approach, rather than a teacher-centred one. This calls for self-regulation and control, and mental fortitude as well as willingness to learn from the learners (Freire, 1985). The medium of instruction remains the primary means for teaching and learning. However, as knowledge is impacted to learners through several mediums of instruction such as produced study materials, audio visuals, and other learning devices, yet distance education learners need some level of interaction with their teachers and peers (CHE, 2014a; Makoe, 2012).

In terms of human resources, PHEIs often employ part-time staff and consultants to decrease the financial strain. While this practice appears to be favourable in the short term, as it brings skilled expertise and other positive contributions to institutions, it ultimately opposes academic sustainability (Altbach, 2012). Additionally, this institution assigned roles and responsibilities to academic staff (faculty) that would normally fall outside the scope and demands expected from faculty within a traditional public university setting. The core functions for academic staff should be centred on teaching, research and community engagement (CHE, 2015b).

Undertaking scientific research appears to be a major challenge for these private providers. This is because they do not have easy access to grants or other funding arrangement allocated for research by state government. Consequently, most PHEIs do not get funding for research ventures thus becomes a huge obstacle for the private sector. Subsequently, research output in the private HE sectors appears to be inadequate. Even though research confirms that there are relevant and recent studies are being conducted within the sector (CHE, 2014a), it appears that the PHE sector is not adequately represented (Baumgardt & Lekhetho, 2013).

In a study done by Essack (2015), several obstacles of QA for PHEIs in South Africa include safety and safeguarding issues, mostly concerning student admission processes and certification. Many issues involving the delivery techniques, study centres and sites are mentioned. These involve the definition of QA, the accreditation and regulatory changes, the registration and the equitable allocation of resources across various sites. As a result, these

issues have been addressed in the amendments of regulations for private HEIs, as published on 31 March, 2016(DHET, 2016b). The practices of unapproved or illegal institutions, particularly in relation to the advertisement of unaccredited programmes before they are accredited, continue to dominate a portion of the private HE sectors (DHET, 2013b). Another complaint points to the issue of upholding and preserving quality and excellence in the midst of weak institutional structures and governance. Curriculum planning and programme development is also a major issue, as well as the calibre and qualifications, and the lack of respect and recognition by some state-owned university players and some stakeholders. Institutional capacity and integrity have, therefore, been recognised as another predominant major barrier (CHE, 2003b; CHE, 2013b; CHE, 2014a; CHE, 2015a; Singh, 2010; Strydom & Strydom, 2004). The entry requirement and integrity of student data, which is often not authenticated, raises serious concerns for the sector (CHE, 2016b; DHET, 2013b).

3.6 CHAPTER SUMMARY

This chapter reviews existing literature on quality and QA in HE from both local and international perspectives. The chapter highlighted QA practices in HE, including perceptions of the roles of QA, conformance to QA requirements and the challenges of QA in HEIs. The assessment focused on finding precise gaps in the study and revealed that the topic of QA has not been fully explored within the existing body of literature. It is essential to recognise that the assurance process in HE encompasses multiple dimensions, continues to evolve and influences the effectiveness of institutions academically, strategically and methodologically, extending beyond policy and regulatory frameworks. A multifaceted QA system in globalised HE imposes normative requirements, such as the documentation of academically grounded structures and processes. QA is conceptualised as a constructive paradigm, integrated reflexively or alternatively, utilitarian. The impact of QA is comparatively positive, but contested concepts necessitate flexible frameworks. The unresolved perceptions of the defined roles of QA in HE include a participatory approach, context relevance and multidimensional, contextually grounded structures. As HE continues to globalise, the relevance of robust, inclusive and forward-thinking QA systems will only intensify.

CHAPTER 4

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND DESIGN

4.1 INTRODUCTION

The preceding chapter examined the scholarly and international literature on QA practices in HE, stakeholders' perceptions of the roles of QA, conformance to QA requirements and the challenges of QA in HEIs were explored. The focus of this study is to examine QA practices in HE in Ghana, with a particular emphasis on the case of private universities. A thorough explanation of the research techniques employed in the study is provided in this chapter, beginning with an overview of the study design and the rationale behind its use. The chapter also covers the branches of philosophy and the research paradigms that inform the study. Additionally, the procedures for gathering data and the selection of subjects are described. To further enhance a thorough understanding of QA systems in Ghanaian HE, the methods and procedures for data analysis and interpretation are also covered. Finally, this chapter outlines the ethical considerations that informed the study's conduct and data collection process.

4.2 PHILOSOPHICAL ASSUMPTIONS

The philosophical presumptions of this study are covered in this section. Different researchers hold different beliefs and philosophical assumptions about the phenomenon they are studying, which shape, guide and direct the study being undertaken. All three research approaches, that is, quantitative, qualitative and mixed methodologies, have underlying philosophical assumptions, namely, ontological and epistemological assumptions that are linked to the research method selected for the study.

4.2.1 Ontological Assumptions

Dieronitou (2014) explains ontology as the nature of existence. Accordingly, scientists debate the essential nature of life, exploring what it fundamentally means to be alive, and the core characteristics that define life, as well as the criteria that differentiate living organisms from non-living entities (Siregar, 2021). Ontology assumes that a researcher connects with and understands the phenomena under investigation if the reality the researcher is examining is independent of their thoughts, for instance if they actively participate in creating reality, then the researcher must make a decision. Panya and Nyarwath (2022) note that key ontological questions in social research concern whether social reality exists independently of human

interpretation, whether reality is singular or context-specific, and whether social behaviour is governed by observable or generalisable laws. This suggests that our thinking may be continuously shaped and directed by the culture in which we live. Leavy (2020) asserts that people may interpret the same event differently based on their subjective perspectives and that similarly articulated viewpoints can elicit varied responses, which can result in a state of continuous revision.

In this study, the researcher adopted an objective ontological orientation. This position assumes that QA practices in HE exists as observable institutional realities that can be examined independently of the researcher's personal views. The study therefore treated QA practices, regulatory compliance, stakeholder involvement, institutional structures, and implementation challenges as measurable features of private universities in Ghana. This objective orientation aligns with the positivist paradigm adopted for the study because it assumes that the phenomenon under investigation can be studied through systematic observation, measurement, and empirical analysis. It also means that the researcher viewed reality as external to the researcher and capable of being assessed through data collected from respondents. In the context of this study, the researcher examined QA practices in HE in Ghana.

4.2.2 Epistemological Assumptions

According to Nelson (2013) and Cohen et al. (2017), epistemology is concerned with how we come to know about phenomena, whereas ontology is concerned with the nature of a phenomenon. Terre Blanche et al. (2021) claim that epistemology describes the type of interaction that exists between the researcher and the known. Given the foregoing, Denzin and Lincoln (2011) argue that, under a constructivist framework, epistemology is subjective since the researcher and the respondents are working together to create understanding.

A link between a researcher and the outside world regarding how information is recognised or collected might be characterised as the epistemological assumption (Panya & Nyarwath, 2022). Wagner et al. (2012) claim that the participant must cooperate with the researcher to obtain the information that the researcher is seeking. To put it another way, the way we gather and evaluate information from participants is addressed by the fact that knowledge can only be acquired via interaction with the participants. This philosophy's intriguing feature is that it places the responsibility of selecting whether to adhere to rationalism or empiricism-based philosophical principles on the researcher. Since the rationalist principle is predicated on the idea that knowledge is attainable through interpretation rather than creation, it is obvious that

the researcher adhered to it (Sol & Heng, 2022). According to the relativist epistemology stance, knowledge is objective and can only be acquired by participating in a social environment or by placing the researcher in a setting where knowledge may be acquired.

In line with the objective ontological stance and the positivist paradigm, this study adopted an objectivist epistemological orientation. This means that knowledge about QA practices in private universities in Ghana was generated through measurable evidence rather than personal interpretation. The study assumed that reliable knowledge could be obtained by collecting data from participants in a structured and systematic manner. The researcher therefore maintained a clear distance from the researched phenomenon by using questionnaires as the main data generation technique. This reduced direct researcher influence on participants' responses and supported neutrality in the research process. The relationship between the researcher and the researched was therefore largely detached, formal, and objective. This was appropriate because the study sought to assess patterns, relationships, and measurable dimensions of QA practices rather than co-create meanings with participants. Research findings were, therefore, distinguished into the following four different sources of knowledge:

1. Intuitive knowledge takes forms such as belief, faith and intuition. It is based on feelings rather than hard, cold facts.
2. Authoritative knowledge is based on information received from people, books, or a supreme being and its strength depends on the strength of these sources.
3. Logical knowledge comes by reasoning out from "point A" (which is generally accepted) to "point B" (the new knowledge).
4. Empirical knowledge is based on demonstrable, objective facts (which are determined through observation and/or experimentation) (Sol & Heng, 2022).

The above knowledge sources align with the study's framework employed by the researcher. Finding an issue to study is the primary application of intuitive knowledge. Rational knowledge is derived via the data analysis process, and authoritative information is provided by the literature study. Lastly, the study's conclusions might be considered empirical information.

4.2.3 Axiological Assumptions

The concept of axiology originates from the Greek terms axios, meaning "value" or "worth," and logos, meaning "theory" or "study," and together they refer to the theory of values (Patterson & Williams, 1998). In research, axiology concerns what is considered valuable,

worthwhile and ethically appropriate, particularly in relation to judgements of what is good or acceptable in the research process.

Within the context of this study, axiology primarily addresses the ethical values that guided the research process. It focuses on how the researcher's values influence decisions at every stage of the study. This included formulating research objectives, collecting data, analysing and interpreting the findings, and reporting the results. Deane (2018) asserts that axiology is closely linked to research aims, as it compels the researcher to clarify what is valued in the research and the purpose the research seeks to serve. This study, therefore, acknowledges that research is inherently value-laden and that the researcher cannot be entirely detached from the research process.

Recognising this, the researcher accepted responsibility for upholding ethical principles and minimising personal bias throughout the study. The researcher's role was not passive but active and reflexive, requiring conscious efforts to ensure fairness, transparency and integrity. Potential researcher bias, which can arise at any stage of the research process, was addressed through a deliberate design, consistent procedures and adherence to ethical standards.

In addition to these axiological commitments, the researcher spent adequate time familiarising themselves with the research context before administering the questionnaires, with the aim of reducing bias and enhancing contextual understanding. The researcher remained objective, reflective, and conscientious during data collection, analysis and interpretation. This ensured that personal values did not compromise the credibility of the findings. Ethical considerations, including respect for participants, confidentiality, honesty and accountability, guided all research activities. The following section discusses the research paradigm used in the study, providing a philosophical foundation for the chosen methodology and explaining how it aligns with the overall research objectives and questions.

4.3 RESEARCH PARADIGMS

According to Kankam (2019), a paradigm is a framework or model for findings that shapes our thought or practice. It is also considered a fundamental establishment of principles or presumptions that direct the researchers' approaches to their studies (Fraenkel et al., 2012). This is confirmed in a study done by Bibi et al., (2022) that the distinctions between qualitative and quantitative researchers are frequently associated with distinct paradigms or worldviews. Similarly, it is asserted by Kivunja and Kuyini (2017) where in their study shed light on how

these theoretical assumptions and beliefs form part of a researcher's perceptive, their understanding and actions within it. Researchers evaluate study techniques and choose data collection and analysis methods through the lens of the ideas and assumptions that these concepts provide. Worldviews can vary widely and have a significant impact on research endeavours.

In social science and educational research, pragmatist, constructivist/interpretivist, positivist and critical/transformative worldviews are usually employed. The discussion that follows focuses on these worldviews and their impact on research methodology choices.

4.3.1 Positivist Paradigm

According to Panya and Nyarwath (2022), positivists hold that existence can be understood based on unbiased observations, which allow for a true understanding of the universe. Typically, the positivist perspective is associated with the realist ontological premise, which maintains that an objective universe exists apart from human perception. Comte's belief that society could be scientifically investigated gave rise to an early positivist worldview that laid the groundwork for the growth of the social sciences (Kankam, 2019). The fundamental idea is that there is a reality "out there" that is unaffected by humans, waiting to be found and governed by dependable natural rules. Science's mission is to ascertain the nature and functioning of this reality.

According to Cohen et al. (2017), positivists believe that knowledge is objective, tangible and verifiable. As such, positivists hold that researchers should act as observers and adhere to the procedures of natural science. This has an impact on the research strategy. The principles and generalisations that resemble laws, much like those utilised in the study of natural events, are the outcome of such an investigation. According to Fraenkel et al. (2012), the researcher's function might also be defined as that of a "disinterested scientist," who is impartial, free from prejudice and more inclined to employ tentative design and control. However, as researchers who engage with their topics and refuse the techniques employed by the natural sciences, non-positivists see knowledge as unique, subjective, and personal (Cohen et al., 2017). Cohen et al. (2017) argue that a key weakness of positivism is its failure to account for the complexity of the social world and the challenges this poses for social research.

The difficulties encountered in this investigation of QA practices in private universities in Ghana are similar to those highlighted above. However, despite these complexities, the study

maintains that QA practices in private universities can still be objectively examined through systematic data collection and empirical analysis. When the consequences of these philosophical assumptions are considered in the context of this study, the following questions can be posed. Can the researcher, given the unique settings and conditions of each institution, define a single reality for each university or all universities? In which areas of the research does the investigator see patterns like those found in the natural or physical sciences? When interacting with study participants, is it feasible for the researcher to act as both an objective observer and an interviewer? Is it possible for the researcher's presence and questions not to affect the participants without compromising the accuracy of the results? In addressing these concerns, the study adopted structured quantitative procedures to minimise researcher influence and maintain objectivity throughout the research process. The use of standardised questionnaires, measurable variables, and statistical analysis enabled the researcher to examine QA practices systematically across institutions. This strengthened the neutrality, consistency and empirical nature of the study and reinforced the suitability of the positivist paradigm for investigating QA practices in private universities in Ghana.

The current research is conducted under the positivist school of thought. Socioeconomic phenomena can be objectively investigated with the aid of positivist philosophy, and the interrelationships between variables can be made evident (Cantah, 2017). Snelson (2016), Cohen et al. (2017), and Denscombe (2010) collectively assert that this philosophy is based on unvarnished facts and offers a dispassionate interpretation of the study. The positivist perspective allows the researcher to stay objective and separate from the investigation. According to Kaboub (2008), this shows that the philosophy bans human intervention in a situation under study.

The study is situated within the positivist paradigm, as positivism posits that there is an objective reality that can be observed and measured (Park et al., 2020). This aligns well with the goals of quantitative research, which seeks to quantify variables and establish relationships between them. Again, positivist approaches stress the importance of reliability and replicability of findings. Quantitative research, with its structured methods and standardised procedures, ensures that studies can be repeated by other researchers to verify results. Positivism is often associated with the scientific method, which involves formulating, testing, and refining hypotheses (Ali, 2021). Quantitative research is ideal for testing hypotheses through systematic data collection and analysis and allows for precise measurement and quantification of variables. Positivism supports this precision by advocating clear, measurable and observable data.

The positivist paradigm was considered suitable for this study because the study sought to examine QA practices in private universities in Ghana through objective measurement and statistical analysis. The study focused on measurable variables such as regulatory compliance, stakeholder participation, institutional practices, infrastructure, and implementation challenges. These variables were quantified using structured questionnaires to allow for objective assessment and comparison across institutions. Measurement was therefore central to the study because the researcher intended to determine patterns, relationships and trends in QA practices using numerical data obtained from respondents. The use of quantitative instruments and statistical procedures enabled the researcher to generate findings that were observable, measurable, and capable of empirical verification. This aligns with the assumptions of positivism, which emphasise objectivity, quantification, neutrality, and scientific investigation of social phenomena.

Quantitative research methods are employed in this philosophy because they ensure objectivity and utilise quantitative instruments, including various statistical approaches, for data analysis and interpretation. As such, the study's analyses and findings are quantifiable and observable (Rauteda, 2025). The research is relevant to positivism because it examined actual data on QA practices in HE in Ghana with a focus on private universities.

4.3.2 Social Constructivism/Interpretivism

van Uhm (2018), postulate that social constructivists perceptions of the universe are shaped by our societal constructs instead of literal depiction of reality and that what we know is limited to these constructions. Defined by qualitative knowledge and subjectivity, Interpretivism underscores that humans differ from objective experiences since they construct meanings. It remains valid that individuals and their societies cannot be investigated in similar manner as natural realities; thus, research in human studies have to be different from research in the physical sciences instead of an attempt to embrace the approaches of the latter.

Individuals from diverse traditional contexts, conditions and eras create and experience different social realities, each with its own unique set of meanings. Interpretivists are analytical of the positivists' pursuit of universal laws arguing that human behaviour is context dependent. They contend that the multifaceted nature of human reality is treated entirely as rigid universal rules if the rich insight into humanity is lost (Ali et al., 2021). To support this, Mayer (2015), in his study indicated that interpretivism adopts the subjectivist stance because it aims to deduce the multidimensional and complex meanings within complex environment.

Positivism was chosen over interpretivism for several reasons that align with the nature and goals of the study. Firstly, positivism is best suited for research that seeks to explain phenomena through objective measurement and quantifiable data. It assumes that there is an objective reality that can be observed, measured, and quantified independently of the researcher (Ikram & Kenayathulla, 2022). This is crucial for studies aiming for statistical analysis and generalisation, as it allows for the testing of hypotheses, the establishment of generalisable findings, and the identification of causal relationships. In contrast, interpretivism focuses on understanding the meaning and experiences of participants, assuming that reality is socially constructed and subjective (Pervin & Mokhtar, 2022). It relies on unstructured or semi-structured methods, such as interviews and focus groups, which are more suitable for qualitative data. While interpretivism provides rich, detailed insights into human experiences, it does not align with the study's aim of statistical analysis and broad generalisations.

Furthermore, positivism's emphasis on objective and unbiased reporting of findings aims to minimise the researcher's influence on the data (Park et al., 2020). On the other hand, interpretivism typically avoids the manipulation of variables and prioritises depth and richness of understanding over replicability, often producing unique and context-specific insights. This approach is more about observing phenomena in natural settings to understand context and meanings, which is not the primary aim of studies that require precise measurement and quantification.

4.3.3 Critical Paradigm

Critical paradigm, often termed as transformation paradigm (Held, 2019; Kivunja & Kuyini 2017), can be drawn to critical theory (Dodge, 2015). A study conducted by Dodge (2015) indicated that, critical paradigm began due to the breaking of dominate paradigms in humanities and inquiry, connected with the student demonstrations, peace movement, civil rights, feminists movements and counter-culture of the 1960s. A critical theory paradigm is focused on fairness and legitimacy concerns related to interest, inclusion, ideology, repression, voice, power, representation, participation, focusing on both the political and practical aspects (Cohen et al.,2017). It pertains to the liberty of groups and individuals in an egalitarian/democratic society (Cohen et al., 2017; Held, 2019). According to Hyde (2018), the result of research within this school of thought is, mainly concerned with the revelation of inequity through accounts of social inequality and oppression, with the aim of bringing about

societal change. This paradigm adopts the qualitative method and also relies on dialogic methods that combine observation and interviews.

4.3.4 Pragmatism

Pragmatism has functioned as established philosophical basis for synthesising mixed methods study because it supports the purposeful integration of quantitative and qualitative approaches to address complex research problems (Gorard & Taylor, 2004; Held, 2019; Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004; Maarouf, 2019; Morgan, 2007). This paradigm prioritises the research question and the practical consequences of inquiry over strict adherence to a single ontological or epistemological position, thereby justifying the use of multiple methods within the same study. For instance, Maarouf (2019) argued that pragmatism suggests that research grounded in practical outcomes is "intersubjective," which implies being both objective and subjective simultaneously, accepting both the existence of a single truth and diverse perspectives of this truth by individual. This position acknowledges the existence of an external reality while also accepting that individuals may hold multiple interpretations of that reality. In mixed methods research, this assumption legitimises the combination of quantitative techniques, which seek to measure observable patterns, and qualitative approaches, which explore participants' meanings and experiences. Also, Maarouf (2019) stated that within pragmatism, reality is understood as multifaceted and diverse meanwhile, researchers prefer the perspective that aligns with their research purposes. Though it is essential to eschew being subjective or influence the subject of inquiry, it is equally crucial to comprehend the perspectives of the players in society.

As Maarouf (2019) discussed in his study, to enable pragmatic researchers to adopt and utilise several ontological positions, pragmatism should stem from an ontological viewpoint positioned in between objective neutrality and subjective interpretation. The cycle of reality construction is grounded on the notion that there exist a single reality and diverse perceptions in the minds of social actors. From the cycle of reality, there exits only one reality within a specific circumstance and at a precise moment. What appears real to social actors depends on the circumstance, which indicates that shifting the circumstances varies the truth, and the presence of several circumstances means the occurrence of several realities.

There is also a chance that these notions may diverge or converge. Additionally, documents and structures possess a material character that renders them actual realities, which may be indisputable; nonetheless, their interpretation can vary. These parts create different perspectives that can come together, leading to a better insight into the selected universities.

This study aims to clarify these eventualities, providing policymakers and practitioners with a thorough comprehension of the different aspects of research enhancing techniques, which has the potential to function as a mechanism for advancing research.

4.4 RESEARCH APPROACH

4.4.1 Quantitative Approach

A methodological and theoretical approach to producing data is referred to as methodology (Evans et al., 2017). Smith (2012) describes a research technique as a theory guiding the conduct of an investigation. A method for examining an inquiry's underlying presumptions, guiding concepts, and workings is called research methodology (Hammond & Wellington, 2012). It discusses the proper methods for conducting research. This study examines QA practices in HE in Ghana, employing a quantitative research methodology. Quantitative research methodology involves measuring the prevalence of "known" phenomena and central patterns of association, including inferences of causality of QA practices in HE (Panya & Nyarwath, 2022).

Quantitative research is characterised by a systematic and structured approach to data collection and analysis, often involving the use of statistical tools to test hypotheses and examine relationships between variables (Mohajan, 2020). This approach is particularly suitable for studies aiming to establish patterns, test theories and make predictions based on empirical data. In the context of this study, the quantitative methodology was chosen because it allows for a comprehensive assessment of QA practices through the generation of numerical data from a representative sample of HEIs in Ghana. This data is then analysed to identify key trends, correlations and potential causal links between different QA measures and educational outcomes.

The study employed a survey-based data collection method, utilising structured questionnaires designed to gather specific information on various aspects of QA practices. The questionnaire development was guided by established frameworks and previous research in the field, ensuring that the questions are relevant, clear and capable of eliciting reliable and valid responses. The survey was distributed to registrars, QA staff, deans of students, lecturers and students executives in HEIs across Ghana, aiming for a diverse and representative sample.

The choice of a quantitative research approach is justified by the study's objectives, which include measuring the extent of QA practices and determining their effect on the quality of HE

in Ghana. Quantitative methods are well-suited for these purposes, as they enable the generalisation of findings from the sample to the broader population and the formulation of data-driven recommendations for policy and practice improvements (Duckett, 2021).

The study employed a quantitative research approach, as it encourages objectivity and utilises quantitative instruments, such as statistical methods, to assess data. To assess Ghana's methods of ensuring quality in HE, a quantitative research technique was suitable. The methodology is centred on gathering numerical data and utilising statistical tools to evaluate it to ascertain the relationship between variables (Mohajan, 2020). In comparison to qualitative research, the outcomes from the quantitative method are more reliable, valid, fair, accurate, and generalisable (Duckett, 2021; Saunders et al., 2012).

Quantitative research seeks to collect numerical data to generalise it across populations from which it was drawn or to explain a phenomenon (Ahmad, 2019). The major purpose of quantitative research is to assess the relationship between variables as well as the cause-and-effect relationship. It also highlights how one component affects another in a specific context (Mohajan, 2020). Quantitative research is concerned with statistics and unchanging facts, as well as exact, convergent thinking rather than divergent reasoning, and employs numbers, logic and an objective mindset (Ahmad, 2019). The primary advantage of employing a quantitative method is that it enables the replication of the same occurrences, resulting in a high degree of reliability. Since the purpose of this study was to examine QA practices in HE in Ghana, the quantitative technique is considered appropriate.

Although quantitative research focuses on numerical measurement and statistical relationships, this does not suggest that social phenomena lack complexity. Rather, the quantitative approach captures complexity by measuring multiple dimensions of a phenomenon systematically across a large population. In this study, complexities associated with QA practices in private universities in Ghana were captured through different measurable variables, including regulatory compliance, stakeholder involvement, institutional practices, infrastructure and implementation challenges. The use of structured questionnaires and statistical analysis enabled the researcher to examine patterns, relationships and variations in these dimensions across institutions in a systematic and objective manner.

4.4.2 Qualitative Approach

According to Kusi (2012), the goal of qualitative research is to comprehend "depth" as opposed to "breadth" or to investigate a phenomenon in more detail. According to Merriam and Tisdell (2015), researchers are interested in learning how individuals interpret their experiences and the world around them. In other words, they want to know how people create meaning. Historical research, phenomenological study, ethnographic study, and interpretive study are only a few of the numerous research methodologies that fall under the broad category of qualitative research. The qualitative approach guarantees the collection of opinions. This method helps clarify challenges that survey research could not capture, while also providing a way to characterise the data in a real-life context and reflect participants' opinions (Savin-Baden & Major, 2023)

The primary strength of the qualitative approach is its ability to capture and investigate the complexity of a phenomenon, thereby facilitating a deeper understanding. This is what large-scale quantitative research studies, which typically involve surveys, are unable to accomplish, as they typically gather surface-level data to generalise about a phenomenon (Kusi, 2012; Savin-Baden & Major, 2023). However, this does not imply that quantitative research cannot examine complex phenomena. Quantitative studies capture complexity differently by measuring multiple variables and analysing relationships among them across larger populations. In the context of the current study, the researcher focused on assessing measurable dimensions of QA practices across private universities in Ghana rather than exploring individual meanings and experiences in depth. Therefore, the quantitative approach was considered more appropriate because the study sought to generate objective, measurable and generalisable findings regarding QA practices in HE in Ghana. The findings helped to enhance practice because the method is action-centred (Cohen et al., 2017). The fact that the results are hard to generalise has been one criticism levelled against the qualitative method, despite its many advantages. This is because studies of this kind frequently focus on one or a limited number of examples of a phenomenon and use a tiny sample size.

In contrast, the current quantitative study employed a larger and more representative sample, which enhanced the possibility of generalising the findings to private universities in Ghana. The use of standardised questionnaires and statistical analysis also strengthened the reliability, consistency and comparability of the findings across institutions.

4.5 RESEARCH DESIGN

A descriptive cross-sectional survey was the most appropriate research strategy for this study, as it included surveys of staff and student opinions on the relevant themes. To address the research questions, the descriptive study style necessitated the systematic collection of data about individuals (Cohen et al., 2017). In addition to describing the nature of phenomena, descriptive research establishes and characterises the present state of affairs. According to Rassel et al. (2020), the goal of descriptive research is to test a hypothesis or provide information about a subject's current situation. The descriptive survey method is employed in this study due to the significance of the subjects to the field of education. Descriptive research, according to scholars such as Savin-Baden and Major (2023), facilitates the study and proposal of solutions for current issues involving students, teachers, administrators, curriculum, the teaching/learning process, and similar concerns. The advantage of the descriptive survey design employed in this study is that it enables the collection of data from a sizeable population. As such, it was considered the most suitable design for this study's population of students and lecturers spread across a wide geographic area. To mitigate the drawbacks of employing a descriptive survey, the questionnaire was pilot tested. Consequently, the researcher was able to clarify and reframe unclear information.

4.6 POPULATION

The study's population consisted of all 105 private universities in Ghana. The respondents included 105 registrars, 420 QA staff, 105 deans of students, 3 360 lecturers, and 1 050 students (SRC executives) from all participating institutions because they typically play a vital role in setting QA policies and practices. The study focused on private universities in the country rather than public universities due to the prevailing problems facing the educational system that appears to be increasing in private universities than in public HEIs. The HEIs are expanding significantly with broad coverage and should be cost-effective and of high academic quality.

4.7 SAMPLING METHOD AND PROCEDURE

The study purposively sampled 10 chartered private institutions that had operated for at least 10 years and were undergoing reaccreditation processes because such institutions were considered more likely to have well-established quality assurance structures and sufficient experience in implementing QA practices. Institutions with longer years of operation were

deemed capable of providing richer and more reliable information regarding the effectiveness, challenges and sustainability of quality assurance mechanisms. In addition, selecting institutions involved in reaccreditation ensured that participants had current and practical engagement with QA requirements and procedures, making them suitable for generating relevant data to address the objectives of the study. The choice of using these particular private universities was grounded on their compliance with the National Accreditation Board's Legislative Instrument (NAB LI 1984) requirement that private university institutions operating for ten years must obtain an executive order to function as fully developed private university.

The sample consisted of 300 respondents from the 10 selected private universities in Ghana. According to Krejcie and Morgan (1970), the minimum sample size for a population of 250 QA staff and lecturers is 152. The study also employed the census sampling technique, which involves collecting data from all members of a targeted population rather than selecting only a sample. This method was used to include all 10 QA heads, 10 registrars and 10 deans of students from the selected private institutions. The use of census sampling ensured that every relevant participant within these categories was represented, thereby increasing the comprehensiveness, accuracy, and reliability of the data collected for the study. The use of a census survey for the QA heads, registrars and deans of students was justified because the researcher could cover all respondents (Kumar, 2019; Cooper et al., 2020). The researcher further used purposive sampling to select 100 SRC executives from various faculties across the 10 selected universities. This technique was considered appropriate because the SRC executives were believed to possess relevant knowledge and first-hand experience regarding student concerns and institutional quality assurance practices within their respective faculties. Again, the researcher having done the survey, purposively selected additional 18 lecturers so they could give deeper insight into the subject under study. They were chosen because they had ones worked directly under the QA offices in their institution. The respondents were distributed across the 10 universities to ensure broader representation and to capture diverse perspectives on quality assurance practices in the selected institutions. This resulted in a total sample size of 300. Table 4.1 presents the distribution of respondents for the study.

Table 4.1: Distribution of Respondents Sampled for the Study

Schools	Population	Sample Size
University A	27	16
University B	32	19
University C	29	18
University D	26	16
University E	28	17
University F	24	15
University G	30	18
University H	21	13
University I	18	11
University J	15	9
QA Heads	-	10
Deans	-	10
Registrars	-	10
SRC Executives	-	100
Additional Lecturers	-	18
Total		300

Source: Fieldwork (2023)

According to Lakens (2022), when the population size is too large, the researcher should collect data from a smaller group or subset of the population so that the data acquired is representative of the whole population being studied. The number of QA staff and lecturers across universities was not equal. To determine the sample size for each university, the proportionate stratified sampling method was used. In selecting QA staff and lecturers at random from each stratum, thus the selected universities, the lottery method was used. This plan was implemented to guarantee that each QA staff and lecturers had an equal chance of being selected.

The proportion of QA staff and lecturers per university was calculated by dividing each university's total by the overall population (250) and multiplying the result by the sample size (152). For example, University C had 29 QA staff and lecturers, which was divided by the total of 250 QA staff from the 10 universities and then multiplied by the 152 QA staff and lecturers sampled. Eighteen QA staff and lecturers were selected from this institution (Pandey & Pandey, 2021). The process was repeated until each university had achieved its proportional representation of QA staff and lecturers.

The researcher then proceeded to select a sample unit from each university after calculating the total number of sampled QA staff and lecturers. Each university's sample unit was chosen by a lottery method. This ensured that all members of the target population group had an equal chance of being selected to participate in the sample. The list of QA staff and lecturers was obtained from the selected universities. The numbers were assigned to the QA staff and lecturers on pieces of paper and placed in a basket. They were chosen and then returned to the basket. When a number was picked a second time, it was not recorded. The technique continued until the sample size for QA staff and lecturers was established.

4.8 DATA COLLECTION PROCEDURES

4.8.1 Instrumentation

The questionnaire was chosen because it is assumed to be the most efficient technique for gathering a substantial amount of data from respondents. As a questionnaire primarily focuses on self-reporting and is therefore capable of eliciting more accurate responses, it also has the inherent attribute of protecting respondents' identities and privacy. Additionally, the questionnaire was used because it is typically deemed to be useful when the sample size is large enough and renders it challenging or expensive to interview every research participant due to time or money restrictions (Mohajan, 2020). The questionnaire, as a tool, however, has some drawbacks, as the way some items are phrased or the use of terminology with multiple definitions may cause misunderstandings, resulting in replies that are not what the researcher intended. However, the researcher made sure that all factors that could affect the questionnaire's validity and reliability were taken into account. These validated instruments were adapted for the study (Atsu, 2015, Ginns et al., 2002, Kember & Leung, 2009, Van Damme, 2004).

The questionnaire (Appendix I) included a brief introduction detailing how respondents should respond, the type of data sought from them, instructions for completing the questionnaires, and a promise that the anonymity of respondents' replies would be protected. A systematic, four-point Likert-type scale was used to construct the questionnaire. Most of its themes focused on the state of QA methods, how those practices were perceived, compliance with the GTEC criteria, the effect on students' academic performance and satisfaction, and the difficulties that QA officers encountered. Academic performance and student satisfaction were measured using self-reported responses obtained through structured questionnaire items on a four-point Likert scale. On a scale ranging from 1 to 4, respondents were asked to check the corresponding

column to indicate their level of agreement with the statements. Despite the varying responsibilities of the respondents, the same assessment instrument was employed with minor modifications to the items, tailored to reflect their specific roles as stakeholders of QA. These modifications did not change the structured quantitative nature of the questionnaire into a fully open-ended instrument. Rather, the modifications involved adjusting the wording of some items to suit the specific categories of respondents, such as registrars, QA staff, lecturers, deans of students, and students, while maintaining the same underlying themes and response structure. In addition to the Likert-scale items, a few open-ended items such as "Others (please specify)" and "If any other (Specify)" were included to allow respondents to provide additional explanations, views, experiences, and perspectives that were not fully captured by the closed-ended questions.

The primary aim was to gather the respondents' views on QA practices within their institutions, aligned with global standards for QA. The respondents' views, experiences, and perspectives were therefore generated mainly through the structured Likert-scale items, which measured their perceptions and levels of agreement regarding QA practices, while the limited open-ended items provided respondents with the opportunity to elaborate on issues not adequately reflected in the fixed response categories. This ensured that the study maintained its quantitative orientation while still allowing respondents to provide additional contextual insights where necessary. This approach successfully provided valuable insights into their experiences and perspectives.

4.8.2 Data Collection Techniques

To confirm the validity of the study, ethical clearance letter (Appendix II) from the University of South Africa, College of Education was presented prior to administering the questionnaire. In contacting potential participants for data collection at their universities, the presidents of private universities received copies of the ethical clearance letter. Copies of the ethical clearance letter and the permission letter (Appendix III), inviting individuals who resided within the research area to partake in the study, were distributed to all participants along with the participant consent form (Appendix IV) and the permission letter. The participants' familiarity with the study's topic (themes) was the primary objective.

The aims of the study were made clear to the respondents, and they were encouraged to participate by being provided with information on how to complete the questionnaires. After making respondents aware of the aim of the study, an appropriate day and time were arranged

for administering the questionnaire. The administration of the questionnaire was conducted directly by the researcher through face-to-face interaction with the respondents within their respective institutions. Although the presidents of the private universities as part of their institutional protocol assisted in facilitating access to participants, the actual administration and collection of the questionnaires were personally undertaken by the researcher. The researcher was physically present during the administration process to provide explanations and clarification where necessary.

To comply with research ethics, a cover letter was included in the questionnaire seeking complete cooperation and assuring respondents that their confidentiality and anonymity would be guaranteed. Before compiling all the responses, the respondents were informed that they had 20 minutes to complete the survey. The 20-minute duration was considered adequate because the questionnaire consisted mainly of structured Likert-scale and close-ended items, which required respondents to indicate their level of agreement or select appropriate responses. The estimated completion time was determined during the pilot testing stage, where it was observed that most respondents were able to complete the questionnaire within approximately 15 to 20 minutes without difficulty. During the actual data collection process, most participants completed the questionnaire within the allocated time, although a few respondents required slightly additional time to review and complete some sections of the instrument. The total number of days allocated to each institution for data collection did not exceed three. If a respondent had any queries about the data collection process that they did not fully understand, the researcher was there to help. The researcher's physical presence during the data collection process made it possible to respond immediately to participants' concerns and ensure that the questionnaires were properly completed before collection.

4.9 RELIABILITY AND VALIDITY

To evaluate the instrument's validity and reliability, questionnaires were administered in a pilot study at a private institution located in the Ashanti Region. Given that there are more private universities in the Ashanti Region than everywhere else in the country, that fact was taken into account when selecting a pilot institution. Furthermore, private institutions in the region share similar characteristics with those in other parts of the country, in terms of enrolment levels and staff members who are qualified to lead both academically and administratively.

To determine whether the instrument used for pilot testing was valid and reliable, I consulted with my supervisor. He helped me analyse the validity and reliability of the instrument for the

study and ensured that the surveys designed were relevant to the subjects of my research. The SPSS was used to analyse quantitative data. The questionnaires were coded and entered for analysis using SPSS. When the results were evaluated, a standardised Cronbach's Alpha Coefficient of at least .80 was obtained for each of the questionnaire's questions. According to Agbevanu (2012), the overall alpha coefficient criteria are as follows: ">.9- Excellent, >.8- Good, >.7- Acceptable, >.6- Questionable, >.5- Poor, and .4-Very poor" (p. 74). These standards were also provided by George and Mallery (2018).

4.10 DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

The information gathered from the respondents was examined to ensure that the underlying presumptions of normality and homogeneity were not violated. Any incomplete questionnaires were removed from data collection through sorting. The following score keys were applied to classify the valid polls into appropriate groups: strongly disagree (1), disagree (2), agree (3), and strongly agree (4). These were analysed using SPSS. Data was analysed through descriptive and some inferential statistics. The primary variables and various rankings of statements among respondents can both be reported through the statistics that were used. The demographic makeup of the respondents was examined using percentages and frequencies. For research question four, the ordinal probit model was considered appropriate because the dependent variables, academic performance and student satisfaction, were measured as ordered categorical responses derived from Likert-scale items. The model assumes the existence of an underlying latent continuous variable that influences observed ordinal outcomes. Diagnostic checks such as multicollinearity assessment and model fit statistics were examined to ensure the suitability and robustness of the ordinal probit estimates. Positive coefficients indicate an increased likelihood of respondents falling into higher categories of the dependent variable, whereas negative coefficients indicate a decreased likelihood. Table 4.2 below shows the summary of the data analysis.

Table 4.2: Summary of Data Analysis

	Research Question/ Hypothesis	Data Analysis Technique
1.	What is the state of QA practices among private universities in Ghana?	Mean and Standard Deviation
2.	What is the perception of staff/students of private universities in Ghana on the role of QA?	Mean and Standard Deviation

3.	To what extent do private universities in Ghana align with Ghana Tertiary Education Commission (GTEC) regulations on QA?	Percentages and Frequencies
4.	What is the effect of QA on Students' academic performance and satisfaction?	Ordinal Probit Regression
5.	What are the challenges faced by private universities in Ghana in complying with quality assurance regulations?	Percentages and Frequencies

Source: Author's Construct (2023)

4.11 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

The following procedures were implemented to ensure that the research ethics were upheld throughout the research process. The researcher applied for ethical clearance to the Research Ethics Committee of the College of Education at UNISA for approval (Appendix II). This required the researcher to take measures that would safeguard the respondents' rights and uphold the strictest level of confidentiality. The researcher sought to ensure that the respondents' privacy was safeguarded. The purpose of data collection was explained to the respondents before it commenced. They were informed that they had the option to decline or withdraw from the study without facing any repercussions.

Regarding confidentiality, the respondents' right to disagree with the study's conclusions was respected. Moreover, the names of the respondents and any other private or delicate information were withheld. Participants were informed that participation was completely optional and that declining to participate would incur no penalties or forfeiture of benefits to which they were entitled. The respondents were further informed that they were free to withdraw their participation at any moment without suffering any retribution.

4.12 LIMITATIONS AND DELIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

4.12.1 Limitations of the Study

The questionnaire was used to gather data for the investigation. However, the challenge is that questionnaires usually offer little room for spontaneity or free expression for respondents when trying to pinpoint the underlying issues and corrective actions. To minimise the impact of this limitation, the questionnaire included a few open-ended items such as "Others (please specify)" and "If any other (Specify)" to provide respondents with the opportunity to elaborate on issues that were not fully captured by the close-ended items. In addition, the questionnaire items were carefully designed and adapted from validated instruments to ensure clarity, relevance, and comprehensiveness. The researcher was also physically present during the administration of

the questionnaires to provide clarification where necessary and to ensure that respondents clearly understood the items before responding.

Additional constraint was the non-probability sampling method used to select the QA leaders, registrars, students and deans of students at different institutions. Hence, the samples it produced were less accurate and representative than those obtained using probability sampling. Despite this limitation, efforts were made to minimise its effect on the findings by selecting participants who possessed adequate knowledge, experience, and direct involvement in QA practices within their institutions. The study also included respondents from different categories of stakeholders and multiple private universities to improve diversity and obtain broader perspectives on QA practices in HE in Ghana. Furthermore, the relatively large sample size strengthened the credibility and usefulness of the findings.

4.12.2 Delimitation of the Study

The sole list used for this study was the National Accreditation Board's list of approved private institutions in Ghana. Due to the emergence of private institutions, access to HE has increased. The Ghana Tertiary Education Commission (GTEC) anticipates that this trend will continue, as 82% of universities in Ghana are privately owned. Again, the study was limited to students, registrars, lectures, deans of students and heads of QA and staff, from various institutions, as they were prominent within the organisation and had access to vital information about it. They were intimately involved in the institutions' day-to-day operations, and as such, their perspectives were possibly unique inside the organisations. Specifically, registrars are well-versed in compliance with accreditation standards, while deans of students can offer insights into student engagement and satisfaction. The heads of QA and staff are directly responsible for developing QA frameworks and providing insights into best practices and the challenges faced during implementation. Lecturers contribute by sharing their experiences in curriculum delivery and assessment methods, as well as highlighting how QA measures impact teaching and learning. Students, on the other hand, bring firsthand experiences of the educational environment and provide feedback on the effectiveness of QA measures from the learner's perspective.

4.13 CHAPTER SUMMARY

The study was situated within the positivist paradigm, which posits that an objective reality exists that can be observed and measured. To align with this framework, the research employed

a quantitative approach, fostering objectivity and utilising quantitative instruments to analyse data effectively. This study adopted a descriptive survey design to assess QA practices in HE in Ghana. Accordingly, a questionnaire served as a primary instrument for data collection from various respondent groups, including QA staff, registrars and student deans. The questionnaire supplied comprehensive information and ensured data validation. To analyse the data, both descriptive and inferential statistics were employed. Data on demographic variables, adherence to GTEC requirements and difficulty in adhering to GTEC rules and requirements were analysed using percentages and frequencies. In contrast, data on the handling of QA and perceptions of QA roles were analysed using means and standard deviations. Moreover, ordinal probit regression was used to analyse data on the effect of QA on students' academic performance and satisfaction. The following chapter focuses on the research findings and discussion.

CHAPTER 5

DATA PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

5.1 INTRODUCTION

The previous chapter provided an overview of the research paradigms and associated methodologies. The methods for analysing quantitative and qualitative data were also discussed. However, the quantitative method of analysing data was deemed appropriate for this study. The primary aim of this study is to examine QA practices in HE in Ghana, with a specific focus on private universities. To achieve this, the study gathered the perceptions of lecturers, students, registrars, heads of QA and deans of students regarding QA practices in HE. The research findings aim to inform key stakeholders, including the MoE, the National Accreditation and Curriculum Assessment Authority (NaCCA), the Ghana Tertiary Education Commission (GTEC) and academic institutions, on policy directions and best practices in QA. The goal is to enhance the quality of teaching and learning in private institutions and to recommend to the Government of Ghana the need to establish effective QA frameworks. Data gathered from the respondents were analysed using IBM SPSS version 26. This chapter begins with an analysis of valid response rates, followed by an examination of quantitative data, starting with the presentation of biographical information. The subsequent sections present the main results of the quantitative data analysis, organised according to the research questions and categorised by the different types of respondents. Finally, the chapter concludes with a summary of the analysis of results and the results are reported with regards to the research questions indicated below.

1. What is the state of QA practices among private universities in Ghana?
2. How do staff and students at private universities in Ghana perceive the role of QA?
3. To what extent do private universities in Ghana comply with the Ghana Tertiary Education Commission (GTEC) regulations on QA?
4. How does QA affect students' academic performance and satisfaction?
5. What challenges do private universities in Ghana face in complying with QA regulations?

5.2 VALID RESPONSE RATES

This section presents the response rates from different categories of 281 respondents who shared their experiences on QA practices in Ghanaian HE. The initial sampling plan aimed to recruit 300 students, QA heads and staff, lecturers, deans of students and registrars from private

universities. Although the target was not fully met, the actual response rate of 93.66% is considered satisfactory. In the context of the above discussion, the data presented next encompasses both dimensions of acceptable response rates and sample size.

Table 5.1: Response Rates of Respondents

Respondents	Sample Size	Response	Response Rates (%)
Lecturers	170	163	95.88
Students	100	91	91.00
QA Officers (Heads)	10	10	100.00
Registrars	10	9	90.00
Dean of Students	10	8	80.00
Total	**300**	**281**	**93.66**

Source: Fieldwork (2024)

Table 5.1 provides an analysis of the response rates by the respondents' category. The data collection process ran over four months, during which the researcher maintained regular communication with the registrars and coordinators via email and in-person visits.

The high response rate achieved in this study may be attributed to several factors. First, the researcher maintained constant communication with institutional coordinators, registrars, and participants throughout the data collection period. This regular follow-up through emails and physical visits helped to remind participants about the importance of the study and encouraged them to complete and return the questionnaires. Second, the researcher personally administered and collected many of the questionnaires, which increased participant confidence and reduced the likelihood of non-response. Third, the topic of QA practices was considered relevant and important by many of the respondents because it directly related to their institutional responsibilities and academic experiences within private universities.

Despite these efforts, some questionnaires were returned incomplete, while others were not returned at all. The average response rate was 93.66%, which exceeds the commonly accepted threshold of 60% (Johnson & Wislar, 2012). This overall response rate suggests that the study's findings are reliable and representative of the target population. Johnson and Wislar (2012) argue that the 60% threshold is only a rough guideline and that response rates should be evaluated in conjunction with other measures of survey quality.

The high response rate may also suggest that respondents were interested in issues relating to QA practices and were willing to contribute to discussions aimed at improving the quality of

HE in Ghana. From a methodological perspective, high response rates are often associated with improved data quality, reduced non-response bias, and increased confidence in the representativeness of the findings. The response rate achieved in this study therefore strengthens the credibility and trustworthiness of the quantitative findings presented in the subsequent sections. The high response rate may further indicate that QA issues are perceived by stakeholders in private universities as important institutional concerns directly linked to academic quality, institutional accountability, and regulatory compliance. This suggests a strong level of stakeholder awareness and engagement with QA practices within the participating institutions, which may have contributed to respondents' willingness to participate in the study.

5.3 BACKGROUND CHARACTERISTICS OF RESPONDENTS

The demographic characteristics of the respondents are presented in this section to provide a framework for interpreting the research findings. Specifically, the analysis focuses on gender distribution, educational qualifications, years of experience in their current posts, and the various positions occupied by the respondents. The presentation of the biographical information was important because it provided contextual understanding of the respondents who participated in the study and assisted in assessing the credibility and relevance of their responses regarding QA practices in private universities in Ghana. The background characteristics helped to show whether the respondents possessed the academic qualifications, professional roles, and institutional experience required to provide informed responses on QA issues. The information also assisted in understanding the diversity and representativeness of the respondents involved in the study. The demographic variables were primarily intended to provide descriptive and contextual understanding of the respondent categories rather than serve as independent analytical variables.

5.3.1 Gender of Respondents

This part of the analysis aimed to identify any gender disparities among the respondents. The gender distribution was useful in describing the composition of the respondents and in showing the extent to which different gender groups were represented in the study. This information provided context for understanding the perspectives captured in the study and enhanced the transparency of the research process. Table 5.2 presents the breakdown of respondents by gender.

Table 5.2: Distribution of Respondents by Gender

Gender	N	(%)
Male	192	68.3
Female	89	31.7
Total	**281**	**100.0**

Source: Fieldwork (2024)

As presented in Table 5.2, a total of 281 respondents participated in the study, with 192 (68.3%) identifying as male and 89 (31.7%) identifying as female. This gender disparity is significant, as the male respondents constituted nearly two-thirds of the total sample. The gender imbalance observed in the study was not deliberately intended by the researcher but rather reflected the actual distribution and availability of respondents within the selected private universities during the data collection process. The disparity may partly be attributed to the relatively higher number of male staff and institutional administrators occupying academic and managerial positions within some private universities in Ghana. In addition, the study relied on voluntary participation, and more male respondents were available during the period of data collection. Therefore, the imbalance should not necessarily be interpreted as a sampling error but as a reflection of the demographic realities within the participating institutions. The gender distribution of the respondents is a significant consideration in this study, as it may have implications for the generalisability of the findings. From a broader perspective, the gender disparity may also reflect existing structural and institutional patterns within HE in Ghana, where males may dominate certain academic, leadership, and administrative positions. This finding may therefore have implications for understanding participation and representation within QA structures in private universities. Although the study did not specifically examine gender differences in QA perceptions, the gender composition of respondents provides important contextual insight into the institutional environment within which QA practices operate. Furthermore, the gender imbalance may reflect broader societal or institutional trends that warrant further investigation.

5.3.2 Respondents' Highest Educational Qualification

The examination of respondents' academic credentials constitutes an important aspect of this study, as it provides insight into the educational backgrounds of deans of students, lecturers, QA heads and registrars in private universities. The educational qualification of respondents was relevant because QA practices in HE requires professional and academic understanding of institutional quality standards, accreditation requirements, and educational management. The

qualifications therefore helped to establish that the respondents possessed the necessary academic background to provide informed responses on QA practices in private universities. Table 5.3 presents the distribution of respondents by their highest educational qualifications, except for 91 student participants who did not possess any academic qualifications at the time of the study.

Table 5.3: Distribution of Respondents by Highest Educational Qualifications

Educational Qualification	N	(%)
PhD	45	23.68
MBA/MSc/MA/MPhil/M.Ed	138	72.63
BBA/BSc/BA/B.Ed.	7	3.68
Total	**190**	**100.0**

Source: Fieldwork (2024)

An analysis of Table 5.3 reveals that a significant proportion of respondents (72.63%) possessed a master's degree (MBA/MSc/MA/MPhil/M.Ed.), while 23.68% held a doctoral degree (PhD). Furthermore, a smaller percentage (3.68%) of respondents possessed a bachelor's degree (B.Ed./BA/BSc/BBA). The data presented in this section have significant implications for the provision of quality education in private universities. The presence of most respondents with advanced degrees suggests that lecturers in private universities possess the requisite academic qualifications to deliver high-quality teaching and learning. This is a crucial factor in maintaining academic standards and providing quality education in private universities.

5.3.3 Positions held by Respondents

Table 5.4 presents the distribution of respondents by their occupations or positions they held within their universities. The positions occupied by respondents were important for interpreting the findings because different stakeholders perform different functions within QA systems in HE. Including lecturers, students, QA heads, registrars, and deans of students ensured that the study captured perspectives from individuals directly involved in teaching, administration, student affairs, and institutional quality management. This strengthened the breadth and credibility of the findings.

Table 5.4: Distribution of the Respondents by Position Held

Position held	N	(%)
Deans of Students	8	2.8
Lecturers	163	62.7
Head of QA	10	3.6
Registrar	9	3.2
Students	91	26.2
Total	**281**	**100.0**

Source: Fieldwork (2024)

Table 5.4 reveals that a large proportion of respondents (62.7%) occupied the position of lecturer, followed by students (26.2%). The remaining respondents were registrars (3.2%), deans of students (2.8%), and QA heads (3.6%). The dominance of lecturers among the respondents may not necessarily be unusual because lecturers generally constitute the largest professional group within most HE institutions. In many universities, academic staff outnumber administrative and managerial staff because teaching, learning, assessment, supervision, and curriculum delivery require a larger academic workforce. The higher proportion of lecturers in this study therefore reflects the staffing structure and operational realities of private universities in Ghana rather than a sampling imbalance. This data shows the dominance of lecturers among the respondents, which may have implications for the interpretation of the study's findings. As they constituted the largest proportion of respondents, the lecturers could potentially influence the study's outcomes, particularly regarding the subject of teaching and learning.

From a broader perspective, the finding may suggest that lecturers occupy a central position in the implementation and experience of QA practices within private universities. Since lecturers are directly involved in curriculum delivery, assessment, student evaluation, and academic quality processes, their perspectives are particularly important in understanding the effectiveness of QA systems in HE. The finding therefore reinforces the institutional importance of academic staff in sustaining QA practices and maintaining educational standards within private universities in Ghana. However, the diversity of respondents across various professional categories could enhance the study's validity and generalisability, contributing to the strength of the findings.

5.3.4 Years of Experience at Current Post

An examination of the respondents' years of experience in their current positions reveals their potential knowledge of QA issues in private universities. The years of experience at respondents' current posts assisted in determining whether participants had sufficient exposure to institutional QA processes and practices. Respondents with longer experience were considered more likely to possess deeper knowledge and understanding of QA implementation, institutional procedures, and compliance issues within their universities. This enhanced confidence in the quality and reliability of the responses obtained for the study. Table 5.5 presents the distribution of respondents by their years of experience in their current posts, excluding 91 students who did not possess any relevant experience.

Table 5.5: Distribution of Respondents by Years of Experience in Current Posts

Years of Experience at Current Post	n	(%)
1.5	101	53.1
6-10	89	46.8
Total	**190**	**100.0**

Source: Fieldwork (2024)

Table 5.5 shows that most respondents (53.1%) had been in their current positions for a period ranging from 1 to 5 years, while a substantial proportion (46.8%) had held their current positions for 6 to 10 years. This distribution suggests that the respondents possessed a considerable range of experience in their current roles, which had implications for their perspectives on QA issues. The findings indicate that respondents demonstrated an understanding of the QA challenges and opportunities within their respective institutions. This, in turn, lends credibility to the study's findings and enhances their generalisability.

5.4 DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

5.4.1 State of QA

To address the first research question, deans of students, lecturers, QA heads, registrars and students were asked to respond to several statements relating to the state of QA. They indicated their level of agreement (mean ranging from 3.5 to 4.0) or disagreement (mean ranging from 1.00 to 1.49) with the statements. An agreement indicates that the respondents perceived understanding of handling QA was very high, while a disagreement suggests that it was very

low. The results are summarised in Tables 5.6, 5.7, 5.8, 5.9, and 5.10. Specifically, Table 5.6 illustrates the lecturers' perceptions of their institutions on the state of QA matters.

Table 5.6: Lecturers' Perceptions on the State of QA

Statements	SD	D	A	SA	Mean	SD
	N (%)	N (%)	N (%)	N (%)	(m)	
Academic programmes are evaluated periodically	0(0)	0(0)	145(89.0)	18(11)	3.11	.31
All stakeholders are involved in programme review	0(0)	1(.6)	149(91.4)	13(8.0)	3.07	.28
Departments/faculties collaboration with international universities/ organisations	0(0)	34(20.9)	118(72.4)	11(6.7)	2.86	.51
Faculty members are well aware of QA practices/ process	0(0)	18(11.0)	121(74.2)	24(14.7)	3.04	.51
Grading system is well-defined	0(0)	1(6)	101(62.0)	61(37.4)	3.37	.50
Admission criteria for undergraduates are defined	0(0)	0(0)	120(73.6)	43(26.4)	3.26	.44
Students are involved in the assessment of lecturers	0(0)	0(0)	89(54.6)	74(45.4)	3.45	.50
Guidance and counselling are available to students	0(0)	18(11.0)	111(68.1)	34(20.9)	3.10	.56
Feedback from students is used to improve teaching and learning	0(0)	0(0)	92(56.4)	71(43.6)	3.44	.50
Good internet facility is available	18(11.0)	35(21.5)	92(56.4)	18(11.0)	2.67	.82
Related and up-to-date books are available in the library	0(0)	19(11.7)	126(77.3)	18(11.0)	2.99	.48
Departments have a well-defined mechanism for students to channel their grievances and appeals	0(0)	19(11.7)	96(58.9)	48(29.4)	3.18	.62
Financial resources are allocated efficiently and effectively	0(0)	37(22.7)	90(55.2)	36(22.1)	2.99	.67
QA practices are shared among different academic departments of the university	0(0)	1(.6)	112(68.7)	50(30.7)	3.30	.47
QA reports are available to all stakeholders	0(0)	37(22.7)	114(69.9)	12(7.4)	2.85	.53
Mean of Means/Average Sd. Deviation					**3.08**	**.51**

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

Scale: 1.00-1.49 (Very low); 1.50-2.49 (Low); 2.50-3.49 (High); 3.50-4.00 (Very High).

Source: Fieldwork (2024)

Table 5.6 presents an analysis of lecturers' perceptions of the state of QA and how these practices are conceptualised within private universities. The overall mean and a standard deviation of M = 3.08, SD = .51 indicate a high level of agreement among lecturers about the effectiveness of the state of QA practices in their institutions. The relatively low standard deviation (SD = .51) indicates a degree of consensus among lecturers regarding their perceptions of the state of QA, suggesting that most faculty members shared a similar understanding of its practices. This consistency is vital, as a unified approach to QA can enhance the effectiveness of institutional strategies (Jafarov, 2024).

The highest mean value reported was M = 3.45, SD = .50, reflecting that lecturers believed students were involved in assessing their teaching. This recognition of the importance of feedback mechanisms within QA frameworks aligns with contemporary literature that emphasises stakeholder involvement in educational quality (Romanowski, 2022). In contrast, the lowest mean value, M = 2.67, SD = 0.82, was associated with the availability of good internet facilities. This disparity highlights an important area for improvement, as access to technology is fundamental for effective QA practices in HE (Li et al., 2024). Moreover, the findings reveal that while lecturers have a positive outlook on certain QA practices, a significant gap remains in areas such as technological support and resource allocation. For example, the perceived inadequacy of internet facilities can hinder the implementation of QA processes, as effective communication and data management are essential for monitoring and evaluating academic programmes (Mireku & Bervell, 2024). Although there is a solid foundation upon which to build, challenges remain, particularly in resource availability. Addressing these gaps would be significant for enhancing the overall quality of education and ensuring that private institutions meet both internal and external quality standards. Table 5.7 shows students' responses regarding their perceptions of handling QA.

Table 5.7: Students' Perceptions on the State of QA

Statements	**SD**	**D**	**A**	**SA**	**Mean**	**SD**
	N (%)	**N (%)**	**N (%)**	**N (%)**	**(m)**	
Academic programmes are evaluated periodically.	0(0)	1(1.1)	53(58.2)	37(40.7)	3.40	.51
All stakeholders are involved in programme review.	0(0)	22(24.2)	69(75.8)	0(0)	2.76	.43
Departments/faculties have collaboration with international universities/ organisations.	3(3.3)	12(13.2)	56(61.5)	20(22.0)	3.02	.70
Faculty members are well aware of QA	0(0)	10(11.0)	50(54.9)	31(34.1)	3.23	.63

Statements	SD N (%)	D N (%)	A N (%)	SA N (%)	Mean (m)	SD
practices/ process.						
Grading system is well-defined.	0(0)	7(7.7)	32(35.2)	52(57.1)	3.49	.64
Admission criteria for undergraduates are defined.	7(7.7)	9(9.9)	43(47.3)	32(35.2)	3.10	.87
Students are involved in the assessment of lecturers.	0(0)	3(3.3)	45(49.5)	43(47.3)	3.44	.56
Guidance and counselling are available to students.	0(0)	22(24.2)	40(44)	29(31.9)	3.08	.75
Feedback from students is used to improve teaching and learning.	3(3.3)	35(38.5)	40(44.0)	13(14.3)	2.69	.76
Good internet facility is available.	30(33.0)	12(13.2)	20(22.0)	29(31.9)	2.53	1.25
Related and up-to-date books are available in the library.	6(6.6)	8(8.8)	39(42.9)	38(41.8)	3.20	.86
Departments have a well-defined mechanism for students to channel their grievances and appeals.	5(5.5)	33(36.3)	52(57.1)	1(1.1)	2.54	.62
Financial resources are allocated efficiently and effectively.	16(17.6)	41(45.1)	34(37.4)	0(0)	2.20	.72
QA practices are shared among different academic departments of the university.	3(3.3)	19(20.9)	53(58.2)	16(17.6)	2.90	.72
QA reports are available to all stakeholders.	1(1.1)	38(41.8)	39(42.9)	13(14.3)	2.70	.72
Mean of Means/Average SD. Deviation					**3.02**	**.71**

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

Scale: 1.00-1.49 (Very low); 1.50-2.49 (Low); 2.50-3.49 (High); 3.50-4.00 (Very High).

Source: Fieldwork (2024)

Table 5.7 presents an analysis of students' perceptions regarding the state and conceptualisation of QA practices within private universities. The mean of means and a standard deviation of M = 3.02, SD = .71 show a high level of agreement among students on the state of QA in their institutions.

The highest mean was M = 3.49, SD = .64 for the statement on the clarity of the grading system. This reflects students' confidence in the assessment processes, suggesting that they recognised the importance of well-defined evaluation criteria within QA frameworks. This aligns with contemporary literature that emphasises clarity and transparency in assessment as important components of educational quality (Gonsalves & Lin, 2024). Conversely, the lowest mean

value, M = 2.53, SD = 1.25, was associated with the availability of good internet facilities. This disparity highlights an area for improvement, as access to technology is fundamental for effective QA practices in HE (Khan et al., 2023). The significant standard deviation indicates that students' perceptions of internet availability varied widely, suggesting that while some students might have access, others faced significant challenges. Moreover, the findings reveal that while students had a positive view on certain QA practices, there remained a gap such as stakeholder involvement in programme reviews (M = 2.76, SD = .43) and the effective allocation of financial resources (M = 2.20, SD = .72). These could hinder the overall implementation of QA processes, as effective communication and resource management are essential for monitoring and evaluating academic programmes (Anachuna, & Obinna-Ifesi, 2024). Table 5.8 presents QA heads' perceptions of handling of QA.

Table 5.8: QA Heads' Perceptions on the State of QA

Statements	SD N (%)	D N (%)	A N (%)	SA N (%)	Mean (m)	SD
Academic programmes are evaluated periodically.	0(0)	0(0)	7(70.0)	30(30.0)	3.30	.48
All stakeholders are involved in programme review.	0(0)	0(0)	8(80.0)	2(20.0)	3.20	.42
Departments/faculties have collaboration with international universities/ organisations.	0(0)	0(0)	9(90.0)	1(10.0)	3.10	.32
Faculty members are well aware of QA practices/ processes.	0(0)	0(0)	8(80.0)	2(20.0)	3.20	.42
Grading system is well-defined.	0(0)	0(0)	2(20.0)	8(80.0)	3.80	.42
Admission criteria for undergraduates are defined.	0(0)	0(0)	4(40.0)	6(60.0)	3.60	.52
Students are involved in the assessment of lecturers.	0(0)	0(0)	2(20.0)	8(80.0)	3.80	.42
Guidance and counselling are available to students.	0(0)	0(0)	7(70.0)	3(30.0)	3.30	.48
Feedback from students is used to improve teaching and learning.	0(0)	0(0)	4(40.0)	6(60.0)	3.60	.52
Good internet facility is available.	0(0)	3(30.0)	7(70.0)	0(0)	2.70	.48
Related and up-to-date books are available in the library.	0(0)	0(0)	10(100.0)	0(0)	3.00	.00
Departments have a well-defined mechanism for students to channel their grievances and appeals.	0(0)	0(0)	4(40.0)	6(60.0)	3.60	.52
Financial resources are allocated efficiently and effectively.	0(0)	2(20.0)	7(70.0)	1(10.0)	2.90	.57
QA practices are shared among different academic departments of the university.	0(0)	0(0)	6(60.0)	4(40.0)	3.40	.52
QA reports are available to all stakeholders.	0(0)	0(0)	9(90.0)	1(10.0)	3.10	.32

Statements	SD N (%)	D N (%)	A N (%)	SA N (%)	Mean (m)	SD
Mean of Means/Average Sd. Deviation					**3.19**	**.48**

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

Scale: 1.00-1.49 (Very low); 1.50-2.49 (Low); 2.50-3.49 (High); 3.50-4.00 (Very High).

Source: Fieldwork (2024)

As reflected in Table 5.8, the overall mean score (M = 3.19, SD = .48) indicates a high perception among QA officers regarding the state of QA in their institutions. This consensus reflects a shared understanding of the importance of QA mechanisms in enhancing educational standards. The highest mean value was observed for the statement on the grading system being well-defined, with an average score of M = 3.80, SD = 0.42. This score suggests that QA officers recognised a strong framework for grading, which is essential for maintaining academic integrity and fairness in assessments. The emphasis on a well-defined grading system aligns with the literature that highlights the role of assessment clarity in educational quality (Fan & Wang, 2021). However, the lowest mean score, M = 2.70, SD = .48, pertains to the availability of good internet facilities. This finding is concerning, as access to reliable internet is fundamental for effective QA practices, particularly in an increasingly digital learning environment (Khan et al., 2023).

The gap in technological support can hinder the implementation of QA processes, as revealed by previous studies that emphasise the need for infrastructure to facilitate academic communication and data management (Anachuna & Obinna-Ifesi, 2024). Moreso, the results indicate that while QA officers perceived certain practices positively, there are notable areas for improvement. For instance, the involvement of all stakeholders in programme reviews received a mean score of M = 3.20, SD = 0.42. This suggests a recognition of the importance of inclusive decision-making processes, which are vital for enhancing educational quality (Wood, 2023). However, the findings also demonstrate that financial resource allocation is perceived less favourably, with a mean score of M = 2.90, SD = .57. This indicates a potential challenge in ensuring that resources are efficiently utilised to support QA initiatives. Efficient resource allocation is crucial for sustaining QA activities, as financial constraints can significantly impact the implementation of necessary improvements (Lowenthal et al., 2021). Table 5.9 shows the registrars' perceptions of handling QA.

Table 5.9: Registrars' Perception on the State of QA

Statements	SD N (%)	D N (%)	A N (%)	SA N (%)	Mean (m)	SD
Academic programmes are evaluated periodically.	0(0)	0(0)	7(77.8)	2(22.2)	3.22	.44
All stakeholders are involved in programme review.	0(0)	0(0)	7(77.8)	2(22.2)	3.22	.44
Departments/faculties have collaboration with international universities/ organisations.	0(0)	0(0)	7(77.8)	2(22.2)	3.22	.44
Faculty members are well aware of QA practices/ process.	0(0)	0(0)	8(88.9)	1(11.1)	3.11	.33
Grading system is well-defined.	0(0)	0(0)	3(33.3)	6(66.7)	3.67	.50
Admission criteria for undergraduates are defined.	0(0)	0(0)	5(55.6)	4(44.4)	3.44	.53
Students are involved in the assessment of lecturers.	0(0)	0(0)	1(11.1)	8(88.9)	3.89	.33
Guidance and counselling are available to students.	0(0)	0(0)	7(77.8)	2(22.2)	3.22	.44
Feedback from students is used to improve teaching and learning.	0(0)	0(0)	4(44.4)	5(55.6)	3.56	.53
Good internet facility is available.	0(0)	0(0)	2(22.2)	7(77.8)	2.78	.44
Related and up-to-date books are available in the library.	0(0)	0(0)	9(100)	0	3.00	.00
Departments have a well-defined mechanism for students to channel their grievances and appeals.	0(0)	0(0)	3(33.3)	6(66.7)	3.67	.50
Financial resources are allocated efficiently and effectively.	0(0)	2(22.2)	6(66.7)	1(11.1)	2.89	.60
QA practices are shared among different academic departments of the university.	0(0)	0(0)	4(44.4)	5(55.6)	3.56	.53
QA reports are available to all stakeholders.	0(0)	0(0)	7(77.8)	2(22.2)	3.22	.44
Mean of Means/Average Sd. Deviation					**3.23**	**.41**

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

Scale: 1.00-1.49 (Very low); 1.50-2.49 (Low); 2.50-3.49 (High); 3.50-4.00 (Very High).

Source: Fieldwork (2024)

An analysis of the registrars' perceptions on the state of QA is presented in Table 5.9. The overall mean of M = 3.23, SD = .41, indicates positive perception among registrars of the effectiveness in handling QA, reflecting a shared commitment to enhancing educational standards. The highest mean was recorded for the statement about students being involved in the assessment of lecturers, with an average score of M = 3.89, SD = .33. This finding emphasises the importance that the registrars place on student feedback in evaluating teaching quality. This finding aligns with literature that emphasises the role of student engagement in

QA (Beerkens, 2018). In contrast, the lowest mean score, M = 2.78, SD = .44, pertains to the availability of good internet facilities. This result is concerning, as reliable internet access is crucial for implementing effective QA practices, particularly in a digitally driven educational landscape (Khan et al., 2023). The problem with technological resources shows a barrier to the effective execution of QA processes, as noted in previous studies (Anachuna & Obinna-Ifesi, 2024).

The above findings also reveal that while registrars generally perceive certain QA practices positively, there are still areas for improvement. For instance, the mean score on efficient financial resource allocation was M = 2.89, SD = 0.60. This suggests challenges in ensuring that resources are adequately directed toward QA initiatives, which are essential for sustaining educational quality (Elg et al., 2021). Moreover, the statement regarding the involvement of all stakeholders in programme reviews received a mean score of M = 3.22, SD = .44. This indicates the importance of inclusive decision-making processes for enhancing the overall quality of education (Wood, 2023). However, a lack of comprehensive stakeholder involvement highlights an area that requires development, as effective QA relies on diverse input for in-depth evaluations. Table 5.10 depicts the deans of students' perceptions of handling QA.

Table 5.10: Deans of Students' Perceptions of the State of QA

Statements	SD	D	A	SA	Mean	SD
	N (%)	N (%)	N (%)	N (%)	(m)	
Academic programmes are evaluated periodically.	0(0)	0(0)	7(87.5)	1(12.5)	3.13	.35
All stakeholders are involved in programme review.	0(0)	0(0)	6(75.0)	2(25.0)	3.25	.46
Departments/faculties have collaboration with international universities/ organisations.	0(0)	0(0)	7(87.5)	1(12.5)	3.13	.35
Faculty members are well aware of QA practices/ process.	0(0)	0(0)	6(75.0)	2(25.0)	3.25	.46
Grading system is well-defined.	0(0)	0(0)	2(25.0)	6(75.0)	3.75	.46
Admission criteria for undergraduates are defined.	0(0)	0(0)	4(50.0)	4(50.0)	3.50	.53
Students are involved in the assessment of lecturers.	0(0)	0(0)	2(25.0)	6(75.0)	3.75	.46
Guidance and counselling are available to students.	0(0)	0(0)	7(87.5)	1(12.5)	3.13	.35
Feedback from students is used to improve teaching and learning.	0(0)	0(0)	4(50.0)	4(50.0)	3.50	.53
Good internet facility is available.	0(0)	1(12.5)	7(87.5)	0	2.88	.35
Related and up-to-date books are available in the library.	0(0)	0(0)	8(100.0)	0	3.00	.00

Statements	SD N (%)	D N (%)	A N (%)	SA N (%)	Mean (m)	SD
Departments have a well-defined mechanism for students to channel their grievances and appeals.	0(0)	0(0)	4(50.0)	4(50.0)	3.50	.53
Financial resources are allocated efficiently and effectively.	0(0)	2(25.0)	5(62.5)	1(12.5)	2.88	.64
QA practices are shared among different academic departments of the university.	0(0)	0(0)	4(50.0)	4(50.0)	3.50	.53
QA reports are available to all stakeholders.	0(0)	0(0)	7(87.5)	1(12.5)	3.13	.35
Mean of Means/Average Sd. Deviation					**3.28**	**.42**

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

Scale: 1.00-1.49 (Very low); 1.50-2.49 (Low); 2.50-3.49 (High); 3.50-4.00 (Very High).

Source: Fieldwork (2024)

The average mean of M = 3.28, SD = .42 in Table 5.10 indicates that the deans generally had high perceptions of the efficiency demonstrated in handling QA in their institutions, reflecting a shared commitment to enhancing educational standards. The highest mean indicates that the grading system is well-defined, with an average score of M = 3.75 and a standard deviation of SD = 0.46. This finding aligns with the existing literature, which emphasises the need for transparency in assessment practices (Beerkens, 2018). In contrast, the lowest mean value, M = 2.88, SD = 0.35, pertains to the availability of good internet facilities. The concern surrounding reliable internet access is particularly important, given its essential role in facilitating effective QA practices within the contemporary digital educational landscape (Khan, & Bohari, 2021). This issue stresses the challenges to allocating sufficient resources to support QA initiatives (Burch, 2021). The perceptions of deans emphasise both the strengths and weaknesses in the current QA framework within their institutions.

5.4.2 Participants' Perceptions of QA Roles

The purpose of this research question was to investigate how employees perceive the role of QA in Ghana. To address this, the study gathered perceptions from selected registrars, deans of students, heads of quality assurance, lecturers and students regarding their views on QA practices in HE. They indicated their level of agreement, with mean scores ranging from 3.5 to 4.0, representing agreement and mean scores ranging from 1.00 to 1.49, representing disagreement with the statements. An agreement suggests that the respondents' perceived understanding of QA is very high, while a disagreement implies that it is very low. The results

are summarised in Tables 5.11, 5.12, 5.13, 5.14, and 5.15. The results obtained on the lecturers' views of the functions of QA are summarised in Table 5.11.

Table 5.11: Lecturers' Views on the Roles of QA

Statements	SD N (%)	D N (%)	A N (%)	SA N (%)	Mean (m)	SD
QA helps the university achieve its mission and visions	0(0)	0(0)	120(73.6)	43(26.4)	3.26	.44
QA raises the reputation of the university	0(0)	0(0)	138(84.7)	25(15.3)	3.15	.36
QA ensures that there are adequate academic and staff resources in the university	0(0)	36(22.1)	99(60.7)	28(17.2)	2.95	.63
QA ensures that the university provides infrastructure for teaching and learning	0(0)	37(22.7)	56(34.4)	70(42.9)	3.20	.79
QA helps to ensure programme/ curricular improvement	0(0)	0(0)	120(73.6)	43(26.4)	3.26	.44
QA gives recognition to the university locally	0(0)	18(11.0)	121(74.2)	24(14.7)	3.04	.51
QA gives recognition to the university internationally	0(0)	18(11.0)	110(67.5)	35(21.5)	3.10	.56
QA gives recognition to students	0(0)	0(0)	149(91.4)	14(8.6)	3.09	.28
QA makes students feel prestigious	0(0)	0(0)	149(91.4)	14(8.6)	3.09	.28
QA gives recognition to students' certificates	0(0)	0(0)	140(85.9)	23(14.1)	3.14	.35
QA ensures students have the requisite resources for learning	0(0)	18(11.0)	91(55.8)	54(33.1)	3.22	.63
QA ensures competition among universities	0(0)	15(9.2)	109(66.9)	39(23.9)	3.15	.56
Mean of Means/Average Sd. Deviation					**3.05**	**.46**

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

Scale: 1.00-1.49 (Very low); 1.50-2.49 (Low); 2.50-3.49 (High); 3.50-4.00 (Very High).

Source: Fieldwork (2024)

Table 5.11 shows the analysis of lecturers' perceptions of the roles of QA practices within private universities in Ghana. The mean values of the respondents' answers yielded an overall mean of M = 3.05, SD = 0.46. This indicates a high level of agreement among lecturers regarding the roles of QA practices in their institutions. The relatively low standard deviation (SD = 0.46) suggests a degree of consensus among lecturers on their perceptions of QA, indicating that most faculty members shared a similar understanding of its roles. This consistency is vital, as a unified approach to QA can enhance the effectiveness of institutional strategies (Hanh, 2020). The highest mean value reported was for the statement "QA helps the university to achieve its vision and mission," with a mean of M = 3.26, SD = .44. This reflects a strong belief among lecturers that QA is essential for aligning institutional goals, emphasising the importance of strategic coherence in educational quality (Harvey & Stensaker, 2008).

Conversely, the lowest mean value, M = 2.95, SD = .63, was associated with the statement "QA ensures that there is adequate academic staff in the university". Moreover, the findings reveal that while lecturers maintain a positive view on several QA practices, significant gaps remain, particularly concerning resource allocation and technological support. For example, the perceived inadequacy of academic resources is concerning, as effective QA processes rely on sufficient staffing and infrastructure to support educational initiatives (Albaroudi & Iqbal, 2024). Table 5.12 shows students' responses to their perceptions of the roles of QA.

Table 5.12: Students' Views on the Roles of QA

Statements	SD N (%)	D N (%)	A N (%)	SA N (%)	Mean (m)	SD
QA helps the university achieve its mission and visions	0(0)	0(0)	60(65.9)	31(34.1)	3.34	.48
QA raises the reputation of the university	0(0)	2(2.2)	52(57.1)	37(40.7)	3.38	.53
QA ensures that there are adequate academic and staff resources in the university	1(1.1)	10(11.0)	58(63.7)	22(24.2)	3.11	.62
QA ensures that the university provides infrastructure for teaching and learning	0(0)	7(7.7)	59(64.8)	25(27.5)	3.20	.56
QA helps to ensure programme/ curricular improvement	0(0)	5(5.5)	65(71.4)	21(23.1)	3.18	.51
QA gives recognition to the university locally	0(0)	6(6.6)	61(67.0)	24(26.4)	3.20	.54
QA gives recognition to the university internationally	0(0)	24(26.4)	42(46)	25(27.5)	3.01	.74
QA gives recognition to students	3(3.3)	36(39.6)	47(51.6)	5(5.5)	2.59	.65
QA makes students feel prestigious	5(5.5)	23(25.3)	30(33.0)	33(36.3)	3.00	.92
QA gives recognition to students' certificates	0(0)	25(27.5)	25(27.5)	41(45.1)	3.18	.84
QA ensures students have the requisite resources for learning	6(6.6)	16(17.6)	41(45.1)	28(30.8)	3.00	.87
QA ensures competition among universities	9(9.9)	5(5.5)	41(45.1)	36(39.6)	3.14	.91
Mean of Means/Average Sd. Deviation					**3.03**	**.65**

Note: 'Strongly Agree' [SA], 'Agree' [A], "Disagree' [D], 'Strongly Disagree' [DS}, 'Mean' [M], 'standard deviation' [S]

Scale: 1.00-1.49 (Very low); 1.50-2.49 (Low); 2.50-3.49 (High); 3.50-4.00 (Very High).

Source: Fieldwork (2024)

The results in Table 5.12 display students' perceptions of the functions of QA within their universities. The overall mean score across various statements was M = 3.03, SD = 0.65, indicating a generally high perception of the roles of QA practices. The highest mean value

reported was for the statement "QA raises the reputation of the university," with a mean of M = 3.38, SD = .53. This suggests that students believed QA significantly contributed to enhancing their institutions' standing. The lowest mean value was associated with the statement "QA gives recognition to students," which scored M = 2.59, SD = .65. Students also expressed a strong belief in the role of QA in achieving the university's mission, with a mean of M = 3.34, SD = .48. This reflects an understanding that effective QA is crucial for strategic alignment and institutional success. Additionally, the mean score of M = 3.11, SD = .62 for the statement regarding adequate academic and staff resources indicates that while students recognised the importance of these resources, there was room for improvement in this area. The findings highlight that while students generally view QA positively, there are critical areas needing attention, particularly regarding student recognition and resource adequacy. Thus, students' perspectives on the functions of QA reveal a solid foundation of support for its roles, as evidenced by the overall mean. However, to enhance the effectiveness of QA practices, institutions must focus on improving the recognition of student achievements and ensuring sufficient academic resources. Table 5.13 shows the responses of QA heads on their perceptions of the role of QA.

Table 5.13: QA Heads' Views on the Roles of Quality Assurance

Statements	SD N (%)	D N (%)	A N (%)	SA N (%)	Mean (m)	SD
QA helps the university achieve its mission and vision.	0(0)	0(0)	5(50.0)	5(50.0)	3.50	.53
QA raises the reputation of the university.	0(0)	0(0)	7(70.0)	3(30.0)	3.30	.48
QA ensures that there are adequate academic and staff resources in the university.	0(0)	0(0)	9(90.0)	1(10.0)	3.10	.32
QA ensures that the university provides infrastructure for teaching and learning.	0(0)	0(0)	5(50.0)	5(50.0)	3.50	.53
QA helps to ensure programme/ curricular improvement.	0(0)	0(0)	5(50.0)	5(50.0)	3.50	.53
QA gives recognition to the university locally.	0(0)	0(0)	9(90.0)	1(10.0)	3.10	.32
QA gives recognition to the university internationally.	0(0)	0(0)	7(70.0)	3(30.0)	3.30	.48
QA gives recognition to students.	0(0)	0(0)	9(90.0)	1(10.0)	3.10	.32
QA makes students feel prestigious.	0(0)	0(0)	9(90.0)	1(10.0)	3.10	.32
QA gives recognition to students' certificates.	0(0)	0(0)	9(90.0)	1(10.0)	3.10	.32
QA ensures students have the requisite resources for learning.	0(0)	0(0)	8(80.0)	2(20.0)	3.20	.42

QA ensures competition among universities.	0(0)	0(0)	8(80.0)	2(20.0)	3.20	.42
Mean of Means/Average SD. Deviation					**3.03**	**.46**

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

Scale: 1.00-1.49 (Very low); 1.50-2.49 (Low); 2.50-3.49 (High); 3.50-4.00 (Very High).

Source: Fieldwork (2024)

The results in Table 5.13 show quality assurance heads' perceptions of the functions of quality assurance in selected universities. The overall mean score across various statements was approximately M = 3.03, SD = .46, indicating that quality assurance heads have high perceptions of the role of quality assurance. The highest mean value reported was for the statement: "QA helps the university to achieve its mission and visions," with a mean of M = 3.50, SD = .53. This reflects a strong consensus among QA officers that quality assurance plays an important role in aligning institutional objectives with educational outcomes (Pham et al., 2022). Conversely, the lowest mean value was associated with the statement: "QA gives recognition to students," which scored M = 3.10, SD = .32. This indicates a perceived gap in how student achievements are recognised within the quality assurance framework, suggesting a need for improvement in student acknowledgement and support mechanisms (Peters, 2024). Moreover, QA officers expressed a high perception of the influence of QA on institutional reputation, with a mean of M = 3.30 and a standard deviation of SD = 0.48. This aligns with the understanding that quality assurance practices are essential for enhancing the credibility and attractiveness of universities (Raja, 2023). The findings highlight that while QA officers generally had a high perception, areas needing attention included the recognition of student contributions and achievements. Table 5.14 shows the registrars' responses regarding their perceptions of the role of quality assurance.

Table 5.14: Registrars' Views on the Roles of Quality Assurance

Statements	**SD N (%)**	**D N (%)**	**A N (%)**	**SA N (%)**	**Mean (m)**	**SD**
QA helps the university achieve its mission and vision.	0(0)	0(0)	6(66.7)	3(33.3)	3.33	.50
QA raises the reputation of the university.	0(0)	0(0)	7(77.8)	2(22.2)	3.22	.44
QA ensures that there are adequate academic and staff resources in the university.	0(0)	1(11.1)	6(66.7)	2(22.2)	3.11	.60
QA ensures that the university provides infrastructure for teaching and learning.	0(0)	1(11.1)	3(33.3)	5(55.6)	3.44	.73
QA helps to ensure programme/ curricular improvement.	0(0)	0(0)	6(66.7)	3(33.3)	3.33	.50
QA gives recognition to the university locally.	0(0)	1(11.1)	7(77.8)	1(11.1)	3.00	.50

QA gives recognition to the university internationally.	0(0)	1(11.1)	5(55.6)	3(33.3)	3.22	.67
QA gives recognition to students.	0(0)	0(0)	8(88.9)	1(11.1)	3.11	.33
QA makes students feel prestigious.	0(0)	0(0)	8(88.9)	1(11.1)	3.11	.33
QA gives recognition to students' certificates.	0(0)	0(0)	7(77.8)	2(22.2)	3.22	.44
QA ensures students have the requisite resources for learning.	0(0)	1(11.1)	5(55.6)	3(33.3)	3.22	.67
QA ensures competition among universities.	0(0)	1(11.1)	6(66.7)	2(22.2)	3.11	.60
Mean of Means/Average SD. Deviation					**3.00**	**.54**

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

Scale: 1.00-1.49 (Very low); 1.50-2.49 (Low); 2.50-3.49 (High); 3.50-4.00 (Very High).

Source: Fieldwork (2024)

The results in Table 5.14 display the registrars' perceptions of the roles of quality assurance in private universities in Ghana. The overall mean score was approximately M = 3.00, SD = 0.54, indicating a high level of perception regarding the roles of QA practices. The highest mean value reported was for the statement, "QA ensures that the university provides infrastructure for teaching and learning," with a mean of M = 3.44, SD = .73. This reflects agreement among registrars that quality assurance is significant for maintaining adequate infrastructure for effective teaching and learning (Dolcini et al., 2021). On the contrary, the lowest mean value was associated with the statement, "QA gives recognition to the university locally," which scored M = 3.00, SD = .50. This indicates a perceived gap in the recognition of the university's achievements locally, suggesting a need for improvement in how institutions communicate their successes (Smith & Horne, 2024). Besides, registrars expressed a positive belief in the role of QA for institutional reputation, with a mean of M = 3.22, SD = .44. This aligns with the understanding that quality assurance practices are essential for enhancing the credibility and attractiveness of universities for both recruitment and retention of students (Harvey, 2024). The findings reiterate that while registrars generally viewed QA positively, areas needing attention included the recognition of institutional achievements at the local level and enhancing overall student recognition. Table 5.15 presents the deans' responses to students' perceptions of the roles of quality assurance.

Table 5.15: Deans of Students' Views on the Roles of Quality Assurance

Statements	**SD N (%)**	**D N (%)**	**A N (%)**	**SA N (%)**	**Mean (m)**	**SD**
QA helps the university achieve its mission and vision.	0(0)	0(0)	4(50.0)	4(50.0)	3.50	.53
QA raises the reputation of the university.	0(0)	0(0)	6(75.0)	2(25.0)	3.25	.46

QA ensures that there are adequate academic and staff resources in the university.	0(0)	1(12.5)	6(75.0)	1(12.5)	3.00	.53
QA ensures that the university provides infrastructure for teaching and learning.	0(0)	1(12.5)	2(25.0)	5(62.5)	3.50	.76
QA helps to ensure programme/ curricular improvement.	0(0)	0(0)	5(62.5)	3(37.5)	3.38	.52
QA gives recognition to the university locally.	0(0)	1(12.5)	5(62.5)	2(25.0)	3.13	.64
QA gives recognition to the university internationally.	0(0)	1(12.5)	4(50.0)	3(37.5)	3.25	.71
QA gives recognition to students.	0(0)	0(0)	6(75.0)	2(25.0)	3.25	.46
QA makes students feel prestigious.	0(0)	0(0)	7(87.5)	1(12.5)	3.13	.35
QA gives recognition to students' certificates	0(0)	0(0)	7(87.5)	1(12.5)	3.13	.35
QA ensures students have the requisite resources for learning	0(0)	1(12.5)	5(62.5)	2(25.0)	3.13	.64
QA ensures competition among universities	0(0)	0(0)	6(75.0)	2(25.0)	3.25	.46
Mean of Means/Average SD. Deviation					**3.04**	**.52**

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

Scale: 1.00-1.49 (Very low); 1.50-2.49 (Low); 2.50-3.49 (High); 3.50-4.00 (Very High).

Source: Fieldwork (2024)

Table 5.15 presents the deans of students' perceptions of the roles of quality assurance in private universities. The overall mean score was approximately M = 3.04, SD = .52, indicating a high perception of the roles of QA practices. The highest mean value reported was for the statement, "QA helps the university to achieve its mission and visions," with a mean of M = 3.50, SD = .53. This reflects a strong consensus among the deans of students that quality assurance is crucial for aligning institutional objectives and enhancing educational outcomes (Makhoul, 2019). Nevertheless, the lowest mean value was associated with the statement, "QA ensures that there are adequate academic and staff resources in the university," which scored M = 3.00, SD = .53. This suggests a perceived gap in adequate academic staff in the university's, indicating a need for improvement for success at that level (Bradley, 2024). Additionally, the deans of students expressed a positive belief in the role of QA in institutional reputation, with a mean of M = 3.25, SD = .46. This aligns with an understanding that effective quality assurance practices enhance the credibility and attractiveness of universities (Huynh, et al., 2024). The findings highlight that while the deans generally viewed QA positively, areas needing attention included enhancing local recognition and supporting student achievements (Ogunshe, 2023).

5.4.3 Compliance with the Requirements of GTEC

This section is based on the question phrased as follows: How do the quality assurance practices of private universities in Ghana comply with the Ghana Tertiary Education Commission (GTEC) guidelines? It examines the conformance of quality assurance practices in private universities with the standards established by the GTEC. To collect insights from key stakeholders, including registrars, deans of students, quality assurance heads, lecturers and students, data was gathered using Section IV of the questionnaire. The responses from these groups on the quality assurance practices in private universities are summarised in Table 5.16.

Table 5.16: Lecturers, Students, Heads of Quality Assurance, Registrars and Deans of Students' Compliance with the Requirements of GTEC

Statements	Yes (%)	Lecturers No (%)	Total (%)	Yes (%)	Students No (%)	Total (%)	Yes (%)	QA Heads No (%)	Total (%)	Yes (%)	Registrars No (%)	Total (%)	Yes (%)	Dean of Students No (%)	Total (%)
Faculty/Departmental meetings on quality assurance of educational provision	125 (76.7)	38 (23.3)	163 (100)	70 (76.9)	21 (23.1)	91 (100)	9 (90.0)	1 (10.0)	10 (100)	7 (77.8)	2 (22.2)	9 (100)	7 (87.5)	1 (12.5)	8 (100)
University-wide meeting to discuss academic matters	144 (88.3)	19 (11.7)	163 (100)	65 (71.4)	26 (28.6)	91 (100)	9 (90.0)	1 (10.0)	10 (100)	8 (88.9)	1 (11.1)	9 (100)	7 (87.5)	1 (12.5)	8 (100)
Completing questionnaires on programme/course evaluation	162 (99.4)	1 (0.6)	163 (100)	71 (78.0)	20 (22.0)	91 (100)	10 (100)	0 (0)	10 (100)	8 (88.9)	1 (11.1)	9 (100)	8 (100)	0 (0)	8 (100)
Completing questionnaires on student learning experience and related issues	143 (87.7)	20 (12.3)	163 (100)	84 (92.3)	7 (7.7)	91 (100)	10 (100)	0 (0)	10 (100)	8 (88.9)	1 (11.1)	9 (100)	8 (100)	0 (0)	8 (100)
Completing questionnaires on the effectiveness of teaching and assessment	144 (88.3)	19 (11.7)	163 (100)	76 (83.5)	15 (16.5)	91 (100)	10 (100)	0 (0)	10 (100)	9 (100)	0 (0)	9 (100)	8 (100)	0 (0)	8 (100)
Curriculum review	160 (98.2)	3 (1.8)	163 (100)	69 (75.8)	22 (24.2)	91 (100)	10 (100)	0 (0)	10 (100)	8 (88.9)	1 (11.1)	9 (100)	8 (100)	0 (0)	8 (100)
Institutional self-evaluation	142 (87.1)	21 (12.9)	163 (100)	71 (78.0)	20 (22.0)	91 (100)	10 (100)	0 (0)	10 (100)	8 (88.9)	1 (11.1)	9 (100)	8 (100)	0 (0)	8 (100)
External evaluation	144 (88.3)	19 (11.7)	163 (100)	80 (87.9)	11 (12.1)	91 (100)	10 (100)	0 (0)	10 (100)	8 (88.9)	1 (11.1)	9 (100)	8 (100)	0 (0)	8 (100)
Accreditation	162 (99.4)	1 (0.6)	163 (100)	83 (91.2)	8 (8.8)	91 (100)	10 (100)	0 (0)	10 (100)	8 (88.9)	1 (11.1)	9 (100)	8 (100)	0 (0)	8 (100)

The data presented in Table 5.16 provides an overview of compliance with the GTEC requirements among various stakeholders, namely lecturers, students, heads of quality assurance, registrars and deans of students. The following analysis shows key findings based on the responses received.

The majority of lecturers (76.7%) indicated that faculty/departmental meetings focusing on quality assurance were held regularly, while 23.3% disagreed. Among students, 76.9% confirmed that such meetings existed, while 23.1% said they did not. Additionally, QA heads reported a strong affirmation of departmental meetings at 90.0%. The registrars showed a lower endorsement at 77.8%, and 87.5% of the deans of students supported this practice. This variation suggests that there was a consensus on the importance of these meetings, the level of implementation differed across departments.

In terms of university-wide meetings that addressed academic issues, 88.3% of lecturers affirmed their occurrence, and 71.4% of students agreed. QA heads and registrars both reported a high assertion rate of 90%, while 87.5% of the deans of students concurred. This data suggests a robust framework for discussing academic matters, which is crucial for maintaining educational standards (Tagoe & Abakah, 2024).

Regarding the evaluation of programmes and courses through questionnaires, 99.4% of lecturers reported participation, with 78% of students also confirming their involvement. All QA heads confirmed their engagement, and 88.9% of registrars reported completing these evaluations, alongside 100% of deans of students. This high level of participation emphasises the institutions' commitment to assessing and enhancing educational offerings, aligning with established best practices in quality assurance (Al Jaber, 2022).

The responses concerning questionnaires on student learning experiences were particularly positive. A substantial 87.7% of lecturers and 92.3% of students confirmed their involvement. All the QA heads participated, and 88.9% of registrars reported their engagement, along with 100% of deans of students. These findings underscore the importance of understanding and enhancing the student experience (Harman, 2011).

Regarding the assessment of the effectiveness of teaching and assessment strategies, 88.3% of lecturers supported the completion of relevant questionnaires. Among students, 83.5% expressed similar affirmations. Remarkably, all the QA heads and registrars and deans of students reported full participation of 100%. This illustrates a systematic approach to

evaluating teaching methods and is essential for ongoing improvements in educational quality (Utuka, 2023).

Additionally, 98.2% of lecturers confirmed the regular conduct of curriculum reviews, with 75.8% of students also agreeing. All the QA heads, deans of students and 88.9% of registrars affirmed this practice as well. Such a commitment to frequent curriculum review is crucial for ensuring that educational programmes remain relevant and effective in meeting the evolving needs of students and the job market (Avsheniuk, 2021).

In terms of institutional self-evaluation, 87.1% of lecturers and 78.0% of students confirmed its implementation. All the QA heads and deans of students reported 100% engagement, while 88.9% of the registrars supported this practice. This strong affirmation indicates that self-evaluation processes form an integral part of the institutions' quality assurance frameworks, enhancing accountability and fostering a culture of continuous improvement (Mohammed, 2022).

For external evaluations, 88.3% of lecturers and 87.9% of students acknowledged their occurrence. All the QA heads and deans of students confirmed this practice, while the registrars reported an 88.9% affirmation. This data reflects a commitment to transparency and accountability in educational quality (Tagoe & Abakah, 2024). Finally, on accreditation, 99.4% of lecturers and 91.2% of students stated that their institutions were accredited. All the QA heads and deans of students affirmed this status, with 88.9% of the registrars also confirming it. Such strong support for accreditation practices is vital to ensure that institutions deliver quality education that meets both national and international standards (Ogunshe, 2023). The findings in Table 5.16 indicate a strong alignment with the GTEC's quality assurance requirements among private universities in Ghana. The high percentages of affirmative responses across all stakeholders reflect a commitment to maintaining and enhancing educational quality through systematic practices. This aligns with literature that emphasises the importance of strong quality assurance frameworks in improving educational outcomes and ensuring accountability within academic institutions.

5.4.4 Effect of QA on Students' Academic Performance and Satisfaction

This section is based on the question phrased as follows: What is the effect of quality assurance on students' academic performance and satisfaction? This research question was analysed using the ordinal probit regression to measure the effect of quality assurance on students' academic performance and satisfaction. Data is presented in two sections. The first section

presents summary statistics and correlation analysis, while the second one presents the econometric results of the study.

5.4.4.1 Descriptive statistics

The descriptive statistics for the variables included in the study's model are summarised in Table 5.17. The statistics were created to provide a comprehensive overview of the data used in the model, enabling the researcher to examine it for any questionable data. The observations, mean, standard deviation, and maximum and minimum values of the variables highlighted across the study period are among the important descriptive measures. Table 5.17 provides a concise description of the data used in the empirical model, detailing the mean, minimum value, maximum value and standard deviation.

Table 5.17: A Summary Statistics of the Variables used in the Empirical Models

Variables	**N**	**Minimum**	**Maximum**	**Mean**	**Std Dev**	**Skewness**	**Kurtosis**
Teaching Quality Improvement	281	1.00	4.00	3.1957	.44815	.554	1.925
Curriculum Review	281	2.00	4.00	3.1210	.47767	.340	.986
Assessment Transparency and Fairness	281	1.00	4.00	2.9466	.71264	-.340	.041
Learning Resources Accessibility	281	2.00	4.00	3.1388	.55930	.037	.017
Faculty Evaluation and Development	281	2.00	4.00	2.9253	.42858	-.427	2.210
Compliance with Accreditation Standards	281	2.00	4.00	3.1281	.57130	.005	-.060
Incorporation of Student Feedback	281	2.00	4.00	2.9609	.41649	-.263	2.755
Academic Performance	281	2.00	4.00	3.2722	.45874	.553	-.804
Satisfaction	281	1.00	4.00	2.9698	.59008	-.224	-.193
Valid N (listwise)	281						

Source: Researcher's Computation (2024)

The statistical results are presented in Table 5.17, which provides additional context for the variables related to quality assurance used in this study. The sample consisted of 281 respondents, with the variables measured on a scale of 1 to 4. The Teaching Quality Improvement variable had a mean score of 3.1957, indicating a generally favourable perception among participants, with a standard deviation of .44815. This suggests that while most

respondents rated teaching quality positively, there is some variability in their assessments, as evidenced by the skewness of .554, indicating a slight positive skew towards higher ratings, and a kurtosis of 1.925, which suggests a leptokurtic distribution. Curriculum Review received a mean score of 3.1210, with a standard deviation of .47767. This indicates that respondents generally viewed the curriculum as effective, although some variation exists in their opinions.

The skewness of .340 and kurtosis of .986 further confirm that the distribution is relatively normal, suggesting a balanced perception among respondents. In contrast, the variable Assessment Transparency and Fairness had a mean of 2.9466, indicating a more critical view, with a higher standard deviation of .71264. The negative skewness of -.340 suggests that some respondents rated the assessment practices lower, while the kurtosis of .041 indicates a nearly normal distribution, implying that there are few extreme values. Regarding Learning Resources Accessibility, the mean score was 3.1388, with a standard deviation of .55930. The skewness of .037 and kurtosis of .017 indicate a nearly symmetrical distribution, suggesting that most respondents felt positively about resource accessibility.

The Faculty Evaluation and Development variable had a mean of 2.9253, with a standard deviation of .42858. The negative skewness of -.427 indicates a tendency for lower ratings, while the kurtosis of 2.210 suggests a more peaked distribution, indicating that opinions on faculty evaluation may be less uniform than other variables. Compliance with accreditation standards scored a mean of 3.1281 with a standard deviation of .57130, indicating a positive perception among respondents. The skewness of .005 suggests a symmetrical distribution, while the kurtosis of -.060 indicates a slight flatness in the distribution curve.

The Incorporation of Student Feedback yielded a mean of 2.9609, with a standard deviation of .41649. The negative skewness of -0.263 indicates that some respondents rated this aspect lower, and the kurtosis of 2.755 suggests a more peaked distribution, implying less agreement among respondents. Finally, the analysis of academic performance revealed a mean score of 3.2722, suggesting that students generally perceived their academic performance positively, with a standard deviation of .45874. The skewness of .553 and kurtosis of -.804 indicate a tendency towards higher ratings, reinforcing the positive sentiment among students.

The average satisfaction level among respondents was measured at 2.9698, with a standard deviation of .59008. The negative skewness of -.224 suggests some dissatisfaction, while the kurtosis of -.193 indicates that the distribution was relatively normal. These findings illustrate

the varied perceptions of quality assurance measures and their potential impact on academic performance and student satisfaction, providing a foundation for further analysis using ordinal probit regression.

5.4.4.2 Multicollinearity testing

The correlation matrix for all variables used in the regression models is computed and presented in Table 5.18. The correlation coefficient provides an index of direction, indicated by the sign of the coefficient, which indicates whether the relationship is positively or negatively related, as well as the strength of the relationship. To ascertain if there is a clear relationship or no connection between any of the variables, a multicollinearity test is performed. This suggests that a certain degree of correlation is appropriate, but it should not be perfect. Therefore, either -1 or 1 is appropriate. As an element of the Gauss-Markov principles, this test is necessary in regression analysis to ensure that the variables do not already have a significant impact on one another before the regression analysis is performed (Wooldridge, 2015). Also, it suggests the value of the coefficient between the set of variables but does not imply any form of causality. The essence of the correlation matrix is to identify highly correlated variables, which makes it impossible for them to be included in the model. In other words, highly correlated variables lead to multicollinearity. This situation makes it very difficult to estimate the true effect of the regressors on the dependent variable. The matrices for the correlations between the variables are displayed in Table 5.18 below.

Table 5.18: Correlation Matrix

Variable	Teaching Quality Improvement	Curriculum Review	Assessment Transparency and Fairness	Learning Resources Accessibility	Faculty Evaluation and Development	Compliance with Accreditation Standards	Incorporation of Student Feedback
Teaching Quality Improvement	1						
Curriculum Review	.194**	1					
Assessment Transparency and Fairness	.185**	.637**	1				
Learning Resources Accessibility	.047	.325**	.377**	1			
Faculty Evaluation and Development	.381**	.503**	.347**	.295**	1		
Compliance with Accreditation Standards	.049	.261**	.541**	.159**	.239**	1	
Incorporation of Student Feedback	.336**	.386**	.573**	.361**	.345**	.228**	1

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Source: SPSS's output

The findings in Table 5.18 reveal that Teaching Quality Improvement has a statistically significant positive correlation with Curriculum Review ($r = .194$, $p < .01$) and Faculty Evaluation and Development ($r = .381$, $p < .01$). This suggests that improvements in teaching quality are associated with enhancements in both curriculum and faculty evaluation processes. Curriculum Review and Assessment Transparency and Fairness exhibit a strong positive correlation ($r = .637$, $p < .01$), indicating that as curriculum review practices improve, perceptions of Assessment Transparency and Fairness also increase.

Furthermore, Assessment Transparency and Fairness are positively correlated with Learning Resources Accessibility ($r = 0.377$, $p < 0.01$) and Compliance with Accreditation Standards ($r = 0.541$, $p < 0.01$), suggesting that transparent assessment practices are associated with better access to learning resources and adherence to accreditation standards. The relationship between Faculty Evaluation and Development and Curriculum Review is also significant, with a correlation of $r = .503$, $p < .01$. This implies that effective faculty evaluations are likely to coincide with comprehensive curriculum reviews.

Additionally, the Incorporation of Student Feedback is positively correlated with multiple variables, including Teaching Quality Improvement ($r = .336$, $p < .01$) and Assessment Transparency and Fairness ($r = .573$, $p < .01$), suggesting that student feedback plays a significant role in enhancing various quality assurance dimensions. The correlation matrix indicates that while several variables are interrelated, no perfect correlations were found, suggesting that multicollinearity is not a significant problem in this dataset. This allows for a more accurate estimation of the impact of quality assurance on students' academic performance and satisfaction in subsequent analyses. However, the researcher eliminated variables that showed a high correlation.

5.4.5 Variance Inflation Factor (VIF)

The VIF was also employed to evaluate multicollinearity within the context of an ordinal probit regression model with two dependent variables: Academic Performance and Satisfaction. The VIF was used in addition to the correlation matrix because it provides a reliable measure, allowing us to understand the degree to which multicollinearity

might affect the stability and interpretability of regression coefficients. The VIF values obtained for the independent variables are presented in Table 5.19.

Table 5.19: Variance Inflation Factor

	Model	Collinearity Statistics VIF	Tolerance
1	(Constant)		
	Teaching Quality Improvement	1.293	.773
	Curriculum Review	2.101	.476
	Assessment Transparency and Fairness	2.946	.339
	Learning Resources Accessibility	1.279	.782
	Faculty Evaluation and Development	1.650	.606
	Compliance with Accreditation Standards	1.494	.670
	Incorporation of Student Feedback	1.761	.568

a. Dependent Variables: Academic Performance & Satisfaction

The results indicate that the VIF values range from 1.279 to 2.946. Thus, all the values fall below the critical threshold of 3, which is used to indicate the presence of multicollinearity. This finding suggests that there is no multicollinearity among the independent variables in the model. This, therefore, enhances the reliability of the regression coefficients and ensures that the effects of individual predictors can be interpreted with greater confidence. Given these results, the variables included in the analysis can be considered suitable for the ordinal probit regression model, thus supporting the robustness of the findings related to the impact of quality assurance on students' academic performance and satisfaction.

5.4.6 Ordinal Probit Regression (Academic Performance & Satisfaction)

5.4.6.1 Test of parallel lines

It is necessary to test the assumption of equal regression coefficients before analysing the estimated coefficients of the ordinal regression model, as this evaluation is crucial for ensuring the model's performance and fit for purpose. This test evaluates whether the slope coefficients (location parameters) are consistent across the response categories.

Table 5.20: Test of Parallel Lines[a]

Model	-2 Log-Likelihood	Chi-Square	df	Sig.
Null Hypothesis	399.103			
General	296.473[b]	102.629[C]	18	.124

The null hypothesis states that the location parameters (slope coefficients) are the same across response categories.

a. Link function: Probit.
b. Dependent variable (academic performance)

The null hypothesis posits that the slope coefficients are equal across the categories of the dependent variable. The observed significance value of Sig. = 0.124 is greater than 0.05, leading us to accept the null hypothesis, meaning that the model is validated. As a result, the ordinal probit regression can be used based on these findings. Given that the assumption of parallel lines holds, the analysis of the ordinal probit regression results proceeds to understand the relationships among the independent variables and their effects on the dependent variable, academic performance.

Table 5.21: Test of Parallel Lines[a]

Model	-2 Log-Likelihood	Chi-Square	df	Sig.
Null Hypothesis	427.720			
General	366.117[b]	61.603[c]	24	.105

The null hypothesis states that the location parameters (slope coefficients) are the same across response categories.

a. Link function: Probit.
b. Dependent variable (Satisfaction)

The null hypothesis asserts that the slope coefficients are consistent across the categories of the dependent variable. According to Table 5.21, the null hypothesis is accepted since the observed significance value Sig. = 0.105 exceeds the 0.05 threshold. This acceptance indicates that the model is validated, supporting the use of the ordinal probit regression approach to understand the relationships among the independent variables and their effects on the dependent variable, satisfaction.

5.4.6.2 Model Fitting Information Test

The Model Fitting Information Test is conducted to compare the performance of the model with no independent variables (intercept-only model) against the model that includes independent variables. The results are summarised in Tables 5.22 and 5.23, respectively, which present the -2 log-likelihood values for both models:

Table 5.22: Model Fitting Information

Model	-2 Log-Likelihood	Chi-Square	df	Sig.
Intercept-Only	538.184			
Final	399.103	139.082	6	.000

a. Link function: Probit.

b. Dependent variable (academic performance)

The following hypotheses are observed from Table 5.22:

H_0: The model is not significant, implying that the independent variables do not contribute positively to the dependent variable.

H_1: The model is significant, implying that the independent variables contribute positively to the dependent variable.

The significance value obtained from the analysis is Sig.= 0.000, which is less than the threshold of 0.05. This result leads us to reject the null hypothesis, confirming that the model is significant (i.e., the independent variables contribute positively) both with the constant term and with the independent variables. Therefore, this finding indicates a statistically significant relationship between the dependent variable and the independent variables included in the model.

Table 5.23: Model Fitting Information

Model	-2 Log-Likelihood	Chi-Square	df	Sig.
Intercept-Only	719.943			
Final	427.720	292.223	6	.000

a. Link function: Probit.

b. Dependent variable (Satisfaction)

The following hypotheses are observed from Table 5.23:

H_0: The model is not significant, implying that the independent variables do not contribute positively to the dependent variable.

H_1: The model is significant, implying that the independent variables contribute positively to the dependent variable.

The analysis yielded a significance value of Sig. = 0.000, which is below the 0.05 threshold. As a result, the null hypothesis is rejected, indicating that the model is significant. This suggests that the independent variables, both with the constant term and individually, make a positive contribution to the model (i.e., the independent variables contribute positively) in both cases, with and without the constant term.

5.4.6.3 Analysis of goodness-of-fit test

Tables 5.24 and 5.25 present the results of the Goodness-of-Fit Test, which evaluates the adequacy of the Probit model.

Table 5.24: Model of Fit Test (Goodness-of-Fit)

	Chi-Square	df	Sig.
Pearson	2 838.899	90	.146
Deviance	386.054	90	.867

a. Link function: Probit.

b. Dependent variable (academic performance)

The following hypotheses are formulated:

H_0: The Probit model fits the data (the difference is not significant), meaning the observed and expected values do not differ significantly.

H_1: The Probit model does not fit the data (the difference is significant), meaning the observed and expected values differ significantly.

This test relies on the significance value (Sig-Deviance). Table 5.24 reveals a significance level of Sig.=0.867, which is greater than 0.05, indicating that we fail to reject the null hypothesis. This finding suggests that the Probit model provides a satisfactory fit for the data, indicating that the difference between the observed and expected values is not statistically significant.

Table 5.25: Model of Fit Test (Goodness-of-Fit)

	Chi-Square	df	Sig.
Pearson	4 441.983	114	.167
Deviance	472.198	114	1.000

a. Link function: Probit.

b. Dependent variable (Satisfaction)

The following hypotheses are formulated:

H_0: The Probit model fits the data (the difference is not significant), meaning that the observed and expected values do not differ significantly.

H_1: The Probit model does not fit the data (the difference is significant), meaning that the observed and expected values differ significantly.

This test is based on the significance value (Sig. = Deviance). Table 5.25 shows a significance level of Sig. = 1.000, which exceeds the 0.05 threshold. Therefore, the null hypothesis is accepted. This outcome implies that the Probit model offers an acceptable fit for the data, indicating that the difference between the observed and expected values is not statistically significant.

5.4.6.4 Pseudo r-square test

The Pseudo R-squared test is utilised to evaluate the degree of fit of the model, showing how well the model represents a given set of observations. Specifically, the Pseudo R-squared value assesses the strength of the relationship between the dependent variable and the independent variables. Among various Pseudo R-squared statistics, the McFadden, Cox-Snell, and Nagelkerke R^2 are the most used statistics. Tables 5.26 and 5.27 present the results of the Pseudo R-Square analysis.

Table 5.26: Pseudo R-Square

	Pseudo R-Square
Cox and Snell	.390
Nagelkerke	.442
McFadden	.231

a. Link function: Probit.

b. Dependent variable (academic performance)

Using the Nagelkerke R^2 coefficient, the independent variables included in the model account for approximately 44.2% of the variance in the dependent variable. Similarly, the Cox and Snell R^2 indicates that around 39.0% of the variance is explained by the model. This implies that, while the model demonstrates a degree of explanatory power, a proportion of the variations in the dependent variable remain unexplained by other variables not included in the model.

Table 5.27: Pseudo R-Square

	Pseudo R-Square
Cox and Snell	.647
Nagelkerke	.686
McFadden	.365

a. Link function: Probit.

b. Dependent variable (Satisfaction)

The Nagelkerke R^2 coefficient reveals that the independent variables in the model account for 68.6% of the variance in the dependent variable. Also, the Cox and Snell R^2 indicates that 64.7% of the variance is explained by the model. This suggests that, although the model demonstrates the degree of explanatory power, a proportion of variations in the dependent variable remain unexplained by other variables not included in the model.

5.4.6.5 Analysis of parameter estimates from the ordinal probit regression

Table 5.28 presents the parameter estimates derived from the ordinal probit regression analysis, which investigates the relationship between various predictors and levels of academic performance. This model is particularly relevant in educational research, where the dependent variable is categorical and ordered, such as academic performance levels.

Table 5.28: Parameter Estimates

		Estimate	Std. Error	Wald	df	Sig.
Threshold	[Academic Performance = 2.00]	4.040	.888	20.685	1	.000
	[Academic Performance = 2.50]	5.242	.836	39.348	1	.000
	[Academic Performance = 3.00]	7.893	.884	79.720	1	.000
	[Academic Performance = 3.50]	8.433	.898	88.233	1	.000
Location	Teaching Quality Improvement	1.355	.193	49.442	1	.000
	Curriculum Review	1.293	.196	43.475	1	.000
	Learning Resources Accessibility	-.277	.155	3.199	1	.074
	Faculty Evaluation and Development	-.765	.221	11.932	1	.001

		Estimate	Std. Error	Wald	df	Sig.
	Compliance with Accreditation Standards	.321	.136	5.576	1	.018
	Incorporation of Student Feedback	.384	.221	3.038	1	.081

Link function: Probit.

As the threshold category in Table 5.28 reflects, the threshold for achieving an academic performance score of 2.50 (Estimate = 5.242) is higher than that of 2.00 (Estimate = 4.040), indicating that as one move from a lower to a higher category of performance, an increase in the latent variable is necessary. This relationship illustrates the ordinal nature of the dependent variable, where each performance level depends on the preceding one. In addition, the standard errors for the thresholds at 2.00, 2.50, and 3.00 are 0.888, 0.836, and 0.884, respectively. These relatively small standard errors suggest that the estimates are stable and reliable, indicating a high degree of confidence in these thresholds. Small standard errors indicate that the estimates are less likely to vary widely from the true population parameters, emphasising the validity of the model. The Wald values for all thresholds are high, with the threshold of 3.50 yielding a Wald statistic of 88.233. The Wald statistic is calculated as the square of the estimate divided by its standard error. Higher values indicate that the corresponding threshold is significantly different from zero. In this case, all thresholds have Wald statistics that yield significance values of less than .001, confirming that these thresholds are statistically significant. This significance implies that the thresholds are not only meaningful but also represent the points at which the likelihood of achieving higher academic performance levels changes.

As the location category in Table 5.28 indicates, the estimate of 1.355 with a significance level of 0.000 suggests a strong positive relationship between teaching quality and academic performance. This finding is consistent with the existing literature, which emphasises the critical role of effective teaching in enhancing student outcomes (Hattie, 2023). Similarly, the estimate of 1.293, also significant at $p < .001$, indicates that regular curriculum reviews have a positive impact on academic performance. Research supports this assertion, indicating that a well-structured curriculum aligned with student needs can lead to improved educational outcomes (Klein, 2016). The negative estimate of -.277, with a significance level of .074, suggests that accessibility to learning resources may not be as influential as anticipated. This finding raises questions about the adequacy and relevance of the resources provided, echoing concerns raised by recent studies that highlight disparities in resource allocation (Baker et al., 2019).

Regarding faculty evaluation and development, the negative estimate of -.765, significant at $p < .001$, suggests that ineffective processes may have a negative impact on academic performance. This finding aligns with research suggesting that faculty development programmes must be robust and targeted to enhance teaching effectiveness (Sims & Fletcher-Wood, 2021). The positive estimate of .321, significant at $p < .05$, suggests that adherence to accreditation standards contributes positively to academic performance. This finding is supported by the literature, which indicates that accreditation processes can enhance institutional quality and accountability (Harvey, 2018). The estimate of 0.384, with a significance level of 0.081, indicates a positive relationship, although the (sig) value is greater than 0.05. This implies that while student feedback may have a beneficial impact, further study is necessary to fully understand its role. Recent studies have stressed the importance of student voices in shaping educational practices (Cook-Sather et al., 2023). Table 5.29 presents the parameter estimates derived from the ordinal probit regression analysis, which investigates the relationship between various predictors and satisfaction.

Table 5.29 Parameter Estimates

		Estimate	Std. Error	Wald	df	Sig.
Threshold	[Satisfaction = 1.00]	5.469	1.117	23.980	1	.000
	[Satisfaction = 2.00]	8.744	.893	95.981	1	.000
	[Satisfaction = 2.50]	9.207	.897	105.282	1	.000
	[Satisfaction = 3.00]	11.176	.953	137.421	1	.000
	[Satisfaction = 3.50]	12.473	1.022	149.043	1	.000
Location	Teaching Quality Improvement	2.095	.213	96.794	1	.000
	Curriculum Review	-.759	.182	17.304	1	.000
	Learning Resources Accessibility	.371	.141	6.956	1	.008
	Faculty Evaluation and Development	.838	.212	15.642	1	.000
	Compliance with Accreditation Standards	-.174	.125	1.927	1	.165
	Incorporation of Student Feedback	.959	.206	21.580		.000

Link function: Probit.

From the threshold category in Table 5.29, it is evident that the threshold for attaining a satisfaction score of 2.50 (Estimate = 9.207) exceeds the threshold for a score of 2.00 (Estimate = 8.744). This indicates that as one transition from a lower to a higher satisfaction category, an increase in the latent variable is required. Such a relationship shows the ordinal nature of the dependent variable, where each satisfaction level is dependent on the previous one. Additionally, the standard errors for the thresholds at 2.00, 2.50, and 3.00 are 0.893, 0.897, and

0.953, respectively. These small standard errors indicate reliability in the estimates, providing a high degree of confidence in these thresholds. The presence of small standard errors indicates that the estimates are less likely to vary significantly from the true population parameters.

The Wald values for all thresholds are significant, with the threshold of 3.50, yielding a Wald statistic of 149.043. This statistic is calculated as the square of the estimate, divided by its standard error. Higher values signify that the corresponding threshold is significantly different from zero. All the thresholds in Table 5.29 yield Wald statistics with significance values of less than 0.001. This significance implies that the thresholds represent the points at which the likelihood of achieving higher satisfaction levels changes.

The analysis from Table 5.29 yields an estimate of 2.095, with a significance level of 0.000, indicating a positive relationship between Teaching Quality Improvement and satisfaction. This finding is consistent with the existing literature, which emphasises the role of effective teaching in enhancing student satisfaction (Rehman et al., 2022). However, the estimate of -.759, significant at $p < .001$, suggests that regular curriculum reviews have a negative impact on satisfaction. This raises concerns regarding the adequacy and relevance of the curriculum (Gul et al., 2021).

Moreover, the positive estimate of .371, significant at $p < .01$, indicates that access to learning resources positively influences satisfaction, supporting the idea that resource availability is important for enhancing student experiences (Lucander & Christersson, 2020). The estimate of .838, significant at $p < .001$, suggests that faculty evaluation and development processes positively affect satisfaction, aligning with research indicating that faculty development programmes enhance teaching effectiveness (Donaldson, 2020). The negative estimate of -.174, with a significance level of .165, suggests that compliance with accreditation standards may not have a significant impact on satisfaction, indicating that further research is needed to fully understand its role (Anyidoho, 2023). Lastly, the positive estimate of .959, significant at $p < .001$, indicates that incorporating student feedback is important for improving satisfaction (Duraku & Hoxha, 2020).

5.4.7 Difficulty in Complying with Rules and Requirements of GTEC

The purpose of this research objective was to explore the challenges faced by Ghanaian private universities in complying with the rules and requirements of the GTEC on quality assurance practices. To address this, the study gathered responses from the selected registrars, deans of

students, heads of quality assurance, lecturers and students on their perceptions of the challenges faced by their universities in adhering to the rules and requirements. The research question was analysed under four themes: (1) misconception or misunderstanding of quality assurance; (2) manpower challenges; (3) inadequate infrastructure; and (4) resistance to determine the extent of the challenges that the quality assurance offices of private universities faced in performing their activities based on empirical literature.

Table 5.30 categorises responses into four distinct levels of difficulty: "Most Challenging" (MC), "Challenging" (C), "Somewhat Challenging" (SC), and "Not a Challenge" (NC), and the respondents indicated their level of agreement. The results are summarised in Tables 5.30, 5.31, 5.32, 5.33, and 5.34. Table 5.30 presents the lecturers' responses to the challenges they faced in adhering to the rules and requirements.

Table 5.30: Lecturers' Responses on Difficulty in Complying with Rules and Requirements of GTEC

Statements	NC N (%)	SC N (%)	C N (%)	MC N (%)	Total
Misconception or misunderstanding of quality assurance	46(28.2)	87(53.4)	30(18.4)	0(0)	163(100)
Manpower challenges	1(.6)	136(83.4)	15(9.2)	11(6.7)	163(100)
Inadequate infrastructure	0(0)	77(47.2)	74(45.4)	12(7.4)	163(100)
Resistance	37(22.7)	113(69.3)	2(1.2)	11(6.7)	163(100)

Note: 'Most Challenging' [MC], 'Challenging' [C], Somewhat Challenging' [SC], 'Not a Challenge' [NC]

Source: Fieldwork (2024)

As Table 5.30 displays, 53.4% of lecturers indicated that the misconceptions or misunderstandings related to quality assurance were somewhat of a challenge, while 28.2% stated that this was NC for them. Only 18.4% of the lecturers acknowledged the misconceptions related to quality assurance as a challenge. These figures suggest that a significant portion of the faculty may not fully grasp the principles of quality assurance, indicating a potential need for enhanced training and education on this topic to mitigate misunderstandings (GTEC, 2024).

In terms of manpower challenges, 83.4% of lecturers reported that this issue was somewhat of a challenge. Only 0.6% stated that this was NC, while 9.2% regarded it as a challenge, and 6.7% identified it as a major challenge. This data highlights the sufficiency and allocation of human resources in academic environments. The high percentage of faculty acknowledging

this issue emphasises the necessity for institutions to evaluate and improve staffing levels to ensure compliance with the GTEC requirements (Addae-Kyeremeh & Boateng, 2024).

The responses on inadequate infrastructure reveal that 47.2% of lecturers identified this aspect as somewhat of a challenge, while 45.4% considered it a challenge. A smaller proportion, 7.4%, categorised it as a major challenge, while none indicated that it was NC. The nearly equal split between those who considered inadequate infrastructure a challenge and those who deemed it somewhat of a challenge illustrates that infrastructure remains a significant barrier to adhering to the GTEC standards. Such findings suggest that addressing infrastructural deficits should be a priority for institutions seeking to enhance compliance with quality assurance regulations (UNESCO, 2021).

Regarding resistance to the GTEC requirements, 69.3% of lecturers reported that this issue was somewhat of a challenge, while 22.7% indicated that it was NC. Only 1.2% acknowledged it as a challenge, and 6.7% designated it as a major challenge. The high level of reported resistance stresses the need for institutions to foster a more supportive environment for implementing GTEC standards. This could involve engaging faculty in discussions about the importance of adhering to these requirements and addressing any underlying concerns that may contribute to resistance (Addae-Kyeremeh & Boateng, 2024). An analysis reveals that lecturers' responses to the challenges of complying with the GTEC rules and requirements are characterised by misconceptions about quality assurance and manpower challenges, which are particularly prominent. The findings suggest a pressing need for targeted interventions, such as training programmes and resource allocation to enhance understanding and compliance. Additionally, addressing infrastructural deficits and fostering a supportive institutional culture may further facilitate adherence to the GTEC standards, ultimately contributing to improved educational quality in Ghana's tertiary institutions. Table 5.31 presents the students' responses to challenges in complying with the rules and requirements established by the GTEC.

Table 5.31: Students' Responses on Difficulty in Complying with Rules and Requirements of GTEC

Statements	NC N (%)	SC N (%)	C N (%)	MC N (%)	Total
Misconception or misunderstanding of quality assurance	48(52.7)	15(16.5)	17(18.7)	11(12.1)	91(100)
Manpower challenges	19(20.9)	36(39.6)	35(38.5)	1(1.1)	91(100)

Statements	NC N (%)	SC N (%)	C N (%)	MC N (%)	Total
Inadequate infrastructure	11(12.1)	26(28.6)	31(34.1)	23(25.3)	91(100)
Resistance	28(30.8)	19(20.9)	29(31.9)	15(16.5)	91(100)

Note: 'Most Challenging' [MC], 'Challenging' [C], Somewhat Challenging' [SC], 'Not a Challenge' [NC]

Source: Fieldwork (2024)

The data reveals that 52.7% of students indicated that misconceptions or misunderstandings regarding quality assurance were NC. In contrast, 16.5% reported that these were somewhat of a challenge, while 18.7% acknowledged it as a challenge, and 12.1% categorised it as a major challenge. The high percentage of students feeling that these were NC suggests that a considerable portion may possess a reasonable understanding of quality assurance principles. However, the percentages of those who saw it as a challenge show the need for ongoing education to address existing misconceptions (Osei-Owusu, 2022).

On manpower challenges, 39.6% of students indicated that they were somewhat of a challenge, while 38.5% acknowledged them as a challenge. Only 20.9% stated that it was NC, and a small fraction (1.1%) classified it as a major challenge. This distribution indicates that a significant number of students perceived manpower issues as a relevant factor affecting complying with the GTEC requirements. The findings suggest institutions need to evaluate workforce adequacy, as students' perceptions of manpower challenges may influence their educational experiences and compliance (Mensah, 2022).

The responses on inadequate infrastructure show that 12.1% of students did not see this as a challenge, while 28.6% categorised it as somewhat of a challenge. A larger portion (34.1%) recognised it as a challenge, and 25.3% considered it a major challenge. This indicates that infrastructure was a problem according to their responses, with over half of the students identifying it as a challenge or major challenge. Addressing infrastructure problems should be a priority for educational institutions to enhance the learning environment and ensure compliance with the GTEC standards (Aidoo, 2023).

In terms of resistance to the GTEC requirements, 30.8% of students indicated that it was NC, while 20.9% reported it as somewhat of a challenge. A significant 31.9% acknowledged it as a challenge, and 16.5% categorised it as a major challenge. The relatively high percentage of students who perceived resistance as a challenge suggests that attitudes toward GTEC compliance may vary widely. To foster a more compliant atmosphere, institutions should

engage students in discussions about the importance of quality assurance and address any concerns contributing to resistance (Anyidoho, 2023). Table 5.32 presents the responses of quality assurance heads to the challenges of adhering to the rules and requirements established by the GTEC.

Table 5.32: Quality Assurance Heads' Responses on Difficulty in Complying with Rules and Requirements of GTEC

Statements	NC	SC	C	MC	Total
	N (%)	N (%)	N (%)	N (%)	
Misconception or misunderstanding of quality assurance	2(20.0)	6(60.0)	2(20.0)	0(0)	10(100)
Manpower challenges	0(0)	80(80.0)	1(10.0)	1(10.0)	10(100)
Inadequate infrastructure	0(0)	4(40.0)	5(50.0)	1(10.0)	10(100)
Resistance	1(10.0)	8(80.0)	0(0)	1(10.0)	10(100)

Note: 'Most Challenging' [MC], 'Challenging' [C], Somewhat Challenging' [SC], 'Not a Challenge' [NC]

Source: Fieldwork (2024)

Among quality assurance heads, 60.0% reported that misconceptions or misunderstandings regarding quality assurance were somewhat challenging, while 20.0% indicated that they were NC and another 20.0% acknowledged them as a challenge. The absence of any respondents categorising these as a major challenge (MC) suggests that while some misunderstandings exist, the majority of quality assurance heads possessed a reasonable understanding of quality assurance principles. Nonetheless, the percentage who reported these as somewhat challenging indicates a need for continued professional development in this area (Osei-Owusu, 2022).

The data on manpower challenges reveals that 80.0% of quality assurance heads identified this issue as somewhat challenging. Only 10.0% regarded it as a challenge and another 10.0% classified it as a major challenge. This majority view of manpower challenges emphasises the importance of adequate staffing and resource allocation in fulfilling the GTEC requirements. Institutions may need to reassess their human-resource strategies to ensure that quality assurance heads are supported in their roles (Seniwoliba, 2014).

Regarding inadequate infrastructure, 40.0% of the respondents indicated it was somewhat challenging, while 50.0% acknowledged it was a challenge. A smaller proportion (10.0%) considered it a major challenge, with none saying it was NC. This equal split between those who perceived it as a challenge and those who saw it as somewhat challenging highlights that infrastructure remains a significant concern (Mensah, 2022).

On resistance to GTEC requirements, 80.0% of quality assurance heads reported that it was somewhat challenging, while 10.0% indicated that it was NC and another 10.0% categorised it as a major challenge. The high percentage of respondents identifying resistance as a challenging point to the need for institutions to foster a more supportive environment for implementing GTEC standards. Engaging staff in discussions about the importance of compliance may help alleviate resistance and enhance compliance (Anyidoho, 2023). Table 5.33 presents the registrars' responses to the challenges of complying to the rules and requirements established by the GTEC.

Table 5.33: Registrars' Responses on Difficulty in Complying with Rules and Requirements of GTEC

Statements	NC	SC	C	MC	Total
	N (%)	N (%)	N (%)	N (%)	
Misconception or misunderstanding of quality assurance	2(22.2)	4(44.4)	3(33.3)	0(0)	9(100)
Manpower challenges	0(0)	8(88.9)	1(11.1)	0(0)	9(100)
Inadequate infrastructure	0(0)	5(55.6)	2(22.2)	2(22.2)	9(100)
Resistance	1(11.1)	6(66.7)	1(11.1)	1(11.1)	9(100)

Note: 'Most Challenging' [MC], 'Challenging' [C], Somewhat Challenging' [SC], 'Not a Challenge' [NC]

Source: Fieldwork (2024)

Among registrars, 44.4% reported that misconceptions or misunderstandings regarding quality assurance were somewhat challenging, while 22.2% indicated that they were NC and 33.3% acknowledged them as a challenge. The absence of any respondents categorising this as a major challenge suggests that while some misunderstandings persisted, the majority of registrars had a reasonable understanding of quality assurance principles. However, the significant percentage facing challenges indicates the need for ongoing education and clarification on these concepts (Mensah, 2022).

The data on manpower challenges indicates that 88.9% of registrars identified this issue as somewhat challenging. Only 11.1% regarded it as a challenge, and none classified it as NC or a major challenge. This significant consensus reflects the critical nature of manpower issues in the context of GTEC compliance. Institutions must prioritise human-resource management to ensure that registrars have the necessary support and staffing to fulfil their roles effectively (Owusu-Afriyie et al., 2024).

Regarding inadequate infrastructure, 55.6% of registrars indicated it was somewhat challenging, while 22.2% acknowledged it was a challenge, and another 22.2% categorised it as a major challenge. The absence of any respondents stating that inadequate infrastructure was NC highlights that this issue was a significant concern for registrars. Addressing infrastructural shortcomings should be a priority for institutions to facilitate compliance with the GTEC standards (Bruce-Twum, 2023).

In terms of resistance to the GTEC requirements, 66.7% of registrars reported that it was somewhat challenging, while 11.1% indicated that it was NC, 11.1% acknowledged it as a challenge, and 11.1% categorised it as a major challenge. The high percentage of respondents identifying resistance as a challenge suggests that there may be underlying issues affecting staff's willingness to comply with the GTEC requirements. Institutions should consider implementing strategies to engage registrars and foster a culture of compliance (Mensah, 2022). Table 5.34 presents the deans of students' responses to the challenges they faced in adhering to the rules and requirements established by the GTEC.

Table 5.34: Deans of Students' Response on Difficulty in Complying with Rules & Requirements of GTEC

Statements	NC	SC	C	MC	Total
	N (%)	N (%)	N (%)	N (%)	
Misconception or misunderstanding of quality assurance	1(12.5)	5(62.5)	2(25.0)	0(0)	8(100)
Manpower challenges	0(0)	7(87.5)	0(0)	1(12.5)	8(100)
Inadequate infrastructure	0(0)	4(50.0)	3(37.5)	1(12.5)	8(100)
Resistance	1(12.5)	6(75.0)	0(0)	1(12.5)	8(100)

Note: 'Most Challenging' [MC], 'Challenging' [C], Somewhat Challenging' [SC], 'Not a Challenge' [NC]

Source: Fieldwork (2024)

As reflected in Table 5.34, 62.5% of the deans of students reported that misconceptions or misunderstandings regarding quality assurance were somewhat challenging, while 12.5% indicated that they were NC and 25% acknowledged them as a challenge. The absence of any respondents categorising this as a major challenge suggests that while some misunderstandings existed, most deans had a reasonable understanding of quality assurance principles. However, the significant percentage facing challenges underscores the need for continuous education and professional development in this area (Senyametor et al, 2024).

The data on manpower challenges reveals that 87.5% of the deans of students identified this issue as somewhat challenging, while 12.5% classified it as a major challenge. This majority

perception reflects the critical nature of manpower issues in the context of GTEC compliance. Educational institutions must prioritise adequate staffing and support to empower student deans in fulfilling their responsibilities effectively (Amegbor, 2023).

Regarding inadequate infrastructure, 50% of the deans of students indicated it was somewhat challenging, while 37.5% acknowledged it was a challenge, and 12.5% categorised it as a major challenge. The absence of any respondents stating that inadequate infrastructure is NC highlights that this issue is a significant concern for the deans of students. Institutions should focus on addressing infrastructural deficiencies to facilitate compliance with GTEC standards (Addae-Kyereme & Boateng, 2024).

On resistance to the GTEC requirements, 75.0% of the deans reported that it was somewhat challenging, while 12.5% indicated that it was NC, 12.5% acknowledged it as a major challenge, and none categorised it as a challenge. The high percentage of respondents identifying resistance as a challenge suggests that there might be underlying issues affecting adherence to the GTEC requirements. Therefore, institutions should consider implementing strategies to engage students and foster a culture of compliance (Tsevi, 2025).

5.5 CHAPTER SUMMARY

This chapter began with an assessment of the valid response rates, the presentation of respondents' biographical characteristics, and was followed by an analysis of the quantitative data. The chapter then presented the main findings of the quantitative analysis, structured around the research questions and disaggregated by the different categories of respondents. Specifically; the analysis examined the state of quality assurance; participants' perceptions of quality assurance roles; complying with GTEC requirements; the effect of quality assurance on students' academic performance and satisfaction; and the difficulties private universities face in complying with GTEC rules and requirements. Descriptive statistics and ordinal probit regression were used where appropriate to analyse the data. The chapter concluded with a summary of the key analytical results, and the next chapter focuses on the interpretation and discussion of these findings. The next chapter focuses on the discussion of findings.

CHAPTER 6

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

6.1 INTRODUCTION

The preceding chapter presented the analysis of valid response rates, followed by the examination of quantitative data, and the presentation of biographical information. The subsequent sections presented the main results of the quantitative data analysis, organised according to the research objectives and categorised by the different types of respondents. The chapter concluded with a summary of the analysis results. The results were presented matching with the research objectives stated. This chapter begins with a discussion of the results of an analysis of quality assurance practices in HE in Ghana, with a specific focus on private universities, drawing on existing literature. The findings of this study aim to inform key stakeholders, including the MoE, the NaCCA, the GTEC and academic institutions, on policy directions and best practices for quality assurance. The goal is to enhance the quality of teaching and learning in private institutions and to recommend to the Government of Ghana the need to establish effective quality assurance frameworks.

6.2 RESEARCH OBJECTIVE 1: EVALUATE THE STATE OF QA PRACTICES AT GHANA'S PRIVATE UNIVERSITIES

The first research objective sought to investigate how private universities in Ghana manage quality assurance. The findings reveal a generally positive perception of quality assurance practices among various stakeholders, including lecturers, students, quality assurance heads, registrars and deans. The strong agreement among stakeholders reflects an understanding of the significance of quality assurance mechanisms in HE. From the perspective of TQM theory, the positive perceptions regarding QA practices suggest that private universities in Ghana are increasingly recognising quality as a collective institutional responsibility rather than merely a regulatory obligation. This finding aligns with the TQM principle of organisation-wide commitment to continuous improvement, where quality practices are embedded within institutional processes and shared among stakeholders. The finding further suggests that QA practices are gradually becoming institutionalised within private universities, thereby reinforcing accountability and quality consciousness within the HE environment.

For instance, the lecturers' responses indicated a high level of confidence in evaluating academic programmes, affirming that these programmes are assessed periodically. This aligns with Jafarov (2024), who emphasises that regular evaluations are essential for maintaining academic standards and institutional accountability. The consistency in perceptions, evidenced by a low standard deviation, indicates that faculty members have a uniform understanding of quality assurance practices, which is crucial for implementing effective institutional strategies. This finding can also be interpreted through Juran's quality planning and quality control principles, which emphasise systematic monitoring, continuous evaluation, and leadership responsibility in maintaining institutional quality standards. The periodic assessment of academic programmes therefore reflects an attempt by private universities to operationalise continuous improvement mechanisms within their institutional processes. From a TQM perspective, this is important because quality improvement depends on regular monitoring and corrective action rather than occasional external inspections alone.

Moreover, the highest mean value reported by lecturers concerning student involvement in the assessment of teaching underscores the recognition of feedback mechanisms within quality assurance frameworks. This finding is consistent with Romanowski (2022), who posits that stakeholder involvement enhances educational quality. The incorporation of student feedback not only fosters a culture of accountability but also empowers students, making them active participants in their educational experience. The finding further reinforces the stakeholder engagement dimension of TQM theory, which argues that quality improvement is more effective when institutions actively involve internal stakeholders in evaluation and decision-making processes. Student participation in teaching assessment may therefore indicate a gradual shift from purely top-down QA approaches towards more participatory and inclusive quality cultures within private universities in Ghana. This is significant because TQM emphasises that sustainable quality improvement requires continuous feedback from those directly affected by institutional processes and outcomes.

Despite the positive outlook on certain quality assurance practices, the findings also highlight significant gaps that require attention. The lowest mean score reported by lecturers regarding the availability of good internet facilities highlights a critical area that requires improvement. Access to reliable internet is fundamental for effective quality assurance practices, particularly in an increasingly digital learning environment (Li et al., 2024). The disparity in perceptions regarding technological support is concerning, as inadequate infrastructure can hinder the

implementation of quality assurance processes. This aligns with Mireku and Bervell (2024), who stress that effective communication and data management are essential for monitoring and evaluating academic programmes. From a TQM perspective, the weak technological infrastructure suggests limitations in the institutional capacity required to sustain continuous improvement processes effectively. Deming's systems-oriented approach argues that quality outcomes are strongly influenced by institutional systems, resources, and process support structures. The inadequate internet facilities reported in this study therefore suggest that although institutions may demonstrate commitment to QA at the policy level, weaknesses in infrastructural support may undermine the effective implementation of quality management processes. This finding also highlights the gap between formal QA structures and operational readiness within some private universities in Ghana.

Furthermore, students' perceptions echoed similar sentiments, with a low mean score for the availability of good internet facilities, indicating that access to technology varies widely among the student population. This variability suggests that while some students may have adequate resources, others face significant barriers, thus impacting their educational experience and the overall quality assurance framework. The finding may further suggest that quality assurance within private universities cannot be fully effective without equitable access to learning resources and institutional support systems. Within the TQM framework, quality is viewed as an institution-wide process that requires consistency in service delivery and stakeholder support. Variations in technological access may therefore weaken the ability of institutions to achieve consistent educational quality outcomes across the student population.

Another notable gap identified in the findings is the perceived involvement of all stakeholders in programme reviews. Students rated this aspect low, indicating that while there is some recognition of stakeholder engagement, it is insufficient. This limitation can hinder the overall implementation of quality assurance processes, as effective communication and diverse input are vital for comprehensive evaluations (Anachuna & Obinna-Ifesi, 2024). This finding partially contradicts the participatory assumptions of TQM theory, particularly Ishikawa's argument that quality improvement should involve broad institutional participation and collective responsibility. The limited involvement of some stakeholders in programme reviews may therefore indicate that QA practices within certain private universities remain management-driven rather than fully participatory. This has important implications because

weak stakeholder engagement may reduce institutional ownership of QA processes and limit the effectiveness of continuous improvement efforts.

Moreover, financial resource allocation received a low mean score from students, suggesting challenges in ensuring that adequate resources are directed towards quality assurance initiatives. Efficient allocation is crucial for sustaining quality assurance activities, as financial constraints can significantly impact the implementation of necessary improvements (Elg et al., 2021). The perceptions of registrars further corroborate the findings regarding efficient resource allocation, indicating that resource management remains a challenge. This suggests a pressing need for institutions to prioritise resource allocation towards quality assurance initiatives, as highlighted by Wood (2023), who argues that inclusive decision-making processes are essential for enhancing educational quality. The resource allocation challenges identified in this study can also be interpreted through Feigenbaum's TQM perspective, which emphasises that quality management requires institution-wide investment and recognition of the costs associated with poor quality systems. The findings therefore suggest that insufficient investment in QA infrastructure and institutional support may weaken the sustainability of quality improvement initiatives within private universities in Ghana. This supports the argument that effective QA implementation depends not only on policy compliance but also on institutional willingness to commit adequate financial and material resources to quality processes.

The implications of these findings are significant for policy and practice in private universities in Ghana. Firstly, the positive perceptions of quality assurance practices indicate a solid foundation upon which institutions can build. However, the identified gaps, particularly in technological support and stakeholder involvement, must be addressed to enhance the quality assurance framework effectively. Institutions should prioritise investments in technological infrastructure, particularly internet access, to facilitate effective quality assurance processes. This aligns with Khan et al. (2023), who highlight the importance of reliable internet in modern educational settings. Improved access would support not only quality assurance activities but also enhance the overall learning experience for students. The findings underscore the need for greater involvement of all stakeholders in programme reviews. Institutions should develop mechanisms to ensure that student voices are heard and integrated into decision-making processes. This could involve establishing regular feedback sessions and forums where students, faculty and administrative staff collaborate on quality assurance initiatives. Such

collaborative mechanisms are consistent with TQM principles of participatory governance, continuous feedback, and institutional learning. The findings therefore suggest that sustainable QA systems in private universities require not only external regulatory compliance but also the development of internal quality cultures that promote shared responsibility, stakeholder participation, and continuous institutional improvement. The findings suggest that faculty members are in the know of quality assurance practices, yet ongoing professional development should be emphasised to keep them updated on the best practices and innovations in quality assurance. Workshops, training sessions and collaborations with international institutions can enhance their skills and knowledge. This finding aligns with Deming's and Juran's emphasis on continuous training, leadership support, and institutional capacity building as essential requirements for sustainable quality improvement. The implication is that QA effectiveness within private universities depends significantly on continuous institutional learning and staff development rather than reliance on compliance procedures alone. Finally, the development of a comprehensive quality assurance framework that includes clear guidelines on resource allocation, stakeholder involvement and regular evaluations is essential. Such a framework can provide a roadmap for institutions to follow, ensuring that quality assurance practices are not only implemented but also sustained over time.

From a theoretical standpoint, these findings extend quality assurance scholarship by demonstrating that positive perceptions of QA can coexist with material and infrastructural deficits, particularly within private HE systems in low-resource contexts. While prior studies report the institutionalisation of QA structures in Ghanaian universities, this study shows that formal compliance does not necessarily ensure operational effectiveness, particularly in technology-dependent QA processes. This helps explain why earlier studies, such as Tsevi (2019), reported weaker QA implementation: those studies focused on earlier regulatory phases when institutional capacity was still developing. In contrast, the stronger alignment observed here likely reflects regulatory maturation under GTEC and increased institutional learning, though persistent infrastructural gaps remain. The Ghanaian private university context, characterised by tuition dependence and limited state support, helps explain why stakeholder awareness of QA is high while financial and technological investments lag behind, thus extending existing QA models that often assume resource sufficiency.

6.3 RESEARCH OBJECTIVE 2: EXAMINE HOW GHANAIAN PRIVATE UNIVERSITY WORKERS SEE THE ROLE OF QUALITY ASSURANCE

This research aimed to explore how the various stakeholders at private universities in Ghana view the role of QA. The findings indicate a generally positive perception of QA among various stakeholders, including lecturers, registrars, heads of quality assurance, deans of students, and students. The overall mean scores for their perceptions suggest substantial agreement on the importance and effectiveness of QA practices in HE. A high level of agreement regarding the roles of QA reflects a shared understanding among stakeholders that quality assurance is integral to achieving institutional goals and enhancing educational quality. This consensus suggests that QA is not merely a bureaucratic requirement but a fundamental component of the academic mission that aligns with the strategic objectives of universities. From the perspective of Total Quality Management theory, the strong positive perceptions regarding QA suggest that quality practices are becoming increasingly embedded within the institutional culture of private universities in Ghana. This finding aligns with the TQM assumption that quality improvement should be integrated into the core mission and operational processes of institutions rather than treated as an external compliance activity. The finding therefore suggests a gradual movement from compliance-oriented QA towards a more internally driven culture of continuous improvement and institutional accountability. The findings resonate with existing literature that emphasises the critical role of QA in maintaining academic standards and institutional accountability. For example, Harvey and Stensaker (2008) argue that strategic coherence in educational quality is vital for aligning institutional objectives with educational outcomes. This alignment is essential, as it enables institutions to navigate the complexities of HE while ensuring they meet both internal and external quality standards. The findings further reflect Juran's TQM perspective, which emphasises that quality planning and strategic leadership are essential for achieving institutional effectiveness. The strong stakeholder agreement regarding the role of QA may therefore indicate that private universities increasingly recognise QA as a strategic management function that supports institutional performance, accountability, and long-term sustainability. From a theoretical standpoint, this suggests that QA is gradually evolving beyond routine accreditation requirements towards a broader institutional quality management process.

Moreover, the perceptions of lecturers underscore the importance of QA in enhancing an institution's reputation. Many lecturers believe that QA practices contribute significantly to

raising the profile of their universities. This finding aligns with the work of Dolcini et al. (2021), who emphasise the importance of quality assurance in elevating the credibility and attractiveness of educational institutions. When universities implement effective QA measures, they not only improve educational outcomes but also enhance their standing in both local and international contexts. This finding also aligns with Feigenbaum's institution-wide responsibility principle within TQM theory, which argues that quality outcomes influence the overall image, credibility, and competitiveness of institutions. The findings therefore suggest that QA practices are increasingly viewed not only as mechanisms for internal monitoring but also as strategic tools for institutional legitimacy and reputation-building within the competitive HE environment. This is important because private universities in Ghana operate within increasingly competitive educational markets where institutional reputation significantly influences student enrolment and public trust. Despite the positive perceptions, the findings also reveal critical gaps that warrant attention. For instance, stakeholders expressed concerns regarding the adequacy of academic and staff resources, indicating that while they recognise the importance of these resources for effective QA, there is room for improvement. Albaroudi and Iqbal (2024) highlight that effective QA processes rely on sufficient staffing and infrastructure to support educational initiatives. This gap suggests that universities must prioritise resource allocation to ensure that QA practices can be effectively implemented and sustained.

From a TQM perspective, the concerns regarding inadequate academic and staff resources suggest that institutional commitment to quality may not yet be fully supported by adequate operational capacity. Deming's systems-oriented approach emphasises that quality improvement depends on the interaction between leadership commitment, institutional systems, staff capacity, and resource support. The findings therefore imply that positive attitudes towards QA alone are insufficient if institutions do not provide the human and material resources necessary for sustaining continuous improvement processes. This highlights an important structural tension between institutional aspirations for quality and the operational realities confronting many private universities in Ghana. The perceived inadequacy in recognising student achievements emerged as a significant concern among students. Their perspectives indicate that while QA is viewed positively, there is a lack of mechanisms to acknowledge and celebrate student contributions. Peters (2024) emphasises the importance of recognising student achievements as a means to foster motivation and engagement. Without such recognition, students may feel undervalued, which could impact their overall academic

experience and success. This finding partially challenges the stakeholder-centred assumptions of TQM theory, particularly Juran's and Ishikawa's emphasis on stakeholder satisfaction, participation, and continuous feedback. Within TQM, students are important stakeholders whose experiences and achievements should form part of institutional quality evaluation processes. The inadequate recognition of student achievements may therefore suggest weaknesses in the institutions' ability to fully operationalise participatory and student-centred QA practices. From a broader perspective, the finding indicates that effective QA in HE should not only focus on institutional compliance and administrative procedures but also on creating supportive academic environments that promote student motivation, engagement, and institutional belonging. The implications of these findings are substantial for policy and practice within private universities in Ghana. Firstly, the positive perceptions of QA practices suggest a solid foundation upon which institutions can build. However, addressing the identified gaps is essential for improving the overall effectiveness of QA. Institutions should prioritise investments in academic and staff resources to support QA initiatives, ensuring that adequate infrastructure is in place to facilitate effective teaching and learning. Such investments are consistent with TQM principles of continuous improvement, institutional learning, and prevention-oriented quality management. The findings therefore suggest that sustainable QA systems require not only policy frameworks and regulatory structures but also long-term institutional investment in people, infrastructure, and organisational capacity. Furthermore, universities should implement programmes that celebrate student successes, enhancing recognition of student contributions within the QA framework. Strengthening local recognition of university achievements can also improve the institutional profile, attract prospective students and foster a sense of pride among current students.

Beyond confirming positive staff perceptions of QA increasingly internalised as a strategic, rather than purely regulatory, function within Ghana's private universities. This aligns with Mensah (2022) and Amoako and Asamoah-Gyimah (2020), who found that staff engagement with QA improves institutional processes and student satisfaction. However, contrasting evidence from Tsevi (2019) suggests that QA was previously viewed as externally imposed and bureaucratic. The divergence can be explained by institutional evolution and context: many private universities have now moved beyond survival-focused compliance toward reputation-building strategies, making QA instrumental rather than symbolic. This transition reflects a key assumption of TQM theory that quality systems become more effective when they are internalised within institutional culture rather than imposed externally through inspection and

compliance mechanisms alone. The findings therefore suggest that some private universities in Ghana may be gradually transitioning from reactive compliance-based QA systems towards more proactive and improvement-oriented quality cultures. The persistent concerns about staffing and recognition mechanisms suggest that, while ideological acceptance of QA is strong, organisational capacity has not yet fully caught up, highlighting a structural tension common in private HE systems across Sub-Saharan Africa.

6.4 RESEARCH OBJECTIVE 3: DETERMINE HOW PRIVATE UNIVERSITIES IN GHANA COMPLY WITH THE GTEC STANDARDS

The investigation into how the quality assurance practices of private universities in Ghana comply with the guidelines set forth by the Ghana Tertiary Education Commission (GTEC) yields significant insights. The findings reveal a strong adherence to the GTEC requirements among various stakeholders, including lecturers, students, heads of quality assurance, registrars and deans of students. This widespread affirmation of adherence indicates a collective commitment to maintaining educational quality and accountability within these institutions. The high levels of agreement in relation to the implementation of quality assurance practices suggest that private universities in Ghana are actively engaging with the GTEC's standards. For instance, the majority of lecturers reported regular faculty and departmental meetings focused on quality assurance, highlighting the importance placed on collaborative discussions to enhance educational provision. This practice is crucial, as it fosters a culture of continuous improvement and open communication among faculty, which is essential for addressing academic challenges and ensuring educational standards are upheld. This finding strongly reflects Ishikawa's participatory orientation within TQM theory, which emphasises collective responsibility, collaborative problem-solving, and continuous institutional dialogue in quality improvement processes. The regular faculty and departmental meetings may therefore indicate that some private universities are adopting more participatory approaches to QA implementation. From a theoretical standpoint, this is important because TQM assumes that quality improvement becomes more sustainable when academic staff actively participate in institutional quality discussions and decision-making processes.

Moreover, the data indicates a strong framework for university-wide meetings that address academic matters. The commitment to discussing academic issues reflects an institutional culture that values transparency and collaboration, which are vital for sustaining quality assurance practices. Such engagement aligns with the findings of Tagoe and Abakah (2024),

who emphasise that regular academic discussions are integral to maintaining educational quality and fostering a proactive approach to quality assurance. The finding also aligns with Deming's systems-oriented approach, which emphasises that institutional quality depends on coordinated organisational processes, communication structures, and leadership commitment. The existence of university-wide discussions on academic quality may therefore suggest that institutions are moving beyond fragmented QA activities towards more coordinated and institution-wide quality management systems. This supports the TQM assumption that continuous improvement requires regular institutional reflection, communication, and collective problem-solving. The overwhelming participation in programme and course evaluations through questionnaires further underscores the institutions' commitment to assessing and enhancing educational offerings. The high participation rates, particularly among lecturers, demonstrate a proactive stance towards quality assurance that aligns with best practices in HE. Al Jaber (2022) supports this assertion, noting that systematic evaluations are fundamental to ensuring that educational institutions can adapt and respond effectively to the needs of students and the job market. This finding can further be interpreted through Juran's quality control and quality improvement principles, which emphasise systematic monitoring, evaluation, and corrective action as central mechanisms for sustaining institutional quality. The strong participation in programme evaluations therefore suggests that private universities increasingly recognise the importance of evidence-based monitoring in improving educational processes and institutional outcomes. From a broader theoretical perspective, the finding demonstrates that continuous assessment mechanisms are becoming important tools for institutional learning and quality enhancement within private universities in Ghana.

Furthermore, the positive responses regarding the evaluation of student learning experiences signify an institutional dedication to understanding and improving the student experience. This commitment is echoed in the literature by Harman (2011), who argues that prioritising student feedback is essential for enhancing educational quality and fostering an environment conducive to learning. The finding reflects the stakeholder-centred orientation of TQM theory, particularly the emphasis placed on stakeholder satisfaction and continuous feedback mechanisms. Within TQM, students are viewed as central stakeholders whose experiences and feedback contribute significantly to institutional improvement processes. The findings therefore suggest that private universities are increasingly recognising student feedback as an important component of effective QA implementation and institutional accountability. When assessing the effectiveness of teaching and assessment strategies, the findings demonstrate a

systematic approach to evaluating teaching methods. The participation of all stakeholders in these evaluations indicates a comprehensive strategy for continuous improvement in educational quality. Utuka (2023) emphasises that such systematic evaluations are essential for refining teaching methodologies and ensuring that they meet the evolving needs of students. This systematic approach to evaluating teaching and assessment practices aligns with Crosby's prevention-oriented approach within TQM theory. Crosby argues that institutions should focus on preventing quality problems through continuous monitoring, supervision, and process improvement rather than relying solely on corrective measures after failures occur. The findings therefore suggest that private universities are gradually adopting preventive QA approaches that aim to identify weaknesses early and improve teaching effectiveness continuously. The commitment to regular curriculum reviews, as reported by a significant majority of lecturers and students, is vital for ensuring that educational programmes remain relevant and effective. Avsheniuk (2021) emphasises the importance of curriculum alignment with contemporary educational demands, suggesting that regular reviews are necessary to adapt to changes in the job market and evolving student needs. From a TQM perspective, regular curriculum review reflects the principle of continuous improvement and responsiveness to stakeholder needs. The findings suggest that private universities are attempting to align educational programmes with changing labour market expectations and societal demands, thereby reinforcing the relevance and adaptability of their academic programmes. This is theoretically significant because TQM views institutional quality as a dynamic process that requires continuous adaptation and innovation rather than static compliance with fixed standards. In terms of institutional self-evaluation, the strong affirmation of its implementation across various stakeholders demonstrates that self-assessment processes are integral to the quality assurance framework. According to Mohammed (2022), such self-evaluation not only enhances accountability but also fosters a culture of continuous improvement within educational institutions. The emphasis on institutional self-evaluation strongly reflects Deming's PDCA cycle and Juran's quality improvement framework, both of which stress the importance of institutional reflection, measurement, and corrective action in sustaining quality systems. The findings therefore suggest that self-evaluation practices are becoming embedded within the internal quality cultures of private universities in Ghana. This may indicate a gradual transition from externally driven compliance towards internally motivated quality enhancement processes. The findings also indicate a commitment to external evaluations, reflecting a dedication to transparency and accountability in educational quality. The

affirmation of external evaluations by all stakeholders aligns with the GTEC's emphasis on regular external assessments to ensure compliance with established quality standards. This finding demonstrates the balance between internal institutional quality processes and external accountability structures that is emphasised within TQM frameworks. While TQM promotes internal quality ownership, it also recognises the importance of external benchmarking and accountability mechanisms in maintaining institutional credibility and public trust. The findings therefore suggest that private universities are increasingly integrating both internal and external QA processes within their institutional management systems. Finally, the overwhelming support for accreditation practices among respondents underscores the importance of delivering quality education that meets both national and international standards. Ogunshe (2023) notes that robust accreditation processes are crucial for ensuring that private universities in Ghana can compete effectively within the global education landscape. This finding further supports Feigenbaum's argument that quality management contributes to institutional credibility, competitiveness, and long-term sustainability. Accreditation may therefore be viewed not only as a regulatory requirement but also as a strategic mechanism for strengthening institutional legitimacy and market confidence within the increasingly competitive HE environment. The implications of these findings are profound for both policy and practice within private universities in Ghana. The strong adherence to GTEC guidelines indicates that these institutions are not only committed to maintaining educational quality but are also actively engaging in practices that enhance their reputation and credibility. By continuing to prioritise quality assurance practices, private universities can further strengthen their educational offerings and ensure compliance with national and international standards. The findings therefore suggest that sustainable QA implementation within private universities depends on the integration of leadership commitment, stakeholder participation, continuous monitoring, and institutional learning processes, which are all central assumptions of TQM theory. The study demonstrates that effective adherence to GTEC standards is strengthened when QA practices become embedded within institutional culture and operational systems rather than remaining compliance-driven administrative activities alone.

Theoretically, these findings strengthen regulatory compliance models by showing that adherence to external QA standards can be embedded into routine academic practices, such as meetings, evaluations and curriculum reviews. Empirical studies by Arthur and Kuranchie (2022) and Tsevi (2025) similarly document strong formal compliance with GTEC/NAB requirements. However, contrasting evidence from Abudetse et al. (2025) suggests uneven

compliance across Ghana's tertiary sector, particularly outside accredited private universities. This discrepancy is best explained by institutional differentiation: private universities face existential risks (loss of accreditation and market credibility) that incentivise stronger compliance than is sometimes observed in public colleges. Thus, the Ghanaian private university context amplifies regulatory responsiveness, adding empirical depth to QA theories that often overlook market-driven compliance dynamics.

6.5 RESEARCH OBJECTIVE 4: EXAMINE THE EFFECT OF QUALITY ASSURANCE ON STUDENTS' ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE AND SATISFACTION

The investigation into the effect of QA on students' academic performance and satisfaction reveals significant findings that underscore the importance of effective QA practices in private universities in Ghana. The analysis employed ordinal probit regression to examine the relationship between various QA dimensions and their effect on students' academic outcomes and satisfaction levels. The findings suggest that positive perceptions of QA practices are linked to improved academic performance and increased student satisfaction. The overall results suggest that quality assurance practices have a substantial effect on students' academic performance, with key factors such as teaching quality improvement, curriculum review and faculty evaluation demonstrating strong relationships with academic success. This indicates that when universities prioritise effective teaching methods and regularly review their curricula, students are likely to experience improved academic outcomes. The findings align with existing literature, which emphasises the critical role of quality assurance in fostering an environment conducive to learning. For example, Hattie (2023) suggests that effective teaching practices significantly enhance student learning outcomes, reinforcing the notion that QA is not merely a regulatory requirement but a vital component of educational effectiveness. This finding reflects Deming's systems-oriented approach and Juran's quality improvement framework, both of which emphasise that sustained quality outcomes emerge from systematic institutional processes rather than isolated interventions. The strong relationship between teaching quality improvement and academic performance suggests that private universities that invest in continuous monitoring, staff development, and curriculum improvement are more likely to achieve positive student outcomes. From a broader theoretical perspective, this finding supports the TQM assumption that educational quality is a cumulative product of interconnected institutional systems and continuous improvement efforts.

Moreover, the positive correlation between teaching quality improvement and student satisfaction underscores the importance of engaging in instructional practices that enhance the overall student experience. This finding resonates with research by Rehman et al. (2022), which demonstrates that students who perceive their instructors as effective and supportive tend to report higher levels of satisfaction with their educational experience. The implication of this relationship is profound; it suggests that universities must invest in faculty development and training programmes to ensure that teaching quality meets the expectations of students. The finding further aligns with Feigenbaum's emphasis on institution-wide responsibility for quality and stakeholder satisfaction within TQM theory. Since students are central stakeholders in HE, their satisfaction becomes an important indicator of institutional quality performance. The findings therefore suggest that improving teaching quality not only enhances academic achievement but also strengthens students' perceptions of institutional effectiveness and educational value. This is significant because TQM views stakeholder satisfaction as both an outcome and a measure of successful quality management systems. The data also reveals that while the majority of students felt positively about their academic performance, there were notable areas of concern regarding assessment transparency and fairness. The relatively lower mean scores in this area indicate that some students may perceive assessment practices as lacking clarity or equity. This finding is supported by the work of Gul et al. (2021), which argues that transparent assessment practices are crucial for fostering trust and confidence among students. The implications of this are significant and suggest that institutions should take proactive steps to enhance the transparency of their assessment processes, ensuring that students clearly understand evaluation criteria and procedures. The concerns regarding assessment transparency suggest weaknesses in institutional communication, process standardisation, and stakeholder trust from a TQM perspective. Crosby's emphasis on "doing things right the first time" and ensuring conformance to clearly defined standards suggests that unclear assessment procedures may undermine perceptions of quality and fairness within the educational process. The findings therefore imply that effective QA systems require transparent and clearly communicated assessment procedures to sustain stakeholder confidence and institutional credibility.

Furthermore, the findings regarding the accessibility of learning resources underscore the necessity for universities to improve resource availability to support academic performance. Access to adequate learning materials, technology and support services is crucial for creating an environment that fosters academic success. This aligns with the conclusions of Lucander

and Christersson (2020), who emphasise that resource availability has a direct influence on student satisfaction and performance. Thus, private universities should prioritise investments in infrastructure and learning resources to enhance the overall educational experience for their students. This finding reflects Deming's argument that quality outcomes are shaped by institutional systems, resources, and support structures rather than by individual effort alone. The inadequate availability of learning resources may therefore weaken the ability of institutions to sustain effective QA outcomes and equitable learning experiences. From a broader TQM perspective, quality improvement requires institutions to provide adequate infrastructural and technological support systems that enable both students and staff to perform effectively within the educational process. The analysis further suggests that faculty evaluation and development processes have a significant positive impact on both academic performance and satisfaction. The evidence suggests that ongoing faculty development is essential for enhancing teaching effectiveness. Donaldson (2020) emphasises that well-structured faculty evaluation systems can enhance instructional quality, ultimately leading to improved student outcomes. Therefore, universities should focus on implementing robust faculty evaluation systems that not only assess teaching effectiveness but also provide opportunities for professional growth and development. This finding aligns closely with Juran's and Deming's emphasis on continuous training, institutional learning, and leadership support within TQM frameworks. Faculty development processes may therefore be viewed as strategic quality improvement mechanisms that strengthen instructional effectiveness and institutional performance over time. The findings suggest that sustainable educational quality depends significantly on institutional investment in staff development and continuous professional improvement rather than reliance on periodic evaluation.

While the findings present a generally positive view of the effect of quality assurance on academic performance and satisfaction, it is essential to acknowledge the areas that require improvement. The negative relationship observed concerning curriculum review and student satisfaction suggests that curriculum processes may not be adequately aligned with student needs or expectations. This raises questions about the relevance and adaptability of the curriculum in meeting the demands of an evolving job market. As noted by Klein (2016), aligning curriculum with contemporary educational demands is crucial for maintaining student engagement and satisfaction. Thus, institutions must actively involve students in curriculum development processes to ensure that their perspectives are taken into account. This finding partially challenges the stakeholder-centred assumptions of TQM theory, particularly the idea

that continuous review processes automatically generate positive stakeholder outcomes. The negative relationship may suggest that curriculum review processes within some private universities are insufficiently participatory or inadequately responsive to student expectations and labour market realities. From a theoretical perspective, the finding reinforces critiques of TQM that argue that institutional quality systems may become procedural and compliance-oriented if stakeholder participation is not genuinely integrated into decision-making processes. In conclusion, the findings of this research underscore the significant impact of quality assurance on students' academic performance and satisfaction in private universities in Ghana. The positive relationships identified between various dimensions of QA, such as teaching quality, curriculum review and faculty evaluation, highlight the importance of effective QA practices in enhancing educational outcomes. These insights not only contribute to the existing body of literature but also have practical implications for policy and practice within private universities.

These findings advance the literature by empirically demonstrating that quality assurance operates as a mediating mechanism between institutional practices and student outcomes, rather than as a peripheral administrative function. While Amoako and Asamoah-Gyimah (2020), Mensah (2022), and international studies consistently report positive links between QA and student satisfaction, contrasting evidence from Nukpetsi et al. (2021) suggests that QA alone may not significantly improve outcomes in teacher training colleges. The difference lies in context: private universities operate in competitive environments where QA improvements directly affect student retention and institutional reputation, thereby magnifying their impact. This contextual explanation extends QA theory by demonstrating that institutional incentives and governance structures influence the effectiveness of quality assurance, particularly in market-oriented HE systems such as Ghana's private sector.

6.6 RESEARCH OBJECTIVE 5: DETERMINE THE DIFFICULTIES PRIVATE UNIVERSITIES IN GHANA EXPERIENCE IN FOLLOWING QUALITY ASSURANCE RULES

The investigation into the challenges faced by private universities in Ghana in adhering to the rules and requirements of the Ghana Tertiary Education Commission (GTEC) reveals critical insights into the barriers that hinder effective compliance. The findings, derived from the

responses of lecturers, heads of quality assurance, registrars, deans of students, and students, highlight four primary themes of challenges: misconceptions or misunderstandings of quality assurance, inadequate infrastructure, manpower challenges and resistance to compliance. These findings suggest that the effectiveness of QA systems in private universities is strongly influenced by institutional capacity, organisational culture, leadership support, and stakeholder understanding. TQM theory assumes that sustainable quality improvement depends on continuous learning, shared institutional commitment, and adequate organisational systems. The persistence of these challenges therefore suggests that some private universities may still be struggling to fully internalise quality management principles within their operational and institutional cultures. The overall finding indicates that misconceptions regarding quality assurance practices are a significant barrier to adherence. A substantial proportion of respondents reported that misunderstandings about QA principles were somewhat challenging. This suggests that many stakeholders may not fully grasp the tenets of quality assurance, which can lead to the ineffective implementation of GTEC standards. This finding underscores the importance of enhancing education and training for faculty and staff on quality assurance principles. Such initiatives are crucial for mitigating misunderstandings and fostering a shared understanding of QA's role within the academic environment. This aligns with the conclusions of the GTEC (2024), which advocates for ongoing professional development in quality assurance practices. This finding reflects Juran's argument that poor quality outcomes are often linked to inadequate planning, insufficient training, and weak communication regarding institutional quality objectives. The misunderstandings surrounding QA practices may therefore suggest that quality principles have not yet been sufficiently integrated into institutional learning and staff development processes within some private universities. From a broader TQM perspective, this is significant because quality improvement depends not only on policies and regulations but also on stakeholders' understanding, acceptance, and active participation in quality processes.

The findings regarding manpower challenges are particularly concerning, as most respondents indicated that these issues were a significant barrier to compliance with the GTEC requirements. The high percentage of lecturers acknowledging manpower constraints highlights the critical need for adequate staffing and resource allocation in academic institutions. Insufficient human resources can impede the effectiveness of quality assurance offices, making it difficult for them to fulfil their responsibilities. This perspective resonates with the work of Addae-Kyeremeh and Boateng et al., 2024, who emphasise that adequate

personnel are essential for implementing effective QA practices. The implications of this finding suggest that universities must reassess their human-resource strategies to ensure that quality assurance offices are adequately staffed and supported. The manpower challenges identified in this study strongly align with Deming's and Feigenbaum's emphasis on institutional systems, workforce capacity, and organisation-wide responsibility for quality management. TQM assumes that institutions require adequately trained and supported personnel to sustain continuous improvement processes effectively. The shortage of qualified staff may therefore weaken the ability of QA units to monitor institutional processes, coordinate quality initiatives, and implement corrective measures consistently. This finding suggests that institutional commitment to QA may be undermined where staffing capacity does not match expanding institutional responsibilities and regulatory expectations. Inadequate infrastructure emerged as another significant challenge, with respondents indicating that it has a significant impact on adherence to the GTEC standards. The findings suggest that many institutions face infrastructural deficits that hinder the effective implementation of quality assurance processes. This aligns with UNESCO (2021), which argues that inadequate facilities can limit the ability of institutions to provide quality education and comply with the established standards. Addressing these infrastructural challenges should be a priority for private universities, as improved facilities can enhance the overall learning environment and facilitate better compliance with the GTEC requirements. From a TQM perspective, infrastructural deficits represent systemic weaknesses that affect the efficiency and sustainability of institutional quality processes. Deming's systems-oriented framework emphasises that quality outcomes are shaped by institutional environments, operational systems, and resource support structures rather than by individual effort alone. The findings therefore suggest that weak infrastructure may reduce the effectiveness of QA implementation by limiting teaching quality, student support services, monitoring systems, and institutional coordination. This also reinforces Feigenbaum's argument that the "cost of non-quality" can manifest through inefficiencies, weak institutional performance, and reduced educational effectiveness.

Resistance to compliance with the GTEC requirements was also identified as a significant challenge among respondents. The fact that a significant percentage of lecturers and other stakeholders reported resistance underscores the need for institutions to cultivate a more supportive environment for implementing the GTEC standards. The findings suggest that fostering open discussions about the importance of compliance and addressing underlying concerns can help alleviate resistance. Engaging faculty and staff in collaborative efforts to

understand and implement quality assurance practices may lead to greater acceptance and commitment to the GTEC standards. This perspective is supported by Addae-Kyeremeh and Boateng et al., 2024, who highlight the importance of creating a culture of compliance within educational institutions. This finding can further be interpreted through Ishikawa's participatory approach to TQM, which emphasises collective involvement, communication, and institutional ownership of quality processes. Resistance to compliance may indicate that some stakeholders perceive QA systems as externally imposed managerial requirements rather than collaborative institutional improvement mechanisms. From a theoretical standpoint, the finding highlights one of the central critiques of TQM identified in the literature review, namely that quality systems may become compliance-driven and bureaucratic when participatory engagement and institutional ownership are weak. The findings therefore suggest that effective QA implementation requires institutions to move beyond enforcement-based approaches towards more inclusive and participatory quality cultures. The implications of these findings are profound for policy and practice within private universities in Ghana. To enhance adherence to the GTEC requirements, institutions must prioritise targeted interventions that address identified challenges. Implementing comprehensive training programmes to clarify quality assurance principles can significantly reduce misconceptions among faculty and staff. Additionally, universities should evaluate their human-resource allocation to ensure that quality assurance offices are adequately staffed. Improving infrastructure should also be a priority, as it is fundamental to providing a conducive learning environment that meets the GTEC standards. In conclusion, the findings reveal that private universities in Ghana face several challenges in adhering to the rules and requirements of the GTEC. Misconceptions about quality assurance, manpower challenges, inadequate infrastructure and resistance to compliance significantly hinder the effective implementation of quality assurance. Resolving these challenges is crucial for enhancing compliance with the GTEC standards and the overall standard of education in Ghana's private institutions. By prioritising education, allocating resources effectively, and fostering a supportive institutional culture, private universities can enhance their adherence to quality assurance practices, ultimately improving educational outcomes. The findings therefore reinforce the broader TQM argument that effective quality assurance cannot be achieved through regulatory enforcement alone. Instead, sustainable quality systems require institutional commitment, continuous stakeholder engagement, adequate resources, effective leadership, and organisational cultures that support learning and improvement. The study demonstrates that weaknesses in any of these interconnected

dimensions may undermine the successful implementation of QA systems within private universities.

Theoretically, these findings contribute to implementation and compliance literature by illustrating how capacity constraints mediate regulatory effectiveness in private HE. While Arthur and Kuranchie (2022) acknowledge challenges within generally compliant institutions, and Tsevi (2019; 2025) highlights financial and procedural burdens, Abudetse et al. (2025) attribute compliance failures to governance weaknesses. The present study reconciles these perspectives by demonstrating that compliance is not ideologically resisted but rather constrained structurally, particularly by manpower shortages, infrastructure deficits and cost-intensive affiliation requirements. The Ghanaian private university context, characterised by limited public funding and high regulatory costs, helps explain why resistance to QA principles emerges despite their broad acceptance. This extends existing QA frameworks by foregrounding resource asymmetry as a central explanatory variable in regulatory compliance.

6.7 CHAPTER SUMMARY

This chapter explored QA practices in private universities in Ghana, focusing on the perceptions of various stakeholders, including lecturers, students and administrators. The research aimed to evaluate the state of QA practices; examine stakeholders' views on QA roles; assess compliance with the Ghana Tertiary Education Commission (GTEC) standards; determine the difficulty in complying with the rules and requirements of GTEC; and understand the impact of QA on students' academic performance and satisfaction. The findings revealed generally positive perceptions of QA practices, highlighting strong stakeholder agreement on their importance. However, significant gaps were identified, such as inadequate internet access and insufficient stakeholder involvement in programme reviews. The study also found robust compliance with the GTEC standards, with stakeholders participating actively in quality assurance processes. Nevertheless, challenges such as manpower shortages, infrastructural inadequacies and resistance to compliance were identified as significant barriers to effective implementation. The chapter concluded by emphasising the need for targeted interventions to address these challenges, improve resource allocation and enhance stakeholder engagement. The next chapter presents the study's summary, conclusions and recommendations.

CHAPTER 7

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

7.1 INTRODUCTION

The preceding chapter discussed the study's findings on quality assurance practices in HE in Ghana. Specifically, it focused on private universities by engaging the literature. The chapter informs key stakeholders, including MoE, NaCCA, GTEC, and academic institutions, on policy directions and best practices for quality assurance. The findings enhance the quality of teaching and learning in private institutions and recommend the establishment of effective quality assurance frameworks. This chapter synthesises the study's findings, presents conclusions drawn from the analysis, and offers recommendations for practice and policy. In this final chapter, a summary of the key findings is presented, conclusions are drawn and recommendations are proposed. The chapter draws conclusions from the results of the data analyses and presents recommendations for improving the Internal Quality Assurance (IQA) of university and suggestions for future research. It presents an overview of the study, summarises the literature and provides findings and concluding remarks.

7.2 SUMMARY OF THE STUDY

Chapter 1: In this chapter, the background and context for this research were provided. The chapter also emphasised the essence for high quality assurance standards to upgrade the low status of private universities in Ghana. It highlighted the research questions, objectives and aims, among them is to determine how closely private universities in Ghana adhere to the National Accreditation Board/Ghana Tertiary Education Commission (GTEC) quality assurance rules and standards.

Chapter 2: This chapter presented local literature on HE, quality assurance and the emergence of private universities. It first presented a theoretical framework: Total Quality Management Theory chosen to underpin this study; an overview of the historical perspective of HE in Ghana; the emergence of private universities in Ghana; characteristics of private university colleges in Ghana; quality assurance agencies in African HEIs and quality assurance agencies in Ghanaian HE. The next section examined GTEC, quality assurance in African HEIs, the concept of quality assurance, the relationship between quality and quality assurance, and various quality assurance models. In the pursuit of the study's objectives, this section highlights internal and EQA approaches, as well as specific strategies employed in HE to ensure quality.

Chapter 3: This chapter examined international perspectives and scholarly literature on quality assurance in HE, including the roles of quality assurance, conformance to its requirements and the challenges associated with quality assurance in HEIs. The focus of this study was to evaluate quality assurance practices in HE in Ghana, with a particular emphasis on the case of private universities.

Chapter 4: This chapter discussed the branches of philosophy guiding the study: ontology, epistemology and axiology. It also presented the research paradigm underlying the study, namely positivism and the quantitative research methodology associated with it, as well as the techniques employed in the study. It explained the chosen research design and the rationale behind its use. Additionally, the procedures for gathering data and the selection of subjects were described. To further enhance a thorough understanding of quality assurance systems in Ghanaian HE, the methods and procedures for data analysis and interpretation were also covered. Finally, this chapter presented the ethical considerations guiding the conduct of the study.

Chapter 5: This chapter began with an analysis of valid response rates, followed by the examination of quantitative data, starting with the presentation of biographical information. The subsequent sections presented the main results of the quantitative data analysis, organised according to the research questions and categorised by the different types of respondents. Finally, the chapter concluded with a summary of the analysis results.

Chapter 6: This chapter discusses the results of quality assurance practices in HE in Ghana, with a specific focus on private universities, drawing on relevant literature. The findings of this study aim to inform key stakeholders, including the MoE, the NaCCA, the Ghana Education Service (GES), and academic institutions, on policy directions and best practices for quality assurance. The goal is to enhance the quality of teaching and learning in private institutions and to recommend to the Government of Ghana the need to establish effective quality assurance frameworks.

7.3 SUMMARY OF LITERATURE

The literature review provided a comprehensive exploration of QA practices in HE, with a specific emphasis on the Ghanaian context. The study began by establishing the theoretical framework underpinning it, specifically TQM, which serves as a lens through which quality assurance processes can be understood and evaluated (cf. 2.2, 2.2.1). The historical

overview of HE in Ghana highlighted the evolution of the system, detailing the emergence and significance of private universities, as well as the corresponding need for robust quality assurance mechanisms to address the challenges faced by these institutions (cf. 2.3.1).

In examining quality assurance practices, it is evident that various principles underpin effective implementation. The study drew on established principles proposed by Frazer (1994), which emphasise the shared responsibility of all stakeholders in maintaining and enhancing educational quality. These principles emphasise the importance of a collaborative approach to quality assurance, where every member of the institution is actively engaged in pursuing excellence.

The review of standard quality assurance practices highlighted the established frameworks set by organisations such as the European Association for Quality Assurance in HE (ENQA) and the INQAAHE. These organisations have developed guidelines that serve as models for quality assurance, emphasising the necessity of clear policies, regular programme reviews and the assessment of teaching staff. However, the discussion revealed a reliance on singular sources, calling for a more robust examination of various scholarly works to enrich the understanding of these practices (cf. 3.2.1).

Literature review also explored quality assurance systems in Finland and Romania, focusing on the practices employed by Jyväskylä University of Applied Sciences (JAMK) and the Technical UTCB (cf. 3.3.1, 3.3.2**)**. These institutions demonstrate various approaches to quality assurance, including internal cross-evaluations and external programme accreditations, providing valuable insights into both the intended and unintended effects of QA procedures. By analysing these international perspectives, the chapter identified key attributes and challenges associated with quality assurance in HE.

Furthermore, the literature review addressed the concept of quality assurance, discussing its multifaceted nature and the need for continuous improvement (cf. 2.3). It emphasised that quality assurance should be understood not only as a set of processes but as a cultural commitment within educational institutions. This cultural aspect is crucial for fostering an environment where quality is prioritised across all levels of operation.

In conclusion, the literature review synthesised insights from local and international perspectives on quality assurance in HE. It identified specific gaps in research, particularly concerning the challenges faced by private universities in Ghana. The review set the stage for

the empirical investigation that followed, highlighting the need for effective quality assurance frameworks that can adapt to the evolving educational landscape. The subsequent chapters were built upon this foundation and explored the perceptions and practices of quality assurance in private universities in Ghana.

7.4 SUMMARY OF THE FINDINGS

An analysis of the quantitative data presented in the preceding chapter shown major findings. These are discussed according to the main research question and sub-questions.

Main Research Question

How do private higher education institutions in Ghana assess quality assurance practices?

Sub-questions

The above main research question gave rise to the following sub-questions:

1. How do private universities in Ghana handle quality assurance?
2. How do employees/students at Ghana's private universities view the function of quality assurance?
3. To what extent do private universities in Ghana adhere to the quality assurance rules set forth by the NAB and Ghana Tertiary Education Commission (GTEC)?
4. What is the effect of quality assurance on students' academic performance and satisfaction?
5. What difficulties do Ghana's private universities encounter in adhering to the rules governing quality assurance?

7.4.1 Findings Relating to Main Research Question

The findings concerning the main research question are encapsulated in the findings sub-questions covered in Sections 6.4.1.1 to 6.4.1.5.

7.4.1.1 Findings relating to sub-question 1

The findings revealed a generally positive perception of QA practices among various stakeholders, including lecturers, students, quality assurance heads, registrars and deans (cf. 5.4.1, Tables 5.6, 5.7, 5.8, 5.9, 5.10). The strong agreement among stakeholders underscores the recognition of quality assurance mechanisms as vital for maintaining academic standards and institutional accountability. Lecturers reported high confidence in the periodic evaluation

of academic programmes, aligning with Jafarov (2024), who emphasises the necessity of regular assessments. However, significant gaps were identified, particularly concerning the availability of reliable internet facilities, which were highlighted as a critical area for improvement. This lack of technological support can impede the effective implementation of QA processes and must be addressed to enhance the overall quality of education.

7.4.1.2 Findings relating to sub-question 2

The perceptions of QA among registrars, deans and lecturers indicate a shared understanding of its integral role in achieving institutional goals. The overall agreement on the effectiveness of QA practices suggests that stakeholders view QA as a fundamental component of the academic mission. The findings align with those of Harvey and Stensaker (2008), who emphasise the importance of strategic coherence in aligning institutional objectives with educational outcomes. However, the gaps were identified in the adequacy of academic resources and the recognition of student achievements, indicating areas where improvements are needed to enhance the effectiveness of QA practices (cf. 5.4.2, Tables 5.11, 5.12, 5.13, 5.14, 5.15).

7.4.1.3 Findings relating to sub-question 3

The study found robust adherence to the Ghana Tertiary Education Commission (GTEC) standards among private universities, with stakeholders actively engaging in QA processes. The high levels of participation in faculty meetings and programme evaluations underscore a commitment to maintaining educational quality. However, challenges such as manpower shortages and infrastructural inadequacies were significant barriers to compliance. These findings underscore the need for universities to prioritise resource allocation and enhance staffing levels to maintain effective QA practices (cf. 5.4.3, Table 5.16).

7.4.1.4 Findings relating to sub-question 4

The analysis utilised ordinal probit regression to assess the relationship between QA dimensions and students' academic outcomes and satisfaction levels. The results indicate that positive perceptions of QA practices are associated with enhanced academic performance and increased student satisfaction. Key factors, such as teaching quality improvement and regular curriculum reviews, were shown to have strong relationships with academic success. However, concerns regarding assessment transparency and resource accessibility emerged as areas

needing attention, underscoring the importance of clear evaluation criteria and adequate learning resources (cf. 5.4.4, 5.4.4.3.4, Tables 5.28 and 5.29).

7.4.1.5 Findings relating to sub-question 5

The investigation identified significant challenges in adhering to GTEC requirements, including misconceptions about QA, manpower issues, inadequate infrastructure and resistance to compliance. These barriers emphasise the need for targeted interventions to enhance understanding and foster a culture of compliance within institutions. As highlighted by the Ghana Tertiary Education Commission (2024), ongoing professional development is essential for mitigating misunderstandings and improving adherence to QA principles (cf. 5.4.5, Table 5.30, 5.31, 5.32, 5.33, 5.34).

7.5 CONCLUSIONS OF THE STUDY

Based on the study's findings, the following conclusions were drawn.

1. The findings indicate that private universities in Ghana generally exhibit a positive perception of their quality assurance practices. Stakeholders, including lecturers, students and administrators, recognise the importance of regular evaluations and the significance of involving students in the assessment of teaching. The high level of agreement among stakeholders reflects a shared understanding of the critical role that QA plays in maintaining academic standards and institutional accountability. However, significant gaps were identified, particularly regarding the availability of reliable internet facilities and technological support. This inadequacy poses a challenge to the effective implementation of QA, underscoring the need for universities to address infrastructural deficits and enhance resource availability. Overall, while a solid foundation exists for QA practices, ongoing improvements are essential to ensure their effectiveness.

2. The study revealed that stakeholders perceive quality assurance as integral to achieving institutional goals and enhancing educational quality. The consensus among registrars, deans, and lecturers regarding the functions of QA demonstrates a recognition that QA is not merely a bureaucratic mandate but a fundamental component of the educational mission. This perception aligns with the existing literature, which emphasises the necessity of strategic coherence between QA practices and institutional objectives. Despite this positive outlook, concerns regarding the adequacy of academic resources and the

recognition of student achievements emerged as significant issues. These gaps highlight the need for universities to prioritise resource allocation and develop mechanisms that acknowledge student contributions, thus reinforcing the importance of QA in fostering an inclusive academic environment.

3. The investigation into adherence to GTEC standards revealed a robust commitment among private universities to comply with the established quality assurance guidelines. Stakeholders actively participate in QA processes, demonstrating a strong engagement with the GTEC standards through regular faculty meetings and programme evaluations. However, the challenges related to manpower shortages and infrastructural inadequacies were identified as barriers to effective compliance. This suggests that, while the institutions are committed to maintaining educational quality, there are practical obstacles that need to be addressed. Enhancing resource allocation and improving staffing levels are crucial steps for ensuring sustained adherence to the GTEC requirements, thereby reinforcing institutional accountability and educational standards.

4. The analysis indicated a significantly positive relationship between quality assurance practices and students' academic performance and satisfaction. Key factors such as teaching quality improvement and regular curriculum reviews were found to be strongly associated with enhanced academic outcomes. These findings underscore the vital role of QA in creating an environment that fosters learning. Nonetheless, issues regarding assessment transparency and resource accessibility were identified as areas requiring attention. The study highlights the importance of ensuring that assessment practices are clear and equitable, as well as providing adequate learning resources to support student success. By addressing these concerns, institutions can further enhance the effectiveness of QA practices and improve the overall educational experience for students.

5. The investigation into the challenges faced by private universities in adhering to the GTEC requirements identified significant barriers, including misconceptions about quality assurance, manpower challenges, inadequate infrastructure and resistance to compliance. These findings suggest that a substantial portion of stakeholders may not fully grasp the principles of QA, indicating a need for enhanced training and education on QA practices. Additionally, the high percentage of respondents acknowledging manpower issues highlights the critical need for adequate staffing and resource allocation. Furthermore, infrastructural deficits remain a significant concern that hinders compliance with the GTEC

standards. To foster a culture of compliance, institutions must engage stakeholders in discussions about the importance of adhering to QA requirements and address any underlying concerns contributing to resistance. By implementing targeted interventions, universities can strengthen their adherence to quality assurance practices and ultimately improve educational outcomes.

7.6 RECOMMENDATIONS

The findings of this study prompt significant recommendations for enhancing QA practices in private universities in Ghana. These recommendations are aimed at two primary groups: the practitioners within the universities, including quality assurance managers, academic staff and administrative personnel, as well as policymakers, including government agencies such as the MoE, the NaCCA, and the Ghana Education Service (GES).

7.6.1 Quality Assurance Managers, Academic and Administrative Staff of Universities

For practitioners, it is imperative that universities implement comprehensive and ongoing training programmes for faculty and staff that focus on quality assurance principles, best practices and the importance of stakeholder involvement. Workshops, seminars and training sessions should be designed to foster a deeper understanding of QA mechanisms. This targeted professional development would help mitigate misconceptions about QA and reinforce a shared commitment to quality standards across the institution.

Additionally, strengthening stakeholder engagement is vital. Universities should develop formal mechanisms that actively involve students, faculty and administrative staff in QA processes. Regular feedback sessions, focus groups and open forums can facilitate meaningful dialogue among stakeholders, allowing for diverse input in programme evaluations and institutional decision-making. Such inclusive approaches not only enhance the quality of education but also foster a sense of ownership and accountability among all the parties involved.

Moreover, investment in technological infrastructure cannot be overlooked. Given the identified gap in access to reliable internet facilities, universities must prioritise improvements in technological resources. Enhancing internet access and providing adequate learning materials are essential for facilitating effective QA processes, particularly in our increasingly digital learning environment. Institutions should explore partnerships with technology

providers to bolster their infrastructure, ensuring that both faculty and students have the necessary tools to support quality assurance initiatives.

Regular assessment and review of QA practices should also be established as a systematic approach within academic institutions. Conducting internal audits and evaluations would help identify strengths and areas for improvement, ensuring that QA processes remain relevant and effective. These assessments should be aligned with the GTEC standards and informed by stakeholder feedback, further promoting accountability and continuous improvement.

Resource allocation for QA initiatives is equally important. Universities must allocate sufficient resources to support quality assurance activities, which include financial investments in staffing, infrastructure and academic resources. Ensuring that QA officers are adequately staffed and equipped would enhance their capacity to implement and sustain effective QA practices, ultimately leading to improved educational outcomes.

7.6.2 Government and Policy Makers

Regarding policy, the government has a critical role in strengthening quality assurance frameworks within the HE sector. Establishing comprehensive quality assurance frameworks that outline clear guidelines and expectations for private universities is paramount. These frameworks should align with national educational objectives and provide a roadmap for institutions to follow. Moreover, they should emphasise the importance of stakeholder engagement and collaboration in the QA process, ensuring that all voices are heard and acknowledged.

Investment in educational infrastructure is another vital recommendation for policymakers. The government should prioritise funding for enhancing educational infrastructure in private universities, which includes technological resources, library facilities and learning environments that support effective teaching and learning. By addressing infrastructural deficits, the government can help universities meet the GTEC standards and improve overall educational quality.

Furthermore, regular monitoring and evaluation of QA practices should be mandated by the MoE and relevant agencies. This should involve both internal evaluations and external audits to ensure compliance with the GTEC standards. Establishing transparent reporting mechanisms

to share findings with stakeholders would foster accountability and continuous improvement within the education system.

Promoting professional development initiatives for faculty and staff in HE is another significant recommendation. The government should facilitate and support these initiatives, potentially collaborating with international organisations to provide training programmes that improve the understanding and enactment of standard principles in quality assurance. This level of effort would not only improve QA practices but also contribute to the professional growth of educators.

Additionally, enhancing stakeholder involvement in QA policy development is crucial for creating a more inclusive educational environment. Policymakers should actively engage various stakeholders in the development of QA policies and guidelines to ensure that they reflect the needs and realities of the educational landscape. This collaborative approach would enhance the relevance and effectiveness of the policies being implemented.

Finally, strengthening accreditation processes through NaCCA is essential for maintaining the credibility of Ghanaian HEIs. The accreditation processes should be rigorous, transparent and aligned with international standards to enhance the global competitiveness of these institutions. In conclusion, the recommendations presented for both practice and policy aim to significantly enhance quality assurance practices in private universities in Ghana.

7.6.3 Integrated Stakeholder-Based Quality Assurance Framework for Private Universities in Ghana

The Integrated Stakeholder-Based Quality Assurance Framework for Private Universities in Ghana is a conceptual model developed in response to the research problem investigated in this study, the fragmented, inconsistent and underdeveloped nature of QA practices within Ghana's private HE sector. Derived from the empirical findings, theoretical insights and practical observations presented throughout the thesis, the model seeks to propose a sustainable and contextually grounded system for enhancing QA in private tertiary institutions. In alignment with the theoretical principles of TQM, the model prioritises continuous improvement, stakeholder collaboration and systemic transformation, with a primary focus on meeting the academic and developmental needs of students. TQM principles emphasise that quality must be built into every level of institutional functioning, that all actors must be engaged in the process, and that an institutional culture must reflect a commitment to excellence. The proposed

model presents a realistic, stakeholder-driven roadmap for institutional renewal and quality enhancement by integrating these principles with the specific challenges faced by private universities in Ghana.

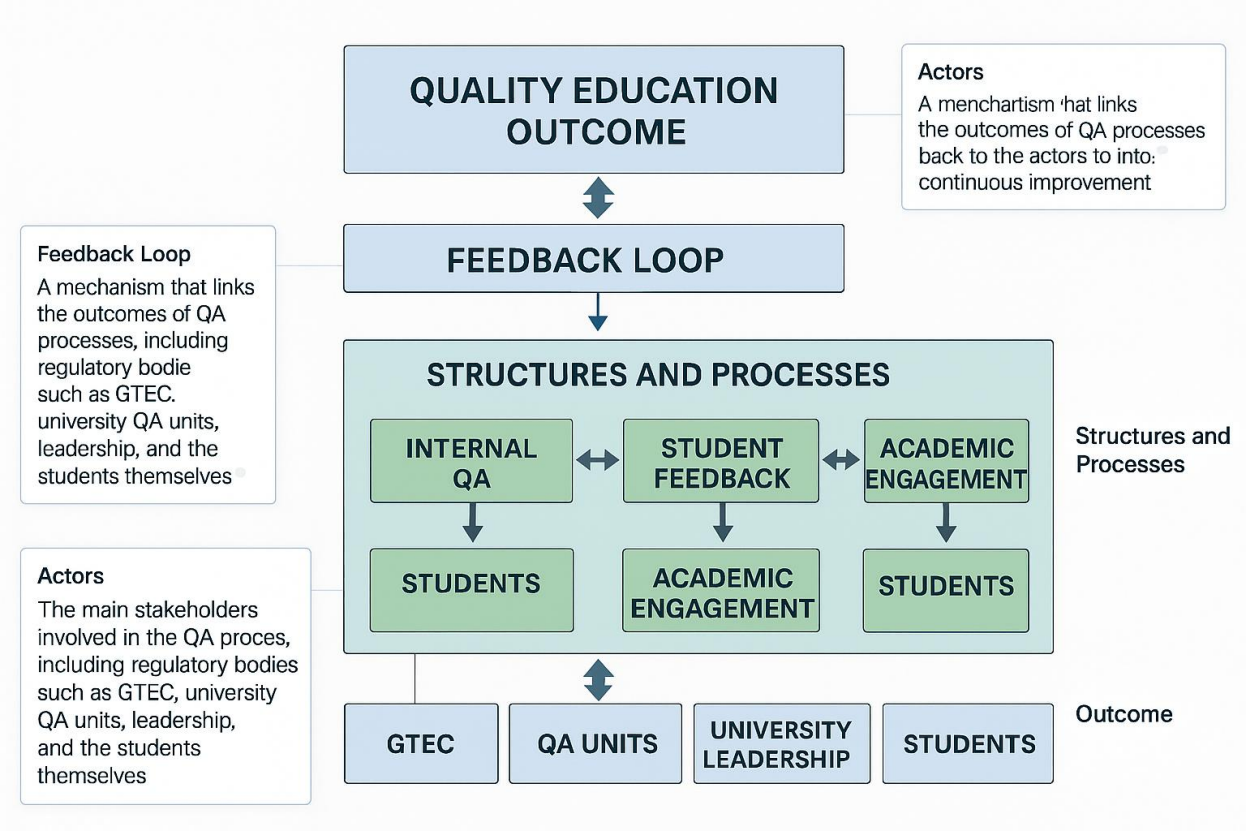

Figure 7.1: An Integrated Stakeholder-Based Quality Assurance Framework for Private Universities in Ghana

Source: Author’s Construct (2025)

7.6.4 Core Focus: Quality Educational Outcomes

At the apex of the model is the achievement of quality educational outcomes, which constitute the ultimate objective of any QA system. These outcomes are expressed in three primary dimensions: (1) enhanced academic performance, (2) improved student satisfaction, and (3) increased graduate employability. These indicators are both the goalposts and the benchmarks against which the success of all QA processes should be measured. In the study, multiple participants identified graduate underperformance and weak practical skills as evidence of suboptimal QA practices. Therefore, the model treats the achievement of learning outcomes not as a by-product, but as the core driver of quality assurance initiatives.

7.6.5 Institutional Leadership and Governance

Beneath the outcomes layer lies the strategic tier of institutional leadership and governance. This component reflects the leadership roles of Vice-Chancellors, Pro Vice-Chancellors, Registrars, Deans and Council Members who are tasked with steering institutional priorities and embedding quality at the governance level. The study's findings revealed that weak leadership commitment and the absence of structured oversight often hindered the implementation of QA policies. In response, this model assigns governance actors the responsibility to:

- Formulate and align QA policies with the Ghana Tertiary Education Commission (GTEC) guidelines.
- Allocate strategic resources for QA units and internal capacity building.
- Promote institutional self-assessment, benchmarking and quality audits as part of strategic planning.

Without strong leadership, quality cultures struggle to materialise. Hence, this component is fundamental to enabling the downstream functionality of all other QA structures.

7.6.6 Internal Quality Assurance Structures

The third tier of the model features the IQA structures, which include QA directorates or units, faculty-level QA committees and departmental accreditation teams. These bodies are tasked with translating policy into action by overseeing curriculum reviews, monitoring assessment methods, preparing institutional accreditation reports and ensuring compliance with QA benchmarks. Data from the field revealed that while some institutions had established such structures, many lacked the human capacity, institutional authority or resource support to operate effectively. Therefore, the model proposes not only the creation but also the empowerment and professional development of QA teams, so that QA responsibilities are clearly delineated, well-resourced and institutionally prioritised.

7.6.7 Academic and Administrative Staff Engagement

This component recognises the indispensable role that academic and administrative staff play in operationalising QA processes. Lecturers, department heads, course coordinators and administrative officers are positioned as frontline quality actors. Their participation is essential in:

- Curriculum design and review processes.
- Employing effective pedagogy and innovative assessment practices.
- Providing timely feedback and learner support.
- Engaging in institutional self-assessment and reflective practices.

Consistent with the TQM principle of employee involvement, the model emphasises that institutional quality is not the sole responsibility of QA officers, but rather must be owned by all staff at every level. The study underscored this point by revealing that staff often viewed QA as "compliance-oriented" rather than "developmental," indicating the need for cultural and mindset shifts.

7.6.8 Student-Centred Quality Feedback Loop

The student is positioned at the centre of the model, reflecting both the TQM customer focus principle and the study's findings that student feedback was often underutilised in QA planning. This component proposes the institutionalisation of a student-centred quality feedback loop through mechanisms such as:

- Regular student satisfaction and service delivery surveys.
- Structured participation in QA governance (e.g., Student Representative Council participation in QA committees).
- Transparent and efficient grievance redress systems.
- Academic advisory and mentorship programmes.

The absence of these mechanisms in many institutions was highlighted by students and staff alike during the fieldwork. By integrating student perspectives into planning and review processes, institutions can ensure that QA encompasses not only standards but also learner experience, equity and responsiveness.

7.6.9 Regulatory Alignment with GTEC

An essential component of the model is alignment with the national QA regulation, particularly the standards and procedures set forth by the Ghana Tertiary Education Commission (GTEC). The GTEC's regulatory role includes accreditation, quality audits and institutional reviews. However, the study revealed significant gaps in institutional understanding of and compliance

with the GTEC requirements. This component of the model calls for a more proactive and supportive engagement with the GTEC, including:

- Participation in the GTEC-led training and capacity development workshops.
- Timely submission of accreditation and renewal documentation.
- Internalising the GTEC's quality indicators as part of institutional performance management.

Institutions must move beyond minimal compliance to strategic alignment with the regulatory quality expectations.

7.6.10 Resource Allocation and Infrastructure Support

The model identifies financial, technological and physical infrastructure as key enablers of quality. Many institutions in the study cited inadequate libraries, laboratories, faculty numbers and digital platforms as critical barriers to delivering quality education. Thus, the framework includes a resource management component that mandates:

- Investment in digital infrastructure to support teaching, learning and QA documentation.
- Mobilisation of funds through partnerships, grants, and internally generated funds (IGF).
- Infrastructure planning that considers future growth, accessibility and equity.

This element reinforces the TQM view that quality requires investment, and that without adequate inputs, processes and outcomes would inevitably suffer.

7.6.11 Continuous Quality Monitoring and Feedback Integration

At the operational base of the model lies a dynamic feedback and monitoring loop. This component serves as the engine of continuous improvement, integrating data from student evaluations, staff performance reviews, institutional audits and academic assessments into QA planning and strategic review. Institutions are encouraged to:

- Establish performance dashboards linked to strategic indicators.
- Use feedback data to inform planning, budgeting and capacity development.
- Cultivate a learning organisation where QA processes evolve iteratively.

This reflects TQM's PDCA cycle, ensuring that quality improvement is not episodic but institutionalised and iterative.

7.6.12 Model Summary and Theoretical Integration

The Integrated Stakeholder-Based Quality Assurance Framework is a multi-layered, interactive and non-linear model. It reflects the realities of private university operations in Ghana, where structural limitations coexist with aspirations for excellence. By embedding TQM principles such as employee empowerment, customer focus, leadership commitment and continuous improvement, the model provides a practical roadmap for sustainable institutional transformation. Each component interacts bidirectionally with the others, as depicted in the accompanying visual diagram. Arrows represent mutual influence, feedback and communication between actors and structures. The model does not prescribe a "one-size-fits-all" strategy but allows for institutional adaptation, making it flexible and scalable across diverse contexts.

The proposed model is not merely a conceptual exercise, but a strategic tool designed to bridge the gap between policy and practice in quality assurance. The model positions private universities in Ghana to systematically and sustainably enhance educational quality by uniting leadership, staff, students and regulators into a shared quality vision. If adopted, adapted and implemented with fidelity, the framework can elevate institutional credibility, improve learner outcomes and position Ghana's private tertiary sector as a globally competitive contributor to knowledge and development.

7.7 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

While this study offers significant insights into quality assurance practices in private universities in Ghana, it is essential to acknowledge several limitations that may affect the interpretation and applicability of the findings. Firstly, the research was confined to private universities, specifically those with a charter, which may limit the generalisability of the results to public institutions or other educational contexts. The unique characteristics and operational frameworks of public universities could yield different perceptions and experiences regarding quality assurance practices. Therefore, the insights gained from this study may not fully capture the complexities of QA in the broader HE landscapes in Ghana.

Moreover, the study utilised a cross-sectional design, capturing data at a single point in time. This approach limits the ability to observe changes in perceptions or practices over time, particularly in response to evolving educational policies or institutional reforms. A longitudinal

study design could provide deeper insights into how quality assurance practices develop and adapt, offering a more dynamic understanding of the factors influencing these processes.

Additionally, the study employed a quantitative approach, which did not provide a more nuanced exploration of quality assurance practices. This approach does not use data collection methods such as interviews or focus groups, which could enrich the understanding of stakeholder perceptions and experiences, providing context to the quantitative findings.

7.8 CONTRIBUTIONS OF THE STUDY

This study makes substantial additions to both academic knowledge and practical applications in the field of QA within HE, particularly in the context of private universities in Ghana. By systematically investigating the perceptions and challenges associated with QA practices, the findings offer a comprehensive understanding that is pivotal for various stakeholders, including university administrators, policymakers and educators.

One of the key contributions of this research lies in its ability to illuminate the complexities surrounding quality assurance mechanisms in private universities. The study identifies critical areas for improvement, including the need for enhanced technological infrastructure, increased stakeholder engagement and more effective resource allocation. These insights are particularly valuable for university leadership, as they provide a clear roadmap for addressing the identified gaps and enhancing the overall quality of educational offerings.

Furthermore, the recommendations derived from the findings serve as practical guidelines for both universities and policymakers. For academic institutions, the emphasis on continuous professional development and stakeholder collaboration highlights the importance of fostering a culture of quality assurance that is inclusive and participatory. This approach not only strengthens institutional accountability but also empowers students and faculty to take an active role in the QA process, thereby enhancing educational outcomes.

On the policy front, the study's findings offer significant implications for government agencies, including the MoE, NaCCA and GES. By advocating for the establishment of comprehensive QA frameworks and improved resource allocation, the research underscores the importance of aligning national educational policies with the realities faced by private universities. This alignment is crucial for ensuring that quality assurance practices are not only implemented effectively but also sustained over time.

In addition to its practical implications, the study contributes to the academic literature on quality assurance in HE by filling a gap in the understanding of QA practices within the Ghanaian context. It adds to the body of knowledge by integrating theoretical perspectives with empirical findings, thereby enriching the discourse on educational quality. The nuanced understanding of stakeholder perceptions and the challenges they face provides a foundation for future research, encouraging further exploration of QA practices across different educational settings.

7.9 SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

Considering the limitations of the study, the following areas are suggested for future research:

1. Investigating QA practices in public versus private universities to identify differences and best practices that can inform policy and practice.
2. Conducting longitudinal studies to assess changes in perceptions and practices over time, particularly following policy implementations and institutional changes.
3. Exploring how innovative technologies can enhance QA processes and provide solutions to existing challenges, particularly in the context of remote learning environments.

7.10 CONCLUSION

In conclusion, this study highlights the crucial role of quality assurance in maintaining and enhancing educational standards in private universities in Ghana. The findings reveal that stakeholders across institutions hold positive perceptions of quality assurance practices, recognising their importance in maintaining academic standards, accountability and institutional effectiveness. Regular evaluations, stakeholder participation and student involvement in teaching assessments emerged as key strengths of existing QA systems. However, persistent gaps, particularly in technological infrastructure, internet accessibility and the availability of academic resources, continue to limit the full effectiveness of these practices.

The study further demonstrates that quality assurance is perceived as integral to achieving institutional goals rather than merely fulfilling regulatory requirements. Stakeholders acknowledged the alignment between QA practices and institutional missions, although concerns related to manpower shortages, inadequate infrastructure and limited recognition of student achievements were evident. Again, while private universities demonstrate a strong

commitment to complying with GTEC standards, practical constraints, such as staffing deficits and resource limitations, pose challenges to sustained compliance.

Importantly, the findings establish a significant positive relationship between quality assurance practices and students' academic performance and satisfaction, through improvements in teaching quality and curriculum review processes. Nonetheless, issues of assessment transparency and equitable access to learning resources require attention. The study also identified key challenges to QA implementation, including misconceptions about quality assurance, resistance to compliance and infrastructural and manpower constraints. This underscores the need for targeted training and capacity-building initiatives.

The findings call for strengthened stakeholder engagement, improved resource allocation, enhanced infrastructural support and continuous professional development to consolidate quality assurance systems in private universities. These measures are crucial for enhancing compliance with GTEC requirements, improving student outcomes and advancing the broader quality agenda in Ghana's HE sector.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX I: QUESTIONNAIRE GUIDE

QUESTIONNAIRE FOR REGISTRARS, HEADS OF QUALITY ASSURANCE, DEAN OF STUDENTS, & LECTURERS

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

I. BIOGRAPHIC DATA

1. Name of University: _____

2. Faculty/College: _____

3. Department: _____

4. Sex: Male ☐ Female ☐

5. Educational qualification:

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

PhD ☐ Others (specify): _____

6. Academic rank:

Graduate Assistant ☐ Assistant Lecturer ☐

Lecturer ☐ Registrar ☐ Senior assist. Registrar ☐

Senior lecturer ☐ Deputy Registrar ☐ Assistant Registrar ☐

Assistant Professor ▱ Associate Professor ▱

Professor ▱ Others (please specify) _____

7. Area of specialisation _____

8. Year/s of service in the University _____

9. Years of experience at current post _____

10. Position held

Registrar ▱ Head of Department ▱ Director ▱ Dean ▱ None ▱

II. HANDLING OF QUALITY ASSURANCE

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

STATEMENTS	**SD**	**D**	**A**	**SA**
26. QA helps the university to achieve its mission and visions				
27. QA raises the reputation of the university				
28. QA ensures that there is adequate academic and staff in the university				
29. QA ensures that the university provides infrastructure for teaching and learning				

30. QA helps to ensure programme/ curricular improvement				
31. QA give recognition to the university locally				
32. QA give recognition to the university internationally				
33. QA gives recognition to students				
34. QA makes students feel prestigious				
35. QA gives recognition to students certificates				
36. QA ensures students have the requisite resources for learning				
37. QA ensures competition among universities				

IV. ADHERENCE TO THE REQUIREMENTS OF GTEC

STATEMENTS	**YES**	**NO**
38. Faculty/Departmental meetings on quality assurance of educational provision		
39. University-wide meeting to discuss about academic matters		
40. Completing questionnaires on programme/course evaluation		
41. Completing questionnaires on student learning experience and related issues		
42. Completing questionnaires on effectiveness of teaching and assessment		
43. Curriculum review		
44. Institutional self-evaluation		
45. External evaluation		
46. Accreditation		
47. Others (please specify) _____		

V. EFFECT OF QUALITY ASSURANCE (QA) ON STUDENTS' ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE AND SATISFACTION

Please rate the statements below concerning the impact of quality assurance (QA) on students' academic performance and satisfaction in your department/ faculty/ institution

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

STATEMENTS	SD	D	A	SA
48. I believe the QA processes at my university contribute to a high-quality educational experience				
49. The quality assurance processes at my university contribute to the improvement of teaching quality				
50. QA initiatives have led to a more supportive and conducive learning environment at my university				
51. QA practices have a measurable positive impact on students' academic achievement and preparedness for the workforce				
52. The quality assurance processes at my university meet students' expectations				
53. Students are satisfied with the outcomes and improvements resulting from the QA processes implemented at my university				
54. The curriculum at my university is regularly reviewed and updated to meet current academic and industry standards, as part of the QA process				
55. The QA practices at my university ensure that teaching methods are continuously evaluated and improved				
56. Assessment criteria and procedures are transparent, fair, and consistently applied, reflecting best practices in QA				

57. My university's QA processes ensure that adequate learning resources (e.g., libraries, labs, online platforms) are available and accessible to all students				
58. Quality assurance at my university includes regular evaluation and professional development of faculty to maintain high teaching standards				
59. Academic support services are effectively managed and improved through the QA processes at my university				
60. My university fully complies with the QA standards set by the National Accreditation Board and Ghana Tertiary Education Commission (GTEC)				
61. QA practices at my university are responsive to the diverse academic and non-academic needs of students				
62. The QA system effectively incorporates student feedback to enhance educational quality				

VI. DIFFICULTY IN ADHERING TO RULESS & REQUIREMENT OF GTEC

Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements.

STATEMENTS	NOT A CHALLENGE	SOMEWHAT CHALLENGE	CHALLENGE	MOST CHALLENGE
63. Misconception or misunderstanding of quality assurance				
64. Manpower challenges				
65. Inadequate infrastructure				
66. Resistance				

67.If any other

(Specify)……

……

……...

QUESTIONNAIRE FOR STUDENTS

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

I. BIOGRAPHIC DATA

1. Name of University: _____

2. Faculty/College: _____

3. Department: _____

4. Programme of study: _____

5. Level: 200 ▱ 300 ▱ 400 ▱

6. Sex: Male ▱ Female ▱

II. HANDLING OF QUALITY ASSURANCE

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

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

STATEMENTS	SD	D	A	SA
7. Academic programmes are evaluated periodically				
8. All stakeholders are involved in programme review				

9. Departments/faculties have collaboration with international universities/ organisations				
10. Faculty members are well aware of quality assurance practices/ process				
11. Grading system is well defined				
12. Admission criteria for undergraduates is well defined				
13. Students are involved in the assessment of lecturers				
14. Guidance and counselling is available to the students				
15. Feedback from students is used to improve teaching and learning				
16. Good internet facility is available				
17. Related and up-to-date books are available in the library				
18. Departments have a well-defined mechanism for students to channel their grievances and appeals				
19. Financial resources are allocated efficiently and effectively				
20. Quality assurance practices are shared among different academic departments of the university				
21. Quality assurance reports are available to all stakeholders				

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

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

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

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

IV. ADHERERNCE TO THE REQUIREMENTS OF GTEC

STATEMENTS	YES	NO
34. Faculty/Departmental meetings on quality assurance of educational provision		
35. University-wide meeting to discuss about academic matters		
36. Completing questionnaires on programme/course evaluation		

37. Completing questionnaires on student learning experience and related issues		
38. Completing questionnaires on effectiveness of teaching and assessment		
39. Curriculum review		
40. Institutional self-evaluation		
41. External evaluation		
42. Accreditation		
43.Others (please specify) _____		

V. IMPACT OF QUALITY ASSURANCE (QA) ON STUDENTS' ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE AND SATISFACTION

Please rate the statements below concerning the impact of quality assurance (QA) on students' academic performance and satisfaction in your department/ faculty/ institution

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

STATEMENTS	SD	D	A	SA
44. I believe the QA processes at my university contribute to a high-quality educational experience				
45. I believe that the current quality assurance practices at my university enhance my academic performance				
46. The quality assurance processes at my university contribute to the improvement of teaching quality				
47. QA initiatives have led to a more supportive and conducive learning environment at my university				

48. QA practices have a measurable positive impact on my academic achievement and preparedness for the workforce.				
49. QA ensures that the university provides infrastructure for teaching and learning				
50. I am satisfied with the quality of education I am receiving at my university				
51. The quality assurance processes at my university meet my expectations				
52. I am satisfied with the outcomes and improvements resulting from the QA processes implemented at my university				
53. The curriculum at my university is regularly reviewed and updated to meet current academic and industry standards, as part of the QA process				
54. The QA practices at my university ensure that teaching methods are continuously evaluated and improved				
55. Assessment criteria and procedures are transparent, fair, and consistently applied, reflecting best practices in QA				
56. My university's QA processes ensure that adequate learning resources (e.g., libraries, labs, online platforms) are available and accessible to all students				
57. The QA system effectively incorporates student feedback to enhance educational quality				
58. My university's QA processes ensure transparency and accountability in grading and academic evaluation				
59. QA practices at my university are responsive to the diverse academic and non-academic needs of students				

VI. DIFFICULTY IN ADHERING TO RULESS & REQUIREMENT OF GTEC

Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements.

STATEMENTS	NOT A CHALLENGE	SOMEWHAT CHALLENGE	CHALLENGE	MOST CHALLENGE
60. Misconception or misunderstanding of quality assurance				
61. Manpower challenges				
62. Inadequate infrastructure				
63. Resistance				

63. If any other

(Specify)……

……

……...

APPENDIX II: ETHICAL CLEARANCE

UNISA university of south africa

UNISA COLLEGE OF EDUCATION ETHICS REVIEW COMMITTEE

Date: 2023/11/08

Ref: **2023/11/08/19291655/42/AM**
Name: Ms CMP Opoku
Student No.:19291655

Dear Ms CMP Opoku

Decision: Ethics Approval from 2023/11/08 to 2028/11/08

Researcher(s): Name: Ms CMP Opoku
E-mail address: adutackie3.ann@mail.com
Telephone: +233246611172

Supervisor(s): Name: Prof. M Lekhetho
E-mail address: lekhem@unisa.ac.za
Telephone: 012 429 3781

Title of research:

Assessing Quality Assurance Practices in Higher Education in Ghana: The Case of Private Universities

Qualification: PhD Education Management

Thank you for the application for research ethics clearance by the UNISA College of Education Ethics Review Committee for the above mentioned research. Ethics approval is granted for the period 2023/11/08 to 2028/11/08.

*The **medium risk** application was reviewed by the Ethics Review Committee on 2023/11/08 in compliance with the UNISA Policy on Research Ethics and the Standard Operating Procedure on Research Ethics Risk Assessment.*

The proposed research may now commence with the provisions that:

1. The researcher will ensure that the research project adheres to the relevant guidelines set out in the Unisa Covid-19 position statement on research ethics attached.
2. The researcher(s) will ensure that the research project adheres to the values and principles expressed in the UNISA Policy on Research Ethics.

Open Rubric

University of South Africa
Preller Street, Muckleneuk Ridge, City of Tshwane
PO Box 392 UNISA 0003 South Africa
Telephone: +27 12 429 3111 Facsimile: +27 12 429 4150
www.unisa.ac.za

3. Any adverse circumstance arising in the undertaking of the research project that is relevant to the ethicality of the study should be communicated in writing to the UNISA College of Education Ethics Review Committee.
4. The researcher(s) will conduct the study according to the methods and procedures set out in the approved application.
5. Any changes that can affect the study-related risks for the research participants, particularly in terms of assurances made with regards to the protection of participants' privacy and the confidentiality of the data, should be reported to the Committee in writing.
6. The researcher will ensure that the research project adheres to any applicable national legislation, professional codes of conduct, institutional guidelines and scientific standards relevant to the specific field of study. Adherence to the following South African legislation is important, if applicable: Protection of Personal Information Act, no 4 of 2013; Children's act no 38 of 2005 and the National Health Act, no 61 of 2003.
7. Only de-identified research data may be used for secondary research purposes in future on condition that the research objectives are similar to those of the original research. Secondary use of identifiable human research data requires additional ethics clearance.
8. No field work activities may continue after the expiry date **2028/11/08**. Submission of a completed research ethics progress report will constitute an application for renewal of Ethics Research Committee approval.

Note:

The reference number **2023/11/08/19291655/42/AM** *should be clearly indicated on all forms of communication with the intended research participants, as well as with the Committee.*

Kind regards,

Prof AT Motlhabane
CHAIRPERSON: CEDU RERC
motlhat@unisa.ac.za

Prof Mpine Makoe
EXECUTIVE DEAN
qakisme@unisa.ac.za

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APPENDIX III: LETTER OF INVITATION TO PARTICIPATE IN THE STUDY

Takoradi Technical University Post Office Box 256 Takoradi 6th August, 2024.

Dear potential respondent,

Invitation to Participate in a Study Titled: Assessing Quality Assurance Practices in HE in Ghana: The Case of Private Universities

I am Christina Maame Pomaah Opoku a PhD student of University of South Africa pursing Doctor of Philosophy in Educational Management. My research is on ***Assessing Quality Assurance Practices in HE in Ghana: The Case of Private Universities.***

Gathering insights that will enhance and strengthen Quality Assurance Practices in Higher Education is part of my requirements. You have been identified as a participant for this study due to your role at your university. I expect to involve approximately 300 respondents. It is expected that you will require about 10 minutes to complete the attached questionnaire.

Kindly be assured that your consent to participate in this study is entirely voluntary and will not attract any compensation or incentives. There are no perceived anticipated participant risks or discomforts. You will be given a consent form to fill upon agreeing to participate in this study. You may revoke this consent without justification at any time. Be assured that all the responses will be anonymised.

A formal written approval which is available upon request has been obtained from Research Ethics Review Committee of the University of South Africa.

A summary of the results and a copy of the thesis will be made available to you upon conclusion. I may be contacted at 19291655@mylife.unisa.ac.za or +233 24 661 1172.

Feel free to contact Prof. Mapheleba Lekhetho (lekhem@unisa.ac.za), my supervisor if you have any questions or reservations about the study.

Thank you for your time and participation in this study.

Christina Maame Pomaah Opoku

PhD CANDIDATE,

University of South Africa

0246611172/ 0204062306

APPENDIX IV: INFORMED CONSENT

CONSENT/ASSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN THIS STUDY

I _____ (Participant Name), confirm that the person asking my consent to take part in this research has told me about the nature, procedure, potential benefits and anticipated inconvenience of participation.

I have read (or had explained to me) and understood the study as explained in the information sheet.

I have had sufficient opportunity to ask questions and am prepared to participate in the study.

I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time without penalty

I am aware that the findings of this study will be processed into a research report, journal publications and/or conference proceedings, but that my participation will be kept confidential unless otherwise specified.

I have received a signed copy of the informed consent agreement.

_____	_____
Participant's Name & Surname (please print)	Participant's Signature & Date
_____	_____
Christina M. P. Opoku	Researcher's Signature & Date

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APPENDIX V: TURNITIN REPORT

Similarity Report

PAPER NAME
Thesis Christina Maame Pomaah Opoku docx.docx

AUTHOR
CHRISTINA MAAME POMAAH OPOKU

WORD COUNT
78683 Words

CHARACTER COUNT
489278 Characters

PAGE COUNT
257 Pages

FILE SIZE
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Jan 28, 2026 12:06 PM GMT

REPORT DATE
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1	erl.ucc.edu.gh:8080 Internet	4%
2	tandfonline.com Internet	1%
3	uir.unisa.ac.za Internet	1%
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5	harvest.usask.ca Internet	<1%
6	publish.ojs-indonesia.com Internet	<1%
7	stmlportal.net Internet	<1%
8	cdn.unicaf.org Internet	<1%

APPENDIX VI: CONFIRMATION OF PROFESSIONAL EDITING

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9 January 2026

Declaration of editing

ASSESSING QUALITY ASSURANCE PRACTICES IN HIGHER EDUCATION IN GHANA: THE CASE OF PRIVATE UNIVERSITIES

by

CHRISTINA MAAME POMAAH OPOKU

I declare that I have edited and proofread this thesis. The editing was restricted to language usage and spelling, completeness and consistency, technical formatting and formatting the references.

I am qualified to have done such editing, being in possession of a Bachelor's degree with a major in English, having taught English to matriculation, and having a Certificate in Copy Editing from the University of Cape Town. I have edited more than 600 Masters and Doctoral theses, as well as articles, books and reports.

As the copy editor,

- I am not responsible for detecting, or removing, passages in the document that closely resemble other texts and could thus be viewed as plagiarism.
- I am not responsible for editing AI generated text.
- I am not accountable for any changes made to this document by the author or any other party subsequent to the date of this declaration.

Sincerely,

Dr J Baumgardt
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University of Cape Town: Certificate in Copy Editing
University of Cape Town: Certificate in Corporate Coaching

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