# Chapter 5
# Distance Education Quality Assurance in Ghana

**Godwin Utuka**
*Victoria University of Wellington, New Zealand*

## ABSTRACT

*In response to the challenges of enhancing the quality of distance education in Ghana, the National Accreditation Board (NAB), the government agency that is responsible for regulating and monitoring standards of the higher education sector, has introduced certain mechanisms or processes to ensure conformity with minimum standards and also to promote the quality of distance education in Ghana. Drawing on an empirical study, this chapter discusses the NAB's role in representing Ghana's government's efforts to extend quality assurance oversight to transnational educational activities in the country. The purpose of this chapter is to examine how the NAB works and comment on the effectiveness and challenges of ensuring the quality of distance education in Ghana.*

## INTRODUCTION

Traditional universities and institutions of higher education have been challenged by a number of factors including the need for flexibility in delivering education. In Ghana, distance education has become an important part of the higher education sector of the country. Transnational education has impacted significantly on the higher education sector in Ghana because it has provided the opportunity for a number of Ghanaians to acquire tertiary education.

For the purpose of this paper, transnational education (also known as offshore education)

refers to programmes that cross national borders. Jones (2001) refers to transnational education as education in which learners are located in a country different from the one where the awarding institution is based. This conforms with the definition given by UNESCO and Council of Europe (2001). Regardless of the form, the fundamental principle is that such offshore programmes mirror the programmes delivered on-campus (Ferris, 2005; Coleman, 2003). They are presumed to be of the same standard and quality, although Kayrooz, Milne and Ward (2005) state that the greatest concern is how such consistency is maintained across borders. The notion of a university considered as a microcosm originated in medieval times. However, higher education in the contemporary

world can no longer be confined within a marked terrain. To use Bauman's (2001) metaphor, it has become liquefied, or as Scott (1999) observes, it has become de-institutionalised. Traditional universities and institutions of higher education have been challenged by a number of factors including the need for flexibility in delivering education.

UNESCO observed that cross-border provision of higher education has grown significantly since the 1980s, and because of this it is 'outside any framework of quality assurance and accreditation (and therefore) renders students and other stakeholders more vulnerable to low-quality provision and disreputable providers' (UNESCO, 2005, p. 8). For UNESCO, it is self-evident that something must be done to mitigate the risk of exposure to low-quality provision and disreputable providers. UNESCO believes that national public regulation of higher education has become a necessity, not only for monitoring quality in higher education delivered within the country, but also for engaging in delivery of higher education internationally.

Tripathi and Jeevan (2008) argued that distance education has evolved in a similar fashion as society has evolved from the post-industrial era to the information age. Consequently, the concerns about the quality of distance education have been of utmost importance. Transnational education is a very common phenomenon in the Ghanaian higher education sector. The growth of the private education industry as a form of trade can only be sustained in Ghana on a robust quality assurance system provided by the National Accreditation Board (NAB) to safeguard the quality of these programmes.

## DRIVERS OF TRANSNATIONAL EDUCATION

Political, economic, and technological trends have contributed significantly to the rapid development in transnational education. The international mobility of students is a well-known feature of higher education. Recent innovations in information and communications technologies have facilitated the international mobility of institutions and courses across borders. The World Bank (2002) identified the following forces that have altered the landscape of higher education: increasing importance of the knowledge economy; changes in demographics; a decline in public financing resulting in sourcing alternative financing; the impact of globalisation; the development of new trade agreements that cover trade in educational services; the continued impact of internationalisation; and the Information and Communications Technologies (ICT) revolution.

## TYPES OF TRANSNATIONAL EDUCATION IN GHANA

The government of Ghana embarked on a series of International Monetary Fund (IMF) structural adjustment programmes under which the government mounted reforms in the late 1980s in all social sectors including higher education. Major reforms were undertaken to the sector in the early 1990s. Because of the reforms, higher education in Ghana has experienced significant transformations. One prominent change or effect of the reform is the private sector involvement in the higher education sector. The government had been the sole funder of tertiary education in Ghana after independence but it was realised that the government could no longer support higher education alone. The reform therefore aimed at reversing the situation by involving private sector participation. The private sector was invited to assist with the growth crisis by establishing private institutions. Developments and reforms in the 1980s, such as the market-friendly reforms initiated under the structural adjustment programmes and the deregulation policies, created an encouraging environment for the emerging of the private sector participation in the sector (including transnational education).

7 more pages are available in the full version of this document, which may be purchased using the "Add to Cart" button on the publisher's webpage:
[www.igi-global.com/chapter/distance-education-quality-assurance-ghana/75643](www.igi-global.com/chapter/distance-education-quality-assurance-ghana/75643)

## Related Content

Distributed Learning Objects: An Open Knowledge Management Model.
Veronica Diazand Patricia McGee (2008). *Online and Distance Learning: Concepts, Methodologies, Tools, and Applications (pp. 875-896).*
www.irma-international.org/chapter/distributed-learning-objects/27438

Choosing a Path for Doctoral Studies in Educational Leadership: A Look at the Online Format
George W. Semichand Julie A. Ray (2013). *Learning Tools and Teaching Approaches through ICT Advancements (pp. 219-227).*
www.irma-international.org/chapter/choosing-path-doctoral-studies-educational/68588

A Distance Learning System for Teaching the Writing of Chinese Characters over the Internet
K.T. Sunand D.S. Feng (2004). *International Journal of Distance Education Technologies (pp. 52-66).*
www.irma-international.org/article/distance-learning-system-teaching-writing/1626

Discovery of Learning Path Based on Bayesian Network Association Rule Algorithm
Huajie Shen, Teng Liuand Yueqin Zhang (2020). *International Journal of Distance Education Technologies (pp. 65-82).*
www.irma-international.org/article/discovery-of-learning-path-based-on-bayesian-network-association-rule-algorithm/240227

Synchronous Hybrid E-Learning: Teaching Complex Information Systems Classes Online
Solomon Negash, Marlene V. Wilcoxand Michelle Emerson (2007). *International Journal of Information and Communication Technology Education (pp. 1-13).*
www.irma-international.org/article/synchronous-hybrid-learning/2318