

SANDWICH PROGRAMME ENROLMENT: POLICY AND MANAGEMENT IMPLICATIONS FOR GHANAIAN HIGHER EDUCATION

Dominic Kwaku Danso Mensah

*Department of Educational Administration and Management
University of Education, Winneba*

ABSTRACT: *The current study used survey approach to examine sandwich masters students views on factors influencing their decision to enrol in educational administration and management programme at a teacher university in Ghana. Randomisation technique was used in selecting 131 samples from 161 second-year session students of the programme with 51% males and 49% female participants with urban students dominating the samples in the study. Questionnaires and open-ended items were used to solicit students' views that allowed for the use of inferential and interpretivists' data analysis techniques. Hence, applying logistic and multiple regressions as well as frequency counts, two hypotheses were tested and the results showed that student' perceptions of their own circumstances and institutional constraints explained 19.4% of variance in decisions to engage with their current programme of study. Also, institutional (GES) factors showed statistical significant difference between male and female students with the odd ratio of 1.12 higher for males than females. Consequently, the study concludes that students' decisions to study on the educational administration and management programme were significantly related to their employers' policy and the admission constraints such as faculty attitudes and teaching and living resources. Implications for managerial policy review were discussed in the paper.*

KEYWORDS: *Educational Policy, higher education management, & gender*

INTRODUCTION

The value of higher education has been captured in varied forms. Whilst Vilakazi (2002) extols the economic and social benefits education brings to the individuals, others poignantly capture the benefits of education as plying a transformative role of many nations (Imenda, Kongolo, & Grewal, 2004). Nevertheless, the 2007 Ghanaian Educational Reform Report concedes that in spite of the two Ghanaian teacher universities training teachers, Ghana still lack professionally trained teachers for the secondary school level with a recommendation to government to support the University of Education, Winneba's sandwich programme (Anamuah-Mensah, 2007). Globally, access to higher education has been of major nation concern in view of enrolment gaps over the past three decades (Atuahene & Owusu-Ansah, 2013). For instance, between 1995 and 2013, the US higher education recorded only 3% point increase in higher education enrolment (Kena, et al., 2014). Considering the Ghanaian case, whilst gains were made in non-researched degrees by 16.3% average gross enrolment in 2012/2013 and post-graduate diplomas average gross figures skyrocketed to 534.11% in the

same year, some programme continue to record declining figures (National Accreditation Board, 2015). At the teacher education level, the GES (2000) recorded a 33% (n = 2399) decrease in teacher trainees enrolment between 1999-2000 and 2000-2001 academic years. Recently, the 2015 NAB Report also further indicate that sandwich enrolment in 2011/2012 school year witnessed 5.11% (n = 146) reduction in research masters degree across the country. Similarly the admission records of the M.Ed programme in educational administration and management at UEW showed similar declining patterns over a six-year period. Figure 1 shows bimodal declining figures between 2010 and 2011 as well as 2013 and 2016. Whilst 2010/2011 academic year recorded 49% (n = 160) drop, 2013 – 2016 produced 37% (n = 97) consistent reduction in students' enrolments over the three year in educational administration and management programme.

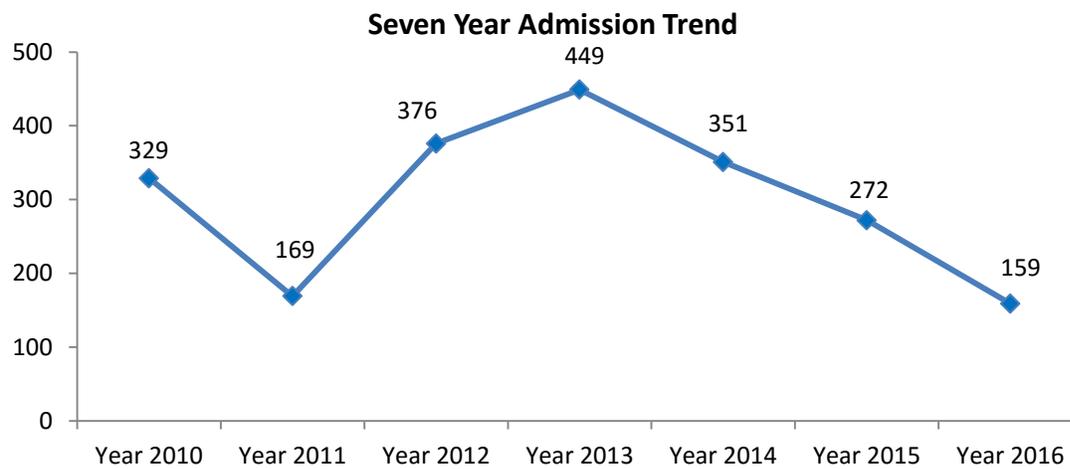


Figure 1: Seven year admission records into the M.Ed Educational Administration and Management Programme (Source: UEW Statistics Report, 2016)

However, such a steady decline witnessed in enrolments gives course for concern to educational policy analysts and management in view of declining governmental financial support. Thus, engaging diverse constituents in policy formulation and negation in addressing the declining standards of Ghanaian educational policy could be a solution. Indeed, educational policy analysts succinctly point out that policy evaluation at any level should account for “negotiation, contestation or struggle between different groups who may lie outside the formal machinery of official policy-making” (Ozga, 1987, p. 113). Surely, Ozga’s views aptly aligns with Ball’s (1994a) conceptualisation that educational policy should not be limited to the formal relationships involving government, educators, and students but should integrate the constant changes taking place in the social, economic, and political structures of the school environment.

Therefore, in search of theoretical framework in explaining educational policy management and sustainability of higher education in Ghana, Schmitter’s (1974) *corporatism theory* underpins the current study. According to Fimyar (2014), corporatism theory explains educational policy-making within the context of different interest groups also part of the

decision-making and implementation. Later, Schmitter and Lehmbruch (1979) marked the academic milestones of corporatism which later gained ground as multi-purpose application in fascist ideology with several countries developing complex and enduring forms of interest and representation suitable for democratic policies (Molina & Rhodes, 2002). Though others have questioned the relevance of the corporatism theory within the neo-liberal dynamics of free-market economy (Grahl & Teague, 1997), it is even relevant to today's institutions with strategic management practices. Strategic thinking constantly requires the managerial thinking of competitive forces analysis (Thompson et al., 2010). Indeed, Schmitter and Ozga's environmental scanning approach to educational policy management are still useful to understand the continuous changes taking place at different levels of the Ghanaian educational system. Hence, the current study believes that the Ghanaian higher education institutions managing sandwich programmes could benefit from the application of Schmitter's theory of corporatism in educational policy assessment.

For instance, several social commentators and academics have added their voices to the debate on funding Ghanaian public university education with some advocating for both governmental and individual supports due to high levels of poverty of the citizenry (Say, 2012), with others entertaining the fear of demise of certain academic departments (Kubi, 2005). The situation becomes more worrying when the Ghanaian government intending to reduce its spending on higher education with the view of getting the universities and to generate income internally and individuals to support government's effort (MOE, 2015) seems to be hitting a dead end. Therefore, the current study sought to interrogate contributing factors to the dwindling students' enrolment in the Educational Administration and Management programme at a Ghanaian teacher university.

To some educational researchers, the increasing participation of the private sector in higher education and continuous expansion in Ghanaian higher education space has been extolled as a symbol of quality and growth worth recognising (Atuahene & Owusu-Ansah, 2013). However, the recent decline in students' enrolment in certain sandwich academic programmes in Ghanaian higher education gives cause for concern. The current study seeks to investigate graduate students' perceptions of factors affecting their intention for application into the Educational Administration and Management programme at the University of Education, Winneba. Hence, two hypotheses and a research question underpinned the study as:

- i. **H₀₁**: Collectively, students' financial constraints, Ghana Education Service (GES) issues, and competition from other universities do not explain their perception of institutional problems,
- ii. **H_{A1}**: Students' financial constraints, GES issues, and competition from other universities do explain their perception of institutional problems,
- iii. **H₀₂**: There is no statistical difference between male and female graduate students on Ghana Education Service related issues in this study,
- iv. **H_{A2}**: Hypothesis 2: there is statistical difference between male and female graduate students on Ghana Education Service related issues in this study, and

However, one proposed research question was formulated to explore which educational policies, in students' views were obstacles to their enrolment in the selected teacher university. Therefore, the methods and data analysis techniques employed in the current study are explained in the subsequent sections.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design and Samples

A survey research design was used for the current study to explore students' views on the sandwich masters programmes amongst second year students in the Department of Educational Administration and Management. A purposive sampling technique was used to select 131 samples out of 161 (see Figure 2) for the study. Figure 2 shows the age and gender distribution of the samples used in this study. The distribution was almost even with 51% (n = 56) males and 49% (n = 53) female students. The dominant age group of the sample was between 26 and 30 years for both sexes with an outlier of 2 students fallen between 20 and 25-year bracket.



Figure 2: Age and gender distribution of M.Ed. sandwich samples used in the current study

The demographic characteristics of the samples also indicated in Figure 3 that indeed, students who indicated their community classifications were 52% (n = 66) urban and 48% (n = 60) rural. Interestingly, Northern and Brong-Ahafo Regions recorded highest rural numbers (10 each) with Greater Accra Region (n = 22) leading the chart with students from urban communities. Majority (n = 22) students failed to provide information on their regions.

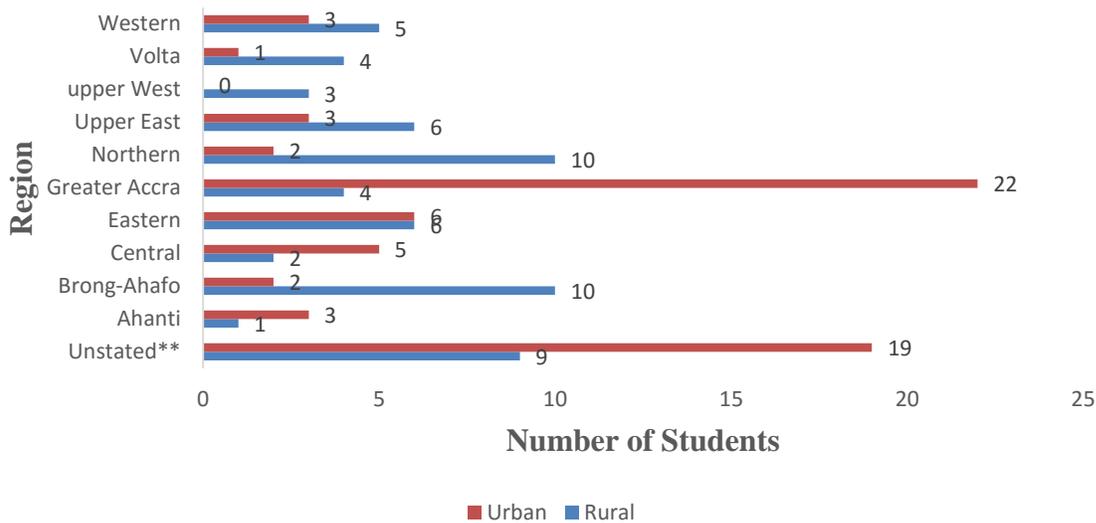


Figure 3: Regional distribution of samples

Research Instrument

A Likert-scale type questionnaire was employed in the data collection with one open-ended item for gathering students' opinions on recommendations for improving the sandwich programme. Indeed, validity and reliability of Instrument of the survey instrument were checked. For face validity purposes, copies of the instruments were circulated to colleague lecturers in the Department and other Departments for their perusal and their comments, which were quite favourable, were included before main data collection. Further, content validity of the instrument was established by using retired lecturers and other professors who had adequate knowledge in the Sandwich programme to ensure the representativeness of the constructs used.

On reliability of the measuring instrument, Likert-type scale items consisted of five parts with their respective Cronbach alpha coefficients reported were reported. For the purpose of relationship testing, the five parts were identified as (i) resource constraints (.67), (ii) financial constraints (.67), (iii) GES issues (.66), (iv) lecturer related issues (.68), and (v) competition from other universities (.74). With an exception of competition from other universities, the remaining constructs fell short of the .7 coefficient criterion for internal reliability tests (Field, 2005). As a virgin instrument, the study did not consider the shortfall a hindrance in significant testing. This is because Bauer (2000) was of the view any reliability coefficient value which ranges between .66 and .79 is acceptable. However, items (i) and (iv) were recomputed as UEW factor regression analysis. The open-ended responses supplied by respondents were used as anecdotal in line with the interpretivists' approach to case analysis.

DATA ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSIONS

Linear multiple regression, binary logistic regression, and frequency were used to answer two hypotheses and one research question that guided the study respectively. Results of Hypothesis 1 sought to test the statistical relationship between students' worker organisation (Ghana Education Service- Factor 1), financial constraints (Factor 2), competition to admit students from competing universities (Factor 3), and the outcome factor, the UEW constraints. The omnibus ANOVA test showed that there were statistical significant differences ($F(3) = 11.189, p = .001$) between the three factors in predicting the outcome factor. The three predictors and the outcome factor also showed a moderately significant association ($R = .462$) in Table 1. Therefore, the study then rejects the null hypothesis and conclude that the sandwich students' challenges with GES policy on career development, financial difficulties, and completion from other sister universities significantly explains 19.4% (Adjusted $R^2 = .194$) of variance in their views of University of Education, Winneba's own perceived problems. Post-hoc analysis indicates that with the exception of students' financial constraints, GES issues and competition from other universities which significantly explain the outcome variable in this study.

Table 1
Beta Values for the Predictors in the Regression Model

Model		Unstandardized		Standardized		Sig.
		Coefficients		Coefficients		
		B	Std. Error	Beta	t	
1	(Constant)	1.349	.648		2.082	.039
	Financial Constraints	.083	.094	.072	.884	.378
	GES Issues	.456	.106	.361	4.300	.000
	Competition	.167	.084	.168	1.992	.049

a. Dependent Variable: UEW Factor *Adjusted R² = .194; R² = .213; SE of Estimate = .645*

Gender and GES Related Issues

The study examined students' challenges prior to admission into the programme using gender as the outcome factor. Hypothesis 2 was then formulated to test the category of gender likely to predict challenges encounter whilst preparing to enrol on the Educational Administration and Management Programme at the teacher university. Binary logistic regression was used to test Hypothesis 2 with the result indicating that indeed, the model was statistically significant ($\chi^2(6) = 16.599, p = .011$). Thus, the six covariates were successfully predictors of gender in the current study. In addition, the classification table accompanying the logistic regression model evidently classified 66.1% overall in gender with 73.3% males and 58.2% females also classified. Therefore, using Negelkerke model, the study confidently accounted for 17.9% ($R^2 = .179$; -2 Log likelihood statistics = 142.61) of variance in gender. This means that whilst the controlled variables (financial constraints, GES factors, and competition from other universities) explain moderate causes of the reduction in students' enrolment into the

programmes, 82.1% of causes in the sandwich enrolment were not the subject matter of the current study. This also implies that further study is required to fully appreciate the issue of decreasing numbers in the Educational Administration and Management programme. Curiously, it is instructive to note that several public and private universities continue to join the sandwich programme thereby creating stiffer competition for the pioneers in the business and this could also explain the reduction numbers as the competitive factor in the logistic regression model explained (16.8%; see Table 1).

However, a look at Table 2 shows that not all covariates entered into the equation were significant predictors of the outcome factor (gender), especially, no staff development ($p > .05$), family commitment ($p > .05$), and head count exercise ($p > .05$). In the current study, the significant issues for institutional policy implications were study leave issues ($p < 0.05$), age of applicants ($p < .05$), and delivering interview letters to applicants on time ($p < .05$). In conclusion, the study rejected the H_{02} that statistical difference does not exist between male and female students and employer (GES) factors and accepted the alternate hypothesis. Thus, the assumption that the collectively influence of students' financial constraints, GES issues, and competition from other universities do not explain their perception of institutional problems did not hold in this study.

Table 2
Variables in the Equation Predicting Gender Group

	B	S.E.	Wald	df	Sig.	Exp(B)
No study leave	0.81	0.27	9.03	1	0.00	2.24
No staff development	-0.03	0.26	0.02	1	0.90	0.97
Age determinant	-0.35	0.20	2.89	1	0.09	0.71
Family commitments	0.09	0.19	0.20	1	0.66	1.09
Head count exercises	-0.16	0.23	0.50	1	0.48	0.85
Interview letters delays	-0.46	0.20	5.16	1	0.02	0.63
Constant	0.10	1.73	0.00	1	0.96	1.10

Source: Sandwich survey data, 2016

Enrolment Issues of Concern to Students

In addition to testing the percentage of variance in issues affecting gender of students in the sandwich programme, students were requested to offer suggestions aimed at addressing their concerns on a scale of 1 (indifferent) to 5 (strongly agree). Unanimously, the students agreed that the University of Education, Winneba should adjust the reopening date of the sandwich period in line with their vacation (Figure 4). The unanimity of their agreement was evident in the low standard deviation score of .065 recorded – an indication of consensus views expressed on the reopening factor. Similarly, they also agreed that the current admission process of the university should probably consider holding such interviews at regional levels

as well. This implies that students travelling from far and near of the country for an interview are a source of worry for students for example, students commented: “*sometimes some people [do] not come for the interview because, it is difficult to raise money for transportation as well as having to lodge in a Hotel when you are in [university]*” (Student 14)

On the other hand, the result also showed students’ disagreement with online purchasing of application forms, intensifying computer literacy, and manual registration. This suggests that some students do not have adequate knowledge in Computing and as a result prefer to complete the application manually. For instance a student commented: “*I know of some friends who could not afford to pay some people to fill out their application for them online, in fact villages[that] do not have the internet facilities and it is very difficult and put some students off*” (Student 92)

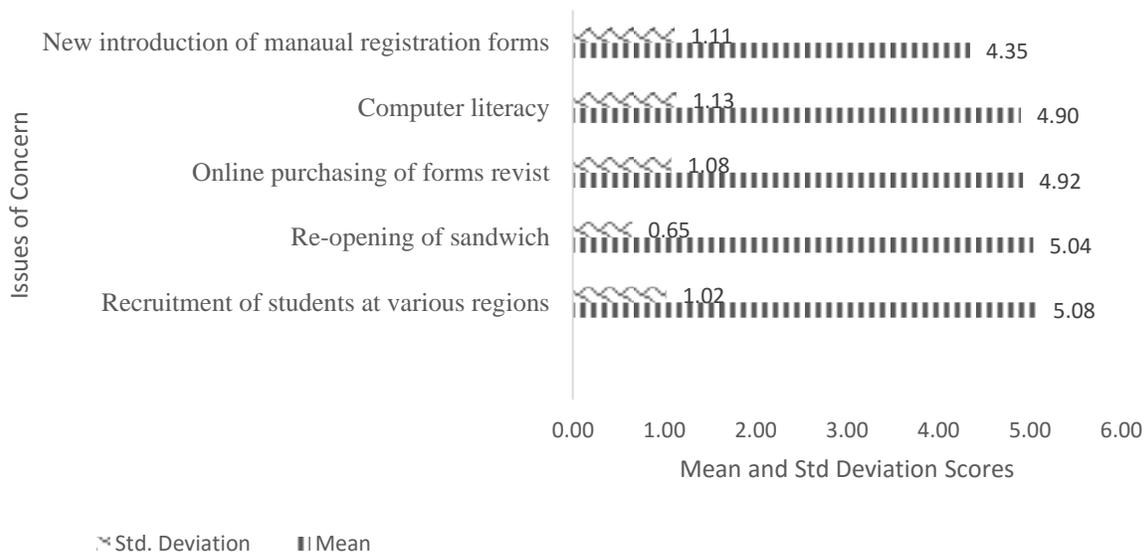


Figure 4: Students’ suggestions on improving the sandwich programme in Educational Administration and Management Department

In support of the descriptive statistics summarising students’ views on re-opening date of the sandwich programme, the following narratives from the open-ended questionnaire item were relevant to the study. A principal superintendent between 31 and 35 years old male student from Greater-Accra Region shared his opinion that “*Sandwich programmes should be organized during basic school holidays since most teachers are not allowed to leave the classroom to be enrolled on the program. Also the fees should be reduced and be flexible as well.*” [Student 112]. Similarly, a female Superintendent student between 26 and 30 years from Northern Region of the country also intimated that,

“*... the re-opening data should be shift [sic] from May ending to July because by then syllabus [GES syllabi] will be completed and revision for end of term (3rd term) exams will*

be on-going and that will not affect teaching and learning activities. [Sometimes] We have to motivate colleagues to undertake our responsibilities at school before director [school supervisors] allowed [sic] us to come this semester [2015/2016 UEW Sandwich Session]. We have to look for money to do this [pay colleagues to teach classes on students' behalf] to satisfy our work. Those who could not do that cannot make it, and this is not good for such an educational institution meant for teachers to upgrade their knowledge. [Student. 111]

CONCLUSION & RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on Schmitter' (1974) corporativism theory, the current study sought to explore the contextual factors influencing the continuous decline of graduates admissions into some university programme in a Ghanaian teacher university. Using regression techniques, the findings revealed that employer-related factors such as lack of study leave policy, inappropriate human resource development initiatives from the Ghana Education Service, and competition from significant other universities running sandwich programmes were more likely to affect students enrolments in this study. Secondly, lack of computer literacy manifested in students' concerns during the application process. Surely, several applicants live in rural communities, hence accessing ICT tools for their work might be a challenge. Evidently, educational policy management should recognise such limitations for prospective applicants and make alternative arrangements for students in deprived Ghanaian communities to apply for admission. Technology acceptance model and corporativism theories could be of help in addressing students' needs in tackling the decreasing numbers of students into some graduate programme.

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