"Equating the unequal"

A comparative case study on How Public Universities in Ghana Respond to the Impact of Global University Rankings

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Abstract

Global university rankings have gradually become a key feature of policy and geo-political discussions among various stakeholders involved in higher education since their emergence in 2003. Global university rankings have become a key instrument for students in their undergraduate and postgraduate school selection process. They have become a key instrument used by HEIs to identify their strengths and weaknesses, to foster collaborative relations with other institutions either within or outside the country of origin and aids them in benchmarking themselves against the peers.

Emerging as a source of consumer information, GURs have grown to influence both the behaviour of various government and HEIs. As a result, it has attracted the attention of many higher education researchers who have explored the various aspects of it; the indicators, impact on students, impact on higher education institutions and the institutional responses towards them. However, most of these research studies on GURs are often in institutions or countries with most higher education institutions appearing in the top 100, 200 and 500 positioning.

Owing to this, the main objective of this study was to explore the institutional responses of four public universities in Ghana towards the growing impact of GURs. Based on this general research area, the study adopted the qualitative case study methodology to explore to explore the institutional responses of four public universities in Ghana towards GURs. With the help of the Oliver's (1991) strategic responses to institutional processes which originated from the institutional and resources dependency theory, the findings of this study revealed that although they were varied perceptions among institutional leaders, their respective universities have been impacted by GURs and are responding according through the adoption of some strategic policies with an aim of improving their rankings. Generally, the findings of the study revealed that the four public universities in Ghana acknowledges the impact of global university rankings. As a result, each of the four universities are appropriately responding in terms of conscious policy measures.

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Dedication

This thesis is dedicated to Mr. Emmanuel D. Eledi. For your enormous support and encouragement towards my personal development and education.

Abbreviations/Acronyms

NCTE	National Council for Tertiary Education
NAB	National Accreditation Board
HEIs	Higher Education Institutions
HE	Higher Education
URC	University Rationalization Committee
GETfund	Ghana Education Trust Fund
GURS	Global University Ranking System
GURs	Global University Rankings
IGF	Internally Generated Funds
SLTF	Student Loan Trust Fund
NBPTEX	National Board of Professional and Technician Examination
UG	University of Ghana
UCC	University of Cape Coast
UDS	University for Development Studies
THES	Times Higher Education Supplement
ARWU-SJA	Academic Rankings of World Universities-Shangai Jiao Tong
IHEP	Institute of Higher Education Policy

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1   Introduction

1.1 Background to Study

The field of higher education (HE) has witnessed an unprecedented transformation in scope, volume and complexities over the past 50 years. In contemporary era, the transformation within higher education institutions (HEIs) has been characterized by massive expansion of programmes, wider participation of diverse players and a more integrated use of communication technologies (Tremblay, Lalancette and Roseveare, 2012). Additionally, new roles of governance, including increasing emphasis on performance, quality and accountability has become common features of most higher education institutions (ibid)

Underpinning these transformations and developments lies the influence of globalization and internationalization of HEIs (Hazelkorn, 2007; Dill and Soo, 2005). HEIs all over the world are constantly undergoing institutional and structural changes because of the increasingly interconnectedness of socioeconomic and political systems. Based on these developments, global competitiveness has become evident. HEIs are now seen competing between and among themselves both within and outside their countries of origin for students, resources (financial in the form of funding, and human in the form of academic, research and administrative staffs) and prestige (Altbach, Reisberg and Rumbley, 2009; Marginson and van der Wende, 2007).

Global university rankings (GURs) have emerged as a result of the globalisation and internationalisation of HE and the associated competitiveness among HEIs. The need for university rankings worldwide also became apparent because of the increasing demand for information about academic quality, greater transparency and accountability and efficiency within the higher education sector (Dill and Soo, 2005; Hazelkorn, 2007, 2011; Sadlak, 2011). In almost two decades since the arrival of global university rankings (GURs), they have become a key source of information for prospective students and their parents (Hazelkorn, 2015, 2015; Clark, 2007; Bowman and Bastedo, 2011; Xu, 2013), politicians or governments, funding or donor agencies, higher education institutions and other stakeholders within the higher education sector (Hazelkorn, 2009; Altbach, 2015; Wedlin, 2011). Whereas political actors' views rankings as measures of economic strength and prosperity, students in pursuit for higher education sometimes rely on rankings in their choice process, and universities uses them in

identifying their strengths and weaknesses, setting targets, branding and marketing themselves to the international marketplace of HE (Hazelkorn, 2009).

Despite its relevance, several criticisms have been levelled against the methodology and impact of GUR (Marginson and van der Wende, 2015; Hazelkorn, 2009, 2011). Some critics perceive GURs as a 'fever', a "disease" that infects universities and even countries and makes them fixated with short term measures which are often related to positions and achievements rather than focusing on long term goals such real quality (Yudkevich, Altbach and Rumbley, 2016). This ongoing debate about the positive and negative impacts on global rankings have stimulated academic research over the years. While there has been considerable research into the impact of rankings in higher education in the global north (West, 2009; IHEP, 2009; Hazelkorn, 2015), there is little attention on countries, mostly in global south, with no representation in these rankings. Most of these studies have been undertaken by institutions that have appeared in the top positioning of rankings publications or countries which have most of their institutions appearing on these ranking publications (Elken, Hovdhagen and Stensaker, 2016; IHEP, 2009).

Against this backdrop, this study sought to explore how Ghanaian public universities are responding to the impact of global university rankings. As an outcome to other studies previously conducted (Hazelkorn, 2015; IHEP, 2009) this study specifically explores the responses of public universities in Ghana towards the impact global university rankings including how they respond and what types of decisions they drive. It is envisioned that the findings of this study would lead to the uptake of measures to enhance the ranking status of public universities in Ghana.

1.2 Statement of the Research Problem

Elken, Hovdhaugen and Stensaker (2016) observes that much of existing literature on global rankings are usually conducted among top ranked institutions or counties dominating these rankings systems. The Institute for Higher Education Policy, (2009) similarly notes that much of the research on global university rankings come from the United States who possess many of the top ranked systems. Consistent with this trend, extant research studies in Ghana have not explored how public universities in Ghana respond to the pressures brought about by global university rankings. A review of existing research shows that limited studies exist on the issue of university rankings in the context of Ghana.

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Given the relevance that global university rankings have assumed around the world, it becomes imperative to have accurate insights into how universities in all countries, including Ghana are responding to their impact. Unfortunately, academic research in the context of Ghana offers little insights into the challenges universities face as a result of global university rankings. This study therefore adds to the knowledge of this understudied scholarly literature.

1.3 Research Objectives

The general objective of this study is to explore how Ghanaian public universities are responding to the impact of global university rankings (GURS). To achieve the general objective, the study seeks to achieve the following research objectives:

- To examine how public universities leaders in Ghana understand and perceive global university rankings.

- To determine the impact of GURs on four public universities in Ghanaian public universities.

- To explore the institutional responses of Ghanaian public universities towards the impact of global university rankings.

1.4 Research Questions

Consistent with the specified research objectives, the research questions guiding the study are formulated as:

General Question: How are Ghanaian public universities responding to the impact of global rankings systems?

Sub Research Questions

- How do Ghanaian public universities leadership understand and perceive the rankings of universities globally?

- What are the impact of GURs on Ghanaian public universities?

- How are public Universities in Ghana responding to the impact of global university rankings (GURs)?

1.5 Significance of the Study

Generally, the significance of this study can be seen from both practical and theoretical perspectives with a primary goal to inform action. From the practical viewpoint, this study seeks to create a knowledge base on how Ghanaian public universities are responding to global university rankings. As a result, it is intended that the findings of the study can have policy implications for the higher education sector in Ghana. Thus, such a knowledge base can serve as a guide to policy makers interested in taking measures to enhance the competitiveness of Ghanaian public universities. For instance, from the perspective of government, this study potentially serves as significant ground for developing interest, strategies and collaborative measures that could be geared towards making public universities more accountable to the state especially in terms of output and outcomes from resources received from the government and measure of impact. It will also be an avenue for the government of Ghana to determine the level of resource commitment and propose other indicators for measurement of expected results and outcomes especially when interest of government at times lies with number of intake than quality of intake. To the understudied public universities in Ghana, this study will provide them more insight into issues relating to GURs and how they can effectively respond to their impact. It will provide a learning platform of these universities towards learning from best practices of how other successful universities have been able to handle balancing the institutional expectations with some of the demands of GURs.

Moreover, though the study contextualizes its findings within a larger body of research, it produces knowledge that is applicable outside of the research setting with implications that go beyond the settings of the focal population units in the study. Thus, the results of the study will potentially have implications for policy in the contexts of other public universities in Ghana and beyond.

A further practical relevance of this study is that the ranking institutions themselves and related bodies stand to benefit from the outcome of the study. To the ranking institutions, this research serves as communication medium between public universities in Ghana and international ranking institutions. For example, findings can be used as an avenue for reviews of indicators

and methods adopted for rankings. Since rankings present challenges and benefits alike, this study will propose and suggest ways through which challenges could be overcome with maximized benefits to schools. A usual challenge that confronts societal progress is the slow translation of research into practice. Gedde (2015) observes that, there is often a disconnect between those who create the evidence base and those who are positioned to implement the research findings. The prevalence of this social distance may be attributed to the fact researchers are often oriented to international audiences of other societies for which they publish than to the needs of practitioners, policy makers or the local public (Jansen, Van Oers, Kok and De Vries 2010). A major task is to take steps to overcome this barrier. In this regard, publishing the findings of this study may be useful as the findings of the research become accessible to the national and global community. Additionally, findings will be made available to local officials, policy makers and community leaders to promote the up-take of evidence-based interventions.

Finally, this study will create room for future researchers to organize similar research. In addition, the project will help to reveal a number of issues concerning GURs which have not been addressed by existing literature especially from the context of developing nation. From the perspective of theory, the findings of the study can lead to further theorizing on the research problem which the current study focuses on. Given the relatively limited published studies about the research problem under consideration in the study in Ghana, this research study contributes important knowledge to the research problem. Another theoretical implication of this study is that it can form the foundation for which subsequent studies may be conducted. This emanates from the fact that research is generally iterative in character: which is conceptualized as the process of returning again and again to the research questions, methods and data which gives rise to current ideas, revisions and improvements (Unite for Sight, 2009). Consequently, from the perspective of further theorizing, a review of the findings of this study by other researchers will reveal further research questions that need to be added, variables that need to be omitted and other changes made.

1.6 Scope of the Study

The study focusses on four public universities in Ghana. It mainly considered higher education leaders who are involved with the strategic level of decision-making and equally abreast with issues relating to university rankings and what their university position is about them. By focusing on public universities, the study explored the research problem accurately in the

context of a single setting, i.e. public universities' settings. Thus, according to Naumes and Naumes (2014) and Eisenhardt (1989), the case study approach typically focuses on understanding the dynamics present within single settings; this view is taken to support the case study approach adopted in this work. The focus on different population units, i.e. different public universities, was to strengthen the validity and reliability of the study's findings. According to Olsen (2004), collecting data from multiple sources otherwise called data triangulation ensures high validity of research findings. Moriarty (2011) similarly avers that this approach also enables the researcher to document multiple viewpoints and highlight areas of consensus and conflict from the perspectives of respondents.

1.7 Limitations to the Study

The study has some limitations that must be acknowledged. Whilst the study acknowledges these limitations, it is worthy to note that these challenges do not affect the validity and reliability of the findings made in the study. Rather, acknowledging these limitations can be of practical utility from the standpoint of conducting future research studies. First, the findings of this study are based on the peculiar cases of four selected public universities in Ghana. In lieu of this reason, the findings of this study may not necessarily be applicable to other public universities and even more so private universities not incorporated in the study. In other words, the external validity of the study is limited in scope. Thus, according to Eisenhardt and Graebner (2007), the results generated from case studies are commonly criticized for their lack of generalizability beyond the immediate case context. Again, the data generated from the study are based on the views of selected staff of the focal universities in the study whose views may not necessarily represent the views of those not sampled. Nonetheless, given the fact that qualitative studies in general do not primarily seek to achieve sample representativeness but seek to provide accurate understanding of the research problem (Barreiro and Albandoz, 2001), the use of a sample of respondents is deemed appropriate in the study.

1.8 Organization of the Study

The study comprises six chapters. Chapter one presents the general introduction to the study. Specifically, chapter one covers the background to the study, statement of the research problem, research objectives and related research questions, significance of study, scope of study, and limitations of study.

Chapter two of the study presents the contextual background under which this study was carried out. That is, it delves into the institutional context under which this study was anchored by presenting the Higher education system in Ghana and the historical overview, development and strategic visions of the case studied institutions.

Chapter three covers a review of literature pertinent to the study as well as the analytical framework. The chapter sets off by exploring literature on Globalization and internationalization of higher education before presenting the literature on the emergence, development, significance and some examples of rankings. The literature review is done by drawing on a synthesis of both theoretical and empirical studies. The analytical framework section specifically presents the relevant literature on the impact and strategic responses by HEIs towards global university ranking systems (GURS).

Chapter four explains the research methods that was employed to conduct the study. This chapter covers the research approach, population of the study, sample and sampling technique, type and sources of data, sources of data, research instrument, ethical considerations, validity and reliability of data and the mode of data analysis.

Chapter five presents, analyses, and discusses the results of the study by focusing on the research objectives, related research questions, existing literature and the analytical framework specified in the study.

Chapter six presents the summary, conclusions, and the recommendations emanating from the study. The chapter culminates by providing suggestions on research avenues that future research can explore.

2 Contextual Framework

2.1 Overview of the Chapter

'those countries whose universities and colleges can adapt to the rapidly changing economic, political and social climate will have much greater prospects of success'
Bloom (2005, p.21)

This chapter discusses the higher education system in Ghana, its development over the years and a brief background to the four public universities considered as the case studies for this research.

2.2 The Ghanaian Higher Education Landscape

The Higher education system in Ghana has witnessed some significant developments since the establishment of its first university in 1948. The gradual acceleration in growth and development saw an improvement in the number of HEIs in the country increase from one to three by the end of the 1980's (Atuahene and Owusu-Mensah, 2013). However, the growing demand for tertiary education ensuing from the increase in the population size of the country and students graduating from senior high schools demanded an immediate response from the government.

Accordingly, the University Rationalization Committee (URC) was appointed to comprehensively review and make recommendations on the state of higher education in the country. At the end of the committee's work, a total of 166 recommendations were made to ensure complete overhaul of the country's higher education system (Atuahene, 2014). Atuahene and Owusu-Mensah (2013) highlight some of the recommendations as including; "strategies to expand access particularly for the poor and female students; the creation of a new University in the northern part of Ghana; upgrading of the existing polytechnics into tertiary education status under the Polytechnic Law" (p.2). Another recommendation identified by the by the URC, was the unification of all post-secondary educational institutions into a single, unified, and coordinated system with greater public accountability (Atuahene, 2013).

The aftermath of the government white paper on the recommendations in 1991, led to massive expansion and diversification of the Higher education system in Ghana. As a result, the Higher education sector in Ghana witnessing growth in terms of access, participation and enrolments levels. According to Morley, Leach, Lugg, Lihamba, Opare, Bhalalusesa & Mwaipopo (2010) and Atuahene and Owusu-Ansah (2013) the government together with the individual higher educational institutions against the backdrop of the rapid expansion of the higher education sector and insufficient funding resolved to introduce measure that will ensure that access to tertiary education was equally widened. As a result, policies such as widening access for women, rural communities, students with special needs, distant education and private sector participation were introduced.

With regards to participation, the Ghanaian Higher education now operates a dual system with both public and private entities participating in the provision of post/secondary education. International institutions and sectors have also started establishing satellite campuses to provide higher education within the country. Data from the National Accreditation Board (NAB) suggest an excess of 190 public and private HEIs exist in Ghana (NAB, 2017). The table below is a breakdown of the composition of these HEIs operating in Ghana.

Table 2.0 *Distribution of Higher Education Institutions in Ghana*

Higher education institutions	Total
Public Universities	10
Private Tertiary Institutions offering Degree Courses	74
Tutorial colleges	9
Public Polytechnics	4
Distant Learning Institutions	1
Private Nursing training colleges	9
Public Nursing training colleges	19
Public Colleges of education	39
Private Colleges of education	6
College of Agriculture	1
Chartered Private Tertiary Institution	4
Regionally Owned (West Africa) Tertiary Institution	1
Public Universities/Professional Institutions	6
Technical Universities	6
Registered Foreign Institutions	7
Total	**196**

Note: Adapted from National Accreditation Board Website (2017)

Because of the entrants of both the private and international institutions in the provision of higher education, the sector witnessed a corresponding growth in terms of access and enrolments. The system marked a departure from an elitist system where access to education was the preserve of the rich to mass universal higher education. Consequently, this resulted in an improvement and massive expansion in the enrolment figures in the tertiary education institutions within the country. According to Atauhene & Owusu-Ansah (2013), enrolment levels in HEIs increased more than tenfold just within the past two decades. For instance, according to data from the National Council for Tertiary Education for the 2012/13 academic year, a total of 283,469 students were enrolled in the Higher education system. Out of this number, the public universities absorbed 45.20%, with the private tertiary institutions admitting (19.53%), and the polytechnics admitting 18.78% whiles the remaining 16.49% of the students enrolled were distributed among the nurses training colleges, the Colleges of education, the colleges of Agriculture and the public specialized institutions (National Council for Tertiary Education, 2014).

Another important recommendation contained in the report of the URC was the introduction of financial diversification approaches. These approaches were meant to encourage universities to be innovative. The current Higher education funding mechanism which was as a result of the recommendation which is premised on a cost sharing and cost-recovery mechanism (Atuahene and Owusu-Mensah, 2013). Based on the cost sharing mechanism, public higher education institutions generate their funding from multiple sources. Their main source of funding comes from the government of Ghana, the Ghana education Trust Fund (GETFund), internally Generated Funds (IGF) and the tuition fees paid by students. However, other development partners as well as corporate entities also participates in the funding of public HEIs in Ghana. Currently, some of the major Higher Education Institutions have scholarship programs for the poor and needy students whereas the government through the Student Loan Trust Fund (SLTF) also provides loans facilities for students to access higher education.

In conclusion, the focus of the Ghanaian higher education system is on six (6) main policy objectives. They include; the facilitation of equitable access to quality tertiary education, the facilitation of research in tertiary education-particularly in national development priority areas, the promotion of quality and relevance in the provision of education, the promotion of effective regulation, management and planning of tertiary education, the facilitation of Science, Technology and the promotion of Technical and Vocational Education and Training in tertiary

education and facilitating collaboration in the provision of tertiary education (<mark>Ministry of education, 2008</mark>).

2.2.1 Governance of Higher Education in Ghana

Following the recommendations of the URC, Ghana has a well-established and coordinated tertiary education system in terms of its governance structure. Apart from the Ministry of education which has the oversight responsibility of all HEIs (both private and public) in Ghana, there are three other regulatory agencies established to ensure an effective Higher educational system. They include; the National council for Tertiary Education (NCTE), the National Accreditation Board (NAB) and the National Board for Professional and Technician Examinations (NABPTEX). The National council for Tertiary Education (NCTE) performs a liaison function between HEIs and the sector Minister and provides advisory services to the sector minister and Higher educational intuitions. It is also responsible for recommending and ensuring that approved national standards and norms implemented and (are) monitored as well as accrediting HEIs. The NAB is equally responsible for ensuring that the quality of higher education in the country meets the acceptable national standards (NAB, 2017).

2.2.2 Challenges Facing the Ghanaian Higher Education System

Despite all these positive developments of the higher education system in Ghana, it faces several challenges in the area of access, participation, enrolments, funding, infrastructures and internet connectivity. Research has suggested that the participation level within the higher education system in Ghana is not evenly distributed among social groups within the country. Data indicate(s) that significant barriers exist to participation in higher education (Leach, Morley, Lugg, Lihamba, Opare, Bhalalusesa, Forde, Egbenya and Mwaipopo, 2008). Lack of adequate infrastructure and ICT especially access to reading or study rooms, access to IT infrastructure, access (to) libraries and library stocks, inadequate lecture halls and lack of availability of research centres are other challenges confronting the Higher education sector in Ghana (Leach et al, 2008). Additionally, power outages and power rationing continue to place strains on higher education— including distance learning—in Ghana. Similarly, low Internet penetration and unreliable Internet access, especially in rural areas, are obstacles to the continued development of tertiary education (Manuh, Gariba and Budu, 2007).

2.3 Institutional Context

As noted in table 2.0, there numerous public and private universities in Ghana. Four of the most known public universities are considered for the purpose of this study. These universities have been chosen because of longest period of existence, their geographical positioning and academic specialization. For the purposive of analyses, the identities of these four universities as indicated in this chapter have been anonymised.

2.3.1 University of Ghana

The University of Ghana was founded in the 1948 as the University College of the Gold Coast by an ordinance of the British government. The University of Ghana was one of the two Universities established to promote university education, teaching and research in the then British colonies. Upon its inception, the University of Ghana was affiliated to the University of London. However, on the 1st of October 1961, it gained the status as a fully-fledged degree awarding university by an Act of parliament (Act 79). Dr. Kwame Nkrumah who was then the President of the Republic of Ghana, became the first Chancellor of the University, whereas Nana Kobina Nketsia IV, Omanhene of Essikado, became the (Interim) Vice Chancellor (University of Ghana website, 2017).

As a university that is poised to become a world class research intensive university, the University of Ghana in 2006 invited a Visitation Panel to review its processes, outputs and outcome. Based on the recommendations made by the Visitation Panel, the university launched a new ten-year strategic plan in 2014 (2014-2024). The thrust of the strategy plan is to become a "world-class research-intensive University" over the next decade. That is, the strategic plan is set out to consolidate the gains made from the review of the university's mission and practices and situate these within the context of a very dynamic environment of higher education in Ghana and beyond" (UG-SP, 2014, p.5). The plan is anchored on nine (9) Strategic priorities: Research; Teaching & Learning; Internal stakeholders; gender & diversity; institutional processes; financial performance; asset management; monitoring & evaluation; and external stakeholders.

The university is currently operating a collegiate system of management as one of the essential component of its transformational agenda. In all, there are four colleges comprising of the College of Basic and Applied Sciences, the College of education, the college of Health Sciences

and the College of Humanities making up this system. The university of Ghana has three separate campuses: the Legon campus, Korle Bu Campus and the Accra City Campus. In addition, the university also has several centres, institutes and other units for learning and research. Notable among them are; the West Africa Centre for Crop Improvement, the Centre for Gender Studies and Advocacy, the Institute of Statistical Social and Economic Research, Noguchi Memorial Institute for Medical Research, Regional Institute for Population Studies, Institute of Statistical Social and Economic Research, Noguchi Memorial Institute for Medical Research, Regional Institute for Population Studies, Centre for Social Policy Studies, Legon Centre for International Affairs and Regional Training Centre for Archivists.

As part of its agenda to become a world class research intensive university, the University of Ghana has identified four priority areas where its research and international collaboration will be enhanced. These priority areas include; Malaria Research, Trans-disciplinary Research into Climate Change Adaptation, Enhancing Food Production and Processing, Development Policy and Poverty Monitoring and Evaluation.

As the premier and largest university in Ghana, the university of Ghana is poised in producing the next generation of thought leaders to drive the developmental agenda of Ghana. As a result, its research institutes and other centres of learning and research, faculty members are involved in studies that support policy making for national development, often in collaboration with other international institutions.

The university currently has a student population of over 38,000 making up of students enrolled on its regular programmes, sandwich pragrammes, distance education as well as students from its affiliate universities. The university also students from over 70 counties on its regular undergraduate and graduate programmes, study abroad programme and other specialized programmes designed for international students (University of Ghana website, 2017).

To enhance the visibility of the university to students, researchers, donor organizations, public and private sector partners and the international community, the university of Ghana has established strong links and agreements with other universities within Africa, Europe and North America for students, faculty and staff exchanges as well as collaborations. It remains the only university in Ghana, that has appeared in the global university rankings publications by Times Higher Education Supplement (ranking within the top 600-800 globally, 7th in Africa and 1st in

West Africa in 2015) and Thomas Reuters publications (ranked 10th best university in Africa in 2015).

2.3.2 Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology (KNUST)

The Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology (KNUST) located in Kumasi, the Ashanti region of Ghana was founded in 1951 as the Kumasi College of Technology and was affiliated to the University of Ghana. However, it began its official operation on the 22 January 1952 with 200 teacher training students transferred from Achimota College to form the nucleus of the new college. The initial mandate of the university was to provide higher education in science and technology, and to act as a catalyst for the technological, economical, educational and social development of the country. In 1961, it fully attained the status of a university and renamed the Kwame Nkrumah University of science and Technology with a decree of awarding its own degrees. The renaming was in honour of the first president of the country, Osagyefo Dr. Kwame Nkrumah (Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology, 2017).

Currently, the KNUST has two campuses; the kumasi and Sunyani Campus with the Kumasi been the main and administrative hub of the university. The university runs undergraduate, distance education and postgraduate programmes with student population of over 37,000 made up of about 32,000 undergraduate and 5,000 graduate students with a teaching staff of 932.

KNUST became the first university in Ghana to organize its academic activities and programmes based on the collegiate system of education in 2004. The collegiate system was introduced to enhance the effectiveness and productivity of the administrative work of the university. In all, six semi-autonomous colleges composed of several faculties. The six (6) colleges includes; the College of Agriculture and Natural Resources, the College of Architecture and Planning, the College of Arts and Social Sciences, the College of Engineering, the College of Health Sciences and the College of science. In addition, the university is also made up of other research centres, departments and institutes. Examples of which includes; the Centre for Settlement Studies, the Centre for Land Studies, the Centre for Biodiversity Utilization & Development (CBUD), the Kumasi Centre for Collaborative Research (KCCR), the Bureau of Integrated Rural Development (BIRD), the Technology Consultancy Centre (TCC), the Agric Research Station – Anwomaso, the Dairy/Beef Cattle Research Station, Inst. of Science & Tech. for Africa (ISTA), the University Centre for HIV/ AIDS Studies (UCHAS),

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the Institute of Mathematical Sciences (IMS), the Centre for Cultural and African Studies and the Centre for Rehabilitation and Disability Studies.

The university has a strong commitment to be globally recognized as the centre of excellence in Africa for teaching in Science and Technology for development; producing high calibre graduates with knowledge and expertise to support the industrial and socio-economic development of Ghana and Africa**.** As a result, the university provides an environment that is conducive for enhancing the teaching, research and entrepreneurship training in Science and Technology for the industrial and socio-economic development of Ghana, Africa and other nations. The university is also committed to offer its service to the community and it is open to all the citizens of Ghana. With that same focus, the university has positioned itself to attract scholars, industrialists and entrepreneurs from Africa and other international community.

Owing to this, it has entered into several Memoranda of Understandings with local and international universities and institutions with the focus of enhancing both students and faculty exchanges, research collaborations and summer school programmes. It currently has institutional collaboration with over eighty (80) international universities.

2.3.3 University College of Cape Coast (UCC)

The University of Cape Coast located in the central region of Ghana was the third public university to be established in the country. The University of Cape Coast was founded in 1962 as a university college affiliated to the University of Ghana. The motive for its establishment was to train graduate teachers for second cycle institutions such as teacher training colleges and technical institutions because the two existing universities within the country at that time were unequipped to fulfil such roles. In October 1971, the university college gained its own autonomy and attained the status of a fully-fledged university, which had the mandate to confer its own degrees, diplomas and certificates by an Act of Parliament-The University of Cape Coast Act, 1971 (Act 390). This Act subsequently led to the University of Cape Coast Law, 1992 (PNDC Law 278).

The University has since its establishment, added to its core functions, programmes that leads to the training of educational planners and administrators; health care professionals, business administrators, Agriculturalist among others. The university is therefore playing a unique and vital role in the nation's efforts at strengthening its educational sector. In pursuance of its

current mission, the University of Cape Coast has witnessed some restructuring of its degree programs from Bachelor of Arts (BA), Bachelor of Science (BSc), and Bachelor of Education (Bed) in education to BA and BSc with non-education content and a Bed, a professional qualification in Education.

With the mandate to facilitate effective teaching, research and outreach programmes that will contribute significantly to the socio-economic development of Ghana, the university of Cape Coast offers both undergraduate, distant education, sandwich and graduate programmes. The university currently has a student population of over 30000.

As a university that fails to appear in any of the major GURS, the University of Cape Coast in line with its vision of strongly positioning itself as a centre of excellence with a worldwide acclaim, out doored a five (5) year corporate strategy plan caption the "Internationalization Strategic Plan 2015-2020". The Internationalization strategic plan of the university identifies eleven (11) areas that forms the thrust of achieving its goal. Some of which is to create an enabling environment which will support active and reflective teaching, learning and outreach programmes; recruit, develop and retain high calibre and motivated faculty and administrative staffs; develop new and relevant programmes, periodically revise existing ones and vigorously pursue distance and sandwich education; develop and strengthen integrated ICT infrastructure and facilities that robustly support teaching and learning, research and outreach; aggressively pursue its linkages with both local and foreign institutions and partnership with industries; improve upon its management capacity and institutional governance system   and vigorously work to improve revenue generation and enforce fiscal discipline (UCC-ISP, 2012).

2.3.4 University for Development Studies (UDS): Institutional Context

The University for Development Studies (UDS) was established in May 1992 by the government of Ghana with a pro-poor focus. According to Effah as Cited on the University of Development Studies website (2017), "the UDS was borne out of the new thinking in higher education which emphasizes the need for universities to play a more active role in addressing problems of the society, particularly in the rural areas". The pro-poor emphasizes of the university is manifested in the conducts its research, teaching and community outreach services. The ultimate mandate of the university is to engage in practically-oriented research and field-based training which remains relevant in contributing to the alleviation of poverty.

A distinguish feature of the University for Development Studies is that, it is the only university in Ghana established as a multi-campus institution. It has four campuses which are geographically located throughout the Northern part of Ghana (Comprising of the Northern Region, Upper west Region and The Upper East Region). The four campuses are in Tamale (the headquarters), Wa, Navrongo and Nyankpala. There are plans to add a fifth campus in kintampo in the Brong Ahafo region of Ghana. Apart from the four campuses it has, it is also made up of twelve (12) Faculties located in the various campuses, a Business School, a Medical school, a Graduate school, an institute and three learning centres. As of the 2015/2016 academic year, the University for Development studies had a student population of 18,084. This comprised of 17,311 undergraduate students and 773 postgraduate students. This was a major departure from the 40 students it started with during its establishment. It also had a staff strength of 1577 (University for Development Studies Strategic Plan, 2016).

The University of Development studies is the only University in Ghana that operates on a trimester bases instead of the regular semester calendar. The third trimester is dedicated for students to embark on a field practical study, called Third Trimester Field Practical Programme (TTFPP) in remote communities. This being an integral part of the university's curriculum, is aimed at ensuring that both students and staff work closely with the disadvantaged, marginalized and hard-to-reach people in the communities with a focus on poverty-reduction.

The UDS sets out four clear criteria in achieving its education philosophy of becoming the home of world-class pro-poor scholarship. These includes: promoting equitable and socioeconomic transformation of communities through practically oriented, community-based, problem-solving, gender-sensitive and interactive research, teaching, learning and outreach activities; providing higher education to persons suitably qualified and capable of benefiting from it; positioning itself as a national asset in the facilitation of lifelong learning; developing its ICT infrastructure as a driving force for the education of more people, more rapidly and the improvement of efficiency and academic quality in order to advance community and national development.

The University for Development Studies in its quest to building its institutional capacity and an enhanced institutional visibility, has entered inter-institutional collaborations with some notable universities within the African sub-region and beyond. Some of these institutional collaborations are with the United Nations University, University of Illinois, USA; Makerere University, Uganda; Montpellier SupaGro, France, etc (University for Development Studies

Strategic Plan, 2016). The University for Development studies also has membership with several international Associations including; the Association of Commonwealth Universities, International Association of Universities, The African Universities Association among others.

To situate itself within the changing and dynamic political, social and economic context of higher education globally, the University for Development Studies recently instituted its Strategic Plan in 2016 which will span for a period 5 year (2017-2023). In all the university identified 8 strategic aspects of its processes outcomes and outputs. The following strategic goals were then derived from the themes and ordered as follows: A stable financial system in place, Innovative academic programmes developed in line with current realities, Enhanced and relevant Third Trimester Field Practical Programme in place, Enhanced governance structure in place, Enhanced and modernized infrastructure in place, Strengthened and expanded ICT for all university activities available, Improved innovative research for community and national development, Enhanced Total Quality Management system in place.

2.4 Concluding Remarks

This chapter presented an overview of the Ghanaian education system, its development and challenges over the past decades and in recent times. It also pointed out the governance structure of higher education in Ghana. It proceeded to highlight the various development in each of the four public institutions considered as the case study of this research. Preceding this chapter is the review of relevant literature on global university rankings systems since its emergence and the analytical framework as well as the theoretical underpinnings of this study.

3   Literature Review and Analytical Framework

Several studies have focused on the impact of rankings on the behaviour, identities and institutional goals and plans of HEIs globally. This Chapter provides a review of relevant literature on the impact of GURs on HEIs globally. The chapter is organized into three sections. The first section provides literature on globalization and internationalization of HE. This is then preceded with the presentation of relevant literature on rankings, its emergence and development over the period. It also highlights the significance of rankings at the individual, institutional and governmental level. The reviewed literature will also capture the impact and responses of HEIs towards GURs. The last section of this chapter presents the theoretical and analytical framework through which the discussions of this study will be premised.

3.1   Globalization and Internationalization of Higher education

"Internationalization is changing the world of higher education and globalization is changing the world of internationalization"-Knight (2004, p.5)

Though often seen as related concepts which are sometimes confused and used interchangeably, globalization and internationalization are not the same. There exist substantial differences between and among them. According to Mitchell and Nielsen (2012), identifying and clarifying these differences is the first step to understanding how HEIs are evolving. In this regard, Knight as cited in Mitchell and Nielsen (2012) argues that, whereas globalization can be thought of as a catalyst, internationalization can be viewed as a response variable describing how institutions reacts to the presence of globalization. On the contrary however, Nielsen as cited in Mitchell and Nielsen (2012), do not concur with this distinction between the two concepts. According to Nielsen, internationalization should rather be perceived as the driving force facilitating, encouraging and propelling the process of globalization. In whichever way the debate might be, internationalization and globalization within the last two decades has and will continue to serve as a powerful and inescapable force shaping the global landscape of HE (Altbach, 2004; Scott, 2000; Altbach et al, 2009). Based on the recognition of both concepts in shaping higher education and their relevance for this study, this study proceeds to discuss each of them.

3.1.1 Globalization of Higher Education

According to Scott (2000), the challenges confronting Higher education institutions globally in recent times cannot be appreciated without undertaking a proper account into the phenomenon of globalization. Globalization, global village, global market, global economy, etc. are all key expressions often used to denote the increasing interconnectedness of countries that expands beyond national borders. However, scholars from diverse background have offered and associated different definitions and meanings to the concept of globalization since it emergence in the 1960's and its growth into prominence from the beginning of 1980.

Knight (2007) views globalization as "the flow of people, culture, ideas, values, knowledge, technology and economy across borders resulting in a more interconnected and interdependent world" (p.23). Anthony Giddens (1990) defines globalization as "the intensification of worldwide social relations which link distant localities in such a way that local happenings are shaped by events occurring many miles away and vice versa" (p.64). However, in the realm of higher education, Altbach and Knight (2007) views globalization as "the economic, political and social force pushing the 21st century higher education toward greater international involvement" (p.290). This Rumbley, Altbach and Reisberg (2012) perceive to have ensured a "wider economic, scientific and technological trends that have a direct impact on higher education and are largely unavoidable in the modern world" (p.4).

Considering these definitions, Hazelkorn (2017) indicates that, globalization has facilitated the increasing concentrations of wealth and resources, leading to an intensification of hierarchical differentiation and social stratification, while opening the door for new entrants. According to the International Monetary Fund, four aspects of globalization comes to mind. These comprises of: trade and transactions, capital and investment movements, migration and movement of people and finally, dissemination of knowledge and technology (International Monetary Fund, 2000).

Altbach and Knight (2007) attributes the rise of the 'knowledge society' or economy to the heavy investment in the knowledge industries globally which exempts not higher education and advance training. According to them, these investments have catapulted the integration of research and the use of English language as the Lingua Franca for both scientific communication and the growing international labour market for scholars and scientist, the growth of communication firms and of multinational and technology publishing and the use of

Information technology (Altbach & Knight, 2007, p. 291). They further elucidated that, the advancement in technology and communication have brought about relatively innovative ways of knowledge dissemination such as "e-learning" which have influenced the pace at which globalization is reaping its benefits (Altbach and Knight, 2007, p. 291). The pervasive adoption of technology coupled with its higher investment towards promoting an elite "knowledge society" has created consciousness about outcomes which extends to how the performances of HEIs are affected through usages of varying indicators.

From the various definitions offered by scholars from diverse backgrounds, it can be observed that, globalization imposes a great deal of impact on every facet of the global economy. According to Scott (2005), it has radically challenged the great institution of the modern world which includes; the state, the market and the individual. As a result, globalization imposes a great deal of challenges on HEIs key among which is the competitiveness of graduates on both the local and global markets. The markets as indicated earlier, are twofold, namely the job market and institutions for higher learning (Hazelkorn, 2017).

According to Tremblay, Lalancette, & Roseveare (2012), Higher education today is characterized by the following: massive expansion and wider participation; the emergence of new players; more diverse profiles of HEIs, programmes and their students; broader adoption and more integrated use of communications and educational technologies; greater internationalization, competition and signalling mechanisms; growing pressures on costs and new forms of financing; as well as new modes and roles of governance, including increasing emphasis on performance, quality and accountability. These growing trends in HE has built up an environment of competition between and among institutions of higher education for students and academic staffs, resources among others.

However, according to Competing (1999), although the process of globalization is often seen dominated by transnational corporations (TNCs), they do not operate or move in a single direction. To Competing (1999), in the nexus of these multiple and asymmetric interdependencies, exist an interplay and a reciprocal relationship. This is what Arnove (2012) terms as the dialectic of the global and the local. According to Arnove (2012), there is a tension at play as global process interacts with national and local actors which sometimes may lead to modifications or transformations depending on the context. As such, the local which is at the receiving end will have to conceive and translate these global influences into their local content. According to Canoy (1999), this mostly triggers three kinds of responses by both higher

education and training institutions and the sector itself. These include; competitive-driven reforms, finance-driven reforms and equity-driven reforms. Whereas finance-driven and equity-driven types of reform pertains more to "business climate", Canoy (1999) explains that competitive-driven reforms are related to the "human factor" and characterized by standard and decentralization which focus mainly on improving economic productivity by improving "quality" of labour which implies expanding and increasing the average level of educational accomplishment among young workers with "quality" measured primarily by student achievement and one's educational relevance to a changing world of work. The drive to fit into multinational corporations and firms therefore nearly compels existing workers to pursue higher education mostly through globally acceptable institutions and accreditations- knowledge to which can at times be found in rankings.

3.1.2 Internationalization of Higher Education

As indicated, internationalization is a close associate of globalization. Several scholars have variously defined the concept of internationalization. Knight (2003) defines internationalization as "the process of integrating an international, intercultural or global dimension into the purpose, functions or delivery of tertiary education" (p.2-3). According to Knight as cited in Altbach et al (2009), this process can be categorized into two, namely; "internationalization at home and internationalization abroad" (p.24). Distinguishing between the two, Altbach et al (2009) views internationalization at home as constituting those activities, strategies or approaches designed and adopted by HEIs to incorporate international dimensions into their local campus experiences. These may include; recruitment of international scholars, faculty, students and incorporating global and comparative perspectives into their curriculum. Internationalization abroad on the other hand refers to those strategies or policies that are adopted to project the image of an institution and its stakeholders beyond the borders of the country within which an institution finds itself. Prominent among such initiatives or programmes include but not limited to; study abroad or student exchange programmes, the establishment of branch or franchise campuses, embarking on international collaborations and partnerships among others (Altbach et al, 2009).

Though student and academic staff mobility is often seen as the most observable features of internationalization, it is and should not be portrayed as the only visible aspect of internationalization (Hénard, Diamond, Roseveare, 2012, Tremblay et al, 2012; Altbach et al,

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2009). According to these scholars, student mobility is just one aspect of the greater picture of what internationalization entails (Hénard et al, 2012, Tremblay et al, 2012). Hénard et al (2012) observes that, the number of students enrolled in HEIs outside their home country double from the year 2000 to 2010. In terms of real figures over the past three decades, Tremblay et al (2012) indicated that, international student mobility has significantly increased from 0.8 million in 1975 to 4.1 million in 2010 worldwide. Bohm et al as cited in Tremblay et al (2012), projects a further increase to 5.8 million by 2020 whereas Altbach and Bassett as cited by Tremblay et al (2012), sees the figure to hit 8 million by 2025.

However, there exist other forms of internationalization aside at home and at abroad. Other forms of the internationalization process may include but not limited to; "the full spectrum of educational programmes and activities that contribute to internationalized learning, ranging from the internationalization of programmes' content and delivery to the mobility of students and scholars, in addition to intermediate forms of trans-national education such as the cross-border mobility of HEIs and/or their programmes" (Tremblay et al, 2012, p.23). Another major form of internationalization relates to the growing convergence of tertiary education systems and curricula in some disciplines (Bennell and Pierce; Altbach as cited by Tremblay et al, 2012). The Bologna Process and the Lisbon Strategy in Europe albeit others elsewhere are some examples explaining the convergence of HEIs globally.

There are several reasons why internationalization of HEIs continues to be a relevant policy in recent times. According to Hénard et al (2012), internationalization enables HEIs to "increase national and international visibility; leverage institutional strengths through strategic partnerships; enlarge the academic community within which to benchmark their activities; mobilize internal intellectual resources; add important, contemporary learning outcomes to student experience; develop stronger research groups" (p.9).

Altbach (2004), argue that though the long-term prospect of internationalization is high, there are some uncertainties that may hinder or reduce the pace of its development in the coming years. Some of these uncertainties according to them includes; political realities and national security concerns, governmental policies and cost of study, the growing influence of English language as the medium of study and research, the convergence of international curriculum, the surge in E-learning, the continuous involvement of private sector participation, the brewing concerns about quality assurance and control and the policies of European union.

These notwithstanding, globalization may be unalterable, but internationalization involves many choices which in spite of all the uncertainties in the outcome of internationalization, can positively foster the cross-border movement of students and of higher education programs and institutions (Altbach and Knight, 2007). The next section of this chapter, will present the higher education system in Ghana. It will also highlight the development of each of the four universities considered as the case study for this research.

3.2 The Emergence and the Rise of (Global) University Rankings, its uses, users and relevance for Global Higher Education

One of the outcomes of globalization and internationalization of Higher education which in turn may arguably be a driver enhancing the process globalization and internationalization of higher education is the emergence of global university ranking systems. Though the history of rankings is not a recent phenomenon as it predates to the 19th century, its rise within the past two decades can be attributed to the demands for accountability, transparency, and efficiency coupled with the forces of globalization and internationalization within the global Higher Education field (Hazelkorn, 2015, 2017; Shin and Toutkoushian, 2011). This section will discuss the various developmental phases and the rise of rankings systems, its current uses, users, significance and challenges for the higher education sector and institutions.

3.2.1 The Emergence and Development of Rankings

Usher and Savino (2006) defines university rankings as "lists of certain groupings of institutions (usually, but not always, within a single national jurisdiction), comparatively ranked according to a common set of indicators in descending order" (p. 5). Though, the history of rankings predates almost a century ago, its growth in popularity and prominence only dates to the 1980's (Hazelkorn, 2015). After emerging in the 1980's with nation specific emphasizes, rankings have evolved into providing comparable data on HEIs at the global scale (Buela-Casal, Gutierrez-Martinez, Bermudez-Sanchez, and Vadillo-Munoz, 2007).

The development of rankings from an academic quality ranking to its current stage has gone through several phases. Basically, there are roughly four main phases – with some overlaps. Each phase reflects the social and political characteristics as of that period. According to Usher

(2016), the phase one (1) is called the 'pre-history' phase. This was within the periods of the 1900's to the 1950's. This period was dominated by sub-national or elite ranking systems (Hazelkorn, 2012). According to Hazelkorn (2012), the work of James Mckeen Cattell who is seen as the father of rankings which was chronicled into his 1910 version of the *American Men of Science* marked the beginning of what is known as rankings today. The "American Men of science showed the scientific strength of leading universities using the research reputation of their faculty members" (Webster as cited in Hazelkorn, 2015, p.26).

The Phase two (2) which according to Usher, (2016) was between the period of 1959 and 2000. This period was viewed as the historical turning point of the ranking phenomenon. According to Hazelkorn (2012), it all started in 1959 when nationally based rankings emphasizing on reputation factors emerged and started dominating those that focused on academic origins. She indicates that this phase was dominated by the Hayward Keniston's Graduate Study and Research in the Arts and sciences compiled at the University of Pennsylvania in 1959, the Allan Cartter's Assessment of quality in Graduate Education in 1966, the Kenneth D. Roose and Charles J. Andersen's Rating of Graduate programs in 1970 among others (Hazelkorn, 2015). According to Hazelkorn (2015) it was the effect of the commercialization success that paved the way for U.S. News and World Report (USNWR) College Rankings in 1983, which equally marked another milestone in the evolutionary process of rankings.

According to Hazelkorn (2015), the third (3) phase started in 2003 "using a combination of reputational factors and bibliometric indicators and citations drawn from Thomson Reuters's *Web of Science* or *Elsevier's Scopus* databases" (p. 28). This was the phase that ushered in the arrival of global rankings.

The last phase which begun in 2008, witnessed the involvement of supra-national authorities such as the European Union (EU) with the U-Multirank and the Asseseement of Higher Education Outcomes (AHELO) by the Organization for Economic Co-Operation and Development (OECD). This was in recognition that the internationalization of higher education necessitates processes and guidelines to monitor and regulate transnational education provision and quality, academic mobility and labour markets (Hazelkorn, 2015). The involvement of supra-national authorities such as the European Union and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation perhaps points to the widespread interest and attention the globalized world harbours especially in the contemporary on HEIs rankings.

Following these developments, rankings' key contribution is their focus on transparency within the higher education sector. Rankings underline the principles of powerful signalling tools, i.e. the measurement of real outputs rather than reputation, and transparent and accurate data collection (Marginson, 2009; Van Vught and Ziegele, 2012). Hazelkorn (2012) argues that, ranking systems have developed from providing vital information sources for the appraisal of universities to becoming important sources of information for various stakeholders of the university; students, parents, alumni, administrators, donors, and politicians. The immediate popularity of rankings has been credited with satisfying a "public demand for transparency and information that institutions and government have not been able to meet on their own" (Usher and Savino, 2006, p. 38). Originally produced by newspapers, research centres, magazines, and governments, rankings have gradually emerged as an essential source of information for prospective students and their parents as well as marketing devices for institutions that are highly ranked (Clarke, 2007; Hazelkorn, 2015). Rankings are helping transform all HEIs into strategic corporations, engaged in positional competition, balanced fragilely between their current and preferred rank (Hazelkorn, 2009).

In analysing the development of rankings over the period since its emergence, Shin, Harman & Dill as cited in Shin & Toukoushian (2011), have identified the massification, marketization, globalization of higher education as the three contributing factors. Other scholars and researchers have equally attributed its development to, the increasing student mobility, high rising cost of education, expansion in technology and economic development, the demand for accountability and quality assurance and the desire for world class recognition (Morse, 2010a; Almgren, 2009; Sponsler, 2009; Hazelkorn, 2012, Buela-Casal et al 2007).

These developments according to Buela-Casal et al (2007), has ushered Higher education into a phase whereby HEIs should look beyond comparing themselves to their peers at the national level to concentrating on becoming competitive within its global marketplace. This according to Altbach and Salmi (2011) is because, universities can no longer hide nor rely on self-declaration of their institutional standings as world class institutions in this global era.

3.2.2 The Major Types of Rankings and what they measure

According to Hazelkorn (2012), there exist more than 50 country-specific ranking systems and more than 10 global rankings systems established to appraise universities worldwide. She

indicates that, all these systems developed pose varying levels of influence on institutions. The various global rankings systems compare HEIs using a wide range of indicators and weightings.

The Academic Rankings of World Universities (ARWU) produced by the Shanghai Jiao Tong (SJT) University, Institute of Higher Education is documented as the first global rankings system to emerge in 2003 (Hazelkorn, 2015; Harvey, 2008). It was originally established as an exercise to determine the gap between Chinese universities and the world-class research universities (Harvey, 2008; Hazelkorn, 2015). Its objective was to provide a means by which Chinese universities could benchmark their performance against the top or elite institutions around the world (Hazelkorn, 2015). Its indicators consist of; the number of Noble Prize/field medals wining alumni, the number of Noble Prize/field medals wining staff, the number of Highly Cited (HiCi) researchers research output, the number of articles in nature/science, the number of articles citation index i.e. science and social science and the size of the institution/per capita academic performance. Because of these indicators, the ARWU has often been criticized as too research focus and bias.

This was later followed by, the Times Higher Education Supplement-Quacquarelli Symonds (THE-QS) as well as Webometrics in 2004. The THES-QS was a partnership between the Times Higher Education and Quacquarelli Symonds. However, in 2009, the THES-QS which was using four main pillars (that is research quality, teaching quality, graduate employability and international outlook broke apart forming separate ranking agencies in 2009. This led to the establishment of the Times Higher Education Supplement (THES) and Quacquarelli Symonds (QS) in 2010. The THES ranking methodology focuses on five main indicators consisting of; teaching, research, citation, economic/innovation and international diversity. The QS ranking system concentrates on the academic reputation, employer reputation, student to faculty ratio, citation per faculty (citation data provided by Scopus), international student ratio and international faculty ratio (Hazelkorn, 2015). The Webometric which also emerged in 2004, measures the performance of institutions as reflected by the level of its presence on the web (Hazelkorn, 2015).

Other notable global ranking system that preceded afterwards includes but not limited to; the Taiwan Performance Ranking of Scientific papers for Research universities established in 2007, the Leiden Rankings compiled by the Centre for Scientific and Technology Studies (CWTS) at the University of Leiden, Netherland (Hazelkorn, 2007, 2009, 2012; Espinosa, Crandall and

Tukibayeva, 2014). Among all these ranking systems however, the ARWU and THE-QS stands out as the most influential (Marginson, 2008, Altbach, 2012).

The table below provides a summary of the various indicators of the major ranking systems and their corresponding weighing.

Table 3.0 *Selected GURS, their indicators and weightings*

Rankings	Indicators dimension	Weighting
SJT Academic Ranking of World Universities *Established in 2003*	No. Nobel Prize/field Medal winning Alumni No. Nobel Prize/field Medal winning Staff No. HiCi Researchers Research Output No. of Articles in Nature or Science No. of Citation Index (Science and Social Science) Size of Institution/Per Capita academic Performance	10 20 20 20 20 10
Times Higher Education Supplement/Quacquarelli Symonds World Rankings (THES-OS) *Established in 2004 and ended in 2009*	Peer Appraisal Graduate employability Teaching quality/Staff-student ratio International Student International Faculty Research Quality/citation	40 10 20 5 5 20
Times Higher Education Supplement (THES) World University Rankings *Established in 2010 after the break up*	Teaching Research Citations Economic/Innovation International diversity	30 30 30 2.5 7.5
Quacquarelli Symonds World University Rankings (UK)	Academic Performance Employer Reputation Student to Faculty Ratio Citation per Faculty (Citation data supplied by Scopus) International Student Ratio International Faculty	40 10 20 20 5 5
Webometric	Impact The count of all unique external links to an HEI's web domain. Activity (divided into: presence, the total number of webpages hosted in the main web domain as indexed by google; Openness, the total number of rich files accessible via a HEI's repository and Google Scholar; Excellence,10% most cited papers according to Scimago.	50 50

Note: Adapted from Hazelkorn (2015)

3.2.3 Significance and Justification of Global Rankings

Rankings whether nation-specific or global have become an essential aspect of HE globally as they serve as a social good for different actors for varied purposes within the HE arenas (Taylor and Braddock, 2007). According to Bastedo and Bowman (2011), the users of the information provided by these ranking institutions cuts across diverse constituents both internal and external to higher education. At the individual level, rankings are perceived to serve as useful devices for comparing the performance of universities (Bowman and Bastedo, 2009) and aid in the selection of an appropriate university or institution for higher learning (Hazelkorn, 2015; Rauhvargers, 2011, 2013) for prospective students and their parents.

At the institutional level, rankings can be used by institutions for comparative purposes; comparing one department to another corresponding departments of other universities (Bowman &Bastedo, 2007). It enables institutions to identify their strength and weaknesses (Rauhvargers, 2013; Taylor and Braddock 2007). Rankings have become a policy instrument and management tool (Hazelkorn, 2009). Again, it encourages the collection and publication of reliable national higher education data by institutional and national leadership (Rauhvargers, 2011). Also, it stimulates and contributes to policy discussion and debate (IHEP, 2009) whiles having implications on institutional policies (IHEP, 2009; Hazelkorn, 2015; Rauhvargers, 2013). It enables institutions to determine salaries and promotions of top university officials (Jaschik as cited in Rauhvargers, 2013) and for justifying claims of resource mobilization and allocation (Rauhvargers, 2013, Espeland & Saunder, 2007; Hazelkorn, 2015).

At the very top, these rankings provide information to governments and other higher education leaders and key policy makers in the formulation of strategic decisions (Bowman and Bastedo, 2007). Altbach (2012) summarizes his thoughts on who uses these rankings and for what reasons as he catalogues students, higher education institutions, government and its agencies and international organizations. Within countries, potential customers (students and their families) use rankings to make choices about where to study by determining what various colleges and universities have to offer in terms of the prestige, value, and price of their degrees. Colleges and universities in the US have long used rankings to benchmark their performance against that of other institutions; they then analyse the reasons for their success or poor performance. Now, universities abroad have followed their lead in comparing themselves to their peers' world- wide. Higher education systems and government agencies also employ such comparisons to benchmark their system's performance against that of other states or nations.

Within both institutions and systems, decision makers may allocate resources based on the rankings. Rankings have become a useful tool in the global knowledge race (Altbach, 2012).

3.2.4 Criticism or shortcomings of Global Ranking

Despite the numerous prospects of GURS to HEIs and its stakeholders, rankings in general are regardless of controversies, criticisms and scepticism concerning what should constitute the definition of quality, the methodology they adopt, the validity of its indicators and weightings allocated and what role it should play in shaping policies and institutional practices (Sponsler, 2009; Marginson & Van der Wende, 2007, Clarke, 2007; Huang, 2011; Hazelkorn, 2015; Rauhvargers, 2011; Harvey 2008; Yudkevich, Altbach and Rumbley, 2015). Several authors have highlighted their biases, noting that the resulting perceptions of reputation are all too often based upon flawed proxies of quality such as input factors or the research performance of HEIs (Dill and Soo, 2005; Hazelkorn, 2015; Van Vught, 2009). Others have offered suggestions to improve them and have designed new conceptual approaches (Van Vught and Ziegele, 2012). And yet some also denounce their distorting effects (Hazelkorn, 2007).

According to Huang (2011), an ideal ranking system should be one that "generate consistent results in replication" and whose "indicators represent the evaluation criteria and whether the evaluation is properly conducted" (p. 6). However, due to the multiplicity nature of the indicators and criteria used, controversies are bound to be associated with rankings systems (Huang, 2011).

Rankings tend to re-enforce existing reputations and, as Marginson and Van der Wende (2007) have pointed out in respect to Shanghai Jiao-Tong, favour English-speaking, research intensive, sizeable institutions with strength in the sciences. They have an even more worrying longer-term impact of incentivizing institutions to turn away from diverse missions, linked to local and national social goals, towards the orthodoxy that will ensure success in the global rankings.

For instance, Marginson and Van der Wende (2007), Rauhvargers (2011), Suchman (2015), believe that most of the rankings are bias and skewed to benefits some disciplines, institutions and countries at the detriment of others. To them, they are mostly skewed towards a certain model of institutions-the comprehensive research, science and English oriented universities. Therefore, universities in their quest to enhancing their positioning, may be tempted to improve performance in certain departments which has the competitive edge of enabling them climb

higher in the league tables (Rauhvargers, 2011; Suchman, 2015). This they suggest, may threaten the existence of other disciplines. Such disciplines may include; fields within the arts, humanities and social sciences (Suchman, 2015) and other professional oriented disciplines such as; the engineering, business, and education may also be affected because of their inability to have a strong peer-reviewed publications and interdisciplinary work tradition (Hazelkorn, 2015).

Apart from posing as threats to other disciplines, Marginson (2007) argues that, university ranking systems may also be bias towards certain HEIs and countries at the detriment of others. University rankings often diverts policy objectives away from widening access to selective investment and concentration on research which tends to favour the traditional universities (ibid). The implication as noted by Sheil (2016) is that, "second tier universities are usually regarded as pale reflection of the flagship institutions rather than as excellent universities in their own right-conformity therefore triumph over differentiation" (p.23).

3.3 Impact of Rankings and Institutional Responses

Despite the criticisms against rankings based on their relevance, validity and methodologically accuracy (Usher and Savino, 2006; Marginson and van der Wende, 2007, Dill & Soo, 2005; Hazelkorn, 2007, 2015; Kouwenaar, 2016), higher education institutions have been cautioned against completely ignoring rankings since their impact is real and they are here to stay (Hazelkorn, 2007; Taylor and Braddock, 2007; Sadlak, 2007). King (2009) suggest that, league tables or rankings have become a form of "bounded rationality that offer a variety of stakeholders a set of simple heuristics with which to comprehend an increasingly complex but less directly knowable world" (p.212-3). As a result, HEIs will be doing themselves a great disservice if rankings are completely ignored or taken on a face value (Taylor and Braddock, 2007).

According to Bastedo and Bowman (2011), although the intention behind the development of rankings were meant for stakeholders outside the higher education, their strongest impact is mostly felt by those within the higher education field. As a result, contemporary studies have sought to investigate the impact of rankings at the individual level - students' choice, access and opportunities for undergraduate and graduate studies (Clark, 2007; Bastedo and Bowman, 2011; Hazelkorn, 2015; Matzdorf and Greenwood, 2015), global (in terms of policy and

regulations) from the perspective of national higher education systems (Marginson and van der Wende 2007; Bastedo and Bowman, 2011; Hazelkorn and Ryan, 2013; Van Vught and Ziegele, 2012; Locke et al. 2008; IHEP 2009; Marginson 2007), and at institutional level – the behavior of higher education institutions towards the impact of rankings (Bastedo and Bowman, 2011; Hazelkorn, 2007, 2012; Dill & Soo, 2005; Locke, 2016; Kehm, 2016; Guruz, 2016; Azmman and Kutty, 2016; Dunrong, 2016; Sheil, 2016; Marginson and van der Wende, 2007, Van Vught and Ziegele, 2012).

However, most researchers have raised concern about the difficulty involved in exploring the impact of rankings on higher education institutions (IHEP, 2009; Hazelkorn, 2017; Lim and Øergberg, 2017). For instance, it is a challenge for most research to establish ranking as the sole contributing factor influencing HEIs to adopt or change their behaviour to reflect the requirements of GURS (IHEP, 2009; Hazelkorn, 2017). This notwithstanding however, researchers exploring the phenomenon of rankings of HEIs have mostly concentrated on its impact; on higher education institutions in general (Locke et al, 2008), specific disciplines or academic programmes within higher education (Locke, 2011, 2016; Espeland and Sauder, 2007; Sauder and Espeland 2009) and institutional leaders or administrators (Hazelkorn, 2007; 2009; 2015; Elken, Hovdhaugen and Stensaker, 2016). Research findings on rankings have shown its diverse influences on Higher education globally. According to Hazelkorn (2017), this is because HEIs are considered as one of the biggest users of rankings, not just in setting their strategic goals, but also for promotional activities, recruiting staff, selecting partners, stimulating internal competition and for managerial purposes (Hazelkorn, 2017).

One of the aspects of HEIs that has witnessed the impact of rankings as suggested by existing literature is institutional identities (Hazelkorn, 2009; Elken, Hovdhaugen and Stensaker, 2016; Hou, Morse and Chiang, 2012). That is, rankings are mostly incorporated into the vision and mission statements of most higher education institutions (Hazelkorn, 2015; Hou, Morse and Chiang, 2014). As a result, the biggest changes resulting from the influence of rankings are apparent in areas that focuses on rebalancing teaching and learning, undergraduate and postgraduate studies, refocusing resource allocations towards fields that are likely to yield the greatest results and that are sensitive and responsive to the ranking indicators (Hazelkorn, 2009). Hazelkorn (2009), provides an example of how most Non-English oriented HEIs in recent times are seen encouraging their academic staffs to publish in highly cited international English journals in order to ensure that a common institutional brand is established for all

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academic publications. Elken, Hovdhaugen and Stensaker (2016), through their study on research intensive universities in the Nordic region observed that, global rankings had a minimal impact on the identities of HEIs in the Nordic countries. Their study also revealed contrary to what have been suggest by research, that rankings had a relatively modest influence on the institutional decision making and their strategic actions.

Additionally, research has also demonstrated the impact of rankings on internal decision making and strategic plans of HEIs (Bowman and Bastedo, 2009; Lim and Øergberg, 2017, Hazelkorn, 2009). Lim and Øergberg (2017), suggest that whereas rankings may be directly seen or responsible for many of the policy actions or institutional decisions of HEIs, its role as an 'accelerator' of higher education reform and a prominent part of 'policy assemblages' cannot be undermined. As a result, HEIs are becoming strategic corporations or business-like, constantly engaged in positional competition because of ranking systems. According to Marginson and van der Wende (2006), the seemingly unavoidability of rankings are compelling HEIs to use them as instruments to strategically position themselves worldwide. Hou, Morse and Chiang (2012) argues that, rankings tools mostly adopted by HEIs to develop long-term strategic goals of becoming world-class research internship universities.

A survey study conducted by Hazelkorn (2007) in collaboration with the OECD and IAU consisting of higher education leaders and managers from 202 HEIs in 41 countries found out that some Higher education leaders admitted to aggressively using rankings to influence organizational change and institutional priorities. The findings showed that rankings were influential towards university restructuring, strategic planning, and goal-setting, as well as policy-making actions such as funding allocations and institutional classifications. Specifically, the findings indicated that, majority of higher educational leaders across the globe admitted incorporating rankings into their strategic, organizational and managerial and/academic goals setting.

For instance, according to Dunrong (2016), the Huazhong University of Science and Technology (HUST) in china has set up to make an entrance into the top 200 universities globally by the year 2020 through its long term strategic plan caption *Long-term Strategic Development Plan* of HUST (2011-2020). However, other studies have shown that rankings either plays no role at all or have an indirect impact on the strategic goals and plan of HEIs (Kehm, 2016; Kwiek, 2016; Guruz, 2016). For example, Kwiek (2016) in a qualitative study at the University of Warsaw, Poland observed that, there was no direct reference to global

rankings in both the current and previous institutional strategies of the university. Similarly, Kehm (2016) observed from a case study of the University of Siegen (Germany) that, although the university was as at the time of the study revising its institutional mission and vision by designing a new structural and developmental plan, none of the five thematic priorities contained in the draft plan was influenced by rankings. According to Kehm (2016), these five pillars were initiatives considered by the university to sharpen its profile and to improve quality in all areas of the university's activities and they were rather influenced by the criteria of performance oriented budget allocation of the Ministry.

Another key aspect of HEIs where research has shown the impact of rankings is resources allocation and funding. Findings from Hazelkorn (2007) study, also revealed how rankings systems played an instrumental role in key policy making such as classification of the institutions as well as funding allocation. As indicated previously, rankings possess the tendency of leading to refocusing of resources to disciplines with arguably more productive and indicator sensitive capabilities, especially redirecting resources allocation from teaching to research. Kehm (2014), relates this to the Matthew effect. That is, the higher the status of a university, the likely it will attract more resources which in effect will equally cement or improve the status.

Research have also shown that, rankings can impact the reputation of HEIs globally (Hazelkorn; 2007; Lock, Verbik, Richardson, & King, 2008). According to Locke et al (2008) report to the Higher Education Funding for England, rankings "largely reflect reputational factors and not necessarily the quality of institutional performance" (p.14). This assertion has been supported by an online survey conducted by Locke et al (2008), in which majority of their respondents although perceived rankings as reflecting an idiosyncratic view of what constitutes a good university, also agreed that rankings possess the tendency of affecting the reputation of an institution and/or may even damage it beyond repairs.

As noted by Hazelkorn (2015, p150), reputational factors are predominant determinants displacing quality of teaching among students from the United states when it comes to deciding which HEI to attend. As a result, some HEIs have resorted to using rankings to support the claims of being 'centres of excellence' and 'world classness' (Wilkins and Huisman; Song and Tai as cited in Tremblay et al, 2012) whiles others are preoccupied with recruiting more high-achieving students, preferably at Ph.D. level who would help improve their reputation (Hazelkorn, 2009). However, studies also confirm that, nonperforming institutions which are

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unable to appear on the ranking systems are sometimes undaunted about their positioning (King, 2009; Lock et al., 2008).

Although rankings might not be seen playing the leading role in forming partnerships, research findings and literature have shown that they subtle play a key role (Hazelkorn, 2007, 2015; IHEP, 2009, HEFCE, 2008). According to Hazelkorn (2007, 2015), rankings are being used as critical assessment tools by other HEIs and key stakeholders deciding to partner with HEIs either within or outside the home countries. According to IHEP (2009; 12), rankings can be an important starting point to identify institutions to collaborate and partner with especially with regards to research partnerships, student and faculty exchange programmes, and alliances. Low rankings according to the Higher Education Funding Council of England (2008) could be detrimental for collaboration and solidarity especially in a time where there is increasing competition among higher education institutions.

For instance, a survey study conducted by Hazelkorn (2015), revealed that, 84 percent and 77 percent of HEIs leadership agreed to monitoring the ranks of their peer institutions within and outside their home country respectively. Also, 70 percent of the surveyed HE leaders agreed rankings influenced the willingness of other HEIs to partner with them, with another 45% indicating that rankings influenced the willingness of other HEIs to support their institution's membership of academic or professional organizations. An example, results from a survey study conducted at the Griffith University (Germany) by Sheil (2016) discovered that, all respondents indicate that the university position on rankings had opened opportunities for the university to partner with other institutions. This was hitherto not the case when the university was not ranked on any of the ranking systems (Sheil, 2016). However, Kouwenaar (2016) survey study at the Vrije University of Amsterdam (Netherlands), showed that rankings were only one of the many indicators considered by the university in selecting a suitable partner. According to kouwenaar (2016), the University of Vrije fairly uses different bandwidth of acceptable rankings for educational collaborations and these criterions are also dependent on country specific circumstances.

Additionally, research studies have suggested that, rankings in whatever form it takes impacts the recruitment and promotions of academic staffs within HEIs (Hazelkorn, 2007, 2012, 2015; Shin and Toutkoushian, 2011; Azman and Kutty, 2016). According to Shin and Toutkoushian (2011), some institutions in their quest to stay competitive adopts policy measures that will encourage the publication of research articles in high impact or peer reviewed journals. As a

result, these institutions go to the extent of reforming their recruitment and promotion policies (Shin & Toutkoushian, 2011). That is, celebrating and giving promotions to academics who excel and demonstrates high research capabilities through their research works and publications (Azman and Kutty, 2016). Azman and Mydin Kutty (2016) in their study of the National University of Malaysia for instance, observed that, ranking indicators or criteria were widely adopted in Malaysia as measures of individual and faculty performance. As a result, one of the respondents to Azman and Kutty (2016) study, indicated that, for the National University of Malaysia to encourage the production of more high-quality research and publication by academics, the university had change its promotion policies.

Locke (2011), through a multiple case study with the aid of a semi-structure interview with key HE leaders, focus group interview and document analysis sought to reanalyse previous attempts to interpret the impact of rankings on the behaviour of six medium-size research intensive universities England. The findings of Locke (2011) study revealed that, though the participating institutions differed in the way they each approached rankings, they all exhibited some form of interest to lessen the side effects of rankings and to maximize the benefits it accords them. As a result, HE leaders from the understudied institutions have variously adopted measures to internalize the logic of rankings by seeking to understand the methods and how their institutional data contributes to their positioning (Locke, 2011).

Finally, the Institute of Higher Education Policy (2009) through a qualitative multiple case study of HEIs stakeholders from Australia, Canada, Germany and Japan prepared an issue brief to summarize the effects of rankings on institutional decision making. The findings from the study acknowledging the different contextual background of the institutions considered for the study, found out that similar pattern responses to the impact of rankings. The study identified five interrelated areas of HEIs that rankings impact can be felt. They include; strategic positioning and planning, staffing and organization, quality assurance, resource allocation and fundraising and admission and financial aid.

3.4 Strategic responses

Several theories provide a foundation for understanding how organisations or institutions are impacted by their institutional environment and how these organizations strategically respond accordingly. However, according Bastedo and Bowman (2010), open systems theories throughout history have proven to instrumental lenses in the study of organizational behaviour. Organizational theories enable researchers to understand the how's and why's of organizational behaviours towards their environment. As a result, this study adopts Oliver's (1991), strategic responses to institutional processes to discuss the influence of GURS on Ghanaian public universities and how they respond accordingly. Owing to this framework, Oliver combined elements of the Institutional theory (Scott, 2008; DiMaggio and Powell, 1991) and the Resource Dependency Theory (Pfeffer & Salancik, 1978) to advance the various response strategies organizations may adopt in responding to pressures emanating from their institutional environment. The framework is useful for this study, because it enables us to understand the behaviour of public universities in Ghana towards the growing influence of global universities ranking systems. Particularly, it enables us to understand the nature and influence of these rankings on universities as well as the potential strategies that maybe adopted by public universities in Ghana either to comply or resist their impact.

3.4.1 The Institutional Approach

"Organizations do not only compete for resources and customers, but for political power and institutional legitimacy, for social as well as economic fitness" (DiMaggio & Powell, 1991)

The institutional approach has contributed in diverse ways towards organizational dynamism and behaviour. According to Frumkin & Galaskiewicz (2004), institutional theory has shifted the focus of research away from providing rational explanation of organizational behaviour towards the recognition of the larger socio-political context within which the operations of an organization takes place. It has also taken the discourse of research away from explaining the heterogeneity of organizations towards the homogeneity or instances that makes organizations alike within their organizational field (Frumkin & Galaskiewicz, 2004).

Institutional theory looks at how the behaviour or operations of an organization is influenced by its social milieu which is dominated by rules, norms, values, and often-taken-for-granted assumptions of what constitutes appropriate and acceptable behaviour (DiMaggio & Powell,

1983; Oliver, 1991; Meyer & Rowan 1991; Hoffman, 1999; Gornitzka, 1999; & Scott, 2001,2005, 2007). From an Institutional theory perspective, the environment of an organization is socially constructed (DiMaggio & Powell, 1991; Scott, 2001).

According to Hoffman (1999), institutional theory makes enquiries into how the choices of organizations are shaped, mediated and channelled within their institutional environment. Intrinsic within the institutional theory is the concept of conformity or compliance to the rules, norms, values and often taken for granted assumptions (DiMaggio and Powell, 1983, 1991; Meyer & Rowan, 1977, 1991; Gornitzka 1999, Frumkin and Galaskiewicz, 2004; Scott 2001, 2005, 2007; Oliver, 1991; March and Olsen, 2015). It is assumed that compliance or conformity to the dictates of the environment guarantees and increases an organizations' survival and legitimacy (DiMaggio and Powell, 1983, 1991). However, according to Frumkin and Galaskiewicz (2004), "organizations do not always comply to strategies, structures, and processes that enhance their performance, but instead react to and seek ways to accommodate pressures following external scrutiny and regulation" (p.285). In view of this, organizational practices and processes are understood as a reflection of or responses to these creations of acceptable behaviours within an organization's external environment (Powell & Colyvas, 2007, p1).

Scholars within comparative education, have indicated the relevance of institutional theory in framing empirical analyses of global education legitimization, expansion and change (Wiseman, Astiz and Baker 2013; Schofer, Hironaka, Frank and Longhofer, 2012). In this light, research conducted globally on the impact of GURS on the identity and behaviour have shown that it possesses a lot of influence on the survival and legitimacy of higher educational institutions. According to Sauder (2006), rankings from the institutional perspective are considered as 'third-party status' system that forms an essential part of the normative environment within which HEIs exist and operate (Sauder, 2006). Third-party organizations particularly those that seek to measure and evaluate institutions from a distant according to Bastedo and Bowman (2011), possesses powerful institutional influence within an organizational field. To Bastedo and Bowman (2011), this is because they are mostly relied upon by the public and policy makers in the quest to gather relevant information. Because of the role they play by supplying information to the public, these third-party agencies (ranking agencies), hold an influential role in shaping the higher education environment though they don't provide material and financial resources to any institution (Bastedo and Bowman, 2011).

3.4.2 The Resource Dependency Theory

Just like the institutional theory and other open systems theories, the RDT do also recognize the importance of the institutional environment in shaping organizational behaviours and actions. The RDT however, marks a departure from many other writings about organizations and their behaviour. It denies the possibility of organizations enjoying autonomy and perusing their self-interest with no degree of influence from its social context (Pferrer & Salancik, 1978). This perspective argues that, though organizations may be seen craving for autonomy and self-reliance, they are influenced, constrained and externally controlled by their institutional environment (Pferrer & Salancik, 1978; Gornitzka, 1999). Therefore, Pfeffer and Salancik (1978), argue that appreciating the behaviour of an organization demands an understanding into the interplay between organizations and its actors within its organizational environment is required.

The RDT is centred on the idea that, organizations exist and must compete in an environment with scarce resources and their survival is dependent on their ability to mobilize enough of such resources (Pferrer & Salancik, 1978; Gornitzka, 1999). In the process of mobilizing of these, organizations interact fervently with other organizations or entities who are in control of these resources. To them, this dependent relationship may create uncertainty and unreliability because of the scarcity nature of the resources. Organizational survival therefore is dependent on their "ability to cope with the environmental contingencies; negotiating exchanges to ensure the continuation of needed resources" (Pferrer & Salancik, 1978, p.258).

Therefore Gornitzka (1999) posits that, organizations as reactive in nature, and that when they feel threatened by the requirements or situations arising from its environment, would adapt themselves in order to guarantee them continues access to critical resources. Gornitzka (1999) therefore emphasizes that, the RDT "relies heavily on a political view of inter- and intra-organizational interaction, and the theory departs from earlier open systems theory in its emphasis on how organizations act strategically and make active choices to manage their dependency on those parts of their task environment that control vital resources. Organizations thus have a major capacity for change, but their response to demands from the environment is not automatic and passive, but active and volitional" (Gornitzka 1999, p.7).

Drawing on this perspective for the purposes of this discussions, HEIs are heavily dependent on resources in all its form for their continual survival. In a market of increase competition for

such resources, global rankings of universities thus play a key role in resource mobilization (Hazelkorn, 2015). Universities therefore in the quest for more resources may adopt various reforms, policies and practices to improve on their rankings. This theory is therefore suitable and will help us understand how these GURs can constraint or position universities in Ghana in mobilizing the vital resources needed for their survival in the world of increasing competition in the HE fields.

3.4.3 Convergence of the Institutional and resource Dependency

Though both the resource dependence and institutional theories have been applied independently in the study of HEIs globally, some scholars have suggested that, an integration of both the institutional and resource dependence theory is very useful and preferably the best approach in studying the behaviours of organizations towards changes in their institutional environment (Oliver, 1991; Gornitzka, 1999, Tolbert, 1985). Oliver (1991) in highlighting the convergence of these theories, developed her framework for predicting organizational the behaviour and the various strategies which might be employed by these organizations.

Highlighting their convergence, Oliver (1991) indicates that, both the institutional and resource dependence theories are firmly rooted in the basic assumption that, the choices of an organization are constrained by ***multiple external pressures*** (governments, students, employers, professional entities among others). In furtherance, she indicates that, both approaches show an appreciation for the ***collective and interconnected nature*** of the organizational environment and that organizational ***survival*** is dependent on how well an organization (university) respond to its external demands and expectations. Finally, she argues that, because organizations are interest driven seeking ***stability and legitimacy***, they may adopt different approaches to maximize their survival and legitimacy. Scholars have indicated that, an organizational effort to maximize its legitimacy may enhances its tendency to obtain access to its vital resources for its operations and performance (Deephouse, 1999; Deephouse and Suchman; 2008).

Huisman and Meek (1999) applied Oliver's analytical framework of strategic responses to institutional process to investigate curriculum innovation in two Dutch universities. In combining both the resource dependence and institutional theory, their findings revealed that, both the task and institutional environments of these universities are created to some extent by the government which to an extent shapes the type of strategy an organization adopts.

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Bowl and Hughes (2016), also applied this framework to study how eight (8) English universities from one region responded towards two new policies expectations by government. In their conclusion, they indicated that, though both the institutional and resource dependency theories are useful lens for understanding both conformity and variations or divergence in universities' responses, predicting these responses are difficult without taking into cognizance the historical and cultural context of any study.

Furthermore, Csizmadia, Enders and Westerheijden (2008) study of HEIs responses to governmental policies, applied the institutional and resource dependency theories to investigate the influence of organizational characteristics on the implementation of quality management in the Hungarian higher education institutions. Their findings indicated that, certain organizational variables such as the commitment of institutional leadership, involvement of external consultants, reputation of the institution, bureaucratic and political decision making were very influential towards the implementation of the quality management policy. However, they indicated that the characteristics of an institution had less influence towards conformity.

Additionally, Barron (2013) also applied the integrated approach to investigated how the regulatory environment of HEIs exerted pressure on for-profit Higher Institutions in the USA. The study was grounded on the proposition that, organizations do not only adapt to the regulatory pressures but also take strategic decisions to create a favourable environment for themselves. Their findings revealed a range of tactics (such as; lobbying, program diversification and public relations) that were adopted by HEIs to manage their environment.

However, Realer and Seeber (2011) in their study of highly heterogeneous HEIs and less well defined environmental pressures (such as Budget cuts), confronted some challenges applying Oliver's (1991) strategic responses to their study. Thus, they developed a new model based on Oliver's framework. However, their findings still revealed the usefulness and relevance of the combined approach of the institutional and resource dependency theory in explaining organizational changes in HEIs though a new model for the strategic responses was developed.

Based on all these studies, a combined approach of the institutional and resources dependency theory has proven to be useful for the study of HEIs and their organizational field. Therefore, in order for this study to achieve its goal of investigating how HEIs respond to the impact of GURs, Oliver's (1991) framework proves to be relevant for the conduct of the study.

3.5 Analytical Framework

In this section, Oliver's (1991) typologies of strategic responses to institutional processes will be discussed. From passive conformity to active resistance, Oliver (1991) highlighted five types of strategic responses organizations are likely to adopt when confronted with environmental pressures such as the Global University Ranking Schemes. These include; Acquiescence, Compromise, Avoidance, Defiance, and Manipulation (Oliver, 1991). These concepts as espoused, reflect possible reactions of universities towards GURs. It is the desire of this research to explore which of these strategies as conceived by Oliver is been adopted by Ghanaian public universities in responding to the growing trend of rankings and the brain behind the adoption of the said strategy.

3.5.1 Oliver's (1991) typologies of institutional responses

As shown in table 3.1, *Acquiescence* strategy according to Oliver (1991) is the least resisting strategy among the strategic responses to institutional processes. Acquiescence as a strategic response is concerned with the conscious or unconscious adherence to institutionalized pressures emanating from the organizational environment. That is, HEIs are said to adopt the acquiescence strategy as a response mechanism when they either deliberately or unconsciously adhere to the established or often-taken-for-granted rules and norms (i.e. rankings) within their institutional environment. In the process of conforming to these established norms created by the ranking institutions, Oliver (1991) believes that, organizations are likely to adopt or imitate the best practices of other successful organizations that have been able to handle such pressures. This behaviour of organizations in mimicking other successful organizations is likened to the concept of mimetic isomorphism as expounded by DiMaggio and Powell (1991). Several studies on the impact of rankings on HEIs globally, have indicated how some institutions have deliberately adopted measures to improve their rankings. Specifically, Hazelkorn (2007) study of HEIs leaders and managers from 202 HEIs in 41 countries goes to confirm that, institutions do adopt acquiescence strategy in responding to rankings. According to findings of the study, majority of the respondents admitted deliberate using rankings to inform their organizational priority and change.

The second predictive strategic response to institutional processes as identified by Oliver (1991) is *compromise* as depicted in table 3.1. Organizations adopting the compromise strategy are

Table 3.1 Adapted Oliver's' 1991 Strategic Responses to Institutional processes

Strategies and *Tactics*	Examples	Application to this study
Acquiescence		Universities may deliberately and unconsciously adopt strategies and actions based on the indicators of these global ranking schemes or systems.
Habit	Following invisible, taken-for-granted norms	
Imitate	Mimicking institutional models	
Comply	Obeying rules and accepting norms	
Compromise		Universities try to find a balance between the expectations of these global ranking systems and their institutional goals or objectives.
Balance	Balancing the expectations of multiple constituents.	
Pacify	Placating and accommodating institutional elements.	
Bargain	Negotiating with institutional stakeholders	
Avoid		Universities creates the impression of adhering to the expectations of global ranking schemes, when in fact they are not. That is, they engage in the act of 'window dressing'.
Conceal	Disguising nonconformity	
Buffer	Loosening institutional attachments	
Escape	Changing goals, activities, or domains	
Defy		Universities may ignore, dismiss, attack or challenge their institutional rankings or call into question the credibility of the process and indicators used.
Dismiss	Ignoring explicit norms and values	
Challenge	Contesting rules and requirements	
Attack	Assaulting the sources of institutional pressures	
Manipulate		Universities may adopt measures to influence, co-opt or exert dominion over global ranking schemes.
Co-opt	Importing influential constituents	
Influence	Shaping values and criteria	
Control	Dominating institutional constituents and processes	

Note: **adapted from Oliver (1991)**

said to partially comply with the expectation of their institutional environment. Especially when the objectives and goals of such organizations conflicts or are inconsistent with the expectations of their institutional environment (Oliver, 1991). According to Aier and Weiss (2012), such organizations can be said to be active promoters of their own organizational interest. As a result, organizations are likely to be tactical with their response to institutionalized pressures by desiring to achieve parity between their organizational goals and external expectations. According to Hazelkorn (2015), some HEIs may demonstrate equivocal love-hate relationship with rankings and as a result use them selectively. For instance, HEIs may decide to adopt and use some of the ranking indicators to enhance that seem to conform with their strategic plan and goals and leave the others that are of no relevance to them.

Another important strategy as identified by Oliver (1991) is the ***avoidance*** strategy. Organizations adopting the avoidance strategy in response to environment pressures are seen ruling out the possibility for conformity. Oliver (1991) defined avoidance as "the organizational attempt to preclude the necessity of conformity" (p.154). Organizations can either decide to buffer, conceal or escape from institutional rules and expectations. Through concealment, organizations are mostly seen engaging in 'window dressing, ceremonial pretence or symbolic acceptance of rankings. For instance, HEIs may establish and adopt measures, policies and procedures just to create the impression of acceding to institutional demands (rankings) without an intention of implementing or using any of their indicators for enhancing its institutional processes or decision making. In that regard, organizations can be said to be engaging in window dressing or ceremonially accepting norms, values or rules arising from their institutional environment. Buffering is another tactic that organizations can use to avoid the expectations or demands from its institutional environment. According to Oliver (1991), buffering refers to "an organization's attempt to reduce the extent to which it is externally inspected, scrutinized, or evaluated by partially detaching its technical activities from external contact" (p.155). That is, organizations may also strategically attempt to either disconnect themselves from or exit the domain of been externally scrutinized or evaluated (Pferrer and Salancik as cited in Oliver, 1991, Bastedo and Bowman, 2009). The buffering tactic is mostly related to the concept of decoupling under the institutional theory.

Additionally, ***defiance*** is also one of the strategies according to Oliver (1991). Organizations are said to defy the expectations of their institutional environment when they ignore or dismiss these pressures emanating from their institutional environment. According to Oliver,

organizations are most likely to defy institutional rules and norms when they either do not understand the rationale behind such institutional pressures, or when the potential of external enforcement or such rules and norms is low or when the internal objectives of such organizations conflicts drastically with the demands from their rules, norms or often-taken-for-granted assumptions. As a result, organizations are likely to challenge, contest or attack the rationality or basis for which such environmental pressures are exerted. Organizations are also likely to attack these norms, rules or values if they are seen to be organization specific rather than generic, discrediting or curtails the privileges, rights or autonomy of such organizations (Oliver, 1991). According Hazelkorn (2015), some institutions dissatisfied with their institutional positioning of the ranking tables may decide to ignore or boycott participating in rankings by refusing to supply to ranking agencies the needed data for their processes. Other major findings of existing literature show how low performing HEIs sought to discredit rankings based on their validity, methodology and rationale (Marginson and van der Wende, 2007; Usher and Savino, 2006).

The most active form of resistance among the five possible strategic responses to institutional processes as identified by Oliver (1991) is ***manipulation***. Under the manipulation strategy, the goal of an organization in responding to environmental expectations is to either alter, influence or exert dominance or power over the content of the expectations themselves or the sources that seek to transmit or enforce them. That is, HEIs adopting the manipulation as a strategy, may either be seen trying to change or influence the methodologies, validity and reliability of the rankling indicators. As a result, manipulation as a strategy is the most purposeful and opportunistic strategy. For instance, HEIs may choose to co-opt by attempting to appoint or appeal to a member of its ranking agencies to join its institutions board of directors. HEIs may also engage in building coalitions with other institutions and such coalitions to exert control, influence and dominance over the ranking agencies with the goal of shaping, modifying or improving their indicators. According to Pfeffer and Salancik as cited in Bastedo and Bowman (2011), "organizations often respond to interorganizational dependencies through forms of collective action, such as the formation of trade associations, councils and coalitions that seek to influence the environment through joint action". The motive behind this tactic is to enhance legitimacy and survival of an organization through neutralizing institutional opposition, demands or pressures. For instance, research findings on rankings shows how the establishment of the International Ranking Expect Group (IREG) by the UNESCO European Centre for Higher Education (UNESCO-CEPES) brings together all stakeholders (including, international

governmental and non-governmental organizations, institutional leaders, representatives from ranking organization and academics) in higher education to conferences or meetings to examine the functioning of rankings in Higher education and to discuss the numerous ways the methodologies and other organizational aspects of rankings could be enhanced in order to provide better and more information to customers (Sanoff, Usher, Savino, and Clarke, 2007). This is an example of how the manipulation strategy could be brought to bear in responding to the impact of GURs.

3.6 Concluding Remarks

This chapter highlighted the impact of globalization and internationalization on higher education globally. It presented the history and development of rankings since its emergence in the 1900's. It subsequently presented the existing literature on the types of global university rankings, their relevance and associated criticisms, their impact and the institutional responses towards them. The chapter finally presented the the analytical framework adopted for the purposes of discussing the findings of this study.

4 RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

4.1 Introduction

Research methodology entails a systematic and objective process of planning, gathering, analysing and reporting of data, which may be used to solve a specific problem or exploit an opportunity facing an organization (Creswell 2013). A clear understanding of the methodological approach is essential for comprehending the findings of any research study. As a result, this chapter presents the various process that were adopted in carrying out this study. It begins by highlighting the research strategy, philosophy, design and the sampling techniques. It proceeds to discuss the various sources of data, the research instruments used, and the procedure adopted in the conduct of the study. The data collection, presentation and analysis process are also discussed in this chapter. It finally presents how the issues of reliability, validity and ethical concerns were handled in the study.

4.2 Research Method

Intensive qualitative research has the advantage of enabling one to gain much relevant information from few informants in a relatively short time (Bryman, 2012). In addition, provides rich insight into the behaviours of individuals and organizations since it aims at discovering the underlying motives and desires of human behaviour (Kothari, 2004). Considering the purpose and research questions as stated in Chapter 1, this study adopts the qualitative research methodology to explore the institutional responses of public universities in Ghana towards GURs.

Further, qualitative research places emphasize on words rather than quantification in the collection and presentation of data (Bryman, 2012). According to Rasmussen, Østergaard and Beckmann (2006), qualitative research design enables researchers to capture both the cognitive and emotional aspects in the data collection and presentation process. As a result, it gives participants the flexibility to express themselves well and thus enables them to give detail description about a given phenomenon or problem (Bryman, 2012). Thus, the qualitative strategy was adopted because it aligns best with the studies objective. That is, to explore the

behaviour of Ghanaian public universities towards the phenomenon of GURS looking at both the impact and the strategies adopted by these universities. Adopting the qualitative research strategy enabled this study to capture the emotions, sentiments and experiences of the understudied universities. It further enabled me to take into consideration the peculiar, dynamic and diverse experiences and perceptions of the participating institutions towards the impact of GURS and how each institution strategically responds to them.

4.2.1 Research Philosophy

Research philosophy refers to the assumption and beliefs that govern the way we view the world (Bryman, 2012); it underpins the general approach and direction that a researcher chooses to take about the whole research. These assumptions about reality are closely linked with the methodological approach pursued and the methods employed in collecting data, as well as the sources from which the data are gained (Mason, 2006). In most cases, research is influenced by three broad philosophical assumptions; the positivist or post-positivist, the interpretivist and the constructivist. This study however, adopted the interpretivist perspective in understanding the reality behind global university ranking systems. This is because, to the interpretivist, reality is a complex social construction of meanings, values and lived experience (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2013; Grix, 2004). Thus, knowledge is built through a social construction of the world.

The interpretivist therefore tends to employ research methods and data collection techniques that allow the research subject to interpret his or her own experience of the world. Accordingly, data-gathering techniques include observation, interviews, documents and audio-visual materials that generate information mostly in the form of words (Bryman, 2012). The qualitative researcher can operate comfortably from an interpretivist point of view, employing methods of data collection that are flexible and sensitive to the social context in which the data are being produced (Grix, 2004).

4.2.2 Research Design

The research design refers to the master plan or framework guiding the conduct of the research (Yin, 2003). That is, the aim of a research design is to guide the researcher through the process of collecting, analysing and interpreting research data (Yin, 2009). According to Yin (2009), there are three conditions that determines the choice of an appropriate research design for the

conduct of a research study. Yin (2009) clearly outlined these conditions to include; the type of research questions asked, the researchers control over actual behaviour and the focus on current happenings.

In studying the impact of GURS and the institutional responses from Ghanaian perspective, the primary objective of this study was to understand the phenomenon from the institutional experiences and standpoints of four public universities. As a result, the choice of research design was an instrument and a key determinant to achieving this objective. The case study research design was found out to be the most suitable to accomplish the objective of the research.

Yin (2014), defines a case study design as "an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon in depth and within its real-world context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context may not be clearly evident" (p.16). As a result, "case studies provide a means by which readers can learn through the discussions of actual situations and circumstances, by following the actions and analysing the thoughts and decision process of real people, faced with real problems, in real settings" (Naumes and Naumes, 2014, p.10-11). That is, case studies necessitate a detailed and an intensive analysis of a single case (Bryman, 2012) and are mostly suitable for studies that seek to explore or investigate the "why" "how" and "what" aspects of a given phenomenon (Yin, 2009). Yin (2009) observes that case study design is particularly relevant in the collecting, presenting and analysing data.

As a result, the four public universities in Ghana, discussed in chapter two of this study constituted the case study. In other words, I refer to the design of the study as a case study because it entails a detailed and intensive analysis of the phenomenon of GURS and the institutional responses from the perspective of four public universities in Ghana bound the case. In order to successfully present the findings of this study, a multiple level comparison was undertaken to discover the major differences and similarities in behaviour of the understudied public universities towards GURS. The objective of this study was not to generalize its findings, but rather to explore into more detail the role of GURS on these specific public universities which the case study approach is suitable for.

4.2.3 Sample

In order to explore the institutional responses towards the impact of GURS, this study identified all universities in Ghana as its population site. As a result, among all the universities within the country, only the publicly funded universities were considered as the sample size to explore the stated phenomenon. Considering the limitedness of resources and time availability, a total of four (4) out of the ten (10) public universities were considered for the study. These four (4) universities were purposively selected for several reasons. Some of which included, their individual locations, number of years in existence and the motives behind their establishment as enshrined in the Act of Parliament that established them. However, for the purpose of anonymity, the identities of these universities will be not be disclosed in this section and thereafter. As a result, University A, University B, University C and University D will be used instead of the real identities of the universities as discussed in chapter two of this study.

To strike a balance, three (3) from the University A, two (2) from University B, (3) from University C and two (2) from the University D were selected for the study. Prospective participants were identified within their respective university community. The disproportionate sampling allocation measures was used for the sampling allocation of number of sample size for each university. Besides this, each university's management board membership is based on the status of the university and therefore some universities have more members or enlarged membership than others.

Table 4.0: Distribution of Participants by University

Name of University	Total Number of Participants	Sampling Technique
University A	3	Purposive/Snowballing
University B	2	Purposive/Snowballing
University C	3	Purposive/Snowballing
University D	2	Purposive/Snowballing
TOTAL	**10**	

Note: From Author's construct

From the table, I considered a minimum two (2) participants from each of the four public universities. In each university, top/principal management officials whose responsibilities were directly related to the subject matter were selected to participate in the study. To determine this, the various variables used by the global ranking institutions including funding, research, quality assurance, international relations among others played a key role. At the end, the relevant

principal/ top management officials who were identified to be useful in serving the purpose of the study included.

This study initially adopted only the purposive sampling technique, which assumes selecting cases such as events, groups, individuals who are relevant and "information-rich" or knowledgeable with respect to the purpose of the study (Bryman, 2012; Rubin & Rubin, 2005). The purposive sampling was employed to select the university management board members from the population of the Universities being studied. Purposive sampling has been identified by scholars as appropriate for specific inquiries that target a specific group of people especially when a researcher wants to identify particular types of cases for in-depth investigation (Neuman, 2006). These key informants provided the information that were key to answering the research questions and are in strategic positions to providing the relevant information.

However, upon arrival, the snowballing technique equally became necessary as some principal management officials had left office living their positions vacant. Upon contacting them individually, they indicated that, they no longer had the capacity to speak on behalf of their respective universities. However, they made referrals of other principal management officials who according to them were equally abreast with subject matter and knew what their universities position and behaviour on GURS were. This resulted in the adoption of the snowballing technique in identifying key participants.

4.3 Data Collection Tools

There exist different procedures for collecting qualitative research data for scientific or academic research. This study relied on both primary and secondary source of data. The primary source of data was collected using a semi-structured face-to-face interview guide.

4.3.1 Interviewing (Semi-Structured Interview)

This study used a standardized open-ended (semi-structured) interview guide (Bryman, 2012; Goyal, 2010) as the data collection tool. Standardized open-ended interviews consist of a set of questions carefully worded and arranged with the intention of taking each respondent through the same sequence of issues by asking them the same questions using essentially the same words (Goyal, 2010, p.185). According to Goyal (2010), standardized open-ended interview is mostly used with the purpose of minimizing variation in the questions being posed to the interviewees.

Face-face semi-structured interviews were chosen because of its leverage in providing each participant an opportunity to express the standpoint of their respective universities concerning the phenomenon of GURS without any restriction. That is, participants in an interview process can provide more and detailed information during an open-ended interview process than if they were asked to write an account of their views or fill out a questionnaire (Bryman, 2012). Through semi-structured interview sessions, participants have an opportunity to react to or demand for further clarification of any questions that seems ambiguous to them. It also gives the interviewer the opportunity to seek for elaboration regarding answers that seem inconclusive or unclear.

Additionally, a semi-structured interview guarantees a high level of response especially when interviewees are given sufficient time to respond to questions. Furthermore, semi-structured interviews create more room for any other issue regarding the subject area which is relevant to be discussed which would have been difficult to capture using a questionnaire. It also enables the researcher to check on the reliability of a response by rephrasing the same question differently and asking it at various stages of the interview process (Freebody, 2003).

4.3.2 Developing the Interview Guide

The nature of this study necessitates inquiry that focuses more on lived experiences than hypothetical scenarios or abstract concepts (Mason, 2006). I therefore prepared before meeting with an interviewee by outlining key themes and areas of interest that addressed my principal research questions.

I followed Bryman's (2012) advice on the use of the interview technique for data collection. Of importance in Bryman's (2012) methodology is developing an interview guide based on the research questions; seeking the participant's permission to be interviewed; arranging a mutually agreeable time and place for the interview; the identification of possible interview themes or subjects; deciding the mode of recording the interview (note-taking, tape-recording or both); and avoiding double-barrelled or multiple-barrelled questions.

The questions were simple, logical, straight to the point and easy to read and understand. It also included the combination of both open and closed ended questions to reduce respondent's fatigue (Bryman, 2012) as well as allow for clarification and/or expression of opinion by participants.

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4.3.3 Document Analysis

The secondary source was utilised to augment the findings from the primary source of data. According to Bryman (2012), secondary sources of data consist of both published and unpublished sources; journal articles, popular periodicals, textbooks, company websites, policy reports, magazines, annual reports, print and electronic media reports. Documents review formed a key component of the secondary source data used in this study. According to Goyal, (2010), document review can be valuable in guiding the researcher during the interview process. Official statements which are either found in public statements (annual reports, policy statements) offers an intriguing insight in the conduct of research (Bryman, 2012).

As a result, institutional documents such as strategic plans and policies, prospectus, website of the understudied institutions were equally reviewed.

Table.4.1 Document Reviewed

Name of Institution	Type of Document	Abbreviation	Duration/Year
University A	*Research Report*	UA-RR	
	Strategic Plan	UA-RS	2014-2024
University B	Building stronger Universities (Phase II)	UB-BSU II	
University C	Research Agenda	UC-RA	2013
	Research Policy	UC-RP	2014
	Corporate Strategy	UC-CS	2012-2017
	Internationalization Strategic Plan	UC-ISP	2015-2020
University D	*Strategic Plan*	UD-SP	2017-2023

Note: From Author's construct (2017)

4.4 Criteria for evaluating the findings of the study (Validity and reliability)

Both validity and reliability are essential component of any research whether quantitative or qualitative in nature and are the two most important and fundamental characteristics of any measurement procedure. However, many terms have been used in place of reliability and validity in qualitative research because of the divided stands on whether or not these two terms can be upheld rigidly in qualitative research (Bryman, 2012). Golafshani (2003) therefore

asserts that in quantitative research, reliability and validity are treated as separate concepts. They tend to be viewed together in qualitative research and are rather replaced with terms such as such as trustworthiness (consisting of credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability) and authenticity (Guba & Lincoln, 1994 as cited in Bryman, 2012). Patton (1990) added that in qualitative research, the researcher becomes the "instrument" responsible for ensuring credibility, trustworthiness and quality. However, in this study, reliability and validity was maintained as the criteria used in evaluating the findings.

4.4.1 Validity

Validity is defined as the degree to which a measuring instrument measures what is designed to measure (Neuman, 2006). A research design is said to be valid, authentic, credible and trustworthy, if it enables the researcher to elicit the correct responses from the sampled subjects, otherwise, it is faulty design and may lead to misleading findings. To achieve quality (validity) in qualitative research (Healy and Perry as cited in Bryman, 2012) proposes that credibility, neutrality or confirmability, consistency or dependability and applicability or transferability are to be indispensable criteria. Creswell and Miller (2000) preferred the use of the member checking as another means of testing for quality (validity).

To enhance the points elucidated above, I also ensured that the right target population was identified and interviewed. That is by considering the objectives of this study, key principal management staff who were not only knowledgeable about the subject area but also abreast with the posturing and behaviour of the various institutions towards rankings were considered and interviewed for this study. The use of a well-crafted open-ended or semi structured interview guide made it possible for questions to be rephrased and asked again to ensure confirmability, credibility and consistency in the answers given. The results were also made credible because audio-recording of the interview process ensured accurate data in their original form.

Furthermore, as indicated by Bryman (2012), validity checks can also be made by comparing verbal data with other sources. As a result, I therefore compared participants' responses to the interview questions with some of the school official records or documents such as strategic plans, prospectus as well as key speeches or statements that indicated the posturing of the various institutions towards the ranking phenomenon. Such crosschecking resulted in an improvement in the validity of data

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4.4.2 Reliability

Terry Blanche and Durrheim (1999) defined reliability as the dependability of a measurement instrument, that is, the extent to which the instrument yields the same results on repeated trials. Bryman (2012) contends that in quantitative research, reliability refers to the ability to replicate the results of a study. However, in qualitative research there's no expectation of replication.

This notwithstanding, I took the following measures to ensure the interview guide was reliable and answers given were consistent. I personally conducted the standardized open-ended interviews so that the approach was consistent and, thus reduced the interviewer effect. I found the open-ended interviews to be reliable in that they were focused on the research problem.

Also, just as indicate above, in order to enhance the dependability (reliability) of this research, instruments for data collection were structured in manner that participants would unconsciously answer a question twice without necessarily knowing. In lieu of this, some of the opened ended questions were rephrased to ensure that participants answer to a particular question again indirectly to reaffirm responds.

Further, the sample instrument for data collection was given a critical review by experts who served as supervisors of for the research. This was done to ascertain mediums through which the research can be improved and how the data can help to answer the research questions. The review ensured that interview guides were structured in a manner that allows participants to freely and genuinely provide information. Again, due process was also adhered to in the conduct of this study. For instance, permission was duly sought for from the Norwegian Research Council and all the participating institutions seeking approval for the conduct of this research. The motive was to enhance the reliability of the processes for the collection of data as well as giving credibility to the findings.

Finally, the analysis of data collected, unlike unstructured ones, was credible because I simply grouped common responses to each item and presented the results without making inferences or assumptions.

4.5 Data Collection Process

Before going to the field to collect data, I submitted an introductory letter from my Department to all the understudied universities by email requesting for information about what the formal procedure in conducting a research study in their institution was. Though, it was a challenge getting a feedback from the various institutions on the procedure involved before my field work, I immediately followed up on that with a hard copy of the introductory letter from my department to the various institutions upon arrival for my data collection. After the formal submission to the various Registrars of the participating universities, a meeting was arranged to further give a detailed briefing on the subject matter and how I intended to collect the data. After the meeting, I was issued a formal communication (permission) letter giving me the green light to interview the relevant participants.

Copies of this letter, the introductory letter from my department as well as a statement of intent of the study together with the interview guide was submitted to all the participants who were identified as relevant for this study. After submitting the letters, appointment days and times were fixed and agreed for the interview process. All the interviews were audio-recorded and complemented with notes in my field diary. In all, at least two days was spent in each university as not many participants were engaged in the data collection exercise. However, for some unforeseen reasons, some of the participants were indisposed as at the time, I arrived for the research. This made it very difficult to arrange a meeting day with them for the interview. Consequently, upon my arrival back to school, several efforts were initiated to get these remaining interviews conducted, as their participation were still found to be instrumental in the final analysis and presentation of the data.

4.6 Data Analysis Plan and Presentation

After the collection of data interviews were transcribed and analysed. I used a cross-case analysis procedure (Patton, 1990) to analyses the interview data. In this approach, responses to a common question from all interviewees in each category were analysed together. As noted by Patton (1990), it is easier to do a cross-case analysis for each question in the interview when a standardized open-ended approach is used. In a, cross-case analysis, participants' responses to a question/item are combined. Common themes across participants (cases) are then identified, analysed and interpreted item by item.

The collected data for the participants were analysed in a systematic manner. First, I transcribed all audio recordings into printable formats. Afterwards I printed them out for the purposes of coding and onward analysis. I transcribed sentences and phrases directly to avoid misinterpretation of the sense or meaning of information participants provided as suggested by Patton (1990). I read through the responses for each item across all the sampled principal management members from the four institutions separately and made notes of the key ideas or themes.

In short, the analysis of primary data was based on a thematic approach. According to Braun and Clarke (2006) "thematic analysis is a method of identifying, analysing, and reporting patterns (themes) within data" (p.6). A theme according to Maxwell (2008) refers to the central ideas that recurs or pervades from the data identified in relation to the research questions and objectives, and which represents some level of patterned response or meanings within the data set. Employing the analytical tool, the researcher through coding generated salient themes that cut across the data set and weaves into the central theme of the study.

Critically examining individual accounts and response to questions, categorizing responses and finally deriving themes out of them. After simplifying these responses into themes, the data were then analysed using the analytical framework adopted for this study, in this case, Oliver's (1991) five typologies of strategic responses to institutional processes as depicted below. Data analysed was presented with relevant quotations that captured these views; and augmenting the findings with data from documentary sources. In accordance to ensuring participants' confidentiality and anonymity, the various public universities were assigned with pseudonym University A, B, C and D with participants assuming Person A1, A2, A3 in the case of University A; Person B1 and B2 in the case of University B; Person C1, C2, C3 in the case of University C and finally Person D1 and D2 in the case of University D.

4.7 Ethical Concerns

"If values are to be taken seriously, they cannot be expressed and laid aside but must instead be guides to actions for sociologist. They determine who will be investigated, for what purpose and in whose service" (Sagarin as cited in Neuman, 2006 p. 130)

Neuman (2006) points out that, ethics in research is a set of principles that reveal what is or is not legitimate to do in research practice. Sarantakos (2012) suggests that, for a research to be

ethical, the study should provide adequate information on the type of questions being asked, the degree of sensitivity and the consequences of the questions. The study should provide concern for the welfare of the participants by paying attention to safety, personnel embarrassment and physical and mental health. The study should also provide informed consent. Lastly, the study has the responsibility to recognize the responder's right to privacy, anonymity and that all information about them remain confidential (Sarantakos, 2012). In conducting a qualitative study of this nature, ethical concerns such as how access is gained are critical, and the richness of the data collected ultimately depends largely on the extent of access and range of sources. During my engagement with each participant in the process of collecting data, I paid great attention to their interests, rights and independence.

To ensure all these ethical standards were met as discussed above, I sought the prior consent from the various participating universities before engaging the participants. These engagements as indicated earlier in the data collection section, clarified all ethical concerns and any other related issues. In view of this, the process guaranteed a cordial renewal of relations as previous access and informed consent/assent and co-operation was again sought for the present study. The anonymity the participants and confidentiality of their responses were also assured. In obtaining data from the field, prospective participants were made to understand how significant their contributions to the study would be, but they were left to decide on whether to assist or not. Thus, members' participation in the interview process was based on one's willingness to voluntarily give out information that will help achieve the study objectives.

Another issue of great concerns in academic research is the falsification of results and how works consulted in the study are properly acknowledged. To prevent the occurrence such academic misdemeanours, the exact quotation of the participants was presented in the analysis and result presentation chapter for checks. Again, at the end of each session, I played back the recorded conversation to the interviewees to make sure they agreed to what had been shared. For scholarly works that were resorted to in the course of the study, all authors were also duly acknowledged and showed in the references.

4.8 Concluding Remarks

In conclusion, this chapter presented the methodology adopted in carrying out this study. It captured the methods and the various processes used in collecting data need for the purposes of

this study. To ensure that the outcome of this study attains the research objective, this chapter specifically addressed and justified the choice of research methodology, philosophy and design. It also went ahead to address the various methods or processes adopted to guarantee the validity and reliability of this study. Finally, it discussed what measures it adopted in compliance with the ethical consideration of its participants and institutions concern. The following chapter will present the findings of this study.

5 Presentation of Findings, Analysis and Discussions

5.1 Perceptions of GURs: Equating the Unequal's?

The first objective of this study was to ascertain the level of understanding and perception of the various participants about the role of GURs in higher education globally. Per the findings, all participants exhibited some considerable level of understanding and knowledge about the influence of GURs on the various stakeholders involved in higher education. Generally, the findings indicated a varied spectrum of discernments and concerns about GURs by participants from the sampled universities. Characterizing their perceptions were both negative and positive concerns which generally dwelled on the indicators and importance of GURs for the various stakeholders in higher education respectively.

As pointed out by the review of essential literature in chapter four of this study, several scholars have documented the significance of GURs for the various stakeholders involved in higher education. Especially, research findings confirmed the notion that rankings are mostly understood as instruments for "gauging competitiveness, providing transparency and accountability and aiding in benchmarking of higher education" (Hazelkorn, 2015, p.94). For instance, Person A2 from University A intimated that;

> "I think that in every system, if there is a way of monitoring and appraising institutions and people, especially academic institutions, it makes the institutions more accountable and competitive. This is good for the institution itself to see how they are compared with their peers either at the continental level, the national level and the global level. So, I think that these rankings are not just global because you can also come to the level of interpreting it even at the continental level. You can extract information vital information from them to reorganize and restructure your institution. So global rankings are good. It makes institutions aware of their strength. It makes institutions also aware of their weaknesses that are looked at globally and what opportunities are available to them".

This perception of Person A2 aligns with notion that, rankings are useful comparative devices (Bowman and Bastedo, 2009) which aid HEIs to identify their institutional weaknesses as well as strengths (Taylor and Braddock, 2007; Rauhvargers, 2013). Apart from the opportunity to identify the strengths and weakness of an institution, Person C3 from University C observed

that rankings could also serve as a reference point for most institutions to learn from each other as he indicated;

> "Ranking have become one of the good key models by which you can determine a good university. It gives some gratification when you are ranked higher. So, for those of us at the bottom [referring to University C] of the major ranking systems, rankings through their various indicators, helps us to do what we call 'best practices' or 'benchmarking' ourselves to our peers. This enables us to understand what makes an 'A' universities to be ranked higher and 'B' lower. This will enable higher education institutions to identify and learn from what the highly ranked institutions have been doing or what they are current doing to occupy the top spots and to replicate such practices within their own institutions" (Person C3, University C)

This perception as noted by Person C3 from University C equally supports Hazelkorn (2015) and Azman and Kutty (2016) claim that GURs are useful for benchmarking purposes. Others who also expressed positive concerns about GURs highlighted their usefulness of rankings in shaping the choices of prospective students (Clark, 2007; Bowman and Bastedo, 2011; Hazelkorn, 2015), measuring quality and making institutions more accountable and transparent (Hazelkorn, 2015). For instance, Person A2 from university A observed that, GURs influence alone on students, corporate entities and access to resources will ensure that higher education leaders will be more accountable and put in certain measures to enhance the quality of education services they delivered.

While acknowledging the aforementioned benefits, some university leaders in Ghana seem to have some reservations about the methodologies adopted by GURs agencies. According to this group of participants, the various methodologies used by some of the ranking systems were totally unfair, subjective and often misleading. For instance, Person A1 from University A notes;

> "The only issue I see with rankings is that they are too subjective, and their indicators do not really present a proper picture of what a good university is. I am always concerned about their publications because I know the effects they could have on prospective students, employers, governments and universities in general. How many people really delve into looking at the various methodologies been employed to come out with what we see in the media before using them. This is very dangerous and to me, these ranking institutions should engage more with the various stakeholders to find an appropriate way of coming out with a more comprehensive and detailed publications that will be concise to satisfy the needs of various stakeholders without misleading them" (Person A1, University A)

Reason like these, were of grave concern to Person B2 from University B, who questioned the use of Noble Prize Laurette as a parameter to buttress his frustrations about rankings. For him,

if one's ranking will be enhanced because of Nobel Prize, then one can imagine the number of years it will take his university to get a top 100 positioning. These methodological flaws associated with GURs, made some participants believe they (ranking agencies) are engaged in equating the unequal. This was the major concern expressed by Person D1 from University D who could not hide his frustration about GURs methodologies as he expressed;

 "Before you go to that question, what is the criteria for ranking? that is what we don't understand. Whether these ranking systems are fair or not is a matter of discussion. Because sometimes you compare apples to oranges, which are different fruits. Looking at Ghana, you are ranking [University D] which is 24 years old to a 60-year-old university like [University A], is it fair? Generally, what you get there in terms of academic staff and the number of professors, etc, you won't get them here at [University D]. Generally, ranking is just like comparing Manchester united [a football team in the United Kingdom] to Wa All Stars [a football team in Ghana]. They are all football teams, but can you compare them? Does Wa all stars have a 10th of the resources Manchester united have, but they are all football teams. It's just not a fair system" (Person D1, University D).

These concerns generally captured the views of other participants who expressed their dissatisfactions about GURs methodologies. According to them, the truism that every university has its core strength (for example, it can be in medicine or education) cannot be gainsaid. So, for them, the question that one must inevitably contend with is, what is the crosscutting indicator being used to determine the best school? Obviously to them, there was no such cross cutting indicator. Such negative perceptions about GURs is not a new phenomenon as several authors have raised serious concerns about their methodologies and indicators adopted by some GURs agencies. According to Hazelkorn (2015), the call on GURs agencies to adopt cross-cutting indicators is simply impossible. This is because of the complexities that characterizes HEIs individually which include; "the vastly different national context, underpinned by different value systems, meeting the needs of demographically, ethnically and culturally diverse populations, and responding to complex and challenging political economic environments" (Hazelkorn, 2015, p.86). Moreover, as pointed out by Hazelkorn (2015), these general reservation and dissatisfactions of participants who expressed their frustrations about the proxies used by these GURs agencies could be as a result of their lack of showing on these major GURs publications and the general believe that rankings influence stakeholders on opinions and actions.

Although there were mixed reactions about perceptions among the higher education leaders as expressed above, they generally concurred that the various respective universities were very

much concerned about GURs, their proliferations and their institutional positions. Below gives a summary of such narratives from each university.

> "Like I told you, we are interested. Because, it helps us to see how we are doing. But you know, in every ranking sometimes these things can be abused. As a result, we are very cautious as an institution on how we interpret and use their publications" (Person A2, University A).

> "Yes, it's obvious, every ranking brings about competition for students, renowned researchers and professors and research grants. So, when you have such publications coming from different institutions although different parameters are used, they have impact on the applicants, the employers and then I will say on the reputation of our institutions [referring to University B]. So, as a university that aspire to be a centre for excellence in relation to Science and Technology, we are very much concern about how we are ranked. We therefore take these publications serious although we are a bit worried about the emergence of so several types of ranking systems and not allowing such publications to dictate to us" (Person B1, University B).

> "The issue to me is about what you pay attention to. What are the areas which are critical? So, there are some that, one will pay attention to and some others that one will not pay attention to. And so, for me that is the bottom line" (Person C1, University C).

> "the [University D] as I said is interested in rankings because whether we like it or not, whether we have the resources or not these ranking agencies will continue to do what they know how to do best, and the ultimate impact will be on us. As a result, we are concerned about their processes, indicators as well as the respective weighting associated to them" (Person D1, University D).

The responses above signify the willingness of the various universities sampled for this study. However, a common trend which dominated their responses was that, these institutions were a bit cautious on not allowing themselves to be dictated to by GURs. For example, up on this, participants indicated that GURs formed part of their priorities of the respective universities. Based on this feedback generated from University A, University B, University C and University D, an average priority of 8, 7, 7.5 and 6 respectively was what they each attributed to GURs on a scale from 0-10 with 10 been the highest.

5.2 How GURs Impact Public Universities in Ghana

Based on the widely held perceptions of GURs by institutional leaders as well as the general concerns and level of priorities of the four sampled universities, this study proceeded to explore what impact GURs have on the various institutions. Generally, research has shown the difficulty involved in exploring the impact of rankings on HEIs globally (IHEP, 2009; Hazelkorn, 2017;

Lim and Øergberg, 2017). However, as observed in the literature reviewed, the impact of rankings is mostly apparent on the following aspect of higher education institutions globally; strategic positioning and planning, staffing and organization, quality assurance, resource allocation and fundraising and admission and financial aid institutional collaborations and institutional Identity.

Based on these areas as outlined above, this study sought to examine the degree to which similar aspects within the four case studied universities in Ghana are impacted by GURs. The table below provides a summary of the findings as suggested by participants from each institution.

Table 5.0: Impact of rankings on various institutional aspects according to respondents

	Impact of rankings according to respondents			
Parameter	University A	University B	University C	University D
Strategic planning and positioning	✓	✓	✓	✓
Institutional Identity	✓	x	x	x
Quality assurance	✓	✓	✓	✓
Resource Mobilization and Allocation	x ✓	x ✓	x ✓	x ✓
Recruitment and Promotion	✓	x	✓	✓
Collaborations and Partnership	✓	✓	✓	✓
Admissions	X	x	✓	✓

Note: From Author's construct (2017)

Key: ✓- Respondent acknowledges impact

x- Respondent acknowledges no impact

x ✓-No impact on one aspect, an impact on the other

As shown in the table above, the respondents reported that the GURs had a substantial impact on only three key aspects of HEIs in Ghana; strategic planning and positioning, quality assurance, institutional collaborations. However, whereas participants acknowledged the impact of GURs on the resource mobilization efforts from donor agencies, the denied its impact on governmental allocations as well as internal allocations of resources to the various units and departments of their respective universities.

5.2.1 Impact on Strategic Positioning and Planning

As indicated in the table above, the findings revealed that informants of all four public universities admitted the impact of GURs on their strategic planning and positioning decisions. Notwithstanding this general admittance, it emerged that the degree of impact varied among the

universities. Thus, whereas three out of the four universities: University A, C and D admitted a more direct impact of GURs, responses from University B indicated an indirect and minimal impact. For instance, Person A3 from University A in admitting to a more direct impact of GURs noted;

> "sure, rankings obviously have shaped the way we think and the decisions we make as an institution. For instance, how can we determine that we are a world-class research-intensive university if there is no means of appraising or evaluating what we do here by a third party? We could aspire to be just a world class university and not a world-class research-intensive university. But our focus should tell you where we want to see ourselves by the end of 2024.Our decision is to be a globally recognized as a research oriented university, and obviously rankings have a role in that" (Person A3, University A)

This response as noted by Person A3 which was similarly shared by the responses from University C and D, supports existing literature on the impact of GURs on the strategic positioning and planning decisions of HEIs globally. As previously noted by Marginson and van der Wende (2006), rankings could be responsible for policy actions and/or institutional decisions regarding the strategic position and plans of HEIs globally. It may also influence its role as an 'accelerator' of higher education reform and a prominent part of 'policy assemblages' (Lim and Øergberg, 2017). While noting this important impact of ranking, the caution that the overemphasis on ranking can make HEIs assume a more business-like corporate nature constantly engaged in positional competition (Lim and Øergberg, 2017), was also reflective of the views of other participants especially those from University B. According to these participants, it is important for institutions to take measures to avert the negative impacts of ranking.

> "Indirectly, it has. As a concerned university which exist in global world at a time of intense competition for major resources, we need to assert ourselves to be relevant. So, we are trying to change things in a way to be able to go up in the ranking systems even though we would say that we are careful not to allow the ranking systems to dictate to us what we should do. We are still looking at how they work, how they operate and what are the things they are looking out for in improving our systems. Once we are satisfied, we will come out with concrete policies to enable us respond positively and ultimately improve our positioning" Person B2, University B.

This position was also expressed by participant D2 from University D, who while noting the direct impact of rankings on the strategic planning and positioning decisions of HEIs insisted that their university had taken measures to ensure that rankings do not dictate what its overall

institutional strategy should be but only served as a guide towards arriving at decisions on the institutional direction of the university. This confirms Frumkin and Galaskiewicz (2004) assertion that organizations do not always comply to the dictates of their societies as most institutional theorist portray.

5.2.2 Impact on Institutional Identity

As indicated in the literature review, several scholars have revealed the impact of rankings on institutional identities globally. However, out of the four universities sampled for this study, findings indicate that apart from University A, all the others overruled the impact of rankings on their institutional identities. Participants from university A, indicated that, as a result of the emergence of so many universities in the country, especially with the private sector engagement, University A's needed to strategical position itself. For instance, Person A1 from University A indicated that, the new focus of the university was to become a research intensive of world class repute as he explains why;

> "But again, we think that it's time for an institution in Ghana has its done elsewhere in the world to again focus on a particular area or aspect in academia. And we think that it's time for [University A] to focus on research so that the others can still decide whether to continue combining teaching and research or otherwise. As you might be aware, we have a lot of private universities which are affiliated to the [University A] and majority of these affiliated institutions of ours are predominantly teaching oriented. They don't do so much research. So, they can focus on the teaching and then for a big university like the [University A], we can concentrate on research that are productive to the nation and of course, international world. So that is the reason why we are going that way" Person A1, University A.

As a result, the university was gradually shifting focus from the humanities or liberal arts to the sciences, teaching to research oriented university and seeking to balance the number of undergraduate and postgraduate students. In line with the interview responses, a review of the strategic plan of University A confirmed the new identity the university was carving for itself. The strategic plan reveals the intention of the university to balance the number of graduate and undergraduate students. Specifically, this goal is to "grow the numbers of graduate students, especially at the PhD level, to ensure a ratio of 50:50 (undergraduate/graduate) by the end of the plan period" (University A Strategic Plan, 2014-2024, p.7). It also highlighted the university's desire to "equip all colleges and their constituent units to develop a strong research focus reflected in their incentive structures" (University A Strategic Plan, 2014-2024, p.7). This seeming focus on research did not come as a surprise as the research report of University A

specifically highlighted the significance of research funding in contributing to university rankings (University A Research Report 2014/2015, p.4). Explaining why University A seem to prioritize research, Person A1 notes;

> "we think that it's time for an institution in Ghana as its done elsewhere in the world to focus on a particular area or aspect in academia. Being the premier university, we think that it's time for us [University A] to focus on research so that the others public universities as well as the private universities affiliated to the [University A] can continue to focus on teaching and research. As you are aware, almost all are the private universities in the country are teaching oriented. So, why then will a big university like the [University A] still concentrate on teaching, when our peers have moved onto research" Person A1, University A.

These findings support Hazelkorn (2009) claim that, the biggest changes in HEIs resulting from the influence of rankings are apparent in areas that focuses on; rebalancing teaching and learning, undergraduate and postgraduate studies, refocusing resource allocations towards fields that are likely to yield the greatest results and that are sensitive and responsive to the ranking indicators. From the on-going discussions, it presupposes that University A's identity has been impacted because of its desire to be among the top 20 universities in Africa as stated in its strategic plan (University A Strategic Plan, 2014-2024, p.12).

On the contrary, responses by participants from University B, C and D indicated that rankings had no impact on their institutional identity. A common trend that emerged out of the responses from participants from these three institutions gave an indication of their firm stance on the core mandate that led to their establishment.

> "We were established as a science and technology university and this has always been our focus. I don't think as at the time the university was established there was anything like ranking of universities. So, our focus to become the centre of excellence in science and technology in Africa and beyond has nothing to do with rankings" Person B1, University B

> "any attempt to shift or alter the focus of the university from its initial mandate will be an upfront to the tenets for establishing the university. So, I don't think rankings has impacted our identity in any way. We remain a home of world class pro poor scholarship" Person D2, University D.

Person D2 maintained that, the philosophy behind this pro-poor policy means that the research output and activities of the university should be geared towards solving the problems of the communities within its vicinity. These responses from University B, C and D seem to suggest that although these universities per the strategic goals, are more guided by the core mandates

of their establishments as well as the basic function of every academic function of every institution.

5.2.3 Impact on Recruitment and Staffing policies

Findings show a mix reaction regarding the impact of GURs on the recruitment and staffing policies of the universities. Although per the findings, all four universities acknowledged that recruiting high calibre academic and research staffs held the potential of enhancing the teaching, research and publication output of the university; it was only University B who responded that GURs had no impact on its recruitment and staffing policies. The three other public universities asserted that GURs had played a significant role in their recruitment and staffing policies.

> "Yes of course, we recently revisited our recruitment policy. Although this policy had been in existence for a long time stipulating the basic requirement for employing, it was reluctantly enforced until the university decided to pursue its new focus on becoming a world-class research-university. This means that for you to become a member of our academic staffs, you needed to have a basic requirement of a PhD degree. The university will not recruit you for a teaching position if you don't"-Person A1, University A

This view as expressed by Person A1 presupposes that universities in their quest of attaining high ranking status might seek to revisit dormant policies that will ensure that they recruit high calibre teaching and research staffs. Another participant from University C while acknowledging how GURs continues to impact their staffing and recruitment policies commented that;

> "well, the metrics or indicators will want to find out how many PhD staffs you have, how many full and part time professors you have? And other factors that impact on your academic output. And so, these things are there and that has indirectly influenced us…the idea is that, if you raise the bar of recruitment to PhD holders, then you are getting people who can contribute to research and publications which could possibly enhance your positioning and visibility" (Person C1, University C)

From the comment made by Person C1, it seems to suggest that the overemphasizes on research by most rankings publications is guiding who these Ghanaian public universities recruit. These comments confirm existing studies that HEIs might go to the extent of reforming their recruitment and staffing policies in order to remain competitive (Hazelkorn, 2007, 2012, 2015; Shin and Toutkoushian, 2011; Azman and kutty, 2016; Marginson, 2008). Also confirming Azman and Kutty (2016) and Marginson (2008) assertion that rankings have an implication for the promotions of academic staffs, Person D2 from University D noted that, *"publication (was)*

a prerequisite for promotion (and that) academic staffs will not just get promoted unless they engage in more publications". This statement also gives an indication the more an academic publishes the more such an academic is rewarded.

Contrary to the above assertion by the University A, University C and the University D on the impact of GURs on the staffing and recruitment policies of their institutions, the case of the University B was different. According to participants from University B, rankings played no role in their recruitment and staffing policies. For instance, Person B2 commented though HEIs needed a certain calibre of staffs for effective teaching and learning to take place,

> "teaching and research in a university, you need certain calibre of staffs, so you go in for those ones provided you have the resources to pay them. You ought not to wait for rankings schemes to be published first before you start looking for qualified lecturers. You know that the more professors you have, the better the quality of education which encapsulates the teaching process, research and a better impact on the communities. So, that one cannot be dictated to us by ranking agencies" Person B2, University B

Although this participant seems to deny the impact of GURs on the staffing and organization policies of University B, He further recognized that some higher education runs on some of the standards of GURs.

5.2.4 Impact on Quality Assurance

The IHEP (2009) suggested that regardless of the extent to which rankings do accurately measure quality, HEIs decision making regarding quality are sometimes influenced by rankings. The responses from public universities leaders in Ghana were found to be in line with this assertion as pointed out by the IHEP. According to the responses, participants admitted that rankings have shifted their attention to focus more on issues regarding quality and performance. For instance, Person B1 from University B in admitting the claim of rankings impact on the quality assurance processes of his university noted;

> "…whether we like it or not, rankings are actually seen as tools measuring the quality and performance of most universities. Students, employers, the media and even the state authorities turn to believe in their publications as a true reflection of the quality that institutions provides. Although from within, we can say that some of the indicators used by these rankings do not have anything to do with the measurement of academic quality, we are guided by that impression created by rankings and try to enhance our quality of teaching, research works and publications".

Similarly, Person D from University D, indicated that the quality assurance processes of the university have been impacted by rankings because of the over reliance by various stakeholders especially donors.

> "Rankings is a tool used by most stakeholders to check how various institutions are performing. We are in a competitive field and even though from the Ghanaian perspective, the competition level among the public universities for students might be seen to be low, donors rely heavily on such publications. They will want to know what level of quality we provide as an institution before the provide resources for us to undertake certain research tasks on their behalf. As a result, rankings might play a role. So, we are committed to improve our quality. We have the quality assurance unit within the university that constantly give the opportunity to students to appraise their lecturers. From these surveys, we are able as an institution to internally evaluate our staffs and organize periodic training programmes for them to improve" Person D2, University D

Largely, data gathered was indicative of the fact that the quality assurance processes of the universities are anchored on certain specific principles. These were identified as rigorous and comprehensive coverage in evaluations, internal and external peer review, staff and student involvement, rapid and effective feedback and evidence based assessment. Whilst these standards were fully acknowledged by all, a close assessment reveal that the degree to which these gains have been made especially in relation to quality of teaching staff, examinations, assessment of students for admission, assessment of teaching of courses and student evaluation of teaching are not uniform. Perhaps differences in resource level as was frequently the case may partially account for this.

5.2.5 Impact on Resource Mobilization and Allocation

One other aspects of HEIs that research has identified the impact of GURs is the mobilizations and allocations of resources. According to Kehm (2014) there is a positive relationship between rankings and resource mobilization - the higher the university ranking, the likely it will attract more resources. In the case of Ghana this claim by Kehm was found out to be most profound in terms of resource mobilization from donor agencies than it is from government as summed up by the statements below;

> "For donor agencies, yes because they focus on reputation, capabilities, skills, systems, and structures of an institution before deciding to support" Person B2, University B

> "I am not aware of anything like that. What I am aware of is that, government is only responsible for the payment of staff salaries and other emoluments".

While other participants denied the impact of rankings on the mobilization (external allocation) from the central government, some informants expressed their concerns as to why government is not investing more in its universities when they expect higher performance from them. Moving on from mobilization to allocation, the focus of discussion is how these external allocations are internally disbursed (internal allocations).

On the issue of internal allocation of resources, several studies have suggested that rankings have the tendency to skew internal allocation of resources to fields or departments which have the potential of enhancing their institutional positioning. This was specifically pointed out in the literature reviewed for this study. As a result, institutional allocations are also most likely to be impacted in the process. Analysis of findings and review of official support both supported this kind of impact on only one institution- University A. Person A2 from University A indicated that the university have over the past two years invested highly internally as noted *"I can tell you that two years ago we invested very heavily internally, I can't tell you how much, but a lot of money was pumped into science equipment and our laboratories. Something which is unprecedented in the history of this university"*. Although Person A2 was unable to mention the exact amounts invested into the various units or aspects of the university, a cursory look into University A's research report revealed that, out of a total of USD 52.5Million allocated, USD 18.7 million went to the college of applied and basic sciences, USD 17.6 million to the college of humanities, USD 16.2 million to the college of health sciences and only USD 4000 to the college of education (University A Research Report, 2014/2015, p.8).

As shown above, the rationale behind the recent emphasis on science anchors on the university's new focus of becoming a world class research intensive university as clearly reiterated in the official institutional report. All the other universities dismissed the impact on ranking on internal allocation of funding. The reason was simple: internal allocations are based on the number of student each department is able to admit. This brings us to the next point, the impact of ranking on student admission.

5.2.6 Impact on Admissions

Admissions is another key aspect of HEIs that research has shown that rankings impacts is apparent. The IHEP (2009) through their issue brief indicated how rankings generally influenced the admissions processes and behaviours of most institutions especially in the USA. Although research has revealed the impact of rankings on the admission processes of most

universities, this study found out that the profoundness is mostly on international admissions. According to Person C2 from University C, *"on international student admissions, I will say somehow it plays a role. We are trying to increase the international diversity of our university and our programmes. This is one of the keys indicators used for times higher education rankings".* Five out of the ten informants generally said rankings played a significant role in terms of their universities approach on international students.

On the issue of admission of local students however, there was divergent opinion of the impact of rankings. Whereas all universities indicated that, they had special admissions requirement which differs from the national entry requirements, two out of the four universities admitted the impact of rankings on the admissions of local students. Contrary to the assertion by IHEP (2009) participants from university A and University B dismissed the impact of rankings on the admission behaviour and process of his university. Person B1 posited that, *"We (referring to University B) have our standards which we call cut off points and that ensures that the students selected are of good academic standing. These standards are not in any way shaped by rankings".* Interesting for this study was how each institution could have their own admission criteria for admitting local students, but have divergent views of the impact of rankings in coming out with such criteria's. The only explanation that could be suggestive of the reasons why the admissions processes of University A and University B might not be impact by rankings, the perceive standards attributed to these two universities by students as the best in the country. Whereas University C and D might be concerned because they know of the potential benefits their attractiveness to the local students might do for them.

In conclusion, it is clear from the findings that although the impact of rankings is well noted by the various public universities in Ghana, its impact depends on the aspect of their institutional life. It is also suggestive of the findings that the impact of rankings varies from university to university as the various institutional dynamics such as; history, focus, core mandate among the rest plays an instrumental role in the way they are shaped by rankings.

5.3 How Ghanaian Public Universities are Responding to the Impact of Rankings

The main thrust of this study as indicated in the introduction section was to explore how public universities in Ghana responded to the growing impact of GURs. As a result, this section delves

into the various strategies and measures adopted by the ensuing universities in responding to the impact of GURs. Although, the findings from the previous section of this chapter revealed that the impact of rankings on the various universities varied a bit from university to university, interview data suggested that public universities in Ghana were both consciously or unconsciously adopting measures in response to influence of GURs. Such behavioural responses could be categorized under Oliver's (1991) acquiescence strategy. Although the acquiescence strategy was mostly seen as the dominant strategy adopted, the compromise strategy was also subtly used in some situations.

Per the findings of this study, measures such as: (1) enhancement of internationalization policy, (2) establishment of special monitoring and evaluation units or committees, (3) enforcement of recruitment and staffing policies, (4) establishment of institutional research repositories, (5) focus on publications in high impact journals were some of the measures adopted either consciously or unconsciously (Oliver, 1991).

5.3.1 Establishment of Specialized Monitoring and Evaluation Units

Generally, responses by participants from three out of the four public universities in Ghana confirmed assertion by Hazelkorn (2015) who said GURs impact sometimes leads to the establishment of special units within HEIs to monitor, collect and analyse institutional data as. According to these respondents, their various universities have at least one specialized unit or committee task to monitor and advice the university on issues relating to yearly publications on rankings. For instance, Person A2 from University A in responding to the measures adopted by the university in responding to the impact of GURs claimed that; *"We have a unit called **Institutional Research and Planning Office (IRPO)** which puts our basic statistics together. That unit [IRPO] works with all the units of the University to get information that will be made available for rankings purposes."*. Whereas the work of the IRPO is to make available data to the various rankings institutions, Person A1 from the same university added that the university because of its desire to be among the top 20 universities in Africa by 2024 has also established a committee whose responsibility is to compliment efforts of the IRPO and the Office of Research, Innovation and Development (ORID). According to Person A1, the committee's role is to;

> "monitor these (referring to rankings) publications, do a serious review of their indicators and suggest to the university what the way forward is. So, if a committee

has been setup purposely for rankings, then it tells you how important University A has come to accept them" Person A1, University A

Similarly, the following responses from University B and C gives an indication of deliberate efforts been adopted by their institutions.

"the University C has a Directorate of Research, Innovation and Consultancy (DRIC) as well as Academic Quality Assurance Unit (AQAU)which together have been tasked to monitor the various ranking schemes and then get the community informed about their criteria, what they use so that it will also inform our strategies. They [referring to the DRIC and AQAU] look at the rankings indicators and try to analyse them and communicate to us for the way forward" Person C2, University C.

"Currently there is a committee that has been set up to look at the various ranking systems and advice the university on what to do to improve on its work as well as positioning on these ranking systems. This committee has been established under the office of the pro vice chancellor of the university. The pro vice chancellor equally serves as the chairperson of the committee" Person B, University B

These responses support Hazelkorn (2015) claim that institutional responses towards the impact of GURs may lead to the establishment of specialized units to accurately collect and analyse institutional data. In line with the work of the committee, the findings also indicated that these units or committees established have been bounded to some specific ranking systems which should be some specific rankings systems. In the case of University A and B, participants highlight the Times Higher Education Supplement (THES), the Quacquarelli Symonds and Webometrics as the ranking systems which the university has resolved to work with. However, participants from University C indicated that, the priority of the DRIC and AQAU to was specifically monitor the THES, Webometrics and ARWU world rankings system. Data from these universities seem to suggest a pattern whereby THES and Webometrics seem to be the most preferable choices of most universities including university D who has no specialized unit to monitor rankings.

In contrast, participants from University D acknowledge the importance of GURs in shaping higher education indicated that there was no such measure in place to monitor the various ranking systems and advice the institutions on the way forward. According to participants from University D, the notice of the ranking of the university is mostly brought to the attention of management by unconventional sources; students, alumnus, individual institutional leaders among others. In responding to the reasons behind this mode of monitoring, Person D1 from University D noted:

> "We are far behind in terms of the physical infrastructure development of the school, so that is our major priority though we desire to be ranked high. However, we need to take things one at a time, and taking things at a time means we need to get our priorities right. As I said before, ranking is our priority, but we have other far more pressing issues that deserves immediate response from us" Person D1, University D

The response of this participant suggests that even though rankings remains a priority of the university, they saw the infrastructural deficit of the university as pressing issue that deserves the attention of the university and as a result can't afford establishing a special unit now. This seems to suggest that, unlike the three other universities were the acquiesce strategy seems to be one strategic measure, University D are adopting the compromise strategy in responding GURs in terms of establishing a special unit.

5.3.2 Recruiting High Caliber Academic and Teaching Staffs

Another response strategy adopted by the various institutions towards responding to the impact of rankings was the conscious commitment to recruiting high calibre academic and teaching staffs. All participants indicated that their various universities recognize the importance of having top notch academic and teaching staffs and their contribution to quality research and teaching which eventually impacts an institutional rank. Based on this, the various public universities noted that to revisit and modify dormant policies which dwelled upon the recruitment and staffing related issues of the university. Generally, the findings revealed that all the four universities were committed in enforcing their policies which clearly stated the minimum recruitment requirement to a PhD degree. That is, though the various public universities had the minimum academic requirement for recruiting academic staffs, it was found out that they were not adequately enforced in the past as a result of lack of teaching and research staffs. However, most participants indicated that their universities had revisited such policies which were dormant. According to Person A1 from the University A;

> "What we are doing is to recruit highly experienced and qualified academic and teaching staffs. Although this is not something new in terms of our recruitment policy, it has become necessary because of the new vision of the university. So, what this basically means is that if you don't have a PhD, the university is not going to recruit you for a teaching and research position…and that goes to one of the ranking indicators. The ratio of your faculties, teachers with PhD against the number of students you have" Person A1, University A.

This view was equally shared by the other participants from the other universities. However, the findings equally indicated that, apart from academic qualifications, these universities were also looking at the publications and experiences of the staffs they bring into their universities.

> Most of the time we look at your qualification, we look at your publications, teaching experience and even for some faculties, it is must you deliver a lecture. A panel will be constituted, and you will deliver a lecture to demonstrate how good you are. And this will be determined by the team constituted by the university. Because whatever you do in that lecture, it is an epitome of how your class sessions will look like. And so, if it emerges that you are not suitable although you have met our minimum requirement, you will not be recommended" Person C2, University C

Justifying the motive behind the revisiting this dormant policy, Person A2 from University A maintained that, *"any forward-looking institution will not just be recruiting for the sake of recruiting but would be looking forward to bringing in academic staffs who would add value to service it delivers as an institution"*. This response seems shows the deliberateness of the university in taking measures because of demands in improving its institution ranking. This behavioural reaction falls in line with the acquiesce strategy as espoused by Oliver (1991). It also confirms the findings of Hazelkorn (2015, 2009) and Shin and Toukoushian (2011) assertion that that HEIs in bid to respond to the impact of GURs are most likely to relook at their recruitment and promotion policies. In the case of University A, Person A1 gave an example of how academic and teaching staffs with masters degrees were given a deadline and sponsorship to pursue PHD programmes before returning back to continue the teaching and research duties. It was equally revealing when one of the participants suggested to me that even though they need lecturers for their faculty of educations, I could not be considered until I attain a PhD degree. This was revealing because it shows how strict these universities have become about such a requirement.

Apart from the reliance on qualification, publications and experience, most of the participants also indicated the commitment of the universities in bringing in international staffs either as visiting or permanent scholars. Person A2 from University A suggested that, the university mostly consider visiting professors from highly reputable HEIs. She notes; *"Most of our visiting scholars come from institutions of high repute as far as ranking is concerned. For instance, some visiting lecturers over the years come from Cape Town University and university of Stellenbosch which are leading on the continental level (Africa)"*. Although, Person A2 recognizes the contribution of such a measure in improving the international diversity criteria of some of the rankings, Person B2 from University B indicated that the motive behind such a

measure was not because of improving it rank. Although this response seems to be opposed that of Person A2, they both fall within the under the acquiesce strategy (Oliver, 1991) were the actions of organizations could be either deliberate or unconscious.

5.3.3 Establishment of a Research Repository and Encouraging Publications in High Impact Journals

Another measure that was clearly seen to be consciously adopted by all four public universities was the establishment of an institutional research repository and the focus on high impact journal publications by academic and research staffs. According to responses, the objective for the establishment of the institution research repository was to enable the universities to be able to collect and preserve scholarly writings emanating from their institutions. The following responses by Participants from University B and D summed up the findings on the setting up of institutional repositories;

> "What we are doing now is to publish all masters and PhD thesis online. Students after submitting hard copies equally submit softcopies as well. These softcopies are then put on the university's repository. This is what people will cite. This is a move away from the traditional system of only relying on the hardcopy submission. Moving on to this system will make us visible" Person D1, University D.

> "As a university, we are now concerned about our research work and how they are made available online. We have come out with a research repository in our library system. So, now we are more serious with collating and getting the various departments to submit their research works to be put together in the repository and made available in a sought of open access systems where other researchers and students could have access to them". Person B2, University B.

According to the various participants, such a measure like the institutional repository will help boost the research visibility of the university which in the long round will boost its positioning. This was specifically pointed out by Person D1 from University D as he noted, *"For example, we know that publications and citations are a key parameter used by these ranking systems, so the idea of a repository will make visible our research work out there which will ultimately improve our citations".*

Another key measure adopted by these universities in response to GURs was the encouragement and/or issuance of directives for the publications of research output in high impact journals as well as attending international conferences to present their research papers. Whereas in some institutions, staffs were encouraged to publish in high impact journals, in other institutions such encouragements came in a form of a directive.

"Currently, that is an ongoing discussion now and a lot of units are compiling their own publications outlets. So, in as part of the guidelines, you need to look at journals that are indexed into Scopus for example. Because, most of the ranking institution uses Scopus. That is, they are compiling it. So, you look at journals that are indexed in Scopus database because and we hope with time, as we keep publishing in this target high impact factor journals linked to Scopus, that will also help shoot our publication output and our citations as well" Person A1, University A

"For instance, one of the things that have come out now, is the vision of the vice chancellor. Every faculty must be visible on google scholar. Because he (Vice Chancellor) thinks that, and then we have also decided that every faculty must be hooked onto the university's website. And then we should use official emails as a way of getting ourselves visible and I think in all universities there are now a targeted monitoring scheme. Because, every university wants to be seen as moving up the ladder"- Person C2, University C

The setting up of a research repository as well as encouraging academic and research staffs to publish in high impact journals confirms the acquiesce strategy at work (Oliver, 1991). These responses also indicate the consciousness of the sampled HEIs towards addressing indicator specific issues of the various ranking systems. It also corroborates exciting literature as indicated that, institutions in response to rankings sometimes focuses on how to improve the visibility of their research output by encouraging their staffs to publish in high impact journals (Hazelkorn, 2015; IHEP, 2009; Rauhuagers, 2013).

5.3.4 Enhancing internationalization policy

The final strategic measure that was seen adopted by the four public universities in responding to the impact of GURs was to deliberate effort to enhance their internationalization policy. Although some institutions indicated that, the issue of internationalization has always been the priority of their universities even before the emergence of GURs, they indicated that, the commitment to which such a policy was driven has changed drastically. They also noted that, even though such a policy was created without no intention of GURs, they could observe its coincidental relationship with some of the indicators as used by the rankings schemes. The findings showed that the rationale behind the internationalization policies of the various institutions were driven by similar objectives; enhancing international visibility and outlook of the universities. Based on this rationale, several measures were seen adopted to achieve the respective internationalization goals. These measures included and are not restricted to institutional collaborations and partnerships in research, and students and staff exchange programmes.

Generally, all four institutions admitted that several efforts have been adopted to create strategic relationship with highly reputable HEIs both within the continent of Africa and Abroad. Person A1 from the University A remarked that the University A "*have had a lot of MOU's with other institutions. A lot of these MOU's address areas such as faculty and students exchange*". According to this participant, such institutional exchange programmes will help expose and make the university visible to the international world. She noted that peer to peer recommendations based on these collaborations will be enhance the reputation of the university especially when students come and experience the academic and social environment of University A. According to Person A2, the university in line with such institutional collaborations has designed what they called the *'special admissions'* and the *'occasional admissions'* programmes for international students visiting for short periods of time. When asked about the rationale behind the special and occasional admissions, Person A2 responded that, it was a measure to increase the international student's numbers within the university.

Similarly, these responses from Person D1 from University D and Person B2 from University B furthers the point as expressed by person A1 from University A.

> "the relevance of institutional collaborations or partnership is to enhance our international reputation and visibility. This is one important way we can be globally recognised. We have a lot of institutional partnerships and collaborations with focus on joint research programmes, and student exchanges. The few international students we have here are as a result of such agreements" Person D1, University D

Person B2 from the University B iterated that:

> "We understand that, having collaborations with highly reputable international institutions is a key factor considered by ranking institutions. They equally look at the presence of students and academic staffs within your institution. Basically, they want to know how international your institution is. These are very key because they are some of the factors used in coming out with the rankings. As a university, we also encourage our faculties and academic members or senior members to have collaborations and invite international scholars to either come to work with us permanently or to come for a short period. Some maybe on fellowships, we do usually encourage them to come and when they come we make sure that they will enjoy their stay and they will also encourage or convince others to come as well".

These responses confirm claims that HEIs responses to the impact of rankings might take the form of enhancing their collaboration and partnership efforts especially with institutions of international repute (Hazelkorn, 2007, 2015; IHEP, 2009; Bernasconi and Véliz (2016). However, although from the responses above it appeared that the sampled universities are very committed in increasing the international students on their campuses, some institutions

indicated that their effort were been curtailed because of inadequate infrastructures and resources to make life easier for such international students. This point was made by Person C1 from University C who indicated that;

> "the centre for international education for instance is trying to make sure that structures are put in place for foreign students. One of the challenges we had was descent accommodation for our international students, but now we have this new hostel where it is fairly decent to be used by them".

This concern was equally raised by participants from University B and D. According to Person D2 from University D, decent accommodation was a major challenge confront the university's effort in pursuing a rigorous internationalization campaign. He therefore re-emphasizes what was said about the comparison of oranges to apples and indicated that, though the desire might be there, those with adequate resources and infrastructures are able to succeed on the various ranking systems.

5.3.5 Concluding Remarks

Conclusively, the chapter presented the findings, analysis and discussion of the study. Generally, the findings of the study revealed that whereas individual university leaders perceived the role of GURs in shaping higher education as both positive and negative, its impact on the strategic planning and positioning, institutional collaborations and quality assurance was admitted by informants from all four public universities. The findings also showed that, these universities were also strategically responding to the impact of GURs by establishing special monitoring and evaluating units, research repositories, embarking on massive internationalization campaigns and recruiting high calibre academic professionals. The preceding chapter provides the conclusion of the study, profess policy recommendation and future possible research guidance to prospective researchers.

6 Summary, Conclusion and Recommendations

This chapter presents a summary of findings, conclusions, and recommendations emanating from the study. The chapter culminates by providing suggestions on research avenues that future research can explore.

6.1 Conclusion

Global university rankings despite their methodological flaws and associated challenges have been portrayed by several researchers as instrumental devices shaping the global landscape of higher education. Emerging with a nation-specific emphasizes, rankings have grown beyond the borders of their originating countries and penetrated sovereign states providing mainly vital consumer information to both governments, donors and HEIs about general. Ever since their emergence, several studies have been conducting to assess issues relating to their indicators, impact on students, HEIs and most prominently the responses of HEIs towards GURs. Existing research findings especially at the institutional level have mostly indicated the profundity of GURs impact on the identity and strategic decision making of most HEIs globally. Other findings have also revealed how institutional leaders and sometimes state governments have adopted strategic measures in responding to the impact of rankings either by completely abstaining from them or including them into the priority list of the institutions. However, underlying these studies are evidence mostly from countries with more representation on the ranking tables or institutions that mostly find themselves featuring in the yearly publications of GURs. As a result, recent studies have begun investigating the phenomena from the perspective of countries with little or no representation.

For this reason, the purpose of this study was to determine the perceptions of public universities' leadership towards GURs, examine the impact of GURs on public universities in Ghana and to explore their institutional responses towards the impact of GURs. Given the complexity of the subject matter, this study through qualitative case study approach carefully selected informants who were well informed about the issues relating to GURs and were as of the time of the study, in strategic leadership positions of their respective universities with direct involvement with issues relating to GURs.

Based on this, participants demonstrated high level of understanding on issues relating to global university rankings and their role in shaping higher education globally. The outcome of the study showed some mix perceptions – both positive and negative among the sampled Ghanaian public universities leadership towards global university rankings. The study found that per the viewpoints of participants who perceived rankings as positive, issues such as benchmarking, competition, influence students' choice of universities, and quality delivery of services generally informed their perceptions. On the contrary, those who expressed negative misgivings about GURs mostly pointed out the methodological inaccuracies and biases to buttress their claims and views. They could not comprehend why GURs are seeking to measure higher education institutions from diverse backgrounds and complexities. To them, until GURs institutions adopt cross-cutting indicators for the purposes of coming out with fair publications, they will continue to compare *"oranges to apple"*.

Despite the differences in individual views as expressed by the various participants, the findings indicated that HEIs or the sampled public universities in Ghana were concerned about GURs and as a result they form part of the priorities of these universities. Although, there was no governmental policy at the national level on rankings, the findings generally show that Ghanaian public universities were/are impacted by GURs. According to participants, GURs have both direct and indirect impact on their universities with the former being dominant. In some instances, participants denied the impact of GURs. Generally, participants admitted to the impact of GURs on the areas such as strategic positioning and planning, recruitment and promotion, quality assurance, re-source allocation, admissions, and institutional collaborations. However, the study found that the impact of global university rankings was most profound on strategic positioning and planning, institutional collaborations, resource mobilization from donor agencies and quality assurance as compared with such areas as resource allocation within the institutions, institutional identity, admissions, and recruitment and promotion decision making of their respective universities.

As a result of the impact, this study finally sought to ascertain the strategic responses of the various universities towards GURs with the aid of Oliver's (1991) typology of institutional responses. In all, evidence from this study pointed out that all four public universities in Ghana per the responses by the sampled participants were/are responding to global university rankings by taking certain specific policies in various aspects of their universities. Prominent among such policies included; the establishment of specialized units and/or committees to monitor,

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evaluate and advice the universities on how to improve on their institutional positioning. Secondly, research finding also revealed that all four public universities in their quest to improve their institutional outlook, have resolved to target high calibre academic and research staffs. By so doing, all four universities had to revisit and enforce their dormant policies on the requirement for recruiting high calibre teaching and research staffs.

A Further step to responding to rankings is witnessed in the areas of research, teaching and publications. To complement these, the findings revealed that specific steps such as the establishment of institutional repositories, increasing graduate intake, and sponsoring faculty research and conferences were such measures consciously adopted. Other responses found are also promoting accountability and quality assurance through peer review mechanisms, admitting high performing students, and increasing the number of international students.

Finally, although some universities indicated that issues of internationalization were on the agenda of their universities prior to the advent of GURs, the generally concurred participants from other universities that they have intensified the efforts in collaborating and partnering with other reputable universities around the world.

Though rankings can sometimes be interpreted differently by various universities reflecting, a degree of obscureness, the evidence in this study suggests that such drawbacks do not really prevent universities from responding to them. Even considering that rankings provide a rough and minimal reflection of quality, they nonetheless give the opportunity of determining whether a particular policy is effective and efficient. Based on the study, it is concluded that the universities selected have directly and indirectly conceded to this notion. It may therefore be argued that a better approach to viewing rankings should begin from the recognition that, all rankings are partial in scope have inherent biases, and purpose driven. But in practice, despite these, the public universities selected in Ghana acknowledge that rankings have changed the context in which universities function and are consequently embracing the fact that it is more important to improve performance in aspects of the university measured by rankings.

Overall, the findings of the study demonstrate that rankings incentivize universities to begin improving their systems by making them aware that as educational institutions, they must live up to the practices of similar institutions elsewhere in the world. Rankings indeed, have encouraged higher educational institutions, in the context of this study, Ghanaian public universities that conventionally do not provide evidence of their performance in certain key

areas of practice to consider not only who they are but also how they might demonstrate that they are developing and improving. Ghanaian public universities have begun to develop their own systems for assessing the quality of learning and teaching which incorporates best of the observed global practices while ensuring that these meet local and national needs. This is a demonstration that the phenomenon of GURs are constantly gaining momentum and will continue to play a vital role toward shaping higher education globally per the findings of this study.

6.2 Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations are made for policy and practice. Uptake of these evidence-based measures would help improve upon the quality of education in Ghanaian public universities and enhance their ranking statuses. These recommendations should not be seen as competing but rather complementary as in general one could lead to the achievement of the other. For ranking institutions, the implications of the study on their respective rankings are also outlined as part of the recommendations.

Public universities in Ghana are urged to encourage their respective faculties to both collaborate and compete with each other to help them achieve greater level of excellence and adhere to their strategic goals. In this regard, identifying clear, agreed quantitative indicators for salient areas of business including teaching, research, learning, and knowledge transfer will be very useful.

In addition, public universities in Ghana, in order to enhance their international status must increase institutional collaborations to build networks of excellence with highly reputable HEIs globally. In line with this, Ghanaian public universities can imitate the best practices of these partner universities and replicate the best practices by localizing them to suit the institutional context.

It is further recommended that there is a national policy direction with respect to GURs. This direction will shape the overall institutional goals of all universities in the country and would eventually boost the national economy with the possible inflows of international students and staffs. It is also recommended that both government and donor agencies are further urged to support public universities as some often lack resources. Indeed, there is often a disconnect between wishes and realities in the context of some public universities. Resourcing public

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universities, particularly that which are lees endowed can enhance their efforts towards improving upon the level of education which would subsequently enhance their ranking status.

6.3 Suggestions for Further Research

As noted earlier, the study has some limitations and therefore to shed more understanding on global university rankings, this section of the study provides suggestions on future research avenues. First to increase the generalizability, in other words, the external validity of the findings of the study, it is recommended that future research should explore the perspectives of other public universities and even more so other private universities not incorporated in the study.

In addition, it is recommended that future studies should investigate the views of other staff such as lecturers and faculty administrators and students as the respondents of the study were largely drawn from the perspectives of personnel at the strategic level of the universities selected. Such a research endeavour would help share a deep understanding of the impact of ranking and the challenges it poses to universities.

 Again, the study suggests that further research should explore the viewpoints and attitudes of the leadership of the state on its position of global university rankings. This is in line with a comment made by one participant to the effect that if the government wanted its universities to perform and position themselves well on GURs publications, it should increase its funding to HEIs within the country. In line with this the Ministry of education, the Minister of state in charge of Tertiary education, the National Accreditation Board and the National Council of Tertiary Education could be possible target for further studies.

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Appendices

Appendix

Appendix 1: Interview Guide

Introductory Questions

- How do you think global rankings influence higher educational institutions globally?

- On a scale from zero (0) to ten (10) with ten been the highest priority, where would you place rankings as an institutional priority? And why?

Understanding Rankings in Ghanaian Context

- *How do institutions make sense of global rankings of universities?*

- How do you understand the role rankings play in shaping higher education institutions?

- How do your university interpret rankings? Or how do your University interpret its positioning on these rankings?

- How concerned has the university become with regards to the proliferations of global rankings?

Assessing the impact of GURs

- How important are the global ranking metrics in influencing policy making of the university?

- How do your University monitor its institutional progress on these ranking systems? (What).

- *How do global rankings impact decision-making of universities? (strategic positioning and planning, staffing and organization, quality assurance, Resource allocation, Fundraising, and admissions and financial aid.*

- What evaluation systems have been implemented to help reach institutional goals specifically improving their rankings?

- How do global ranking influence Institutional collaboration?

- How are global rankings influencing academic staff recruitment and promotion policies?

- Do rankings influences budget and resource allocation of the university to the various faculties, departments, centres and units of the university? If yes, please provide a few examples.

- In what ways do global rankings influences policy direction towards teaching and learning?

- What role does rankings system play towards boosting the research capabilities of the University?

- How do global rankings play a role in the admissions process of the university?

Appendix 2: Consent for Participation in this Research
The Study

I volunteer to participate in this research project conducted by Reuben Plance, a masters student from the Department of Education, University of Oslo, Norway. I understand that, this project is designed to gather information about the influence of global rankings on Ghanaian public universities. I will be one of the approximately 8 people who would be interviewed for this research from four sampled public universities in Ghana (University of Ghana, Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology, University of Cape Coast and University of development Studies).

Your rights

➢ My participation in this project is voluntary. I understand that I will not be paid for my participation in this study. I may withdraw and discontinue participation at any time without explanation.

➢ If I feel uncomfortable in any way during the process of answering the questions, I have the right to decline to answer any question or to end it.

➢ Participation in this project involves approximately 30-45 minutes interview with the researcher.

➢ I understand that this interview would be recorded and would be used only to serve the purpose of the study.

➢ I understand that the researcher will not identify me by name in any reports using information obtained from this interview, and that my confidentiality as a participant in this study will remain secure. Subsequent uses of data will be subjected to standard data use policies which protect the anonymity of individuals and institutions.

➢ Faculty and administrators from my University would not have access to the interview I provide in this study. This precaution will prevent my individual comments from having any negative repercussions.

➢ I have read and understood the explanation provided to me. I have had all my questions answered to my satisfaction, and I voluntarily agree to participate in this study.

➢ I have been given a copy of this consent form.

_____   _____

 Signature   Date (Respondent)

_____   _____

Signature   Date (Researcher)

For further information, please contact: reubenp@student.uv.uio.no +4740991997