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Tertiary Education Policy in Ghana

An Assessment: 1988–1998

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TERTIARY EDUCATION POLICY IN GHANA:
An Assessment: 1988 — 1998

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ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS USED

AAU	Association of African Universities
AVU	African Virtual University
CDR	Committees for the Defence of the Revolution
COPP	Committee of Polytechnic Principals
CSPIP	Civil Service Performance Improvement Programme
CVCP	Committee of Vice-Chancellors and Principals
FTE	Full-time Equivalent
GoG	Government of Ghana
HND	Higher National Diploma
ICT	Information and Communication Technologies
IDA	International Development Association
ISSER	Institute for Statistical, Social and Economic Research
JAMB	Joint Admissions and Matriculation Board
MOE	Ministry of Education (from 1993)
MOEC	Ministry of Education and Culture (pre-1993)
MTEF	Medium Term Expenditure Framework
NAB	National Accreditation Board
NABPTEX	National Board for Professional and Technical Examinations
NCHE	National Council for Higher Education
NCTE	National Council for Tertiary Education
NDC	National Democratic Congress
NDPC	National Development Planning Commission
NICTR	National Implementation Committee on Tertiary Reform
NIRP	National Institutional Renewal Programme
NUGS	National Union of Ghanaian Students
OHCS	Office of the Head of the Civil Service
PEF	Private Employers Federation
PNDC	Provisional National Defence Council
PUFMARP	Public Finance Management Reform Programme
RECAAST	Regional Colleges of Applied Arts, Science and Technology
SSNIT	Social Security and National Insurance Trust
TEIs	Tertiary Education Institutions
TEP	Tertiary Education Project
UDS	University of Development Studies (University of the North)
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
URC	University Rationalisation Committee

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1. Introduction

This study was prepared as one of several activities undertaken at the conclusion of a five-year World Bank/Government of Ghana project, the Tertiary Education Project (TEP). The project was designed to assist the Government of Ghana with the restructuring and quality enhancement of its tertiary education sector, after a prolonged period of underfunding and decline. Implementation took place over the period 1993-98.

An ambitious reform programme had been prepared by the previous Ghanaian Government. This programme – which was widely-acclaimed internationally – formed the basis of the TEP. However, despite apparently strong initial Government commitment to the agreed policy framework and the actions necessary to achieve sustainable improvement, implementation experience was mixed. At the conclusion of the TEP, many of the key policy agreements had been either reversed, apparently forgotten, or only partially implemented. The crucial balance between enrollment growth and the levels of financing available to ensure improved academic quality – the core objective of the reform programme – had not been achieved. Thus, although the groundwork for the implementation of a number of complex reforms has been undertaken, it seems very likely that the gains made over previous years will be jeopardised if this imbalance between the level of financing available and expansion of enrollments continues.

The purpose of the study was therefore to provide an external reflective perspective on the effectiveness of the policies currently in place, and to suggestions possible reasons for failure to implement agreed key policies. Recommendations for consideration during the next phase of policy development were also made, and are included in sections 10-14 of the main paper.

It is suggested overall that the most significant factors to have influenced the progress of policy implementation include: (1) the breadth and complexity of the policy agenda, particularly where Ghanaian policy concerns extended beyond the priorities established by the Tertiary Education Project; (2) desired sectoral development objectives, and the Government's ability to finance or prioritise these; (3) the structural constraints impeding implementation, including administrative capacity and resource allocation mechanisms; (4) emerging political processes, and the transition from a military to a civilian government (and the consequent need for Government to respond more visibly to the competing demands of civil society); and (5) closely related to this, the evolving relationships between the Government and the tertiary education sector, which led to the continuing testing and re-definition of institutional and sectoral autonomy.

2. Structure of the reform programme

The preliminary policy framework was drawn up over the period 1986-88 by the University Rationalisation Committee (URC), a Government-appointed committee, headed by the PNDC Deputy Secretary with responsibility for higher education. The proposed reforms fell into four main areas: (1) unification of the existing institutions into a co-ordinated tertiary education system,

and the establishment of new bodies and mechanisms to provide system management and control; (2) measures to ensure the system's overall financial sustainability (including cost-recovery, cost-sharing with both students and the private sector, a norm-based approach to institutional management, and a new block grant funding mechanism); (3) measures to improve the quality and relevance of Ghanaian tertiary education; and, finally, (4) significant expansion of the tertiary education system as a whole, to meet the demands of school leavers and the needs of employers, and to provide greater opportunity of access to those previously denied it (whether through poverty or gender). Expansion was to be achieved firstly by upgrading existing post-secondary institutions to polytechnic or university college status, and secondly by considerably increased institutional enrollment.

3. Translation from policy framework to the Tertiary Education Project (1993-98)

The policy framework recommended by the URC was subsequently re-formulated as a White Paper, *Reforms to the Tertiary Education System* (1991). This served to clarify the Government's commitment to the new policies both within Ghana and beyond it. The White Paper also formed the basis of the policy agreements underpinning the TEP.

Project objectives: It was anticipated that the project's primary impact would be that of 'improvement of quality in the processes of teaching and learning' (*Staff Appraisal Report*, 6.1, p. 39). More broadly, its development objectives were designed to reflect those of the Government's own policy agenda:

- to reverse system deterioration, falling standards, and the declining quality of education;
- to expand access to tertiary education;
- to establish a stable and sustainable basis for the financing of tertiary education; and
- to create institutional capacities for quality monitoring and policy evaluation in the tertiary education sector.

Policy agreements: A number of policy goals were agreed between GoG and IDA to ensure the sustainability of the project's development objectives. These included: control over expansion of student numbers; the implementation of cost-recovery measures; adoption of gender ratios for incoming students; the use of staff:student ratios as a mechanism for managing staffing levels within the institutions; satisfactory functioning of the existing student loan scheme (in a manner which would permit both cost-sharing and cost-recovery, whilst still maintaining equitable access); and finally, control and/or maintenance of the level of Government spending on tertiary education, to ensure that quality could be sustained. This last point was viewed at the outset of the project as *control* of expenditure, as it had been anticipated that expansion of student numbers might result in a substantial escalation of costs.

Implementation and outcomes: After a series of initial policy reforms introduced by the PNDC prior to the signing of the World Bank loan agreement, slippage quickly occurred in a number of key policy areas. In the event, rather than rising, Government spending on tertiary education actually *declined* by one-fifth of the former proportion of educational expenditure, dropping from 15% of the education budget to 12% for much of the duration of the project. Expansion of student numbers however was rapid (an 80% increase in enrollments over the duration of the project). The

number of polytechnics rose from six to eight (and was projected to rise to ten), despite persistent and serious underfunding. Expenditure per FTE student fell from an average of almost US $2,500 a year per university student in 1990, to approximately US $900 in 1997; and from US $180 a year in the polytechnic sector (already a matter of concern) to about US $74 in 1997. This is believed to be insufficient for credible tertiary education. Cost-sharing and cost-recovery mechanisms were not fully-implemented. To the extent that they were, this rarely resulted in any significant financial benefit to the institutions. Further, until 1998, if institutions *were* able to generate additional income, this was deducted from subsequent funding allocations. At the conclusion of the TEP, the student loan scheme had generated a deficit of US $ 16 million for the public purse (with no apparent equity benefits), and its conditions for viability had not yet been addressed. Structural constraints within the public sector meant that the block grant mechanism had not been implemented, and the tertiary education institutions were still largely unable to undertake meaningful planning.

At its conclusion, the project was therefore evaluated as only 'marginally satisfactory'. This report considers why this should have been the case, when initial commitment and political will appeared strong, and the objectives of the Government of Ghana and the World Bank were largely congruent.

4. Scale and complexity of the policy framework

The policy agenda was broad and complex. At the outset, the Government wished not just to redress several years of underfunding, but to create a lasting structure for its tertiary education system, to improve quality and accountability, and to meet the country's needs for the next several years. This led to much-deserved international recognition. However, many of the issues which have arisen as problematic over recent years can be traced to the original design of the policy framework. This was in part because of its complexity and scale, and the difficulty of the political and administrative environment in which the project was implemented. Additionally, however, some of the policy objectives were potentially-contradictory, arising in part from a lack of clarity over key concepts (equity and quality), and thus over the balance of policy reforms needed to achieve them.

Financial assumptions: At the time of the programme's formulation, unrealistic assumptions were made about the level of finance likely to be available. Significant external resources were anticipated, including external financing (from the World Bank and other sources), an Education Fund, to be paid for by contributions levied from the private sector (viewed as the primary beneficiaries of tertiary education), as well as the additional resources which might be generated from greater efficiency and cost-effectiveness. While not quantified, it is evident that all of these were considerably over-estimated. The URC thus consciously chose to make recommendations which went well beyond the ability of the Government of Ghana to finance them.

The policy agenda was broadened to include *the ideal* and the medium- to long-term, rather than a strictly realistic programme of reform and a defined time-frame for implementation. While it was apparently intended that implementation would be phased in step with (i) implementation capacity, and (ii) financial resources, in practice, phasing of implementation appears to have been connected at least in part to political priorities, and *not* sufficiently to the availability of adequate resources.

A tendency to consider *what is desired* without sufficiently taking into account financial viability has been increasingly problematic throughout the reform programme's implementation.

Complexity of the political message. There was considerable tension within the URC between a desire for social justice on the one hand, and a desire to achieve cost-effectiveness and efficiency (and diversified financing) on the other. This appears to have resulted in neither ultimately being achieved. While these goals are in theory complementary, the preliminary steps needed to achieve sustainable financing levels may have required too great an ideological step for those to whom free tertiary education and security of employment represented the key principles of equitable public education policy.

Possibly as a result of an initial reluctance to confront such difficult choices, the changing political climate weakened the links between different aspects of the policy agenda. The PNDC Government had had the initial political strength to introduce a controversial programme of reform (as legislation at least, and some aspects of implementation). However, where it attempted to satisfy internal political contradictions through ingenuity (the student loan scheme, which was specifically designed to introduce the *principle* of cost-sharing, *without any cost to students*), the results were detrimental to the sector. In later years, the fragility of the democratic process allowed the need to promote popular reform measures (expansion) to take precedence over their consequences, which were less immediately visible (recurrent costs and a decline in quality). Overall, the political gains to be made from increasing demand through expansion has meant that this has been handled with considerably greater vigour than the introduction of the principles of cost-sharing and cost-effectiveness.

Equity. Although equity was an underlying principle of the reform programme, it was not defined as a concept. Yet there was little likelihood of its being achieved without careful definition and analysis of the options possible for pursuing it.

Quality. The URC and subsequent policy-makers did not define what was meant by academic quality, nor what would be required to assure it. Thus, it became difficult to measure its achievement (or otherwise) as implementation proceeded. Although improved pedagogical training and national accreditation were initiated, there was an apparent assumption that a greater ratio of direct expenditure on academic costs (projected to increase the funding available for academic needs) would by itself result in better teaching and learning.

Scale. The range of issues to be tackled simultaneously was broader than the national capacity to implement them, and prioritisation was insufficiently undertaken (or was dominated by political considerations). The tendency for Government to initiate too many new developments with inadequate financial or human resources appears therefore to have exacerbated an already difficult situation, and to have contributed to the persistent under-funding and declining quality currently evident in the sector.

Marginalisation of the polytechnics. Polytechnic education to meet the needs of the country for mid-level manpower was emphasised in the initial policy formulation. However, the polytechnic sector remains seriously underfunded, and the institutions rarely receive more than a small percentage of estimated needs. Expansion of the sector appears to have been undertaken on

primarily (geo)political grounds, and was initiated too rapidly for credible diploma standard education to be achieved or sustainable.

5. Political factors contributing to failure to implement policy reform

Emerging political processes and the political environment in Ghana. The period over which the reform programme took place was a time of political transition in Ghana. The transition from military to elected government occurred immediately prior to the TEP's commencement. Thus, the programme was prepared by one Government, and implemented by another. The incoming NDC Government inherited a series of complex policy agreements which it was required to introduce within a changing political environment. Political change impacted differently upon the various stages of policy formulation and implementation.

From the late-1980s, the Provisional National Defence Council (PNDC) had begun to prepare for a voluntary transition from military to civilian (elected) government, and the adoption of a new civilian constitution. Greater political participation became possible, leading to greater complexity in the public policy environment. However, political freedom was circumscribed in scope. This changing and uncertain political environment appears to have exacerbated the existing tensions between the universities (in particular) and those in Government, making the initial period of consultation, policy formulation and preliminary implementation a time of confrontation and challenge, throughout which both the legitimacy of the regime and the autonomy of the institutions were subject to regular testing and re-definition. As a result of these tensions, the work of the URC remained contentious, and the subsequent White Paper was seen to lack legitimacy.

Control and autonomy have been conflicting issues within this complex political situation. The PNDC held sufficient authority to introduce unpopular measures and to initiate reforms which transferred control away from the institutions. However, strong inter-relationships between those in Government and those in positions of institutional leadership (and the highly-political nature of tertiary education institutions in general), led to complex expectations of compliance and/or special treatment, and to a sense of betrayal when these were not forthcoming.

When the new Government (the National Democratic Congress) took office in January 1993, it was under a new Constitution. The nature of authority had changed. There was thus the need for a different style of governmental legitimacy – one based upon popular appeal to the electorate – and this appears subsequently to have contributed to the slowness of implementation of unpopular reform, particularly in the periods approaching an election or during periods of student protest. There has therefore been considerable disjunction between longstanding policy agreement, and the willingness of the new Government to accept political responsibility for announcing new and unpopular measures.

Student protest: The student population has also played an active part in political and educational events in Ghana, and it remains sensitive to issues of tertiary education policy. Government fear of student unrest has been strongly instrumental in delaying the implementation of key policy reforms, particularly in the areas of cost-sharing and cost-recovery. Although individual student leaders have appeared convinced of the need for reform, the issue remains highly-politicised. Where it has been addressed incrementally and pragmatically (de-linking of enrollment with an

automatic entitlement to accommodation) reform has been introduced most successfully. However, a lack of co-ordination between the Government and the institutions has been unhelpful. Co-ordinated consensus-building, based upon evidence and careful definition of needs and priorities, appears to have offered the best approach forward, although it must be recognised by all parties that it will take time for maturity of this process to develop.

In a more democratic environment, change, when successfully introduced, appears more likely to be sustainable, but the need for transparency and consultation has increased, particularly where resistance to reform has political origins. Reluctance to accept political responsibility for unpopular reform has held back the policy measures which would have ensured the sustainability of previous investment in the quality of education. Within the democratic environment, a danger remains that future attempts to appeal to electors by pledging financially non-viable reform may damage the tertiary education system still further.

6. Structural Constraints

Structural constraints. The structural constraints impeding implementation – arising mostly from existing public sector practice and conditions – remain significant. Yet many reforms have been introduced without taking into account the structural constraints of the public sector environment. In particular, there was initial failure to identify the pre-conditions for successful reform of sub-sectoral planning and budgeting mechanisms – particularly the extent to which change was dependent upon the co-operation of other Government departments and ministries (especially the Ministry of Finance). Recent developments within the civil service, and the introduction of the Medium Term Expenditure Framework may begin to alleviate this problem, but it remains of great structural importance.

More broadly, the structural constraints facing the reform programme have included the following: national resource allocation mechanisms (which have prevented the block funding mechanism proposed from functioning); the lack of communication or compatibility of practice between ministries; institutional planning and budgeting mechanisms; low salaries and the nature of personal allowances; and issues relating to the utilisation of existing human capacity. Lack of transparency in resource allocation processes at the national level has resulted in considerable delay to improvements in system efficiency, and has prevented the institutions from undertaking meaningful planning.

The constrained public sector environment impacts not just on the technical ability of institutions to plan, but upon their sense of autonomy and control, and their ability to determine academic priorities. Without such conditions, previous attempts to emphasise the need for cost effectiveness and efficiency – based upon international experience (largely the 1985 UK Jarratt Report on *Efficiency Studies in Universities*) – were not applicable within the Ghanaian situation.

Failure to resource the bodies established for system management and co-ordination. A further factor impeding reform has been the low level of resourcing (in financial and human terms) of the bodies established to oversee policy formulation and implementation, and to implement quality control procedures. The overarching principles of autonomy and accountability cannot function satisfactorily in the absence of guidance from such bodies.

7. Conclusion and prospect: new directions for policy development

While many of the initial policy agreements of the Tertiary Education Project have not been achieved, considerable progress has been made over the last ten years within the Ghanaian tertiary education sector. This is particularly so, given the constraints experienced. Many of the factors impeding implementation appear to have been related to the nature of the political process in Ghana – in particular, the ability or otherwise of two successive governments (and several Ministers of Education) to accept and sustain the political risk necessary to achieve policy outcomes. Other factors have included ambivalence and/or ambiguity over the primary goals of reform – and thus over the trade-offs and levels of expenditure necessary to achieve desired policy objectives (thus leading to an inability to prioritise means and ends sufficiently); and, finally, the weak public sector environment, which has made the management of effective reform impossible.

The conditions for sustainable quality improvement are not yet in place. However, there is overall recognition that change *has* taken place – albeit slowly – and, in particular, that considerable progress had been made towards achieving some of the most important aspects of the programme (the establishment of mechanisms for system management and the development of greater autonomy and accountability, key aspects of cost-recovery, notably hostel fees, preparations for block grant funding, and some management efficiencies). Recent changes – particularly institutional awareness of unit costs and the intractability of their situation under likely future funding scenarios – mean that the reform process may in future at least in part be driven by the institutions themselves. Taken together, these factors are felt to offer real prospects for improvement in achieving financial stability and educational quality for the future.

A key priority for the Ghanaian government will be that of ensuring a greater balance of funding to enrollment, whilst still seeking to promote equity. This may mean moving away from traditional options and beginning to consider the other models beginning to emerge in Africa – particularly the examples of Uganda, and other countries with a more dynamic approach to student financing. There may also be benefit in considering non-traditional (distance, part-time and flexible) provision. Student financing will need to be addressed, but solutions are beginning to emerge within Ghana itself, so that a range of options may be made available to students from differing backgrounds. The possibilities offered by the global development of Information and Communication Technologies could mean new ways of teaching, learning and accessing knowledge, although with caution regarding the overall constraints currently experienced within the country. It is suggested that polytechnic education should be a further major focus of future investment, in conjunction with efforts to ensure potential mobility between institutions and sub-sectors, and accreditation of work-based learning.

Higher Education Policy Assessment

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THE COMMONWEALTH SECRETARIAT

1. INTRODUCTION

This study comprises one of a number of activities undertaken to mark the completion of a five-year World Bank/Government of Ghana (GoG) project to assist with the restructuring and quality enhancement of the Ghanaian tertiary education system (the Tertiary Education Project/TEP). It complements (i) the detailed evaluation of national tertiary education policy objectives undertaken for the Ministry of Education by the Akyeampong Committee (1998); (ii) the report of the TEP project manager; and (iii) the formal assessment of policy implementation given in the *Aide Memoire* of the Project Completion Mission, held in September 1998.

The study provides a reflective external perspective on the effectiveness of the policies for tertiary education currently in place, and comments on the manner in which these policies were formulated and implemented. It considers the policy framework beyond the quantitative indicators selected to monitor the implementation of policy reform (as agreed between GoG and the International Development Association (IDA) prior to the commencement of the Tertiary Education Project), and suggests possible reasons for failure to implement certain agreed key policies. It also gives suggestions for consideration during the next phase of policy development.

It is recognised that the explanations given within this paper do not adequately convey the richness of the Ghanaian policy environment, nor the complexity of the causal factors. For pragmatic reasons, the scope of the paper has been limited. It is hoped that it may nonetheless provide a useful input for Ghanaian policy-makers now preparing an education sector development plan in anticipation of a possible TEP II.

The report was prepared following discussions with some of the key actors and decision-makers in the tertiary education sector over the period 1986 - 1998 (listed at Appendix One). The author was given access to considerable project documentation, including initial project preparation materials, papers prepared for the Mid-Term Review in 1995, many of the Bank mission *Aide Memoires*, and documentation prepared by the Government of Ghana. Thanks go to all those individuals listed in Appendix One, many of whom gave me considerable time at short notice, when there were many more pressing matters at hand. My particular thanks go to Victor Nortey, Esi Sutherland-Addy, Kwesi Amissah-Arthur, Daniel Akyeampong, Adrian DeHeer Amissah, Nikoi Kotey, George Afeti and Joseph Budu, as well as to William Saint for

inviting me to undertake the work. I am also grateful to the former Minister for Education, the Honorable Dr Christina Amoako-Nuama, and the Deputy Minister responsible for Higher Education, Dr Mohamed Ibn Chambas, for their willingness to discuss their views with me.

2. THE POLICY CONTEXT

2.1 Tertiary Education Policy in Ghana and the Tertiary Education Project

Within recent project literature, the following development objectives have been used to summarise the goals of the Tertiary Education Project:

- to reverse system deterioration, falling standards, and declining quality of education;
- to expand access to tertiary education;
- to establish a stable and sustainable basis for the financing of tertiary education; and
- to create institutional capacities for quality monitoring and policy evaluation in the tertiary education sector.

These points summarise the reform objectives of the Tertiary Education Project (TEP), which was designed to reflect and further the policy objectives of the Ghanaian Government. Policy formulation and implementation are however essentially dynamic and political processes, and this paper will therefore explore some of the factors which have influenced policy implementation beyond the parameters of the project itself. These include the following: (1) the breadth and complexity of the policy agenda as defined in 1986-88, particularly where Ghanaian policy concerns extended beyond the immediate priorities established by the Tertiary Education Project; (2) desired sectoral development objectives, and the country's ability to finance or prioritise these; (3) the structural constraints impeding implementation, including administrative capacity and resource allocation mechanisms; (4) emerging political processes – the transition from a military to a civilian government, and the consequent need for Government to respond more visibly to the demands of civil society (in particular those pressure groups deemed capable of destabilising governmental legitimacy); and (5) closely related to this, the evolving relationships between the Government and the tertiary education sector, characterised by the continuing testing and re-definition of institutional and sectoral autonomy.

The reform programme undertaken in the tertiary education sector from 1986-88 to the present represents a sustained attempt to define the place of tertiary education within the Ghanaian economic and political landscape. The policy framework was comprehensive, designed over a lengthy planning process, and it required substantial investment from both Government and the IDA to realise it. Considerable effort was made to bring together the disparate tertiary education institutions (TEIs) into an integrated tertiary education system; to scrutinise the sub-sector's articulation internally and externally, especially with the preliminary and intermediate cycles of education; to increase access; and to quantify the type(s) of tertiary education required. Attempts were made to structure and provide for the sector accordingly,

both within the context of national needs, and, to a certain extent, within the constraints of the national economy.

However, political and financial attention were not always sustained. After an initial series of policy reforms prior to the signing of the World Bank loan agreement, slippage has occurred in a number of key policy areas. It is apparent that there has been considerable disjunction between (i) longstanding policy agreement, and the acceptance of political responsibility for announcing new and unpopular measures; and (ii) the implied costs underlying policy decisions, and fiscal reality. While there has been no formal change in Government policy, some of the initial policy agreements have been reversed or apparently forgotten, and many of the key structural features impeding reform scarcely addressed.

As examples, the important new funding mechanisms which would have facilitated devolved budgetary control at the institutional and sectoral level – a critical aspect of the reform programme – have not yet (or have only just) been satisfactorily introduced. Student numbers have risen to an unsustainable level under current financing arrangements. The student loan scheme now generates substantial debt for Government/SSNIT stakeholders, rather than serving as a cost-sharing mechanism. The tertiary education institutions have complied only intermittently with agreed quantitative norms (there are no incentives for them to do so under current funding mechanisms, nor financial penalties for failing to do so), and the bodies which were intended to ensure policy co-ordination and quality control across the system (the National Council for Tertiary Education, the National Accreditation Board, and the National Board for Professional and Technician Examinations) are greatly under-resourced, and function only partially, if at all. Further, rather than rising uncontrollably, as had originally been feared, tertiary education's share of the education budget has in fact declined from approximately 15% at the outset of the TEP to an annual figure of about 11/12% (although if Government compensation to SSNIT for interest foregone on student loans, distance education, the cost of the scholarships scheme and the cost of the (formerly) proposed RECAAST scheme were to be included in the overall figure – as was initially calculated – spending would appear to be significantly higher). This means that expenditure per FTE of the student population is now too low to provide an adequate tertiary education. Project literature repeatedly drew attention to the decline in expenditure per FTE over the duration of the project – from almost US $2,500 a year for each university student in 1990 to approximately US $900 in 1997; and from US $180 a year in the polytechnic sector (already a matter of concern) to about US $74 in 1997. Despite gains in a number of areas, the Tertiary Education Project was therefore rated as only 'marginally successful' at its conclusion, and attainment of policy objectives intermittently deemed 'unsatisfactory' over the project's lifetime.

This report considers why it was that a programme of reform, drawn up with strong conviction by a Ghanaian Government came to be viewed by successor administrations almost as an external agenda. Despite initial strong support, many of the most important features of the policy structure were never publicly announced as Government policy, and therefore not implemented (particularly in the more contentious areas of cost-sharing and cost-recovery), or were implemented at huge cost, as with the student loan scheme. What factors have held back a programme of reform which was renowned at the outset for its clarity, the depth of analysis which underpinned it, and for the vigour with which it was initially pursued? What are the

implications for the sector as it now undertakes a process of formal reassessment and policy refinement, and consideration is given to the possibility of further external assistance?

2.2 The process of policy formulation (1986-88)

A clear vision for the future of tertiary education in Ghana was produced over the period 1986-88 by the University Rationalisation Committee (URC). The Committee's Final Report set out a creative agenda for change of significant scope and magnitude. After more than ten years, the ideas which were synthesised as policy at that time still appear relevant, and the sense of purpose which underlay the reform programme is very apparent. The fact that the 1988 framework and vision is still very much to the fore of policy considerations in Ghana at the end of the 1990s is testament to its continuing relevance. However, the process by which policy for tertiary education was drafted raises a number of issues, and may suggest in part where difficulties in implementation have lain. It is therefore given detailed consideration below.

Over the 1970s and the early 1980s a significant deterioration in conditions took place within the tertiary education sector, firstly in terms of financial provision and physical infrastructure, and secondly in the relationship between the institutions and successive civilian and military governments (Sawyerr 1994). In discussion, those who had been present at the time unanimously described the prevailing atmosphere on the campuses as depressed and degraded. Deteriorating conditions had led rapidly to low staff recruitment and retention, poor morale, an alleged decline in academic standards, regular interruptions in the academic year caused by disputes with both staff and students (sometimes resulting in military intervention), and an ongoing sense of tension and overall deterioration. Suspicion and political unease prevailed. Many staff had left to teach in Nigeria or elsewhere (at least until the forced repatriations from Nigeria in the early 1980s). Near-complete economic collapse and constant political upheaval had left the original quinquennial funding allocation system as a distant memory. By the mid-1980s, a very low level of funding (disbursed monthly in arrears) meant that academic and financial planning were virtually impossible. The institutions themselves were regularly in substantial deficit. Capital projects were initiated and subsequently abandoned, lowering morale and expectations still further.

A major re-formulation of tertiary education policy was therefore undertaken by the Provisional National Defence Council (PNDC) in the late-1980s, following the initiation of comprehensive reform at the primary and secondary levels, and concurrent with reform in other social sectors. There had been extensive discussion of the possibility of reform across the education sector over previous years, and it is apparent that there was longstanding desire for change within the tertiary education institutions, as well as within the PNDC. Committed and strong political leadership, together with the Government's ability to seek external assistance, meant that the conditions were finally appropriate for reform to be undertaken.

The policy framework for the tertiary education sector was formulated by the University Rationalisation Committee (URC). It undertook its work over the period 1986-88, and produced an Interim Report in late-1987, and a Final Report in 1988.

These two reports contain an extremely comprehensive and detailed summary of the issues then facing Ghanaian higher education. The URC put forward 166 recommendations, each involving different levels of complexity and ideological change. The scope of these recommendations was broad, involving articulation and re-orientation of policy in a number of fundamental ways. Four main sources of evidence and ideas were used, each of which is clearly evident in the final work. These were: (1) A fact-finding visit by the main Committee to all of the tertiary education institutions in Ghana; (2) detailed quantitative analyses produced by the URC's eight sub-committees, including empirical evidence on issues such as space and facilities utilisation; the development expenditure estimated to be necessary for completion of unfinished building projects; provision of staff housing; the costs of student maintenance; and the anticipated unit costs of educating students calculated under different scenarios; (3) evidence gathered on a visit to Nigeria, and the work of the Nigerian Universities Commission; and (4) reports of international experience, most notably the Jarratt Report of the UK CVCP, *Report of the Steering Committee for Efficiency Studies in Universities* (1985).

3. POLICY OBJECTIVES OF THE REFORM PROGRAMME

The following were the central policy objectives:

3.1 Unification into a single tertiary education sector.

One of the Report's primary recommendations was that all post-secondary education institutions should be brought into a single, unified and co-ordinated system characterised by greater public accountability. Specific recommendations included the regrouping, rationalisation and upgrading of existing institutions, and the establishment of new ones; the transfer of oversight of the polytechnics from the control of the Ghana Educational Service to the tertiary education sector; and the establishment of various regulatory bodies to co-ordinate and provide policy oversight (firstly, the establishment of a proposed Education Commission and the establishment of the Planning, Budgeting, Monitoring and Evaluation Unit in the Ministry of Education and Culture; and secondly, a Joint Admissions and Matriculation Board, an Accreditation Board and a Technical and Professional Examinations Board). The PNDC had abolished the National Council for Higher Education (NCHE) under PNDC Law 42 (1983), when revoking the previous (civilian) Constitution. The NCHE's powers were then transferred to the Ministry of Education and Culture, thereby granting financing and regulatory powers over higher education to the Ministry. However, the NCHE had formerly represented the universities only, and it had reported directly to the Office of the President. This arrangement had given the institutions greater opportunity for exerting influence over decision-making, for informal negotiation, and for channelling requests for supplementary budgetary resources directly to the President and/or his Office.

The abolition of the NCHE was therefore felt very strongly by the universities. They greatly resented its loss, particularly as concern increased at the level of control being taken by the MOEC (most strikingly so in the early phases of the PNDC era). The Final Report therefore suggested a variety of possible mechanisms to ensure greater autonomy at the institutional level (in essence, state supervision rather than state

control), while remaining consistent with the (somewhat ambiguously) perceived need for greater accountability.

3.2 To increase the effectiveness of state mechanisms for calculating institutional needs, to systematise the allocation of resources in accordance with both national and institutional requirements; and to increase the efficiency and cost-effectiveness of the institutions.

The Final Report's recommendations aimed to change the governance, management and planning structures of the individual institutions, in order to increase their relevance, responsiveness, cost-effectiveness and efficiency. The URC intended also to improve mechanisms for calculating the requirements of the institutions, in conjunction – theoretically – with national needs. New means of financial and academic planning were recommended, at both the national and the institutional level. These included the formalisation of academic planning units, the use of academic planning indicators within the tertiary education institutions, and the introduction of programme-linked budgeting (linked to student numbers) as the main institutional funding mechanism.

The URC clearly acknowledged that the Government could not itself finance the tertiary education system the country required, and it recommended diversification of the funding base of the institutions. Ultimately, it urged that there should be no further delay (these were not new ideas) in pursuing the concepts of (i) cost-sharing and (ii) cost-recovery with students. To this end, it was recommended that catering services should be privatised, and that residence halls be changed to hostels, which would charge for accommodation. Non-residence was to be encouraged. Tuition, however, was to remain free (this was subsequently – if somewhat ambiguously – enshrined in the 1993 Constitution of the Fourth Republic of Ghana). Student loans were to be provided for all students, to meet the anticipated cost of food and boarding and other expenses, and bursaries were to be available for those studying in areas of national need and/or of exceptional merit. Employers were also expected to contribute, through a proposed Education Fund.

A range of recommendations for increasing institutional efficiency and accountability was also given. Among these, it was proposed that University Councils should be restructured, and internal communications enhanced. In the populist/revolutionary period in which the URC undertook its work, greater accountability and responsiveness (and 'grassroots participation') were interpreted as an increase in representation from groups close to the structures of the PNDC – the Committees for the Defence of the Revolution, trade unions and other workers' organisations, and (initially at least) representatives of the National Union of Ghanaian Students (NUGS). Contradictory to its overall emphasis upon efficiency and the need to rationalise institutional decision-making mechanisms, the URC therefore recommended that the frequency and size of meetings of the major university committees should be increased, in order to increase worker participation and internal communication flows. Finally, the URC recommended that income-generation by institutions should be encouraged, and a range of possible mechanisms for doing so was suggested, including the employment of business managers within the institutions to facilitate greater consultancy and income-generation opportunities for

staff. Incentives such as subsidised Government loans were to be made available to the institutions to pursue these options, and pilot projects to be tested for replication.

3.3 To improve and control the quality and relevance of teaching and learning within a self-regulatory framework.

The URC proposed the establishment of national bodies with mandates to control the quality of Ghanaian tertiary education and to ensure the maintenance of academic standards. These were modelled to a large extent upon existing practice and mechanisms in Nigeria, although the detailed methodologies to be put in place were not specified. It was assumed that re-capitalisation of the system and greater efficiency in the utilisation of the existing infrastructure would ensure that learning environments were enhanced. Attention was also to be paid to improved pedagogical practice. Academic and library budgets were to be assured of a higher proportion of institutional expenditure under new planning norms which were adapted from those already in place in Nigeria. Greater balance was also to be achieved in subject provision, gender enrollment, and science/arts ratios.

Considerable attention was also paid to improving excellence in research and postgraduate teaching, and to the development of a 'fourth cycle' of education. The polytechnics and other institutions were to be encouraged to undertake primarily applied, but also fundamental research.

3.4 Equity, expansion and the PNDC policy agenda.

The Committee aimed expressly to address the inequities in access linked to gender and poverty. In keeping with the prevailing PNDC emphasis upon social justice, expansion of student numbers in order to meet regional and local needs (social, economic and political) was put forward as a key theme of the policy framework. Recommendations were based in part upon the (professional) manpower requirement norms projected for middle-income countries, as it was an underlying assumption that Ghana would reach middle-income status within the planning period. There was also strong awareness of the likely increase in student demand, following expansion and restructuring of the school system. Gender balance was to be given considerable priority.

Equity was to be achieved primarily through an expansion of student numbers. The URC amended its original remit from a request to consider the desirability and likely impact of student enrollment increases of approximately 0% - 5% per annum, to one requiring consideration instead of increases in the region of 0%, 30% and 50% (its final recommendation was 30%). In addition to a considerable expansion in the number of institutions and overall increases in the efficiency of utilisation of existing facilities, new measures such as double-shift teaching and work-study programmes were recommended as mechanisms to enhance access. These latter remained contentious, even within the URC's main committee, and were not implemented.

An increase in the number of institutions and overall student numbers was however implemented. In 1986, there were three universities and six polytechnics, as well as a variety of other post-secondary institutions, including diploma-awarding colleges and teacher training colleges. The URC recommended that the diploma-awarding and

teacher training colleges be re-grouped into a single University College on one campus (at Winneba) for upgrading to full university status, and that a new university institution, the University of the North (subsequently re-named the University for Development Studies), be built at Tamale to serve the northern region. These recommendations were implemented. The six polytechnics were also to be upgraded, and their number expanded, primarily by the upgrading of existing technical institutes – Ghana has ten regions, and the polytechnics were intended to meet the needs of each of the regional constituencies (eight have now been established, following the upgrading of two institutions over the project's duration). Finally, the remaining colleges were ultimately to be grouped as a single federal entity, the Regional Colleges of Applied Arts, Science and Technology (RECAAST). This proposal has not been implemented. Through these actions, together with expansion of the existing institutions, the student population increased by 18,000 over the period 1992-1998, a gain of 80% (university enrollments increased from 14,272 to 27,812, an increase of 95%).

4. COMMENT: EFFECTIVENESS OF THE POLICY FRAMEWORK

The Ghanaian policy framework for tertiary education reform has justifiably been commended internationally for its comprehensiveness and cohesion. The URC undertook a thorough job of reviewing the current situation of tertiary education in Ghana, and of suggesting a way forward from the demoralised and depressed state then experienced within the sector. The comments below are not intended to detract from this overall awareness of the URC's achievement. It appears however that many of the issues which have arisen as problematic over recent years can be traced in part to the design of the policy framework. Careful consideration of these issues may assist with an attempt now to look to the future. Aspects of the URC's work which may have impeded the Government's ability and determination to undertake the difficult process of implementing such a large programme of reform are therefore discussed in some detail below.

4.1 Scope of the reform agenda. The extent and breadth of the policy framework for reform must firstly be acknowledged as contributing both to the success and to some of the difficulties of implementation. Widespread consensus on the desirability of reform existed at the institutional level, and those with responsibility for tertiary education policy within the PNDC wished to undertake a comprehensive review of existing policy and provision. There was an apparent expectation that significant funding would be made available to the country to implement the wide-ranging reform programme recommended, from both (i) World Bank/IDA and other external sources, and (ii) from a proposed national Education Fund (to be funded primarily by employers).

The URC therefore consciously chose to make recommendations which went well beyond the predominantly financial and economic framework which would have been required by the World Bank to secure a loan agreement. Its recommendations required funding at a level which was considerably greater than the resources available from Government, both at the time, and for the foreseeable future. The policy agenda was however broadened to include *the ideal* and the medium- to long-term, rather than a strictly realistic programme of reform and a defined time-frame for implementation.

Writing in 1993, the then Deputy Secretary (Higher Education) of the Ministry of Education and Culture (who was also Chair of the URC) emphasised the scope of the 1986-88 policy-formulation exercise, and its distinctly Ghanaian agenda: '[It was] ..... a massive exercise of consultation with key players, of analysis, and of revision. For those who had a rather limited vision of the goals of the study (namely, to look into narrow efficiency-related variables), the scope of the study came as a major surprise' (Sutherland-Addy, 1993, p. 4). However, while this scope and ambition ensured that it was a Ghanaian agenda, in keeping with the perceived needs of the country, a tendency to consider *what is desired* without sufficiently taking into account financial viability has been increasingly problematic throughout the reform programme's implementation.

4.2 Underlying assumptions. The URC's recommendations assumed a high level of administrative capacity, strong and continued political will, and significant levels of funding. None of these has been adequately forthcoming. The URC was also over-optimistic about Ghana's medium-term economic growth prospects, and thus its likely manpower requirements. Economic growth has since been slower than anticipated, and employment in the formal sector has declined substantially (World Bank, 1993, 1997; UNDP, 1997; and successive editions of the ISSER annual studies on the *State of the Ghanaian Economy*). Although the policy's underlying assumptions were not made explicit (and therefore not monitored – certainly not before the TEP), it was emphasised in discussion with those responsible for policy formulation that the URC's intention had been primarily to map out a vision for the future. It was always planned that implementation would be phased in step with (i) implementation capacity, and (ii) financial resources. In practice however, phasing of implementation appears to have been connected at least in part to political priorities, and *not* sufficiently to the availability of adequate resources. The nature of the political process in Ghana, and the pressures of firstly the need for the military government to assert its legitimacy, and subsequently for an elected government to appeal to its electoral base, appear to have contributed to a failure to consider the economic, political and structural assumptions underlying the different aspects of policy change. This has resulted in a programme of underfunded expansion (now requiring ever-increasing recurrent expenditure), and a concurrent failure to assert with sufficient clarity the need for cost-recovery and cost-sharing measures.

These factors have held back implementation of the crucial policies necessary to sustain system expansion and quality enhancement. The disjunction between (1) an essentially political process; (2) a desire for the ideal in the objectives of the reform programme; and (3) fiscal reality, has been seriously detrimental to the policy objective of improving the quality of Ghanaian tertiary education. Further, in those cases where the underlying economic assumptions *were* made explicit (for example, the student loan scheme), little action was taken to make adjustments, even when the conditions for viability quickly became overtaken by changes in policy (eg, expansion in the population of eligible students) and/or the macro-economic environment.

4.3 Process by which the URC undertook its work. The URC's work was undertaken through what was a difficult, intensely political, and sometimes disrupted process. It was always controversial. Despite a strong desire for improved conditions, and acceptance of the need for radical change amongst the institutions, there was considerable tension between the institutions and the URC throughout the

policy formulation process and beyond it. This can be attributed to a number of factors:

1. *The very detailed nature of some of the recommendations, including the nature and extent of academic provision:* The URC was considered by the institutions to have moved considerably beyond the legitimate concerns of a governmental body, and to have transgressed university autonomy, in part because of the extremely detailed nature of some of its recommendations (details of subject coverage, modularisation, semesterisation, facility utilisation, etc). In some cases, so great was the level of detail provided, that the Reports failed to give adequate consideration to the underlying policy concepts themselves (equity, quality, etc.).

2. *Extent of advance planning of the reform process:* Eight technical sub-committees were established to undertake the specialist tasks of the Committee's work. Given the level of detail contained in the remit of each sub-committee (and the specified composition of each group), there was some feeling within the institutions that the policy agenda had been pre-determined, and that what was being gathered by the URC and its sub-committees was in fact supporting evidence, rather than an unprejudiced consideration of alternatives.

   While considerable efforts were made by the URC to undertake consultative processes in the early stages of policy formulation, discrepancy of opinion is likely to remain over whether these were in fact genuinely consultative, with both parties feeling their own case equally strongly. As a result of a series of difficulties and confusions over the consultation process, including the nature of the appointment and status of representatives, missing letters, meetings called at very short notice, and very short consultation periods, the URC was regarded with some suspicion within the tertiary institutions, and its legitimacy queried.

3. *Interrelationships between personnel in the institutions and Government:* The acute political tensions of the mid- to late- 1980s are very apparent from discussion with those holding decision-making roles in the sector at that time. A number of PNDC office-bearers had been formerly (or were still) employed as teaching staff in the universities, and many had been involved in campus discussions on how the universities should be transformed, well before the 1981 Revolution. This fact was well-known to those still working at more senior levels in the universities (particularly Legon). As predominantly young (and junior) members of staff, those University staff also holding PNDC office appeared to share a drive firstly to challenge the prevailing low morale of the institutions, and secondly to find ways to re-invigorate them, and to restore their reputations as prestigious centres of learning and scholarship. This led to the enthusiasm and determination with which the work of the URC was undertaken.

   However, there is no doubt that reform was also intended to be seen as a *challenge.* This led to a somewhat difficult relationship between the URC and senior members of the academic community – a relationship which was sometimes strained to the point of near breakdown, despite the evident mutual respect which still endures. The close personal connections between those in Government and those in the institutions led also to increased expectations of

both compliance and special treatment, and to an apparent sense of betrayal when these were not forthcoming.

4. *Perceived origins of the policy agenda:* The URC's more sceptical observers were strongly aware of the policy agreements which would be required by the World Bank before a new loan to finance the re-capitalisation of the sector could be negotiated. This was particularly the case because the policy preparation for the publication *Education in Sub-Saharan Africa: Policies for Adjustment, Revitalization and Expansion* (1988) was well-advanced, well-known, and deeply unpopular in many quarters. There is however a consistent emphasis amongst URC participants that, although the work of the URC was in a sense initiated by World Bank requirements (and some of its activities were funded by the Bank), the URC was in no sense merely re-producing a formula of policy proposals to release funding. All those involved in the policy formulation process have stressed that it was an indigenous policy agenda, driven by concern at previous wide-spread deterioration, and an awareness of the need firstly for greater coherence across the sector, and secondly for an increase in the provision available to low-income members of Ghanaian society.

5. *Relationship between Government and the student population:* The relationship between the PNDC and the student population (and particularly NUGS) deteriorated sharply over the period of the URC's work, leading to disruption on the campuses and several periods of serious unrest and institutional closure. As is the case elsewhere in Sub-Saharan Africa, student protest has long been an issue of political sensitivity. Continuing student unrest has been a significant factor in delaying the implementation of key aspects of the reform programme.

4.4 Mechanisms for translating policy into practice. Change of such magnitude would have made considerable demands upon the resources available within the Ministry of Education and Culture, both in financial and in human terms, over a very lengthy period of time. It is evident that determined effort went into the early stages of the reform effort, with – in fairly rapid succession – the introduction of a student loan scheme, the removal of subsidised catering on the campuses, substantial transition to modularised and semesterised academic provision, and the restructuring and upgrading of several tertiary institutions.

The initial mechanism for implementation, the National Implementation Committee on Tertiary Reform (NICTR) met with some success, particularly in assisting with the negotiation of Memoranda of Understanding on various efficiency-related norms between the Ministry of Education and the institutions. However, it was reportedly too large and unwieldy a committee to be either effective or sustainable in the long-term, and it was seen primarily as a deliberating rather than an implementing mechanism. It dealt largely with the *details* of the reform programme (eg planning civil works) rather than the broader policy issues, and was not itself a policy-making body.

The NICTR did not therefore produce the necessary detailed plans for phased implementation of the reform programme (although it did subsequently have a role in the preparation of the TEP). The proposed Education Commission which was to have overseen and co-ordinated the reform process was never established. Its successor,

the National Council for Tertiary Education (NCTE), only began its operations in 1993, as required by the new (January 1993) Constitution of the Fourth Republic.

The NCTE has always been acknowledged as under-resourced to meet the considerable demands placed upon it, and its credibility was hampered initially by its physical location within the Ministry of Education. The Council has spent a considerable proportion of its existence without a convener to give overall leadership, and it has suffered both occasional political interference and an evident lack of authority in its dealings with the Ministries of Education and Finance, and also at times with the institutions.

4.5 ***Complexity of the policy message.*** Ghana is well-known for pursuing a classic stabilisation and structural adjustment programme, while at the same time maintaining a strongly populist political rhetoric. Many of the same contradictions can be seen in the education sector. Tension can be seen throughout the URC recommendations between an expressed desire for social justice and 'grassroots' participation on the one hand, and a determination to achieve cost-effectiveness and efficiency on the other. While these goals are theoretically compatible – when pursued within a balanced process of policy formulation and implementation – the preliminary steps needed to achieve sustainable financing levels (staff losses, cost-sharing and cost-recovery, greater managerialism, emphasis upon accountability, etc) may have required too great an ideological step for those to whom free tertiary education and security of employment represented the key principles of equitable public education policy. It is clear that the URC itself felt this tension. Additionally, the political gains to be made from increasing access to publicly-financed tertiary education have meant that the policy of meeting demand *through expansion* has been handled with considerably greater vigour than the introduction of the principles of cost-sharing and cost-effectiveness – particularly as the relationship with the student body came under strain in the late-1980s and early-1990s.

4.6 ***Treatment of student financing of tertiary education.*** The URC did not address the more difficult financing issues very forcefully, in either of its Reports. Where issues such as cost-recovery and cost-sharing were discussed, it was in ways which would minimise the impact on students, and the Committee's reluctance to make such recommendations at all is evident. The Interim Report therefore recommended that *employers*, as the 'primary beneficiaries' of tertiary education, should be asked to contribute 1-3% of turnover annually to an Education Fund.

The issue of student financing of costs was handled considerably more gingerly: 'While tuition remains free throughout the educational system in Ghana, it may be argued that the developmental need to produce more self-reliant and responsible graduates demands that all beneficiaries of higher education, especially students and their potential employers, should be induced to contribute their quota to the cost of education. Nonetheless, we found ourselves as yet unable to make firm recommendations on the thorny issue of the implementation of the removal of subsidies for boarding and lodging.' (Interim Report, 5.5.7, p. 146) The issue was therefore left to a specialist committee on 'Financing Education and Cost Effectiveness', which was itself also reluctant to confront the issue. After 49 pages of its 60-page report, the sub-committee finally broached the issue of student maintenance: 'This is a very sensitive issue and the sub-committee tried to solicit as wide an opinion as possible. But the response was poor.' (Final Report, para. 5.5.2,

p. 318) The Report briefly surveyed the history of financial support to students, concluding '..... university student maintenance became a nagging problem to the various past Governments in the face of inflationary economic conditions and mounting higher educational expenditure. But due to the lack of strong political will, which has in the past characterized the governance of this country, no firm decision has been taken on this question.' (Final Report, para. 5.5.18, p. 324)

Finally – and somewhat reluctantly – it was recommended that although tuition would remain free, students should in future be charged for board and lodging. Hostels were to be self-funding, and catering outlets privatised. It was also recommended that loans and scholarships should be provided to enable students to meet these costs. An educational levy would be charged *to employers,* to meet the costs of the student support system. Given this deep reluctance to pass the costs of tertiary level education on to students, it is perhaps remarkable that recommendations for cost-sharing were actually made at all. In this light, delays in implementation appear less surprising. The strength of opinion amongst those who had themselves come from rural and impoverished backgrounds, and who had still managed to attain a tertiary education, remains in evidence in the late-1990s, giving rise to a strong perception that food and boarding are in fact *academic* issues.

It is apparent that the innovative student loan scheme introduced in Ghana in 1988 was specifically designed not to place any financial burden upon students themselves (with repayments being deducted from compulsory national insurance payments when the student gained employment, and with no further detrimental effect upon individual social security benefits/entitlements after an initial 10 years of employment). The loan scheme was consciously designed to introduce the *principle* of cost-sharing, *without any costs to students.* However, rapid change in the external economic and policy environment which had underpinned the scheme's financial viability (including in particular the numbers of eligible students), and subsequent failure to reassess its sustainability have resulted in a substantial indirect subsidy to tertiary education[1]. This now represents a significant additional contribution to sectoral expenditure – one which does not contribute in any way to improving the quality of the education available to students. (See also 4.7)

*4.7 **Access and equity.*** The URC Reports emphasised strongly the need to increase access (and, by implication, thereby to improve equity for disadvantaged groups), as an underlying principle of the reform programme. However, the final recommendations gave little guidance to encourage specific targeting of the relevant groups, beyond an overall recommendation for equal participation of men and women

[1] By the conclusion of the TEP, the student loan scheme had generated a deficit of US $16 million for the public purse (comprising disbursed loans and overdue interest, payable to SSNIT). The rate of interest payable to SSNIT was to be no worse than the one year rate on Treasury Bills. The Treasury Bill rate – 19.8% average in 1989 – had been predicted to decline over time as inflation abated. This did not happen however, and by 1995 the Government's initial subsidy deposit of C1.08 billion was wiped out. (It had been anticipated that, if invested by SSNIT and used to meet the interest obligation, this initial deposit would cater for the scheme for ten years, or possibly in perpetuity). Thus, the interest burden was almost entirely assumed by Government (only 3% interest was passed on to beneficiaries initially; rising to 6% in 1993). Combined with a very low rate of repayment (in part due to high graduate unemployment), rising loan levels, and a rapid growth in the student population, the scheme was quickly no longer viable (Amissah-Arthur, 1998).

within ten years, and a suggestion that Government should provide (unspecified) incentives to achieve this (which it has not done).

Overall, student numbers have increased more rapidly than had originally been planned, but there is concern – particularly from the World Bank – that participation has not broadened, and that female enrollment appears at times to have decreased, especially within the polytechnic sector. Targeting has been employed only to the extent of increasing provision at a regional level, and retaining (i) notionally free tuition for all those undertaking tertiary level education, and (ii) the provision of student loans for all those in full-time tertiary education. The availability of 50% loans for those engaged in part-time tertiary education *may* have allowed broader participation, but there appears to have been little encouragement at a policy/incentive level to increase the availability of part-time (or flexibly delivered) provision, nor to encourage non-traditional entry routes.

For a variety of reasons, the relevant socio-economic data are not available for analysis of the income groups of parents and guardians. However, rising entry requirements, and pressure from the increased numbers of SSS certificate-holders with top grades have meant that competition amongst school-leavers has become increasingly intense. Many of those working in the tertiary sector now express serious concern at the grades which students must achieve to gain entry: the current cut-off points are considerably higher than the minimum entry requirements in the majority of disciplines.

Access is likely to have become correspondingly difficult for those unable to afford additional/private tuition during their school education. Groups notionally targeted by access policies have therefore not been enabled to participate, with the possible exception of (school-leaver) female applicants who have benefited in some cases from slightly reduced cut-off points on aggregate school scores. (It should be emphasised however that entry requirements are now so demanding that all females who gain entry under such schemes have still considerably exceeded minimum entry requirements.) Well-qualified students are thus increasingly denied entry to tertiary-level education. Further, despite initial emphasis upon the need for credit transfer and mobility schemes and the desirability of life-long learning, only one pilot scheme is presently in place (at pre-HND level) to meet the needs of non-traditional entrants.

The URC was emphatic that the student loan scheme should be backed by a national scholarship scheme to ensure access (i) for those wishing to study in areas of the greatest national need, and (ii) for students with the highest grades (*after* completion of the first year). Combined with the blanket eligibility of the student loan scheme, this has ultimately meant that a high proportion of the resources directed at the tertiary education sector *have not been utilised to tackle equity concerns*. As with many indirect consequences of policy implementation, it will only be with the availability of more explicit data that this loss of equity can be properly understood and monitored. In the absence of such data, the full impact of the policies in place may not yet be apparent. However, it appears that the student financing schemes currently in place have come to represent a further substantial subsidy to tertiary education, with no overall equity benefits. Further, rising entry requirements may indeed have resulted in an overall loss of equity.

4.8 ***Relationship between the state and the tertiary education institutions.*** Although the URC had envisaged that Government control would give way in the medium-term to a form of state supervision, the first step (in 1983) had been a formal transfer of control from the NCHE to the Ministry of Education and Culture. In part as a reaction to this loss of control (and/or privilege), subsequent reforms were evidently perceived in many quarters as being excessively control-oriented, which further exacerbated the difficult relationship between the institutions and the Government, particularly in a period of military rule. The fact that the URC was chaired by the Deputy Minister with responsibility for tertiary education also detracted from the objectivity which might have been considered desirable (Sawyerr, 1994).

Additionally, reform to the tertiary education sector was conducted initially in a highly-politicised environment. Factors such as the continuing ambiguity of the relationship between tertiary education institutions and Government, an articulate and cohesive constituency, a high level of political involvement, strong traditions of fiercely-guarded academic freedom and consensual management, and the high calibre and integrity of many in leadership positions (in both Government and the institutions) meant that the reform process became an arena for conflict – particularly when university autonomy appeared to have been broached. It was thus over many of the issues related to tertiary education reform that the limits of the PNDC's authority were tested, as the country proceeded slowly towards constitutional rule.

4.9 ***Management and planning in tertiary education institutions.*** The URC placed considerable emphasis upon the need for improved management and planning within the institutions. It also made rather optimistic assumptions about the level of savings which could be expected from greater cost-effectiveness and efficiency (such estimates provided an apparently sound means of projecting the sustainability and viability of the reforms presented).

In this respect, the influence of the Jarratt Report on *Efficiency Studies in Universities* (1985) – a document which was greatly influential during the major restructuring of universities in Britain in the 1980s – is strongly apparent. Parts of the Final Report (particularly the chapters on planning and institutional management) reflect very closely the language and concepts of the Jarratt Report. However, while Jarratt had stressed that 'it is in planning and the use of resources that universities have the greatest opportunity to improve their efficiency and effectiveness' (Jarratt Report, 1985, p. 16, para. 3.27), managerial change of such magnitude was clearly not possible in the Ghanaian situation, where the institutional infrastructure had been weakened by years of underfunding, and the public sector environment remained heavily constrained.

The central recommendations given in the Jarratt Report included increased devolution of responsibility, more effective decision-making mechanisms, and clearer lines of accountability in all aspects of institutional management. Recommendations by the URC to increase worker/student participation in decision-making were thus directly contrary to the spirit of the Jarratt Report, which had intended to break with a longstanding tradition of consensual and representative decision-making bodies, and to signal instead a move towards more executive styles of management. Further, while the URC seemed to expect that Ghanaian institutions would simply be able to alter their management processes to achieve the outcomes described by Jarratt, the

main external conditions which would have allowed such efficiencies to be attained (eg. greater stability of the funding environment, flexibility in budgeting and the ability to vire funding, greater autonomy, and the ability to employ staff on a flexible basis) were simply not available to Ghanaian institutions, which were greatly restricted by time-consuming line-item budgeting, and central auditing and payment authorisation procedures. However, the URC merely iterated that these things *should happen,* with insufficient practical guidance or incentives as to *how.* Additionally, as a body, the URC certainly did not have the power or authority to recommend the changes in public sector management which would have been required for implementation to proceed as it had envisaged in its Reports.

Clearly, considerable efficiency gains and improvements in management practice needed to be made at institutional level. This fact appears largely to have been accepted by all parties at the time, although change would almost inevitably have met with some degree of resistance. However, for the level of managerial reform anticipated (and for the savings projected from increased cost-effectiveness) to have been even partially-realised, the following would (minimally) have had to have been in place:

- Greater flexibility in planning, budgeting, and internal allocation/virement of funds;
- Ability to determine staffing levels and to reshape the staffing complement as required (and to retain the monies thereby released);
- Ability to charge students for services and basic costs;
- Ability to determine size and proportion of student intake, with incentives/weightings to meet national policy requirements;
- Clear indication of Government priorities for planning purposes;
- The ability to generate income, and for the monies raised to be retained by the institution.

Some recommendations along these lines were made, but the URC and/or MOEC did not have sufficient political authority or power to ensure that the key structural reforms were put in place. As one example, although quite substantial numbers of (primarily) manual staff were initially retrenched from the institutions in keeping with URC recommendations, the institutions did not subsequently receive additional funding as a result of these reductions (item 1 rather than items 2-5 of recurrent expenditure). There was thus little (or no) incentive for institutions to cut staff numbers as radically as had been proposed; nor to sustain the initial losses, which could be recouped without financial penalty, beyond (unquantified) overhead expenditure.

Similarly, the intake of new entrants to the institutions has on several occasions been the subject of direct political intervention, and is sometimes beyond the control of the institutions themselves. For example, in 1997 the universities were required by the President to increase substantially their intake of students, to compensate for the loss of the previous academic year (the result of strike action by academic staff). For similar reasons, the proposed Joint Matriculation and Admissions Board was perceived by some as *a potential tool for control* by Government, rather than as a mechanism for increasing efficiency in the admissions process. This perception, together with the prospect of losing significant income generated from the admissions

process, appears to have led to initial successful resistance from the academic community.

The Jarratt Report had also placed considerable emphasis upon the importance of the resource allocation mechanisms used within institutions to achieve overall improvement in efficiency and effective planning. Although the URC recommended limited internal improvements such as the establishment of planning units (or formalisation, where such units already existed), there was no clear discussion of how they might be integrated into institutional management structures. This created the likelihood that their primary role would become that of monitoring implementation of external (Government) requirements, rather than one of underpinning institutional decision-making (ie, the provision of management information). This was particularly the case when the flexibility to allocate funding or to make substantial savings internally was severely restricted.

4.10 Teaching quality and relevance. The Final Report considered teaching quality issues, but again largely by implication, and less explicitly than might have been expected for such a central aspect of the policy framework. While it was frequently iterated that there was a need 'to design academic programmes and courses which would provide relevant and integrated education for students' (Final Report, 6.b, p. 4), little clarification was given as to what this would mean in terms of teaching aims, objectives and the modalities of delivery and assessment within the institutions. Critically, no reference was made to comparison with internationally-recognised norms and standards. Instead, the URC gave very detailed consideration to the range of disciplines/academic programmes which should be offered, and where they should be provided (which was subsequently seen as a breach of institutional autonomy).

The Committee appears largely to have assumed that an increase in expenditure under norm-based allocation of institutional funds would *by itself* result in better teaching. In many ways, this assumption was a result of the period in which the Report was written (much work has been done internationally on this subject since that time). However, the emphasis upon the *details of disciplinary provision* – rather than on the concepts of quality in teaching and learning, and internationally-comparable academic standards – resulted in institutional attention subsequently being deflected elsewhere (ie, resistance to external control of the range of provision).

Very little was made explicit about the range of possible objectives which might have been undertaken through the sector-wide mechanisms which the URC recommended should be put in place to assure quality and academic standards within the institutions. More seriously, little indication was given as to what might happen if these bodies found that quality had been seriously compromised by a lack of resources. Possibly as a result, even when established, the co-ordinating, regulating and quality control bodies have lacked funding and human resources, and their authority to undertake these important tasks has appeared inadequate.

4.11 Research, postgraduate study, and the desire for a knowledge and innovation industry. The Final Report was clear on the need for a 'fourth cycle' of education, including (1) the development of a 'knowledge and research industry' to 'find solutions to the problems of development', and (2) the promotion of centres of excellence in research. It was less clear as to how these might be achieved. An acute

analysis of the breakdown of the research infrastructure and culture was presented. As with a high proportion of the Report's recommendations, however, its subsequent proposals were numerous and idealistic, and implementation mechanisms unclear (eg: 'more use should be made of work in the evenings and during weekends in the teaching of courses for higher degrees, and employers should be encouraged to give time off during the week for part-time post-graduate students who have to engage in practical work ..... as a matter of urgency, books and journal holdings in the libraries of our universities [should] be made current, and considerable improvement be made in the provision of teaching and research facilities for post-graduate work', Final Report, p. 194, 3.9.19, x and xi).

As might have been anticipated from a group with a core membership comprised largely of academic (university) staff, the URC's recommendations concentrated primarily on possible improvements at the institutional level. A few suggestions were nevertheless given for the sector as a whole. As one example, it was suggested that the research budget should be approximately 20% of direct teaching costs – but it was not specified whether this figure had already been included within the assumptions underlying the proposed new budgeting mechanisms.

Virtually all institutional research funding had in fact long since ceased. Institutions had come to rely upon the ability of individual staff members to attract international funding or consultancies to finance their research. This had resulted in patchy and fragmented research efforts. A shift towards identifying national or institutional means of nurturing co-ordinated research activity to re-build Ghana's reputation for research excellence was therefore urgently required; but the path to this goal was not adequately given.

The URC's emphasis upon the need to expand postgraduate provision (subsequently mediated through the 1991 White Paper) did however later contribute towards some change at the institutional level. For example, a recommendation that 25% of the university student population should be pursuing postgraduate qualifications had a demonstrable effect when the University of Ghana chose to set a target of 10% for the postgraduate share of enrollments.

In general, the recommendations regarding research were diffuse, and it was unlikely that they could be effected without substantial additional resourcing. Very few were rooted in likely change to the existing situation, and the anticipated benefits to the economy (and/or links with the commercial and industrial world) were not enumerated. While there were clearly enormous needs, the pages of recommendations given by the URC were unlikely to provide sufficient focus for the first steps necessary to re-build a research culture, particularly after such depletion, and with the limited financial resources likely to be available.

4.12 SUMMARY COMMENTS – Significance & heritage of the work of the URC

The URC proposed a major policy reform agenda overall, and its achievement in this respect is significant. It recommended a broad, visionary and very political agenda for change. It was one which required the restructuring of relationships among all actors in the sector, and a change in the nation's perception of its tertiary education system. It was, however, an agenda which would also have required massive and

sustained Government attention, and considerable additional resources, and neither of these was ultimately available. In many respects, the policy vision was not mapped onto feasible or financially-viable action, and the initial phases of implementation appear to have been politically driven. Some policy outcomes have been unexpected, especially in terms of equity and quality.

A tendency to allow the political and the financial to diverge during the planning process, and an over-estimation of implementation capacity have since been marked features of tertiary education policy. Further, although the PNDC had begun to implement many of the more unpopular aspects of the reform programme, it is apparent that successive Ministry of Education incumbents – required to respond to an electorate – have had rather different interpretations of the desirability of achieving previously agreed policy goals. These interpretations were clearly shaped by a concern with possible political costs. This was, after all, an administration which was in the process of moving from military rule to the early stages of elected constitutional government.

Factors arising from the process by which the policy was designed and formulated which have constrained its effectiveness therefore include the following:

- the range of issues to be tackled simultaneously was broader than the national capacity to implement them, and prioritisation was insufficiently undertaken (or was dominated by political considerations);
- there was tension between the concepts of cost-effectiveness/efficiency and social justice – which appears to have resulted in neither being adequately achieved;
- a failure to identify the pre-conditions for successful reform of sub-sectoral planning and budgeting mechanisms, particularly the extent to which change was dependent upon the co-operation of other Government departments and ministries (especially the Ministry of Finance);
- the fact that the URC and MOEC had insufficient power to influence the overall public sector environment, yet change in public sector practice would have been central to successful implementation;
- expansion of the sector was undertaken on primarily (geo)political grounds, and was initiated too rapidly for quality improvement to be sustainable;
- the projections made and expectations of external support were unrealistic (and almost certainly unsustainable). Although recommendations for efficiency and cost-effectiveness were made, these were not couched in very specific terms. This made them difficult to implement. In addition, wholly insufficient incentives were built into the policy framework to encourage institutions to achieve these efficiency gains. Estimates of the levels of support likely to be available from the private sector were also unfounded (and the means by which it was thought funding could be acquired were unrealistic);
- the prevailing sectoral perception of system *control* – rather than system supervision – appears to have adversely affected relationships between the institutions and Government, and increased resistance to reform;
- uncertainty over the status of the Final Report remained unaddressed for some time, and agreed policy was not immediately articulated by Government.

A combination of these factors appears to have led to a number of unanticipated outcomes. These include loss of equity (or little gain), uncontrolled expansion, and a

decline in educational quality. The tendency for Government to initiate too many new developments with inadequate financial or human resources appears therefore to have exacerbated an already difficult situation, and to have contributed to the persistent under-funding and declining quality currently evident in the sector.

5. The White Paper: 'REFORMS TO THE TERTIARY EDUCATION SYSTEM'

The overall framework proposed by the URC was subsequently re-drafted and formalised as a White Paper on tertiary education reform. Entitled *Reforms to the Tertiary Education System*, it was approved by the PNDC Government in 1991. It remains in place in 1999.

Brief consideration only will be given to the White Paper here, in part because it served primarily to restructure and formalise the URC's recommendations, and in part because implementation had in fact begun *before* the White Paper was formally drafted (a similar situation occurred over the Student Loan Act, passed in 1992 to give the legislative basis for a scheme initiated in 1988). Moreover, the goals of the White Paper have recently (November 1998) been given a very detailed assessment by the Akyeampong Committee.

The White Paper is significant as a marker in the transition from the rule of the PNDC to the forthcoming (late-1992) elections, and the installation of an elected civilian government. Pressure from within the tertiary education sub-sector to demonstrate the extent to which the URC's recommendations had been formally approved by the PNDC, and to prioritise the recommendations into a more manageable agenda for change, led in part to the White Paper's publication. The Paper also formed the basis of the policy agreements for the Tertiary Education Project (TEP).

Various aspects of the URC Reports were highlighted in the White Paper's forceful introductory statements. These included: (1) the reasoning behind the consolidation of Government's several management entities for the sector, including especially the wastefulness of managing a single sector from three separate ministries/agencies; (2) the need for greater financial independence on the part of institutions, and the urgency of greater cost-effectiveness; (3) the need for cost-sharing with students; (4) the need to re-orient both course content and the structures of institutional organisation to keep the university sector aligned with the national development process; and (5) the need for improved management and planning at the institutional (university) level. The paper drew attention to the weaknesses besetting the sub-sector, and the 'cynicism and low morale' which were prevalent amongst the academic and administrative staff (p. 4).

These introductory remarks were placed within the context of the PNDC's overall development strategies. Policy objectives included firstly a desire not to sacrifice equity in educational provision (p. 1). Secondly, it was stated that: 'The overall, long-term development goals of the Government are to reduce poverty, improve the living standards and quality of life of the people of Ghana by a substantial and sustained increase in national wealth. Education is conceived by the Government as an essential component of development strategy to achieve these national goals, with the particular contribution of tertiary education being the training or retraining of

upper, middle-level and high-level manpower to steer and manage economic and social development.' (p. 2)

5.1 ***Policy priorities and the mechanisms of change.*** Eleven 'Goals for Change' were itemised to encapsulate these objectives and to prioritise those aspects of the URC's work considered to be most significant for the country's tertiary education policy framework. Particular attention was paid to the following: the overall structure of the system, and the need for an integrated and co-ordinated sector 'under the general supervision, direction and control' of the Ministry of Education; the need for greater cost-effectiveness and institutional income generation; increased access for 'qualified people' and improved gender balance; a more appropriate balance between the supply of higher level and technician level personnel; greater relevance to and articulation with the workplace and employment opportunities; and 'better management' in all the TEIs. The White Paper formally identified the bodies which would be established to improve the overall management of the sub-sector, viz: a Joint Admission and Matriculation Board, a Board of Accreditation, a Board for Professional and Technical Examinations, and a National Teaching Council. At that stage, no apex body was proposed, as it was envisaged that supervision of the sub-sector would be undertaken by the Ministry of Education directly, assisted by an advisory Education Commission (A steer away from this approach was subsequently suggested in the World Bank's *Staff Appraisal Report* in 1992 and the NCTE was formally included in the drafting of the new Constitution, which was adopted on 7 January 1993).

Although the White Paper was again vague on implementing mechanisms and/or targets, its final section was devoted to detailed directives to all affected parties regarding the preparation of implementation programmes and action plans. These were to be prepared in the light of manpower data which would 'shortly' be supplied by the National Development Planning Commission (NDPC). However, these data have not to date been made available, and it appears that few of the detailed plans required were actually prepared. Likewise, few of the relevant recommendations have yet been fully implemented. In many cases a good deal of the groundwork has however been done, and the prospects for future development are potentially promising.

Following on from the comments made in section 4 (the large majority of which are relevant to the White Paper), a few illustrative examples of future areas of difficulty and general comment are given below:

- It was emphasised that 'vast expansion' would be required to underpin Ghana's movement to self-sustained and self-reliant economic growth, and that detailed plans and projections would be issued to assist implementation, including national manpower requirements from the National Development Planning Commission. It was not made apparent how these overall national requirements would mesh with institutional planning, nor how institutions would be encouraged to respond to them (although technically they were mandated to do so). By 1999, this manpower information has still not been made available. As manpower planning is no longer considered to be necessarily effective as a guide for educational planning (it is considered to be too slow, often inaccurate, and not very efficient as a means of achieving responsiveness), this may be less relevant. But there does appear to be a need for tertiary institutions to have a more structured

understanding of the labour market and articulation with its changing skills/knowledge requirements.

- Modularisation was recommended, but this was not explicitly extended to credit transfer or other arrangements to encourage mobility within the tertiary education system. Thus, despite almost 100% modularisation of provision, the current intense pressure for admission to the institutions has weakened the likelihood that the flexibility and transfer arrangements which were desired will ever be achieved without incentives and/or pressure being exerted at a policy level.

- The White Paper emphasised the need for continuous review of the relevance of all tertiary level provision, and the need for 'links' between post-basic and secondary level education on the one hand, and tertiary level provision on the other. No specific arrangements were mentioned to ensure that this 'better balance' would be achieved or how it could be demonstrated; nor has it been.

- Reflecting the less democratic political environment of the time, many of the directives in the final section were very control-oriented, and thus likely to be problematic. For example,'The MOE shall inform universities of a Chancellor to each, and the membership of the reconstituted University Councils'[2], and '[The MOE] shall work out criteria for the provision of admissions and scholarships on the basis of government's development priorities in consultation with the National Development Planning Commission' (p. 12). Such challenges to institutional autonomy would always be likely to create tension, whether in Ghana or elsewhere.

*5.2 **Equity, expansion, and institutional upgrading.*** Ghana confronts various equity issues arising from its geographical spread (rural/urban), the balance of ethnic and religious affiliations across its regions, and the socio-economic conditions within each region. Patterns of poverty are increasingly well-understood, in part as a result of regular surveys undertaken by the GLSS and other statistical services, and equity considerations have informed many aspects of recent policy formulation.

However, despite forceful iteration of its centrality to the Government's educational reform programme, equity remained largely implicit as a concept within the White Paper. Although Government stated that it would 'alter the hitherto privileged pattern of access' (p. 4), no indication was given as to how this might be achieved, other than through an increase in the number of institutions and upgrading of the existing polytechnics. The main mechanism to address equity considerations was to be the introduction of the University of the North (later named the University for Development Studies), 'in the interest of spatial equity'. The two main actions, establishing the University of Development Studies (UDS) and upgrading the polytechnics to tertiary status, are discussed briefly below.

University of Development Studies. The URC provided the following rationales for the establishment of the University of the North: to meet the high-level manpower needs of Northern Ghana; to ensure greater utilisation of existing facilities; for complementarity with existing development projects; the 'demonstration effect' that

[2] This directive was changed by the constitutional civilian government which took office in January 1993 to enable University Councils to appoint the Chancellors directly.

such a university would have for pre-university education in the three northern regions of Ghana; its economic growth effects; its affordability; to increase social justice; and for geo-political reasons (Final Report, Ch. 6, 6.3.72, xix, p. 376). These rationales were not repeated in the White Paper, but it did emphasise that the degree programmes offered by the University of the North/UDS would be qualitatively different, and 'action-oriented'.

Implementation experience suggests however that the establishment of UDS has been more effective as a political gesture than as a means of addressing equity issues. In comparison to the actual scale of need and the lack of opportunities at the lower educational levels in the Northern region, UDS consumes considerable resources (US $1.2 m annually) in proportion to its small intake of students (96 entrants in 1996), who are nonetheless provided with an education of uncertain quality, given the resources which are actually available for teaching purposes.

It will be a matter of concern to future policy-makers as to whether the northern populations might be better-served through more focused targeting of scholarships for highly able students to attend the established institutions in other regions, and thus to allow for possible use/development of the existing facilities for distance or other flexible provision (at the appropriate level) to provide maximum benefit for local populations. 'Locally-relevant' medical training to serve the community and minimise brain-drain has been anticipated, but the likely costs of such provision will have to be carefully balanced against the needs of the sector and the country as a whole. Is this a genuine answer to the region's problems? If so, where will the necessary trade-off in resources and/or quality be made, and how will these decisions be taken?

The Polytechnics. The White Paper announced the 'upgrading' of the courses offered by the polytechnics to tertiary level, in addition to an expansion in the number of institutions which would be undertaken on a regional basis. It was expected that this notional upgrading would in itself ensure that the country's (unspecified) need for higher-level technician training and practical research would be adequately met. However, little attention appears to have been paid to the amount of polytechnic education which the country could afford and how it might be distributed, nor to the choices which would therefore have to be made – given the resources likely to be available – between political and geographical concerns, existing provision and its quality, and social demand, and how these competing concerns might be prioritised. There is a considerable equity dimension to such considerations, in addition to the more general issue of national interest. As it has turned out, these difficult decisions have not been taken, and the quality of polytechnic education has suffered as a result.

Further, polytechnic students are required to pay tuition fees at the sub-tertiary level (constitutional constraints prevent fees being charged for tertiary level education). Yet these students are likely to be paying fees for a very low standard of educational provision – a situation which is manifestly unfair. Additionally, the polytechnics are subsequently penalised for their efforts to attract fee-paying students, through a reduction in the NCTE calculation of their requirements. This practice may negate the anticipated financial gain of increasing sub-tertiary provision. (The NCTE formula states: 'the costs per student for non-tertiary courses have been calculated to be two-thirds of tertiary courses and further reduced by another one-third because of fees charged to these students', NCTE Recurrent Estimates, 1998.) An unanticipated

incentive to recruit at the sub-tertiary level was thus created through the provisions of the Ghanaian Constitution, but it is one which may in fact ultimately work against both institutional interests, and the stated aims of the White Paper.

5.3 ***Quality and relevance.*** As with equity, little attempt was made in the White Paper to define 'quality' and/or academic standards. Some of the underlying conceptualisation appears to parallel the exaggerated simplicity of the URC's assumptions of cause and effect in relation to quality. For example, the White Paper gave one of its aims as the provision of 'quality education for increasing numbers of students through *increased efficiency in the utilisation of space, resources and personnel'* (Goal no. 3, p. 5). In this way, it appeared to suggest that efficiency in resource use alone would lead to an improvement in pedagogical practice. While there is obviously a connection – and the level of resourcing is a major factor in teaching quality – little further attention was given to offering greater clarity, nor to defining the academic standards which would be relevant and/or desirable.

Relevance was a further key concept, which was – again – defined only imprecisely. The White Paper emphasised strongly the need for links between the academic processes of institutions and national development priorities, and it was therefore stated that all institutions would be required to:

- review periodically all programmes and courses with a view to upgrading and the ensurance of continuing *relevance to national needs;*
- introduce new programmes and courses *in relation to national development priorities*, as required;
- rationalise existing programmes and courses within the institution as a whole, *as required*; and
- make provision for *practical training* by attachment of students to industry.

Little detail was given as to what these recommendations might actually mean for academic insitutions, and they do not appear to have been implemented. However, such a strong equation of quality education with the (vaguely-defined) needs of the country might have been viewed as a challenge to institutional autonomy – and possibly to academic quality and coherence – unless it was undertaken within a framework which clearly conveyed how such national needs were to be defined and subsequently transmitted to the institutions. This might, for example, have been in relation to the following: explicit academic standards; desirable disciplinary content and competency requirements; desirable skills acquisition (including conceptual, inter-personal and other transferable skills); and/or other quantifiable student attainment, or an appropriate balance of provision. Although the establishment of an Accreditation Board was confirmed elsewhere within the White Paper, its precise role was also left unclear. Thus, while it might have been expected that the NAB would have taken a lead in establishing the mechanisms for identifying and enhancing relevance, this has not been the case, for a variety of reasons (see also section 10.2).

5.4 ***Research.*** Neither academic research nor the need for integrated knowledge and innovation structures – as discussed by the URC – were included in the eleven 'primary goals', although it was stated in the more discursive section of the White Paper that the institutions should allocate 10% of their student capacity to postgraduate students (the URC had specified 25%). It may not be unrelated that the

subsequent failure of the research component of the TEP was deemed to originate in part from the absence of appropriate mechanisms for co-ordinating research policy and guiding its application within the sector.

5.5 ***Financing, fees and cost-sharing.*** The White Paper stated clearly and confidently that a system of cost-sharing between Government, the student population and the private sector would be introduced, and that further attention would be given to identifying new mechanisms to maximise revenue generation. Thus, although it was emphasised that fees would not be charged, the White Paper made explicit the principle that students would be expected to take full responsibility for the costs of their maintenance and other incidental expenses.

The basis on which Government funding would be provided to institutions and individual students was outlined as follows: (1) the provision of recurrent subventions, equipment and capital grants to institutions, in part through the use of programme-based norms to be provided by the Ministry of Education; (2) specified grants for students and teaching staff; (3) the provision of scholarships; and (4) assistance (unspecified) to students to *obtain* loans. The principle of free tuition was affirmed, and it was later enshrined in the 1993 Constitution of the Fourth Republic, in which it is stated that 'education shall become progressively free'. This has subsequently been interpreted as free tuition *at tertiary level,* although the precise definition remains open to debate. There appears to be a growing consensus that it covers all items of institutional expenditure directly relating to academic tuition at tertiary level (only). It is therefore recommended that, in keeping with the *spirit* of the Constitution (and given that there is an element of ambiguity), such discussions should in future take account of broader equity considerations, particularly as the emerging issues of imbalance become clearer.

5.6 ***Planning norms and sub-sectoral efficiency.*** The White Paper confirmed that planning norms would be used, as recommended by the URC. It stated: 'Tertiary institutions are required to conform to administrative, financial and staffing norms which will be laid down from time to time by the Ministry of Education. These norms will represent quantified objectives and are *to assist planning units in their function of ensuring efficiency of operations at a cost government can afford*'. (p. 10) This has not proved to be the case, in part because the rate of expansion across the sector has been considerably greater than originally anticipated, and in part because of the inflexibility of the planning, budgeting and financial accounting mechanisms in use in the public sector in Ghana, which means that there is insufficient budgetary autonomy for these efficiencies to be realised.

The norms recommended by the URC were adapted primarily from those in use in Nigeria at the time. These were subsequently negotiated for implementation by the NICTR, and adopted through institutional Memoranda of Understanding. As will be discussed in more detail under section 7.1, the (partial) use of norms has not served to promote efficiency in resource utilisation. This has been for a variety of reasons, among them the following:

- Although the institutions have attempted to use the agreed norms when preparing financial estimates for annual funding allocations, the figures computed have almost without exception been considerably greater than the level of funding available for allocation within the sector. After mediation through the Ministries

of Education and Finance, it has not subsequently been possible to determine the rationale for final allocations, which are invariably considerably below the sector's norm-based 'requirements'. Final allocations thus appear arbitrary, and negate the value of 'planned' expenditure.

- The separation of emoluments from other items of recurrent expenditure has sometimes meant that institutions have been unable to meet the patterns of institutional expenditure required by the norms, as the available level of non-salary funding has been too low.

- The norms have not been reviewed since their initial (supposedly 'pilot') introduction within the sector, and are likely now to be inappropriate in at least a proportion of cases.

- The use of staff:student ratios for the calculation of institutional funding may preserve a historical (disciplinary) structure which ceases to be desirable as external conditions change, or as the institutional staffing composition changes. Planning in relation to historically-determined staff:student ratios also removes the potential for more flexible or creative (and potentially cost-effective) planning and re-shaping of the profile of academic provision at the institutional level – *even if* the 'block grant' produced by the staff:student ratios can be re-allocated internally on a flexible basis. The use of planning norms which are not regularly reviewed can therefore act against the objective of maximising relevance.

Norm-based planning/budgeting offers a useful way of moving away from a previous historically-based, incremental and inefficient pattern of expenditure. But it can be problematic in many ways, particularly if used in an environment where the level of funding available is lower than would be required to fund the established norms or, as in Ghana's case as well, when it is based on student numbers, and where sectoral expansion has been more rapid than public expenditure levels can sustain. It should also be noted that experience with the implementation of norms has proved problematic elsewhere. For example, in 1992, Nigeria itself showed a very low level of institutional compliance with its own established norms (Eisemon, 1992, pp. 13-14).

5.7 ***Comments on the significance of the White Paper.*** The White Paper has retained its significance as the major piece of Ghanaian legislation outlining the philosophy and principles of national tertiary education reform. It has acquired further significance through its relationship to the emerging democratic process, and the growing demand for transparency in the design and implementation of reform – in particular the need for parliamentary discussion and approval of policy decisions. The White Paper interpreted the work of the URC for implementation and broader consumption, highlighting the principles of the new policy structure. To a certain extent, however, it concentrated more firmly on the *mechanisms* for co-ordination of the sector (and the Government's need to find mechanisms to refine, interpret and transmit its policy decisions) than on giving adequate definition to the major policy issues themselves. Policy thus remained vague in some crucial aspects. It must also be noted that in some cases the White Paper's firm stand on controversial issues was deceptive, possibly because it lacked sufficient legal backing to make it effective once the constitutional Government assumed office in 1993. Progress towards

implementation has thus been considerably slower than might have been anticipated from the vigorous commitments presented in the White Paper.

6. THE TERTIARY EDUCATION PROJECT (TEP), 1993-98

The White Paper was the formal basis for the preparation of the Tertiary Education Project. The GoG/IDA project was finally initiated in 1993, by which time the PNDC administration responsible for the policy's formulation had handed over its powers to a recently elected constitutional Government (the National Democratic Congress or NDC). The project was overseen for much of its duration by the incoming Minister of Education, Hon. Harry Sawyerr, who remained in office until 1997.

The TEP was designed to provide assistance in two ways: (1) expenditure (US $51.4 million over five years – including GoG public investment funds and $45m from IDA) on a variety of inputs and items of capital expenditure, including new buildings and other civil works, staff training (management and academic), technical assistance, vehicles and equipment, and library and journal inputs; and (2) regular monitoring and advice to ensure that the project was implemented as designed. It was agreed that four universities and six polytechnics would be the institutional beneficiaries. The new tertiary institution at Tamale (the University of the North/UDS), and two further polytechnics were specifically excluded, as they were held by the Bank to be unsustainable.

Following the dissolution of the NICTR, the TEP proved to be the prime mechanism through which policy became translated into implementation. After early policy lapses – in the more complex environment of an elected but not yet fully-participatory democracy – it seems possible that without the regular monitoring and visits of World Bank staff, the main architecture of the policy framework might never have been fully implemented, given the fluctuations of the electoral cycle and Government caution towards the electorate. This cannot be said with certainty, however, since it is also apparent that the gradual move towards transparency – which is now visible in many of the sectoral allocative processes – has begun simultaneously to have a significant impact upon the subvented educational institutions. Awareness of the nature and depth of their financial situation and its intractibility under likely future funding scenarios has grown steadily. The drive for policy reform thus appears increasingly to be bottom-up as well as top-down, and pressure for change from the institutions may ultimately overcome Government reluctance/caution to implement unpopular measures.

6.1 ***Translation of Government policy into TEP policy agreements.*** The TEP was designed to assist the Government of Ghana to implement the objectives of the White Paper. In the World Bank's *Staff Appraisal Report* (1992), the primary developmental objectives were interpreted as: (1) restructuring, upgrading, rehabilitation and quality improvement; (2) expansion (controlled); (3) improved management and increased efficiency; and (4) diversification of financing. The policy agreements put in place to ensure the viability and sustainability of the overall development objectives included the following: control of student intake, maintenance of the level of Government spending on tertiary education (at the time, viewed as *control* of expenditure), implementation of cost-recovery mechanisms, the use of agreed norms to govern staff:student ratios, agreed gender ratios for incoming

students, the introduction of measures to assure quality control, and the satisfactory functioning of the student loan scheme. Quantitative targets for monitoring adherence to policy reforms were agreed in the following areas (*Staff Appraisal Report*, 5.15, p. 33):

For Government: Control of intakes and enrollments in project institutions, in accordance with an agreed rate of increase; containment of tertiary education's share of MOE's actual recurrent budget and expenditures; agreed norms for tertiary education's budgeted share of the public investment programme for capital expenditure in education; student loans to be implemented at a sustainable level; cost recovery measures to be implemented incrementally, to reach 5% of actual costs.

For educational institutions: Overall students to academic staff ratio (SSRs) to reach agreed norms and stabilise; non-academic staff numbers to be reduced (in accordance with a formula); time/ space/ facility utilisation to be intensified to maximise efficiency; institutional library acquisitions budgets to rise and stabilise as a proportion of expenditure; proportion of recurrent expenditure on general maintenance to rise and stabilise.

6.2 Anticipated benefits of the project. It was anticipated that all aspects of the Government's tertiary education reform programme would benefit from the project. However, it was noted in the SAR that the project's emphasis – and therefore its likely main impact – would fall upon 'the improvement of quality in the processes of teaching and learning'. (SAR, 6.1, p. 39) Three broad areas of particular benefit were identified:

- *A substantial improvement in the quality of teaching and learning* in the institutions. This was to be achieved through (i) physical inputs (textbooks and materials for practical laboratory work) and (ii) assistance to promote improved teaching practice, including training in academic programme review, curriculum development and staff development.

- *Provision of the necessary conditions for Ghana to prepare for and handle controlled expansion in the universities and polytechnics*, in response to increased demand (new SSS candidates) and to meet the needs of the economy. This was to be achieved through improved academic infrastructure (civil works) insofar as it was required, and increased efficiency in the utilisation of existing facilities. The project also encouraged a culture shift to non-residential status, in part through the provision of facilities for non-residential students (consistent with what had been outlined in the Government White Paper).

- Finally, the project aimed *to support the Government in its attempts to implement policies designed to ensure the sustainability of quality improvements*. This was to be done through the Bank's role in ensuring that the policy agreements were adhered to over the duration of the project (which, it was recognised, would cover the transition to a new Government).

6.3 Policy agreements implemented in advance of the Project's commencement. Prior to the start of the project, the letter of Higher Education Development Policy provided in September 1992 by the Government of Ghana gave

assurances that the following policies were already in place: the removal of feeding subsidies for students (1988); the introduction of a successfully functioning student loan scheme (from 1988); the introduction of a semester scheme for all tertiary institutions; increases in student intakes at undergraduate level (34.6% over two years); an increase in the number of students who were non-resident; improving staff:student ratios; and a substantial reduction in non-teaching staff.

The PNDC Government also anticipated a number of likely areas of pressure during implementation, and, in the letter of Development Policy (signed by the PNDC Secretary for Finance and Economic Planning). Assurances were given that such issues would be kept under regular scrutiny by Government. These included student enrollment figures, the introduction of adequate hostel fees, and cost-sharing with students. (Letter of Higher Education Development Policy, *Staff Appraisal Report*, Annex 3, p. 77)

6.4 ***Implementation.*** The Project was implemented over the period 1993-98. As has been previously described, some serious slippage occurred from the outset, and a number of concerns recurred throughout the duration of the project's implementation. These included the following in particular:

- Persistently high student intakes and enrollment rates, even as the unit of resource per FTE declined;
- Failure to implement agreed cost-sharing and cost-recovery measures;
- Failure to implement the block grant and programme-linked grant funding;
- Non-viability of the student loan scheme and the subsequent indirect subsidy to tertiary education it came to represent;
- Neglect of the urgent need for Government to provide adequate staff and resources for the polytechnics;
- Establishment of new polytechnics, when it was very clear that the existing polytechnics were insufficiently resourced and unable to provide an education of adequate quality;
- Inability to achieve agreed gender ratios;
- The fact that, for at least four years of the project's implementation, Government continued to withhold funding if/when the institutions succeeded in generating income of their own;
- Failure of the institutions to conform to the norms set for expenditure on libraries and maintenance.

Some of the policy agreements remained unmet, even at the conclusion of the project. The TEP was evaluated by the World Bank as 'marginally successful' in recognition of (1) the extent to which change had taken place – however slowly – and in particular because considerable progress had ultimately been made in achieving some of the most important aspects of the reform programme (hostel fees, block grant funding, management efficiencies, and institutional capacity building). These were felt to offer real prospects for improvement in achieving financial stability, educational quality, and system management for the future; and (2) awareness of the likelihood that, without such a large inflow of additional finance, quality within the sector would almost certainly have declined to a much greater extent. It was also noted that this was a very considerable agenda for change, in a sector which was not unified and which contained strong opposition, and that it had been undertaken at a

time of considerable upheaval in Ghanaian public life (*Aide Memoire*, Project Completion Mission, September 1998).

7. COMMENT: STRUCTURAL AND CAPACITY ISSUES

Before moving to consider those areas where attention might usefully be focused in preparation for a possible TEP II, the following will be given brief discussion, as they are issues of considerable continuing relevance: (1) the broader issues relating to the structure and capacity of the Ghanaian public sector; and (2) the political environment in Ghana.

Both of these broader contexts have had a major impact upon the project's implementation. Many of the structural and capacity issues identified below are currently receiving attention from the Ghanaian Government, and from a wide variety of donor/agency efforts (particularly in the ongoing public sector reform programmes). It is evident however that it will be some time before such issues can be resolved and/or the situation improved. Any future project activity should thus take full cognisance of the changing political and managerial environment, and its likely impact on anticipated benefits/outcomes.

7.1 Structure of national resource allocation mechanisms and their impact on the institutions. One of the major constraints which has faced those with responsibility for achieving the policy goals of the reform programme has been the lack of transparency in resource allocation processes at a national level. This has resulted in considerable delay to the introduction of block grant funding, and has prevented the institutions from undertaking meaningful planning.

The URC and the Ministry of Education had anticipated that the new budgetary mechanisms which were scheduled for implementation from 1993 would have encouraged the institutions to address perceived inefficiencies in the use of resources (space, financial and personnel), and to take greater responsibility for the generation of external funding. This would have resulted in a delicate transfer of autonomy and power to the institutions, allowing them considerably greater control of their own environment, as well as the assumption of greater financial responsibility. International experience suggests that such measures – particularly the devolution of financial decision-making to the lowest possible level – does lead to greater efficiency and cost savings, as spending units take 'ownership' of their financial destiny.

However, while it appears that the Ministry of Education was genuinely concerned to implement the new mechanisms, this has not occurred in practice. A study undertaken at the time of the project (Penrose, 1993) suggests that retention of control within centralised Ministry of Finance procedures is not uncommon in post-colonial bureaucracies. In many cases it is therefore Ministries of Finance (and their officers) who have the final say in policy implementation, rather than the department or ministry initiating policy change.

In Ghana, these conditions have created a situation whereby the institutions have undertaken a budgeting process in accordance with the financial norms prescribed by the MOE in 1988 over a number of years, but the approved budget has borne little

resemblance to the formula-based budget submission. Having two systems of budgeting in operation concurrently (historically-based line-item budgeting is also required), and regularly receiving an approved budget allocation which seems to bear little resemblance to either, has created increased disillusionment and frustration within the institutions themselves, and more broadly across the sector. It has also left open the likelihood of reversion to previous practice, whereby personal interventions are made by influential individuals directly to the Ministry of Finance and/or the Office of the President, thus bypassing the procedures established by the MOE, and distorting agreed sectoral priorities.

These conditions *may* change in the near future, in part through the various public finance and civil service reform programmes currently under way within both the Ministry of Finance and more widely (eg NIRP, CSPIP, PUFMARP). In particular, the phased introduction (from 1998) of the Medium Term Expenditure Framework – which will allow open scrutiny of capital and recurrent funding allocations and donor inputs within a common set of objectives and priorities – *should* offer a useful mechanism for ensuring that budgetary allocations are made on a more transparent and rational basis, in accordance with national and sectoral plans. It is particularly useful that the Ministry of Education has been designated as a case study for the pilot phase of this initiative.

The lack of transparency in the final stages of the decision-making process which determines sectoral allocations has been an increasing source of frustration at the institutional level, particularly in those cases: (i) where the institutions are making a serious attempt to address their financial problems and to undertake unit cost analysis (as with the University of Ghana); and (b) where there is considerable discrepancy between even minimal estimated needs and the final allocation (at times as low as 18% of estimated requirements for some of the polytechnics).

7.2 ***Structures and rationale for financial accountability.*** The programme-linked budgeting mechanism should have introduced a shift in the ways in which financial arrangements operate. Financial accountability has not so far operated to ensure maximum value for money, and the existing systems appear unable to deal with the complexities of greater decentralisation and flexibility/ prioritisation of expenditure. A system which gives greater control to institutions but holds them ultimately accountable would certainly present a greater level of risk in the short-term, but it should promote value for money over time, and with experience.

At present, liquidity is a chronic problem. The tertiary education institutions are routinely in substantial deficit, and must make private or commercial arrangements to cover their lack of liquidity. This represents a further unproductive financial drain on the tertiary education system overall.

7.3 ***Institutional planning mechanisms.*** As has been discussed in section 4, the institutions have to date had only minimal flexibility for planning. Under the current budgetary structures, all that is really possible is a certain amount of decision-making at the margin. This is particularly the case with regard to staffing issues. In addition to a strongly-unionised culture which holds security of employment as a key priority, the whole pattern of institutional planning has been driven by staffing complements which have developed on a purely historical basis. Until there is greater flexibility over the use of short-term contracts and other mechanisms, institutions will remain

largely unable to take strategic decisions over their future. Further, as long as the only flexibility within the system remains that of increasing student numbers, financial and academic planning will be virtually impossible, and student numbers will remain potentially volatile, while institutions attempt to 'play the system' to increase their funding entitlements (whether or not these are subsequently met).

Linked to their structural inability to plan has been the institutional misunderstanding of the term 'strategic planning'. Where 'strategic planning' *has* been undertaken, it has often functioned as (1) a mechanism to implement national policy within institutions (eg to address gender balance or enrollment targets) or (2) the preparation of a 'shopping list' of highly-desirable activities and/or objectives which might be undertaken *if funding should somehow become available,* without any likelihood of it doing so from normal budgetary or other sources. While this has proved useful for discussions with external agencies, and for raising institutional profiles within the local community, it is not planning, and this should be recognised. The illusion that it *is* planning may hold potential dangers for future institutional morale, if these aspirational plans (and planned income) fail to materialise.

Planning should instead provide a mechanism for institutions to define the activities that they *will* undertake in the light of realistic financial forecasting, and planned activities and expenditure should be subject to regular internal – and possibly external – review. It should provide a means for demonstrating leadership, enabling prioritisation, and building a sense of shared understanding within the institution. The present difficulties and constraints to successful planning are however sizeable, and should not be underestimated.

In their study of strategic planning in African universities (1996), Plante and Ekong comment on some of the positive outcomes of strategic planning at the University of Ghana. These have included an increased attention to graduate study, and the enrollment of women students (both are Government policy goals), as well as steps towards devolved budgetary control at the faculty level. Their study emphasises the Strategic Plan's usefulness to the University, as it has enabled the institution to increase its efforts to attract external resources from the private sector and alumni.

Nevertheless, as they point out, while a timetable for implementation was initially set out, this has not been either monitored or implemented, and there has been little impact upon the allocation of resources internally. Critically, as they discuss – although in a generally positive conclusion – 'Where strategic planning may be arguably less useful, however, are [those] cases where universities must choose between the essential and the essential.' (Ekong and Plante, 1996, p. 17)

7.4 ***Acceptance of political responsibility for change.*** It is noticeable – as has been mentioned before in this report – that there has been a significant failure, particularly on the part of Government ministries, to take responsibility for announcing unpopular policy decisions, even where these have already been passed as legislation. This has led to confusion at times, as well as to delays in implementation. In some cases it can amount to serious side-stepping of responsibility. As one example, the instructions given to the NCTE for the preparation of the annual budgetary (1998/99) submission appear to expect the NCTE to take undue responsibility for presenting and implementing measures which still remain undeclared as policy by the Ministry of Education (eg, to propose incentives

to the private sector for the provision of facilities; to project the sustainability of the student loan scheme and national scholarships and bursaries; and to implement *full* cost recovery for student maintenance. MOE, 1998). Greater co-ordination of effort and full sharing of responsibility for building consensus would have been helpful.

7.5 ***Salary structures and allowances.*** As is the case throughout the public sector in many developing countries, the low level of salaries for public sector employees is a key and chronic issue. While such issues are beyond the scope of this paper, the impact of low remuneration must however be recognised. Very low levels of pay act as a huge disincentive to staff performance. Inadequate remuneration remains a central issue, affected more by Ghana's overall economic situation and the public sector environment than by the reform process under consideration. No set of tertiary education policies alone could address the weaknesses which such a structural issue will have created. These nevertheless impact upon the implementation of reform in a number of ways. For example:

- institutional ability to generate consultancy income is likely to have been greatly reduced, as much of the income which is generated in such circumstances tends to be retained at the individual level, to supplement inadequate salaries;
- where institutional rewards are low, there is little incentive to put great effort into improving pedagogical practice, or other educational improvements, as it is known that these will go unrewarded;
- recurrent strike action (exacerbated by the often poor – and politicised – relationship between the tertiary education institutions and the Government), poor morale, and 'brain drain' of able staff will invariably recur as persistent problems;
- if there is little likelihood of reward (or insufficient remuneration), the 'motivational' desire to undertake research may be very low, particularly where resources are scarce, thus reducing the potential of the sector to generate locally or internationally relevant research;
- 'coping' strategies may distort institutional priorities – eg, when travel is undertaken in part for the sake of *per diem* payments and other benefits to supplement salaries. The benefits received may thus assume a disproportionate significance in relation to the stated purpose of the journey.

7.6 ***Personal allowances as a disincentive to institutional change.*** Also of relevance is the issue of personal allowances and generous leave entitlements. It is apparent that, following a major restructuring of salaries in 1991 when most allowances were abolished, an increased range of allowances has begun to re-emerge (new allowances may be granted by institutional Councils). Some of the traditional allowances are clearly very costly to the institutions (eg, housing benefits, funeral allowances, medical care and free or subsidised schooling), but appear at present to be structurally and culturally largely necessary.[3] Others appear to be features of *institutional* rather than national culture, and may be a drain on the institution's *recurrent* budget (eg, sitting allowances, some responsibility allowances).

In general, the use of allowances as compensation for highly inadequate and poorly-differentiated salaries may result in distortions of the organisational culture, and of the purpose and function of routine activities, and act as an incentive to unproductive

[3] Although these allowances are beginning to be questioned, as happened at the 1997 Elmina Workshop on Tertiary Education Financing, held for Vice-Chancellors and senior officers.

types of activity. Additional allowances may be the only way for an institution to reward performance, or to recognise the additional burdens carried by staff. But unless they are carefully structured, they do appear to present a major barrier to successful reform. It also appears to be common practice for these allowances to be paid from recurrent academic expenditure, thus reducing still further the funds available for the basic functions of teaching and learning.

7.7 ***Utilisation of human capacity.*** A number of aspects of the reform process have been severely affected by insufficient human capacity. For many posts, the relevant skills and knowledge do not presently exist in Ghana. In some cases, however, there is under-utilisation of the human capacity which does exist, possibly because of factors such as rigid promotion and appointment procedures, which select by length of service (or political factors) rather than by ability.

Where capacities do exist, they are often not used to good effect. A study of the polytechnic sector in Ghana (Alberts, 1998) has drawn attention, for example, to the wastefulness surrounding the operations of the NCTE, whereby the professional advice and judgements of NCTE staff have been disregarded by either the institutions or by the Ministry of Education. Other bodies (eg, the NAB, some departments within the MOE) likewise appear to lack the authority which would allow full advantage to be taken of the professional work carried out by the dedicated individuals working within them. More broadly, studies of public sector management in Ghana (many of which have been undertaken as part of the various national and externally-funded programmes of public sector and civil service reform) have suggested that under-utilisation of potentially high quality employees is not uncommon (eg, GoG, 1994; OHCS, 1994; Larbi, 1995; Appiah, 1997; Osei, 1997). A number of public sector reform programmes (NIRP, CSPIP, etc) have been set up to address these and other issues, but progress remains slow.

7.8 ***Management systems.*** Despite the emphasis upon improving institutional management in the URC's Final Report and the White Paper, management structures appear to have changed little. Related to 7.7, this may in part reflect the prevailing culture of public sector management in Ghana. However, the staff development programmes intended to strengthen institutional management under the TEP have not had a significant impact in this sense. Some staff appear to have received inappropriate training, or training which cannot be put into effect because of structural constraints. Future developments might therefore perhaps be linked to emerging areas of good practice across the public sector, although the uniqueness of the tertiary education environment might inhibit full exploitation of such opportunities. A co-ordinated approach linked to key issues (eg devolved budgetary management, quality assurance, pedagogical improvement, institutional planning) should be adopted.

8. POLITICAL FACTORS AND THE TRANSITION TO DEMOCRACY

8.1 ***Political significance of the tertiary education sector.*** An important feature of tertiary education institutions (particularly universities) has been their political significance. This has been firstly in terms of their perceived importance as national symbols, historically reflecting the prestige and intellectual independence achieved by the former colonies at the time of independence. Secondly, with only a small cadre of

highly-educated people in leadership positions, there has always been a strong inter-relationship between the tertiary institutions and those in Government (and in opposition, formal or not). This has operated both on a personal basis, as individuals transfer regularly between the universities and Government positions, and also on an institutional basis. As institutions with a mandate to lead intellectual debate and to critique, universities can be a strong source of dissent or unwanted criticism. Specific examples have been chronicled by a number of writers (eg Mwiria, 1992; Sawyerr, 1994), and space precludes further discussion. However, the significance of this uneasy relationship cannot be overemphasised. It makes the balance required for the 'state supervision' model of tertiary education management (as opposed to state control) particularly difficult to achieve, and means that trust, transparency and widespread information regarding all transactions and initiatives are critical for the success of reform measures.

*8.2 **Political power of the student population.*** As in many developing or transitional economies, the power of the student body in Ghana to disrupt or destabilise, and to generate pressure on the Government has been regularly demonstrated. In 1992, Eisemon wrote in a World Bank discussion paper '... universities in many countries, particularly their students, have a long tradition of political dissent and participation in the political process. Students represent an incipient political elite with claims to an influential, independent role in the political system that are often recognized, implicitly, in negotiations between student groups and ministers (and heads of state) about campus and other grievances. In these situations, university students are not passive objects of reform, but key political actors in the reform process. Congregated on campuses, they are easily mobilised. The location of many universities in capital cities in close proximity to government institutions makes student protest politically difficult to ignore.' (Eisemon, 1992, pp. 2-3) Attention has been drawn elsewhere (eg Watson, 1995) to instances where governments have been overthrown as a direct result of disturbances initiated by student unrest.

Ghana possesses a long history of student volatility. There have been frequent instances of institutional closure and military occupation of the campuses, and occasions where the student population has been fired upon by state forces, resulting in some deaths. After (reported) active student involvement in previous regime overthrows (notably that of Colonel Acheampong), the potential power of the student population tends to be taken seriously. At the time of the 1981 Revolution, the National Union of Ghanaian Students (NUGS) had a close political relationship with the PNDC (in part through other student structures such as the June 4 Movement), but that relationship deteriorated and NUGS – and the student population more generally – came to be perceived as a potential threat to Government stability, causing the PNDC to react strongly at times. A number of disturbances occurred throughout the 1980s, including a significant confrontation between the University of Ghana and the PNDC in the late 1980s, following the arrest of a group of student leaders. This incident developed into a confrontation of authority between the University leadership, the Government, and the legal authority of the state. Other less serious incidents have caused regular disruption to academic schedules.

In discussion with those in the tertiary education sector in Ghana, the following were cited as possible reasons for the power held by students in the political process: students are part of well-organised groupings through which ideas are easily spread,

particularly while they remain on-campus; a large proportion of the student population are the children/wards of those holding influential positions (especially in the public sector); conversely, many students are from rural areas, and they may therefore rapidly disseminate politically destabilising areas to their home areas; students are highly-articulate, and are thus able to put into words what their less well-educated families and contacts may not be able to; students, by virtue of their participation in the tiny minority attending tertiary level education (the tertiary enrollment ratio is currently less than 3%), are regarded as leaders, and respected by their communities, despite their comparative youth and lack of experience. In addition, it was suggested that a large part of the national political process occurs on the campus, involving staff as well as students, and this political interaction may be perceived as potentially destabilising.

Whatever the predominant reason, a fear of student unrest has continued into the late 1990s, despite the transition from military to elected rule. As one example, a serious incident occurred in 1993 (after the installation of the NDC), during which Government offices in more than one ministry were ransacked. This led Government to withdraw the introduction of cost-recovery measures, and, simultaneously, to approve a financially non-viable (and well above the agreed maximum for the scheme) rise in the amount available to students under the student loan scheme (although the Government was at that time able to increase the interest rate payable by students from 3% to 6%).

Although it has been less frequently demonstrated in the late-1990s than during the PNDC era, student influence has remained considerable. Students have generally been quick to react against the imposition of academic service fees and other charges, and, while the student/government relationship appears to have become less antagonistic in recent years, it remains a deeply significant factor. Possibly in keeping with a more stable and democratic (and financially-pragmatic) environment, the threat of actual violence appears to be declining, but it is still perceived to be present. Attempts to involve the student leadership in negotiations over the rationale and general equity considerations raised by the introduction of cost-recovery measures have met with little success. Individual student leaders have agreed with the rationale for the introduction of charges (and are on record as doing so), but the quick succession of student leaders has meant that it has been impossible to gain the support of NUGS as an entity for such measures. Fora organised jointly with bodies such as the Private Employers Federation (PEF), which has taken an active role in attempting to involve all stakeholders in consultation over tertiary education financing, have failed to gain the long-term support of the student population, despite the agreements of the individual NUGS officers.

Attention is therefore drawn in the *Aide Memoire* of the Project Completion Mission (1998) to the manner in which accommodation charges were finally introduced in 1998. This move followed the de-linking of admission to the Universities from automatic entitlement to a place in residence, which had been announced by Government in late-1997. A de-linking policy meant that University-provided accommodation was officially no longer guaranteed to all students. Those who refused to pay charges simply lost their places to other students who were keen to gain residence. Student resistance was consequently minimal.

This was acknowledged as a very useful strategy. However, continuing political dispute mediated through (public) announcements and counter-announcements over the *amount* to be charged to students for accommodation did ultimately detract somewhat from the smoothness of acceptance of the new measures. Compromise over the amount to be charged has also meant that the financial gains to the institutions will be minimal (or even detrimental) in the short term. But there is no doubt that the experience has been significant, and similar phased strategies may be useful in other contexts.

8.3 ***Electoral cycles.*** Electoral cycles will very likely remain as important factors in determining the rate and pace of reform implementation in Ghana. Controversial reforms are unlikely to be introduced in the 18-24 months preceding an election, in order to avoid the risk of possible political backlash. This reduced time-span for the introduction of change will greatly constrain the extent to which reform of this highly-volatile sector can be undertaken. It may be the case that such political constraints will diminish to a certain extent as the political process stabilises, but unrest and protest are likely to be significant for the foreseeable future.

More importantly, to the extent that tertiary education policy may in the future appear as part of political party platforms (especially given the level of political involvement on the campuses), the danger of policy commitments pledging financially non-viable change for political gain seems likely to increase. This would be highly detrimental to the tertiary system. Every effort should therefore be made by all those likely to be affected by tertiary education policy to explore and make public the educational and equity issues underlying policy decisions.

9. PREPARATION OF A NEW POLICY FRAMEWORK

Ghana has now begun to consider the next phase of policy development for tertiary education. It is clear that many of the key structures underpinning the phase of reform which began in 1988 are only just being put into effect, and the underlying policy issues are only now receiving (some) acceptance in the late-1990s. These achievements do however represent a significant basis from which to refine and develop policy.

As it plans for the future, it will be important for Ghana to isolate the principles upon which it wishes to build and consolidate its tertiary education system. Associated policies should seek to achieve these goals *within a framework which is financially-viable,* and presented in a manner which is politically appealing. More than a decade has now passed since the URC's recommendations were made. It is certainly time for a full review of tertiary education policy.

Based upon the ideas which emerged during the project completion workshop, the policy goals which are likely to command future attention are those of quality, diversity, equity, relevance, and the further development of systems to achieve co-ordinated information management. Such goals would allow Ghanaian institutions to take maximum advantage of opportunities which will emerge in the 21st century (particularly with regards to the potential of information and communications technologies and distance education). These goals will obviously have to be integrated within the national perspective provided by *Vision 2020*, and other relevant

framework documents, such as *Making People Matter: A Human Development Strategy for Ghana* (1991) and *A Policy Focus for Poverty* (1996), all of which emphasise the importance of poverty reduction and the provision of services for the most vulnerable, as well as the continuing development of Ghana's technological capabilities and the skills and human capacities necessary for expansion of the private sector. Reconciling these potentially disparate goals within severe resource constraints will require careful balance of both short and medium term strategies and strong political will.

Drawing from the assessment of the existing policy framework and the lessons which have been learned over the course of its implementation, a number of issues which might constitute elements of a new tertiary education policy framework are discussed in sections 10-14 below. It is recognised that, just as the previous framework was drawn to quite a considerable extent from the detailed attention given by the URC to eight structural issues (rather than commencing from a specific policy outline and determining how most effectively to achieve it), this framework is drawn *in part* from the issues raised by the TEP, and the concerns which implementation of the project have highlighted. However, a number of major new issues and developments have arisen in the higher education arena over the duration of the project. Some of these are included here for more detailed consideration.

Those with responsibility for policy formulation can make use of these suggestions as they believe them to be appropriate, while drawing primarily upon their own expertise and understanding of the dynamics of educational change (and educational requirements) in Ghana. A considerable number of the ideas given below emerged in discussion with those working in the sector, and my thanks go to all those who shared their thoughts and experience with me. Some attempt has been made to interpret ideas in the light of international developments, and to comment on likely constraints and viability. However, it must be recognised that, overall, these preliminary suggestions may remain as somewhat idealistic. They will certainly have to be reviewed against any changes to the overall public financing environment, and the constraints discussed in sections 7 and 8.

10. ASSURANCE OF EDUCATIONAL QUALITY AND RELEVANCE

The concepts of educational quality and relevance have undergone considerable international refinement since the URC reported in 1988. Much international experience has been gained in the areas of quality assurance and accreditation. It will therefore be important for Ghana to ensure that the mechanisms which it has in place will enable it to draw upon these developments effectively. At least as significant – and probably more so – has been the concurrent explosion of technologies allowing access to and management of information. The potential for Ghana to benefit from (and contribute to) the 'knowledge revolution' cannot be overemphasised. While these ideas are already current in Ghana – as shown by the fact that its three main tertiary institutions contain pilot sites for the African Virtual University (amongst other initiatives) – the issues they raise must be given strategic consideration. The African Virtual University is only in the rudimentary stages of development, and the range of potential applications has yet to be fully-explored. However, some stocktaking should be undertaken of the more general issues presented by this initiative. These include access to and control of knowledge, commercialism, control

and indigenisation of curricula, copyright, intellectual property rights, accreditation and certification, etc. Careful consideration of these broader issues is needed to ensure that Ghanaian interests are well-served.

Experience elsewhere in Africa (particularly Kenya and South Africa) suggests that possibilities exist for use of ICT developments such as the AVU for income generation, as well as their even greater significance as a means of overcoming the major constraints of inadequate library or other learning facilities. Ghana ought to be in a position to take advantage of these developments, if the limitations to its resources are recognised, and if the resources which are available are used wisely. It will thus be most important for Ghana to consider *at a national level* how such opportunities can be maximised and developed, and the potential threats minimised. A co-ordinated assessment will be essential to produce useful policy guidance, as rapid access to knowledge and the ability to handle (and transmit) information will be key issues for the 21st century.

Many of the critical issues relating to quality and relevance will also need attention at the sectoral level. Current structures suggest a very major role for both the National Council for Tertiary Education and its associated bodies, particularly the National Accreditation Board. They must ultimately provide policy advice and support to guide the institutions in developing appropriate academic structures, in promoting effective and relevant methods of learning and teaching, and in generating research – all of these in ways which will maximise the contribution of tertiary education to national needs.

Discussion of these inter-related issues is organised below under three headings: (i) the development of flexible structures for knowledge generation, and the acquisition and management of internationally-available electronic information (ie, development of a national information infrastructure); (ii) quality assurance and quality control mechanisms, and the clarification of academic standards; and (iii) access, lifelong learning and flexible entry/exit from learning opportunities within a coherent national structure, as a means of promoting both equity and the continuous generation of the skills necessary for the country's economic development.

10.1 Future directions: knowledge management and information infrastructure. Much has been written in recent years about the need for tertiary education systems to structure themselves in accordance with new methods of acquiring, generating and utilising knowledge, both within the sector and beyond it (eg Gibbons, 1998; World Bank, 1998). Preliminary attempts were made in Ghana over 1997/98 to generate an Information Policy Planning strategy for the sector as a whole. While this strategy development exercise did not advance, the initiative remains valid and is worthy of reconsideration. Planning for ways by which the full potential of information communication technologies can be developed and utilised *within the constraints which Ghana currently faces* will be critically important, particularly given the magnitude of the technical and infrastructural problems and service interruptions which Ghana routinely experiences.

The ability to access virtual library facilities and developments such as on-line access to journals has the potential to make an enormous difference to tertiary education in Ghana, both nationally, and in the country's ability to take up opportunities to participate in international developments at minimal additional cost. Positioning the

sector to take advantage of these developments will however require determined effort and foresight. It will also require a change of behaviour, as forward thinking and planning have not been widely-utilised to date. Major investments will be required, in terms both of physical hardware and the training and aptitudes necessary to use the new technologies. At what level should Ghana invest? Can it afford to update equipment, and how should it select equipment which will serve national needs and still offer a maximum technical lifespan? Where should the focus of investment be, and why? At present, there is great disparity between the institutions, in terms of their capacity (both technological and human) to undertake a high-technology initiative, and even the most highly-resourced institutions have low capacity in this sense. It is an area which should be of first priority if and when investment funding is available.

Full use of the potential of such powerful developments will be seriously curtailed if implementation is undertaken in isolation at the institutional level, or if any investment funding which may be available is used without great care and forward-planning. Strategies for sharing access across the sector will be important, as will the development of cultures of continuous flexible learning, and, of course, routine maintenance and routine repair.

Within the teaching environment, teaching and learning strategies will also have to be re-considered to make effective use of new technologies. Even more than in the past, it will be important for students to be taught how to seek, acquire and use knowledge, rather than to act as passive recipients. This should ensure firstly that they are able to derive maximum benefit from the education they receive, but also that they are well-equipped for the working culture of the 21st century.

10.2 Quality assurance in tertiary education. During the 1990s, the quality movement has become pervasive in systems of higher education across the world. It has been linked closely with the phenomena generally termed 'globalisation'; the massification of higher education systems; the transfer and accreditation of labour, knowledge and skills from one country or continent to another; and as an integral aspect of new public sector management practices. Quality assurance systems are frequently linked with accountability and transparency, and, in many countries, strengthened quality assurance procedures have been developed in conjunction with the transfer of increased autonomy, devolved planning and other decentralisation measures. For these new arrangements to work satisfactorily in promoting the quality of educational provision, much will depend firstly on the philosophy underlying the structure of institutional quality assurance arrangements, and secondly the specific methodologies employed by external quality assessment agencies. Such arrangements must be linked with management practices as a whole, and can only fully serve their intended purposes in an atmosphere of trust and collegiality.

In respect of the quality of teaching and learning, there is considerable evidence internationally that quality assurance systems have focused attention upon serious pedagogical issues – in particular student learning processes, and the need for students to develop 'deep' learning and cognitive abilities. This has helped institutions and teachers to move beyond the traditional practice of teaching students by rote (and thereby skilling them to pass exams) which has been so detrimental to the development of transferable, conceptual and analytical skills. Concurrently, academic management systems have been clarified and streamlined, and financial and

academic planning more closely integrated, ensuring that institutions focus on those areas where there is a need for change, and develop their own capacities for performance improvement on a long-term basis. The adoption of formal quality assurance mechanisms might therefore appear to hold the *potential* to assist with the introduction of beneficial changes to academic management in Ghanaian institutions, but only if approached with the positive support of the institutional leadership, the NCTE and NAB, and the MOE.

Existing developments and constraints. Ghana already has structures in place to address many of these concerns, primarily through the National Accreditation Board (NAB) and the National Board for Professional and Technical Examinations (NABPTEX). However, neither has been adequately resourced to fulfil its role properly, nor does either appear to possess the authority necessary to carry out its mandate. The ability of either body to have an impact on the quality of education within the sector has therefore been less than might have been desirable. As one small example, the delays experienced by candidates waiting for the results of their examinations from NABPTEX (over 15 months) does not suggest an improvement in the overall quality of the system, nor its responsiveness to student needs. NABPTEX in particular has been severely hampered by its lack of staff. Objectively, there seems little point in establishing, but then under-funding and part-staffing bodies in this way, particularly at such a crucial time for the development of the polytechnic sector.

Similarly, the under-resourcing of the National Accreditation Board should also be a matter of serious concern. Despite considerable constraints, the NAB has made a very creditable start to the major task of evaluating the fitness of Ghanaian institutions to offer programmes and qualifications (this is due at least in part to the commitment and resourcefulness of the individuals involved in NAB activities). However, the sheer cost of undertaking accreditation visits has caused considerable impediments, and the NAB has been further hampered by occasional official reluctance to listen to or accept its recommendations.

Some uncertainty exists as to what will happen when the 'interim' accreditation awarded several years ago to the large majority of programmes expires. The conferral of interim accreditations appears generally to have been related to very low levels of resourcing (particularly within the polytechnic sector). Assuming this was the case, what will happen in the longer term if resourcing does not increase significantly? The number of interim accreditations greatly exceeds full accreditations. What can the NAB therefore do to assist with quality improvement at the institutional level if additional funding remains scarce? Can the NAB assist with ensuring that institutional (and inter-institutional) *processes* are strengthened, even when resources are low? Can the NAB play a significant role in preventing under-funded expansion?

The NAB has thus far worked only with the polytechnics and the University of Development Studies. The methodology it currently uses was established primarily as a 'threshold model' – ie, to identify the minimum inputs (or threshold standards) required to offer a particular disciplinary programme, and then to accredit/or not the provision offered, following an assessment visit to the institutions conducted by a panel of subject experts (generally from the universities).

Activities should now ideally be broadened. Firstly, the NAB should consider whether its current methodology is the most appropriate, given the changing conditions in Ghana (and in the light of international experience). It should also consider what methodology will be most appropriate for use in the well-established universities. For example, the NAB may wish to consider the totality of institutions from broader perspectives (these may include structural, procedural and governance arrangements, or institutional links with the public, with employers and with past and potential students). It may wish to encourage and share good practice, for example by the promotion of graduate tracer studies, employer involvement, and feedback from students (past and present).

The NAB should also aim to broaden the scope and methodology of its enquiries, and should now focus upon institutional mechanisms and academic management structures, which are critically important, but which can be rectified to a considerable extent *without* a large input of additional funding, and often by the institution itself. The NAB should seek to become a source of expertise on such issues, and it should provide the firm external guidance necessary – with the backing and support of the NCTE – to ensure that change does indeed take place.

A shift towards quality enhancement in the processes of teaching and learning within the institutions would also be useful. Such a change of approach *would* need inputs at the sectoral level, but these would be minimal in comparison to the shortages in infrastructure, staffing and facilities previously identified by the NAB. Again, the services and benefits of such assistance should be shared across the sub-sector, and structurally embedded. In the past, for example, the Pedagogical Improvement Programme (funded by the TEP) appears to have failed to have a long-term impact within the institutions, in part because it was not institutionalised into a sectoral process of quality enhancement. The benefits of quite substantial expenditure have therefore remained largely at the individual level (or have been lost altogether). Institutional leadership and support will be critical. A number of issues thus require clarification when the sector reviews its approach to quality assurance:

- How can the NAB and NABPTEX be funded to ensure that they can fulfil their roles? If there is insufficient funding to undertake the anticipated role, what should their new roles be, to ensure that some benefit is gained from the resources expended? Can Ghana afford *not* to resource these adequately?

- Which methodology should the NAB employ for its external quality assessments? Can it move from a threshold standards model (which serves largely to identify issues of under-resourcing) to a performance improvement model? How should assessors be trained, and how can institutions be encouraged to take maximum advantage of the process itself? Is there any possibility of developing internal cultures of self-reflection and regular self-review within the institutions? Given overall constraints, what would be the most appropriate model within the Ghanaian context, to combine a minimum of additional bureaucracy with the greatest possible quality improvement?

- What authority will NAB recommendations carry? What sanctions can be applied if examples of poor management, inappropriate academic design, or extremely

low resourcing are persistently identified? Can help be offered to assist with improvement?

- How can these bodies contribute to overall sectoral improvement in the quality of teaching and learning? How can staff training (especially pedagogical training) be institutionalised? Where should responsibility for ensuring this lie?

- How should the work of the NAB in particular feed into national resource allocation procedures (if at all)? Should excellence in teaching be rewarded with additional funding (can sufficiently robust systems to identify excellence be found)?

- Can some indicators of performance be routinely monitored by the NAB and/or the NCTE? For example, drop-out (or wastage) rates are unknown, but are generally assumed to be low. Is this genuinely the case? What could be done if significant anomalies were detected?

- What relationship should the NAB have to international bodies, and what processes should be initiated to compare the standards achieved in Ghanaian tertiary education with those of its international competitors?

Finally – and importantly (see also 12.1) – as private provision is likely to have a key and growing role in future tertiary education provision in Ghana, work is needed *now* to identify the mechanisms which will be necessary to accredit private providers, and to consider fairly the equivalence values of overseas and distance education qualifications, particularly those undertaken from Internet providers or franchised operations. These issues seem likely to take on an increasing prominence internationally in the coming years, and it will be necessary for the sector to prepare in advance.

10.3 Access, equity and lifelong learning in Ghana. Issues of equity and access have received considerable attention within this report. All such discussion must be qualified because of a lack of hard data, but anecdotal evidence suggests that the children of the better-off are considerably better-represented than poorer children within the tertiary education sector. Excessively competitive examination requirements – for which previous private tuition confers great advantages – and the existence of a student loan scheme and scholarship schemes which do not differentiate by ability to pay have been detrimental to equity considerations. It is therefore important that these issues should be taken into account when both the loan scheme and national scholarship arrangements are reviewed, in conjunction with the funding of students more generally (see also 11.2).

Similarly, attention to lifelong and flexible learning will be important if a more equitable balance is to be achieved. The introduction of modularisation and semesterisation was originally intended to initiate progress towards the development of credit transfer schemes. For various reasons, these have not been developed. Consequently their intended purpose remains unfulfilled. Ghana may therefore wish to review the developments being undertaken elsewhere (particularly within Africa) to promote movement across education systems. Policy-makers may want to consider the possible development of formal credit accumulation and transfer schemes, within

a well-articulated qualification framework, which will give maximum credit for any learning achievement – whether achieved through traditional learning structures, through distance education, or even (ultimately) the acquisition of demonstrable learning achievement within the workplace. Accredited work-place learning would – in theory – usefully enhance the development of skills relevant to the Ghanaian economic situation, and possibly begin to lessen the desire for conventional (and possibly less relevant) qualifications.

The development of credit transfer frameworks would be a further role for the National Accreditation Board to undertake. It must be acknowledged that such work is probably not immediately practicable, but possible future arrangements of this kind should be taken into consideration while other more immediate or short-term developments are planned. Expertise should be gathered, possibly from South Africa, or from any other suitable comparator with experience in this area. A serious attempt to interpret *and value* a variety of types of learning achievement may have ultimate significance in lessening the demand for traditional university-based qualifications. Degree qualifications can, in some cases, be valued more for their currency as certificates than as the final outcome of a process of learning and skills accumulation. This attitude may ultimately inhibit the individual's (and thus his/her society's) ability to develop the requisite cognitive and transferable skills for participation in the benefits which societies geared up to acquiring and using information will enjoy.

In theory, therefore, the principles of expanded access, equity and lifelong learning should be amongst the foremost considerations for Ghanaian tertiary education policy-makers, given the national emphasis upon poverty reduction and the transformation of Ghanaian society. How can such aspirations be furthered at the tertiary education level? How can students from the most disadvantaged or excluded backgrounds be encouraged and supported to benefit from tertiary education?

Such issues will have to be taken into consideration when the new education sector plan is produced. Equally pressing (for now), however, are the following: (1) the international credibility of Ghanaian tertiary education, (2) the provision of graduates who will be able to shape the labour ethos of the next generation, and (3) the provision of middle-level skilled manpower to meet the needs of the private sector (and the employment market more generally). The balance achieved in policy concerns overall, and decisions over what it might be possible to undertake, given existing financial and infrastructural circumstances, will require considerable analysis. Any shift in focus should be deliberate and justifiable.

11. FINANCIAL SUSTAINABILITY OF THE TERTIARY EDUCATION SYSTEM

The issues which together will determine the financial sustainability of Ghana's tertiary education system are clearly critical – and at least as great as they were in 1988. The proportion of public finance available annually appears now to be reasonably consistent (it seems likely to settle at about 15% of the education budget, although it has been considerably lower in recent years). All financial projections should be made within an awareness of Ghana's changing overall economic situation. It appears well-understood that public finance will not in itself be sufficient to meet the anticipated needs and costs of the institutions in the sub-sector. While official

policy has favoured cost-sharing and cost-recovery mechanisms to assist with meeting the costs of the tertiary educations system for more than a decade, this has only recently begun to be implemented, and needs still to be pursued rather more vigorously. Even where cost-recovery mechanisms are in place (eg student accommodation), the amounts charged to students are well below the real costs of the services provided. The gains are therefore not likely to be felt by the institutions for some time. If improvements to the system are to be made, the issues relating to financial viability must be urgently addressed. The following concerns appear to be the most pressing:

11.1 National resource allocation mechanisms and the need for a 'one line' budget for tertiary education. As discussed throughout this report and others connected with the Tertiary Education Project (including the *Aide Memoire* of the Project Completion Mission), the final implementation of a form of block grant will be an essential step towards ensuring financial sustainability and encouraging the institutions to take greater responsibility for planning and managing within defined parameters. The programme-linked budgeting model which was developed by the URC should provide a reasonable basis for preliminary implementation, but its application should be kept under review, and the norms reviewed regularly in light of developments within the sector. It should also be noted however that a norm-based model is essentially static or mechanistic, and does not encourage 'plan-led' activities.

To date, project reports have emphasised the extent to which norms have not been met within the institutions. However, there has been little incentive for them to do so. Additionally, the NCTE appears to lack the authority it needs to enforce adherence to the norms. While it would be useful ultimately to consider whether the conditions are appropriate to move to a resource allocation system which is plan-led, this is unlikely to happen for some time.

A first priority should therefore be to review the norms which have been established, and to consider whether these are fully appropriate for current conditions. Other models might be considered as the existing financial systems become more robust. The use of planning norms makes great sense when little information is available, and the planning process is still under development. However, it should not be forgotten that this is *planning by control*, and that it will not lead to the introduction of dynamism in institutional management. In the short-term, the following questions might be asked:

- Is there any likelihood that emoluments will be included within the block grant, so that flexibility in staffing arrangements can be encouraged? (If so, what would the social impact of such decisions be?) The preservation of historic 'establishments' is not likely to allow institutions to respond quickly to new potential developments, nor to respond with sufficient speed to the needs of the economy.

- Can incentives and disincentives be provided through the formula used to determine funding allocations to bring about broader policy goals? If transparent, various options would be available to guide institutional decision-making (eg, capping funding for student numbers to discourage excessive intakes). Incentives would have to be carefully developed in conjunction with overall policy (and outcomes monitored).

- The norms were initially derived from those in use internationally. But do they reflect the styles of teaching and learning actually in place within the institutions? Are the staff:student ratios appropriate in light of current pedagogical practice? How much small group teaching is actually undertaken? How much classwork is given, which thus requires intensive preparation and marking? Is there flexibility for the use of graduate teaching assistants, or part-time teaching provision? How would these changes affect the calculation of norms?

- How can new styles of learning, particularly using the new technologies, be encouraged?

- How can research be promoted, and can this be encouraged through the calculation of institutional funding?

- Can academic worth be recognised and rewarded? Could areas of need within the labour market be identified and incentives provided for increased provision in such areas?

A more flexible formula-based approach (to incorporate a policy dimension, and which may be based on institutional plans and projections) might ultimately be considered, if and when: (1) considerably more robust information is available, and (2) inter-ministerial constraints have lessened at the Governmental level. As a first step, the generation of a good understanding of the true unit costs of educating students within each institution – and thus also areas of subsidy – would be a very useful basis for future decision-making. Not only would such information be useful in itself, but it may also point to the most useful and appropriate financing models for the future, and speed up the implementation of existing policy decisions. It was noticeable, for example, that when accommodation charges were finally introduced in 1998, considerable institutional variation was apparent in the calculations made regarding expenditure on student hostels. The disparity in approach and methodology between the Government and the different institutions was ultimately detrimental to public credibility. It undermined any firm belief that the figure charged represented accurately the costs of providing accommodation, and thus possibly created an additional obstacle to any move to full cost-recovery. Robust information based on transparent financial criteria would therefore be a very useful tool for future decision-making.

*11.2 **Student support: the promotion of equity and financial sustainability.*** Ways to maximise cost-sharing with students, while promoting equity and ensuring that participation is broadened are urgently needed. Student support has already been recognised as a key area for reform. The goal should be to develop genuinely Ghanaian alternatives. To this end, a full review should encompass both the student loan scheme and the national scholarship awards, as well as other potential developments such as fund-raising from village or district assembly level, to develop – where possible – local solutions to the current situation. The review should also borrow where relevant from international experience.

The current lack of information concerning the income groups of parents of tertiary education students has meant that accurate projections of the likely impact of cost-

sharing strategies on students and their families are difficult. In the absence of such information, impartial advice from those likely to be affected seems improbable. However, a variety of initiatives are under serious consideration, and debate and analysis of the options and their implications should be developed further. Any review must take full account of the policy implications involved, particularly those of equity (including gender) and long-term financial feasibility, with a clear understanding of the threshold for financial viability, both in the present and under future possible economic and political conditions. As is reasonably well-understood, any failure of political will in this area will have serious consequences for the future of tertiary education in Ghana.

Student loans. The student loan scheme was designed in 1988. This was prior to (1) the upgrading and expansion of the polytechnic sector, (2) a dramatic rise in the student population as a whole, (3) significant increases in the amount required by students for daily subsistence, and (4) an unanticipated decline in the Ghanaian economy. The scheme was specifically designed to introduce the *principle* of cost sharing without affecting any student's ability to participate in tertiary education. Albrecht and Ziderman (1992a, p. 76) have pointed out that the system in fact now represents an additional subsidy by the majority of workers who have paid into the SSNIT, but who are themselves unlikely to benefit from the interest earned from their contributions – which is instead made available (indirectly) as low-interest loans to students in tertiary education (should Government not meet its full share of the interest costs). Aside from this subsidy, and the equity concerns previously discussed, it is now well-recognised that the existing student loan scheme is not financially-viable. As part of its current search for a solution, the Ministry of Education now hopes to broaden the scheme so that it may include greater private sector involvement.

National scholarships and bursaries. Similarly, the national scholarships scheme should be reviewed, as previous reports have also identified a number of disadvantages to the current arrangements:

- expenditure is high (often higher than budgeted), and the contribution to equity benefits uncertain;
- scholarships and bursaries for undergraduate study are awarded *after* the first year has been completed, and cannot therefore encourage wider access;
- the operation of the scholarships secretariat lacks transparency, and information on beneficiaries and patterns of expenditure is not easily available;
- the location of the scholarships secretariat (outside of all other bodies dealing with tertiary education and/or bodies operating at the sectoral level) makes integration with national policy difficult, and leaves the allocation process vulnerable to other influences.

Means testing. Discussion of the feasibility of means-testing with those in the sector was inconclusive, and a variety of views were put forward on possible ways of determining need. The majority view appeared to suggest that – in a country where a high proportion of economic activity is informal, and thus unrecorded – devising a reliable and accurate means of means-testing which would be both fair and not open to easy abuse would be virtually impossible. Attempts might however continue to investigate and test the feasibility of alternative means of determining approximate

socio-economic status with at least some degree of reliability. As an example, recording previous schooling history was suggested as a possible mechanism, because of the very high level school fees which the majority of parents pay, particularly in the 'better' schools. (This might also serve a useful purpose in overall monitoring for equity purposes.)

Alternative sources of student support for inclusion within a comprehensive package of options. A few other possible sources of support were suggested, particularly for young people from low-income or subsistence households in *rural* areas. For example, it was suggested that local/district assemblies might be able to identify and sponsor needy local students. These, and any other specifically Ghanaian ideas for increasing support for the poorest should be formalised, or at least further investigated, and included within a comprehensive package of options for student support, with differing conditions of eligibility and/or repayment. All mechanisms for student support should ideally be centrally-co-ordinated and the different options well-publicised, with an in-built monitoring and review mechanism to assess the medium-term impact of different options.

11.3 ***Fees.*** Issues relating to student fees have received much attention, and will undoubtedly continue to do so, in part because of the politicisation of fees as an issue *per se*. The distinction between equity and fees should be clarified in discussion with student representatives. There appears to be some belief that much of the discussion and outright rejection of the introduction of fees by the student body has become 'ideological' without a corresponding equity rationale or political justification. Some effort should therefore be made to review and analyse the issues raised by the experience of the last decade with all affected parties, so that unfounded 'ideology' cannot easily prevail. At the same time, consideration should be given to clarifying the interpretation of the Constitution's requirements, and its implications for equity and access. Can the current definition withstand the evidence which is beginning to accumulate?

11.4 ***Split fee and grant structures.*** Alternative financing models such as the 'Uganda' model were also suggested by members of the tertiary education community. Through this approach, the Ministries of Education and Finance would determine the level of funding available for the tertiary education sub-sector in advance of each academic year, and the NCTE (ideally) or MOE would thus be able to determine how many students could be educated on a 'no fee' or a 'partial fee' basis. It would then allocate funded or partially-funded student numbers to the institutions. Over and above these fully and partially-funded student numbers, additional unfunded students might gain entry, on payment of full-cost fees (ie, private sponsorship). Aspects of this model might prove attractive, although it carries a number of potential difficulties and longer-term implications, which would have to be considered carefully in advance:

- there would have to be absolute certainty about the levels of funding available, and a clear understanding of institutional unit costs for the system to work satisfactorily;
- the NCTE/MOE would have to have very clear criteria for allocating funded numbers, and would have to be certain that its judgement could not be contested;

- institutions would (ideally) have to find the means to target the 'funded' places to students from low-income backgrounds;
- full-cost fee paying students would be attracted to some disciplines in preference to others, which would require clear institutional or sectoral priorities and academic policy over disciplinary expansion and compensation (or academic priorities could easily be distorted);
- institutions would require very clear and consistent policy on the use of additional fee income;
- quality regulation, particularly of very popular disciplines, would be important;
- fee-paying students would be likely to make demands (in terms of pedagogy, facilities, etc) which non-fee paying students do not, and the institutions would have to be prepared and able to meet their realistic expectations;
- staff would have to be prepared to work longer hours, and facilities would have to be accessible for longer periods.

Such models are still fairly new in Africa, and experience (particularly at Makerere) is beginning to demonstrate both the advantages and potential disadvantages of this approach. It is certainly worthy of thorough investigation, perhaps including implementation initially on a controlled or pilot basis.

11.5 ***Income generation.*** All the tertiary education institutions have begun to make serious efforts to generate an increasing proportion of their income, and some methods are clearly proving successful (alumni giving, big gift fundraising). It is most important that institutions are allowed to keep all monies raised in this way, and that, where possible, further developments might be encouraged through appropriate incentives from Government. Initial expectations of the extent to which the private sector might be prepared to support tertiary education were somewhat unrealistic, but gains have certainly been made. Considerable enthusiasm for such activities is evident. It may be worth some discussion within the institutions (but possibly incorporating external views) on the manner in which the monies raised are applied: Could academic activity be more specifically targeted? Are student hostels the most useful way to use externally-generated income? These are internal matters, but should be kept under review, within the bounds of institutional autonomy.

11.6 ***Pensions and superannuation.*** It is evident that some of the institutional superannuation and pension schemes are no longer financially viable, as there appears in some cases to be a mismatch between the income generated from staff and institutional contributions, and the benefits offered. If this is a widespread problem it is potentially serious, and must be given attention as soon as possible. Allowing such a problem to escalate would result in grave problems for future institutional administrations (and, of course, for retired staff and their families). Further, while this does not appear to be a major problem in Ghana at present, in some African countries the prevalence of AIDS has had a serious impact on the financial viability of pension schemes. This possibility may be worthy of further consideration.

11.7 ***Regular review of policy and its outcomes.*** The underlying issues facing the sector, and their implications for the long-term financial well-being of the institutions, are well-known. Some are being addressed. It is clear that, if the quality of tertiary education is to improve to meet the needs of the nation, issues relating to the financial viability of the sub-sector must be addressed with greater determination than has been

the case to date. This now appears to be well-understood within the institutions, and within the Ministry of Education. The balance of financial subsidy within the sub-sector has been distorted, primarily by historic and political factors, and there has been a long tradition of initiating new developments which are not financially-viable and cannot be sustained. The issues which have been identified repeatedly over the duration of the Tertiary Education Project should be thoroughly reviewed internally. On this basis, informed decisions are needed as to the optimal balance of Government and non-Government funding, to ensure financial sustainability and promote quality enhancement, particularly for the polytechnics. Beyond this, policy outcomes should be regularly reviewed, and adjustments made on an on-going basis.

12. RATE OF SYSTEM EXPANSION AND DEGREE OF SYSTEM DIFFERENTIATION

Demand for tertiary education in Ghana is high, and seems likely to remain so. Student enrollments have consistently exceeded projections in the university sub-sector. Although numbers have increased less dramatically in the individual polytechnics, the *number* of polytechnics has grown faster than the country's ability to finance them. Further, numerous other institutions and types of provision are currently very poorly-articulated with the tertiary education system, in part because of a failure to implement the RECAAST proposal, and in part because of poor linkage with technical and vocational provision (in both practical and policy terms).

The rapid rise in the number of school-leavers who are adequately qualified to receive education at tertiary level, and other political and socio-economic pressures, have contributed to a potentially enormous (however defined) student population, the majority of whom aspire to a conventional degree-level qualification. Years of strikes and interrupted academic provision have also exacerbated the 'overcrowding' problem, leading in some cases to long delays before students can gain entry to the various tertiary education institutions. In some cases, parents have chosen to send their children abroad to study, rather than waiting the obligatory two or more years before they can gain entry to the tertiary education institutions, indicating that there is likely to be a market for alternative types of higher education provision.

Private higher education is accepted in principle, and half a dozen private institutions now exist. But private provision has not been explicitly encouraged, either through official policy, or by more practical means, such as financial incentives. If and when such provision expands, it will be very important to ensure that the qualifications offered are respected and/or accredited in some internationally-recognised manner, and that students are receiving an adequate educational experience.

Pressure for entry into tertiary education arose initially because of the close links between tertiary education and the security of well-paid employment in the formal sector. At present, however, graduate unemployment is rising, and opportunities in the public sector are diminishing. Demand continues to rise notwithstanding. If it is to be met, the Ministry of Education should consider what *kinds* of tertiary education will be most useful for graduates who may have to be prepared to update and change skills regularly, and possibly to work for themselves, as well as in formal employment. How can opportunities for up-skilling be maximised, without additional costs to the country? What skills and aptitudes are actually needed for the

development of the Ghanaian economy, and the provision of its social services? Further, if the participation rate is to be increased at tertiary level (and this must be firmly decided at a policy level, and the appropriate incentives and disincentives provided), a variety of other forms of provision and cost-allocation must be considered. A few options are discussed below:

12.1 ***Private provision.*** A study undertaken in 1995 indicated considerable potential for the development of private provision in Ghana. A few small-scale institutions have been established already, and some appear to be achieving modest respect. Any expansion of this type of provision should be carefully scrutinised by the National Accreditation Board, to verify qualifications and the general level of the education provided to students, and to ensure that (fee-paying) students are not unfairly exploited. Although cautiously welcomed, it is likely to be some time before private institutions operate in Ghana on a large-scale. In preparation, the Ministry of Education should begin to consider how it will monitor and/or co-ordinate such provision, and the extent to which it may wish to encourage private providers.

Some very useful recommendations were put forward in a 1995 study on private tertiary education co-ordinated for the MOE by the Association of African Universities. These recommendations should now be seriously reviewed. They include the following:

- Formulation of a clear statement of Government policy on private tertiary education, 'based on a recognition of its distinctive character and its potential contribution to the broadening of the range of options for individuals.' (Recommendation ff, p.vii);
- Streamlining procedures and guidelines – 'The obligations of the private sector under the law should be clearly and concisely spelt out, as should rights and safeguards for students in the private sector.' (Recommendation hh, p. vii);
- Strengthening of advisory and inspection services (Recommendation ii, p. vii);
- Compilation of a register and collection of data, to be updated on a regular basis, analysed and published. 'This should be part of a wider effort to overhaul the collection of data on human resources development as an aid to policy formulation and to help the public make more informed choices.' (Recommendation jj, p. vii);
- Provision of services and incentives, including financial management and other administrative services (for which charges would be applied), access to public sector management training, recognition of any representative bodies, etc. (Recommendation kk, p. viii);
- Provision of financial and material assistance, including relief from import duty and taxes, hire of public buildings at favourable rates, help with access to credit on favourable terms, and access for students to scholarships and loans (Recommendation ll, p. viii).

It will be particularly important for a clear statement of policy to be made, but all the above recommendations are worth serious re-consideration.

12.2 ***Overseas and franchised provision: opportunity or threat?*** Increasingly, prospective students may also have the option of registering for qualifications which are not Ghanaian, but which are available on a distance education or franchised basis from overseas institutions, including on-line providers. What will Ghana's attitude to

such qualifications be? Should such mechanisms for acquiring qualifications (particularly well-regarded qualifications offered by institutions of high international reputation, and which may be specifically designed for the target group of students, eg, Masters degrees for teachers) be encouraged? Provision of this nature could well relieve pressure on local institutions. However, local institutions may also see these external initiatives as a threat. There is much good practice internationally, but it is also an area in which poor or exploitative practice exists, often largely undetected for considerable periods of time. What can and should be done to protect students? Some of these operations are highly commercial in origin, and prospective students should be encouraged to find out how the qualifications they seek will be recognised/accredited in Ghana *before* registering or paying fees. Ideally, they should be given the best possible guidance in advance of registration.

Similarly, overseas institutions may come to Ghana to look for partners to offer locally-based franchised provision. Experience suggests that franchised arrangements (which tend to operate as primarily commercial ventures) can sometimes fail to include sufficiently robust quality control mechanisms. Quality control or accreditation mechanisms should help to ensure that qualifications are what they claim to be, and that students will receive a fair and worthwhile educational experience, as near as possible to that in the overseas partner institution.

These and other associated issues should be deliberated in some detail in Ghana *now*. It will be important to foster good practice, to ensure that student choice and the possibilities of access to education of at least a reasonable quality is maximised. Possible preliminary actions might include the following:

- the establishment of open learning facilities which could be made available to students undertaking non-traditional qualifications (probably on a payment basis);
- invitations to selected potential overseas providers to visit Ghana to discuss the possibilities of franchised or other arrangements;
- the development and dissemination to institutions of model memoranda of understanding for use in co-operative/franchised ventures, to ensure that all arrangements with overseas institutions are fair and equitable in respect of the gains to both parties;
- enhancement of the expertise held by the National Accreditation Board, to ensure that prospective students can receive guidance about qualifications before they register. Where good practice has been identified, this might be drawn to the attention of enquirers;
- routine collection of information to ensure that the NAB and NCTE are informed of all overseas providers working in Ghana (this may not be possible with on-line providers) so that monitoring can be undertaken;
- the creation of a channel of appeal for students who feel that they have received unfair treatment.

12.3 Part-time provision. If universities and other institutions are able to charge for part-time provision (to cover their costs, or to generate revenue), this type of provision may offer greater chances for those who are already in employment, or generating their own living, but who have been unable to gain access to tertiary education earlier in life; or who may now wish to gain masters or other postgraduate qualifications, and for whom full-time education is not an option. Should part-time

provision (for which students may be eligible to pay full-cost fees) be actively encouraged? How carefully should its use be controlled? Should existing qualifications be offered on a part-time basis, or less formal new qualifications be designed? What types of pedagogy are likely to be required? What incentives can be offered to staff, who may have to work long hours in this way; and, conversely, what checks can be put in place to ensure that the education given to full-time (non fee-paying) students does not suffer? Is there an awareness of the extent of demand, and the nature of constraints?

12.4 ***Local provision of distance education.*** As Ghana develops a stronger communications infrastructure, tertiary institutions will certainly wish to consider making greater use of distance education provision. This could be in part through the use of 'resource-based' learning materials and practices, possibly paper-based initially (many courses can already be purchased – or acquired through aid/donor relationships – from overseas institutions, for initial or transitional developments). The use of distance education should subsequently extend to all electronic and other media, keeping in pace with the improvements to the overall communications infrastructure in Ghana. Arrangements of this sort could be anticipated to have equity effects. They would give institutions greater potential to reach and include students in geographically-remote areas, and also to encourage a wider age-profile, and, importantly, more women.

Caution should however be used. Distance education is not a cheap option initially, nor is the set-up process easy. It should be encouraged only after lengthy consideration of all its advantages and disadvantages. Cost-implications (which would be high) *must* be anticipated. Experience suggests (eg, Fielden, et al, 1996) that the greatest advantage of distance education is its flexibility, and that unit costs may not be low if wastage rates are taken into consideration. There is a general tendency to over-estimate the likely benefits of distance education, particularly for the short-term, and experience in other countries should therefore be given careful consideration.

Changes in the location and style of study may however begin to alter the present high-cost situation whereby the large majority of 'traditional' university students choose to live on campus throughout their period of study. An increase in distance education provision may also serve to increase attention to the basic processes of teaching and learning (by focusing on what students will achieve and how), which would be a useful additional benefit.

12.5 ***Articulation with vocational provision.*** This is a somewhat neglected area. Ideally, there should be greater coordination, wherever possible, between formal tertiary education provision and the vocational sector, and possible pathways between them. This is a task which might initially be undertaken by the NAB, particularly if greater effort is ultimately to go into establishing a full framework or 'ladder' of qualifications and articulation points. The private sector might be encouraged/offered incentives to assist with formalising and upgrading the quality of existing vocational provision (or a levy might be imposed, if feasible and appropriate. This is done in some countries, and their experience might be reviewed). Ultimately, some mechanism for quality control and possibly accreditation of such provision would be desirable.

13. ROLE OF THE POLYTECHNICS

The objectives given by the NCTE (1998) to Ghana's polytechnic system are as follows:

- To provide tertiary education through full-time courses in the fields of manufacturing, commerce, science, technology, applied social science, applied art and other areas;
- To encourage study in technical subjects at tertiary levels; and
- To provide opportunity for development, research and dissemination of knowledge.

At present, the polytechnic sector is in extreme need of stocktaking, consolidation and development. The institutions are clearly attempting to undertake more than the objectives given above. For example, a substantial proportion of students are pursuing sub-tertiary programmes, and not all provision is full-time. For a variety of reasons, the polytechnics are increasingly less able to fulfil their core mandates. Many of the issues which have been touched upon already in this report are contributing factors, the key issue being the extremely low resourcing of the institutions, coupled with rising student numbers. Increasing concern is expressed about the level of qualifications which the polytechnics are able to deliver, and with the sub-sector's educational credibility more generally.

In discussion with those knowledgeable about the sub-sector, **an almost unanimous view emerges that the polytechnic sector has a major role to play within Ghana's education system, and that its needs are currently so great that it must form the focus of the next phase of tertiary education investment** (from whatever source investment funding is obtained). Awareness is strong that, despite the best efforts of the World Bank and the TEP staff, the polytechnics have to a large extent been marginalised from the education system, despite their potential role in developing mid-level manpower (which was also stated as a primary policy objective of the White Paper). The factors which have led to this situation are unfortunate, and it will now require concerted effort to address the difficult situation which prevails. As a first step, the Government appears to have pulled back from its earlier efforts to increase the number of institutions (whether through upgrading or by the establishment of new institutions). This is absolutely critical for the realisation of the existing polytechnics. For this reason, all future developments for the polytechnic sub-sector should be carefully tested against quality objectives and criteria.

13.1 Strengths of the polytechnic system. It is readily apparent that the system has potential strengths which should be developed before any further expansion can take place. Demand clearly exists at both tertiary and sub-tertiary level for the qualifications offered by the polytechnics. The fact that students are prepared to pay fees for sub-degree programmes indicates the potential for future income generation – and such income should *not* be appropriated back to Government through the funding allocation formula. It was also reported (anecdotally, but consistently) that many polytechnic graduates find it easier to get jobs – and in many cases they find higher-paying jobs – than university graduates. The applied nature of polytechnic education would thus appear to be a major strength. A clearer understanding of employer

demand (now and in the future) would be useful, especially if it could then be applied to admissions policies and course revision. While responsibility for formal manpower surveys is nominally held by the NDPC, either the COPP or the NCTE might consider commissioning or undertaking similar work on a limited scale, rather than continuing to wait for the NDPC to act.

If the institutions have the capacity (or could develop it), the use of regular graduate tracer surveys would provide extremely useful information, which should be collected on a systematic basis. Graduate tracer work is in fact a key element of most quality assurance systems. Qualitative information from former students and employers concerning the relevance of their education to future employment is a strong indicator of quality. The use of such feedback from the labour market by the tertiary education system is long overdue.

*13.2 **Co-ordination of polytechnic interests.*** Management of the polytechnic sub-sector appears to be well co-ordinated. This is almost certainly the work of a few key individuals, but their ideas and thoughtful analyses are refreshingly frank and clear. This thinking is also a major strength. The Committee of Polytechnic Principals (COPP) appears to serve a useful function, and is now generating good ideas about the strategic directions it wishes to follow. Further, COPP appears prepared to consider some fairly difficult choices, including rationalisation of provision. The COPP leadership should be encouraged to develop ideas for discussion with the NCTE.

*13.3 **Representation on the National Council for Tertiary Education.*** The polytechnic sector is under-represented in the NCTE and its executive secretariat. This has led to a perception that polytechnic issues have received less attention at the Council level than is desirable. This may be a misperception, and it may already have been remedied. But, if true, greater representation should certainly be introduced, particularly at this critical time for the polytechnics. Is the current level and extent of representation appropriate, or should it be increased?

*13.4 **Staff development, staffing levels and conditions of service.*** It is well-known that the level of qualifications held by the majority of staff are inappropriate for the level of teaching expected of them. This is being addressed, but upgrading of qualifications – in line with objectives for the sector – should continue to receive high-priority attention.

Conditions of service are inadequate to hold good staff. This poses a serious constraint on polytechnic capacity building and quality improvement. Consideration should be given to the expectation that polytechnic staff should undertake research. Is this desirable? Is it feasible? Is it actually done? Should it be carried out in all or just some polytechnics? What advantages do the polytechnics have in this area? Is research compatible with existing teaching loads? And most importantly, what is an appropriate definition of research in the polytechnic context?

*13.5 **The National Board for Professional and Technical Examinations.*** NABPTEX has been given a very central role in ensuring the quality of polytechnic education, which it appears unable to fulfil, due to inadequate resourcing. Like the NAB, it appears to have made a reasonable start. The importance of NABPTEX as a quality control body means that priority should be paid to ensuring that all key posts

are filled, and that post-holders receive adequate training (including knowledge of national and international issues relating to examination modalities, curriculum development and academic standards). Senior officers must have access to ideas and information from other examination bodies around the world, and preferably good personal contacts and links of their own. Some exchange initiatives are under way internationally, and advantage should be taken of such developments. Failure to ensure that NABPTEX functions adequately will have further serious consequences for Ghanaian polytechnic education – and for Ghanaian employers. In particular, NABPTEX must *function* as a body. It should accomplish things. Board posts should be occupied only by those committed to attending meetings and fulfilling the duties assigned to the Board.

13.6 ***Distinct character of polytechnic education and its objectives.*** The polytechnic sector should obviously avoid certain areas. In many countries a breakdown of the specific nature of polytechnic education has occurred. Many former polytechnics (eg, in the UK and Australia) have lost their unique identity and become universities, offering their own degrees and including research within their institutional missions. Ghana should avoid the temptation to follow this course, recognising that polytechnic leadership, staff and students may all be strong advocates for such upgrading. While it may *ultimately* be possible for the polytechnics to offer degree-level qualifications, this should only be after thorough consideration by an accrediting body of some kind. It would seem unlikely – under current conditions – that the polytechnics would be able to offer their own qualifications for some considerable period. Furthermore, there should be absolute confidence in the awarding body (NABPTEX) before any such upgrading is considered. In short, raising polytechnics to university status should not be a short-term option.

13.7 ***Consistency of academic standards and articulation with other educational provision.*** Clearer articulation between the qualifications and credit-allocation practices of the polytechnics and other institutions would be highly beneficial to the entire system. This implies a role for NABPTEX, which, as a first step, has already expressed concern about inconsistencies between institutions (Alberts, 1998). Attention should be paid initially to achieving consistency of attainment/academic standards across the sector (there seems to be some confusion in this area at present). Ultimately, there should be potential for easy transfer of credits across the sector, and possible reciprocal transfer with other types of provision, including universities.

13.8 ***International links.*** Already under discussion and preliminary exploration is the formation of links between institutions and disciplines in Ghana, and other institutions, particularly the polytechnic (technikon) structure in South Africa. Institutional or even personal links can provide an extremely cost-effective way of building capacity and providing access to new ideas and offering working examples of good practice. Care should be taken to ensure the appropriateness of different links with the objectives of diplomas and other qualifications in Ghana (eg the balance between theoretical or applied content, and the nature of the labour market and its requirements).

13.9 ***Resourcing levels.*** Finally, and most importantly, resourcing levels are very clearly inadequate within the polytechnic sector at present. If funding levels cannot be raised, the nature of polytechnic qualifications – and indeed the system as a whole

– will need serious review. External advice might be sought on the number of institutions which the country can support on a sustainable basis. Where capacity and resourcing are insufficient, it may be desirable to focus for a period on sub-tertiary provision in skill areas critical for the country's economic growth.

14. KEY INSTITUTIONAL CAPACITIES NECESSARY FOR SYSTEM MANAGEMENT

Many of the points highlighted below have been discussed already throughout this report. Specific attention is drawn to the most salient issues for management of the tertiary education system.

*14.1 **Sectoral (and national) planning and budgeting mechanisms.*** Planning and budgeting mechanisms are receiving attention across Ghana's public sector. This report emphasises that little is likely to change in the tertiary education sector until its budgetary structures allow some flexibility for innovation, institutional planning and autonomous decision-making at the most devolved level possible. A one-line budget or block grant, preferably including staff emoluments, would be desirable (although national constraints have to be recognised).

*14.2 **Sectoral relationships and communication.*** The relationships and mechanisms of communication between the tertiary education institutions, the NCTE (and its various boards and committees) and the Ministry of Education (and within/between its different divisions and officers) are very important for effective system performance. Regrettably, these communication networks are weakly developed and poorly used. (In partial exception, the Deputy Minister of Education's regular meetings have been considered a helpful development.)

All new decisions and initiatives should be given as much publicity as possible. The consultative role of the PEF has been helpful in this regard, although it would be desirable for it to have a stronger relationship with the polytechnic sector as well as with the universities. Gatherings such as the Akosombo meetings on tertiary education financing have clearly been helpful within the sector. They have defined issues, problems and possible solutions, and fostered the development of greater cohesion of purpose across the sector.

It is nevertheless noteworthy that policy for tertiary education had not been reviewed comprehensively, from the preparation of the White Paper in 1990/91 until the conclusion of the TEP. In a well-managed system, aspects of policy might *regularly* be selected for discussion and review. Improved information flows across the sector, and within the institutions themselves, will be of great advantage if and when the next phase of policy implementation is undertaken. Monitoring and analysis of outcomes on a routine basis will also be important.

*14.3 **Role and capacity of the National Council for Tertiary Education.*** The NCTE has been given the leading role in guiding and co-ordinating the tertiary education sector, and in interpreting and implementing Government policy. To date, it has only been able to fulfil a small part of this role. The NCTE has never been adequately funded or staffed to allow it to achieve these functions. It operates largely through its Committee structure, aided by a very small secretariat, which is clearly

not yet adequately staffed to meet the considerable burdens placed upon it – particularly its significant technical responsibilities for policy development. Despite a serious shortage of human and other resources, however, the NCTE has undertaken a considerable amount of groundwork, and its achievements are now widely acknowledged across the sector.

Amongst others, the NCTE has faced the following particular problems:

- insufficient legitimacy in the eyes of both the Ministry of Education and the institutions to undertake the functions assigned to it;
- a shortage of technical expertise has led to an undesirable overlap of roles – for instance, the finance officer of one university plays a key role in budget preparation, and the current Chairman is a member of staff at another university;
- the polytechnics are under-represented, and believe that their interests are not adequately safeguarded;
- some key aspects of the NCTE's mandate have not been fulfilled, such as review of the norms in place, possibly because of the lack of human resources, and possibly due to a lack both of leadership and authority;
- the NCTE has not played its expected role in policy analysis and formulation.

A degree of trust has now been built between the NCTE and the institutions on the one hand, and with Government on the other. In such a small and highly politicised sector, the objectiveness of the NCTE's decision-making will be very important, and this makes transparency of process essential. The staffing and strengthening of its secretariat will be of great importance for the sector's future development, particularly when the full advantages of a national one-line budget for tertiary education are recognised and put into effect.

14.4 Awareness and definitions of the principles of autonomy and accountability. The principles of autonomy and accountability should ideally underpin and frame sectoral development. However, the balance between them is very delicate. It is extremely difficult to get this balance correct, particularly when a previous system has been vested with great control, and the nature of the relationships within the sector remain ill-defined. In any new policy framework, it is suggested that autonomy and accountability should be the key principles underlying sector management. If it is to function equitably and cost-effectively, investing considerable effort into achieving this objective would be worthwhile.

15. CONCLUSION

Ghana is recognised internationally for the coherence and vision of the policy framework that has shaped developments in its tertiary education sector. Since the major review undertaken in 1986-88, considerable effort and resources have been directed towards improving the quality and accessibility of tertiary education. It appears that the gains from this investment are now beginning to be felt. Progress has been made in a number of areas, both at the institutional level, and in the development of the national infrastructure necessary for system co-ordination and quality assurance. Significant gains have now been made in the introduction of cost-

sharing and cost-recovery measures, and these measures appear to have won limited public acceptability.

However, other aspects of policy implementation have proceeded more slowly than might have been anticipated, and the flaws in the original policy framework are increasingly apparent. The choices needed to ensure both quality enhancement and greater equity of opportunity do not yet appear to have been made. Thus, the level of finance available to the tertiary education sector is now too low to sustain quality improvement (particularly if student enrollments continue to rise in an uncontrolled manner). The equity benefits of the reform programme are uncertain. Implementation has however been undertaken in a period of significant political and economic upheaval, and in the face of severe structural constraints. These factors have made reform considerably more difficult than had originally been anticipated. The country's political structures now appear to be stabilising, and transparency and accountability are gradually being accepted as key principles of public sector management. The prospects for more rapid development and consolidation appear to be good.

In this context, the main task for Ghanaian policy-makers in the education sector should be to review seriously the experience of the last decade for themselves, and to use their understanding to shape the framework which will take their tertiary education system into the 21st century. The Akyeampong Committee's 1998 assessment provides an excellent basis for this exercise. It is suggested in this report that the priority areas for future investment should probably be those of polytechnic education and the development of tertiary education information and communication technology capabilities. However, all such developments should be well grounded within previous and current experiences and constraints, and led by the anticipated needs of the country and its people.

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Appendix One

INDIVIDUALS CONSULTED

My grateful thanks go to those listed below, who agreed to see me during my visit:

Mr Harry Sawyerr, former Minister of Education (1993-1997)
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Mr Kwesi Abeasi, Director-General, Private Enterprise Foundation, Accra
Mr John Scott Dalrymple-Hayfron, former Chief Director, Ministry of Education
Mrs Esi Sutherland-Addy, former Deputy Secretary, Ministry of Education
Professor I Addae-Mensah, Vice-Chancellor, University of Ghana
Mr George Daniel, Registrar, University of Ghana
Professor Akilagpa Sawyerr, former Vice-Chancellor, University of Ghana (subsequent to visit)
Professor Daniel Akyeampong, Chairman, National Accreditation Board, Ghana
Mr J Dwomoh, Director, Planning, Budgeting, Management and Evaluation Department, Ministry of
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Hon Dr Mohamed IBN Chambas, Deputy Minister (Higher Education), Ministry of Education, Ghana
Dr K A Awuku, Ministry of Education
Mr N Kotey, National Accreditation Board, Ghana
Dr Nick Aidoo-Taylor, Principal, Takoradi Polytechnic
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Mr Kwesi Amissah-Arthur, former Deputy Minister of Finance (PNDC)
Mr Louis Casely-Hayford, former Chairman, National Council for Tertiary Education
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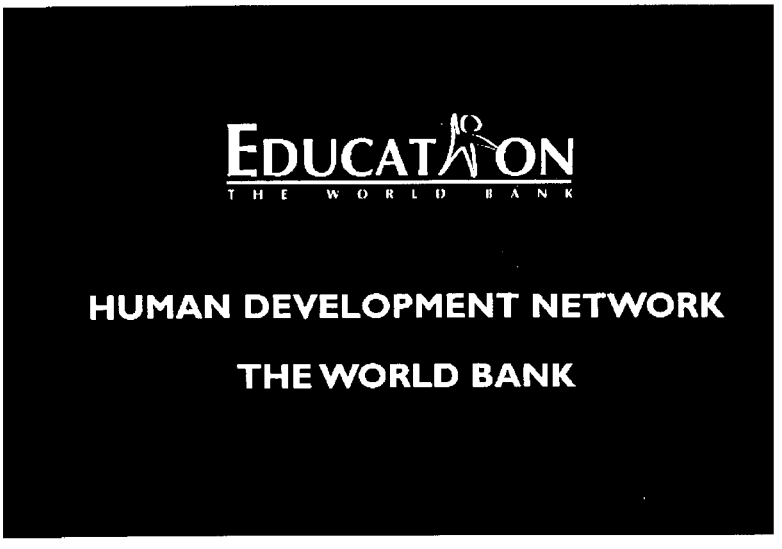

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