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**Assessing the Narratives of the Role of Higher Education in
Northern Ghana: The Case of University for Development Studies**

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Abstract

Purpose: The main purpose of this study was to examine the role of University of Development Studies (UDS) in enhancing socio-economic development in northern Ghana, and secondly, to ascertain whether or not knowledge production and the universities are part of national development strategy.

Methodology: In aiming to achieve the descriptive and exploratory objective of the study, the research design adopted for this study was a Case study. The study employed a qualitative approach as its research strategy. A semi-structured interview guide and document analysis was used to answer the research questions. A critical data analysis was done based on open-coding, axial coding, and selective coding.

Results: The study revealed that the ‘university as an instrument’ and ‘university as an ancillary’ were the dominant notion emphasized as the key role of UDS, which in essence translate into minimal or somewhat absence of use of Knowledge production and the university in national development strategy.

Policy Recommendation: It is recommended that a policy framework should be agreed by key stakeholders that will link the university activities to national development plan which will not only stimulate socio-economic development but to contribute towards the global knowledge economy since global happenings has permeated both national and local levels.

Keywords: *University, economic development, innovation, third mission and human capital development.*

1.0 Introduction

As opposed to the old view of universities as an ivory tower where only the elite were admitted and research was described as blue-skies research - which was undertaken by scientists and scholars as a hobby and where the “knowledge is capable of being its own end... thus its own reward” (Newman, 2008, p. 128). Universities over the past couple of decades due to globalization, the emergence of ‘knowledge economy’ has given rise to new economic, social, political and cultural challenges to which nations, regions and higher education systems and institutions are responding (Castells, 2001). It is widely assumed that in the context of these new challenges, specific knowledge, competencies and skills – often referred to as ‘human capital’ – come to play an increasingly important role in developmental efforts, as do research, innovation and technological development (Castells, 2001). Whereas some countries in the developed world have linked higher education to economic development with great success, including Finland and South Korea, African governments did little to promote the development role of these institutions despite the rhetoric of ‘Development University’.

The established argument is that for several decades African countries and its development partners placed greater emphasis on primary and later secondary education while neglecting higher education as a key institution in socio-economic development, innovation and contributing to the global knowledge economy. Strikingly, in the last couple of decades some development partners such as the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural organisation (UNESCO), World Bank is advocating for a more knowledge intensive approach to development for African countries. They believe this is possibly the only route that could permit sustained, outward oriented development.

As emphasized in the 2007 educational reforms which could be assumed to be the development strategy, nationally, Ghana aims to be a knowledge economy (Government White Paper on Educational Reforms 2007). However, at the national level, the roles of the university do not seem to be emphasized. In various key speeches and statement by key actors and policy makers seem to emphasis the problems the universities are encountering and the necessary provisions being made to address them. For example, none of the state of the nation addresses by the various head of states since 2007 has touched on the essential roles of the universities in economic development. Governments rather emphasized the importance of the private sector as an engine of growth in stimulating socio economic development and the need for public-private partnership in Ghana. This goes contrary to what Kofi Annan, then secretary general of the United Nations, strongly promoted the importance of universities for development in Africa (quoted in Bloom *et al.* 2006, p. 2):

“The University must become a primary tool for Africa’s development in the new century. Universities can help develop African expertise; they can enhance the analysis of African problems; strengthen domestic institutions; serve as a model environment for the practice of good governance, conflict resolution and respect for human rights, and enable African academics to play an active part in the global community of scholars”.

Given the importance attached to higher education institutions being recognized as active players in national, regional and local development. The focus of this research is the University for Development Studies which was established in northern Ghana with an explicit objective of serving as an agent of development in northern Ghana. This study examines the role of University of Development Studies (UDS) in enhancing development in northern Ghana and to examine whether or not knowledge production and the universities are part of national development strategy.

In order to understand the role of universities the study adopted the four notions of the role of the university (the university as ancillary, self-governing university, the university as an instrument and the university as an engine of development) as a framework.; based on these four notions as a point of departure, the study will then ascertain whether or not the university's role relate to national development strategy.

This study intends to do four things; firstly it will provide a brief background of University for Development Studies, this will enable us not only to better understand the contextual settings but most importantly enable us to appreciate the study findings. Secondly, a review of the four notions of role of knowledge and university in development Maassen and Cloete (2006) and Maassen and Olsen (2007) which served as conceptual framework will be used to explain and analyze actors' interpretations of role of UDS in northern Ghana. The methods used in gathering data, after which the findings of the study is presented and finally the study offers a conclusion and recommendation on the way forward.

1.1 Statement of the Problem

Most influential voices have attest to the fact that in the current dispensation of global knowledge economy, knowledge has become a vital toolkit in enhancing a country's competitiveness (World Bank 2008, OECD, 2007). What this means is that, the era where a nation's wealth is based on its natural resources is no more an issue but the success of a nation is now determined by its ability to use the available knowledge in transforming these resources. Hence a nations ability to accumulate and apply knowledge have become a critical factor in ensuring economic development and enhances the country's competitive advantage in the global knowledge economy and that nations without minimum scientific and technological capacity will lag behind (World Bank, 2002).

The heart of this argument rest on higher education institutions, this is because they are recognised as a key agent of development. According to the *National Science, Technology and Innovation Policy*, Ghana's ambition to become a middle-income country requires a vision of development which fully applies and integrates science, technology and innovation into national development strategies to harness fully the nation's total science and technology capacity to achieve national objectives for poverty reduction, competitiveness of enterprises, sustainable environmental management and industrial growth. However, at the national level, the roles of the university do not seem to be emphasised. In various key speeches and statement by key actors and policy makers seem to emphasis the problems the universities are encountering and the necessary provisions being made to address them.

For example, none of the state of the nation addresses by the various head of states since 2007 has touched on the essential roles of the universities in economic development. Hence it is

against this background that this study uses University for Development Studies as a Case study which was established in northern Ghana with an explicit objective of serving as an agent of development in northern Ghana. This study examines the role of University of Development Studies (UDS) in enhancing development in northern Ghana and to examine whether or not knowledge production and the universities are part of national development strategy.

1.2 Objective of the Study

- 1 To examine the role of University of Development Studies (UDS) in enhancing socio-economic development in northern Ghana.
- 2 To ascertain whether or not knowledge production and the university (UDS) are part of national development strategy.

2.0 Background study of UDS

The University for Development Studies (UDS) established by the Government of Ghana in May 1992 by the Provisional National Defence Council (PNDC) Law 279, with an explicit mandate to contribute to the development of northern Ghana and the country as a whole but also it was borne out of the new thinking in higher education which emphasizes the need for universities to play a more active role in addressing problems of the society, particularly in the rural areas” (Effah, 1998). Thus, there is a high expectation of the university to contribute meaningfully towards the social, economic, and environmental development of northern Ghana since the northern part of Ghana remains as the most deprived part of the country.

UDS among other things is to help bridge the economic development disparity between the north and the south and help raise the educational attainment of the area since it falls below the national average coupled with poor health facilities and low infrastructural development. The Vision Statement of UDS is to be the home of world-class pro-poor scholarship. This philosophy translates itself at UDS into a pedagogical style that emphasizes practically-oriented, community-based, problem-solving, gender sensitive and interactive learning (Kaburise, 2003). Apart from the three core functions of teaching, research and services, the university has the mandate to blend the academic world with that of the community in order to provide constructive interaction between the two for the total development of northern Ghana in particular, and the country as a whole.

3.0 Literature Review and Conceptual framework

Since the aim of the study is to examine the role of the UDS and to ascertain whether or not knowledge production and the universities are part of national development strategy. The study employ Maassen and Cloete (2006) and Maassen and Olsen (2007) four notions regarding the role of Universities as a framework in order to analyse the roles of UDS based on these four notions and will finally help to determine whether or not knowledge production and the university (UDS) are part of national development strategy. The four notions of the role of the university which will be discussed in the next section are ancillary, self-governing, instrument, and engine.

3.1 University as an Ancillary

Firstly, with the university as an ancillary, there is a strong emphasis on the ideological or political starting point of development. From this perspective, Maassen and Olsen (2007) argued that the need for a strong knowledge basis for development policies and strategies are relegated. In this regard, neither is it important for the university to play an active or direct role in the development since much priority and investment is on primary education, healthcare and agricultural production. The assumption behind this role of the university is transmitting established knowledge rather than on research (producing civil servants and professionals) as well as different ways of third mission activities i.e. community services. However, For Lyotard, the main criteria of academic knowledge is no longer ‘is it true’, but ‘what use is it?’ (Lyotard, 1984, p.51) as cited in (Barnett, Parry and Coate, 2001). This has caused some changes in academic fields and disciplines, since the performative shift, which is associated with increased emphasis on ‘efficiency’, ‘outputs’ and ‘use-value’, has played out differently across knowledge fields.

3.2 The University as self governing

The University as a self-governing knowledge, this notion assumes that vital knowledge is produced when scholars or academics from developed countries (north) collaborate with academics from the less developed countries (global south) in an sponsored or externally funded projects rather than been governed or interfered by the state (Maassen, 2012). Hence this perspective portrays that the university will be able to prioritize and perform better if left alone to manage its own affairs, which would not care much about national development.

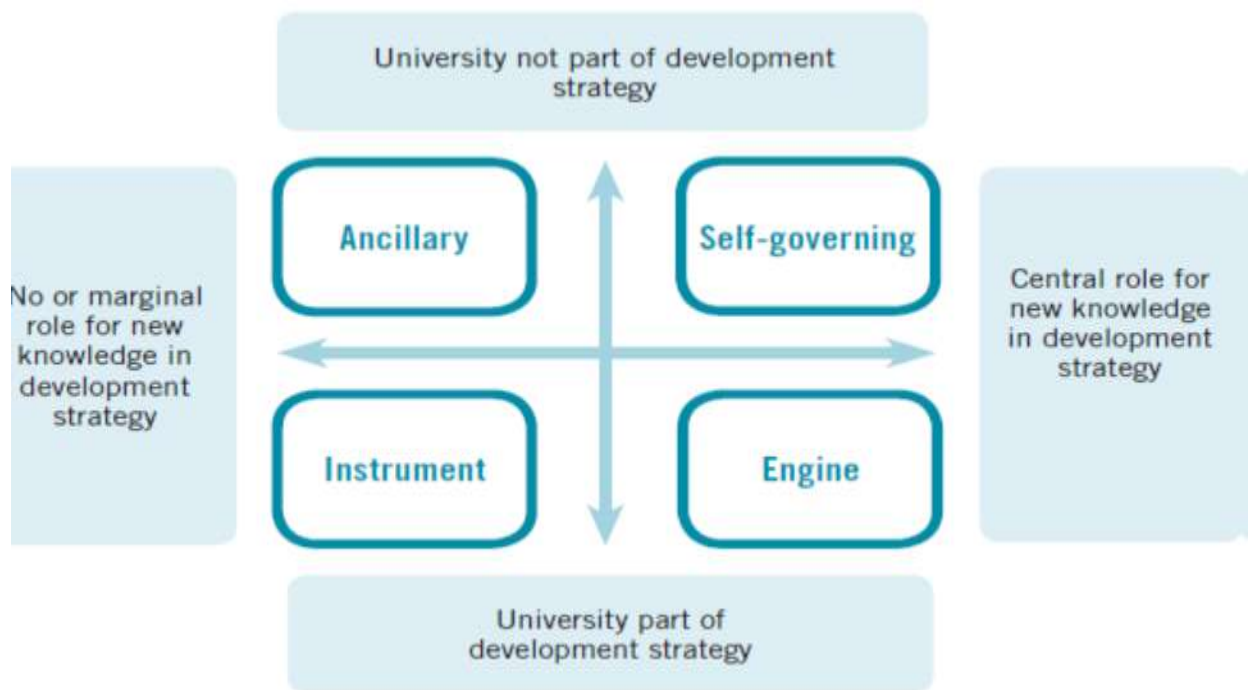


Figure 1: The four notions of the role of universities and the two scenario of whether or not the University role is part of national development strategy. Source: T.BAILEY, N. Cloete and P.Pillay, University and economic development in Africa, CHET, 2011.

3.3 The University as an Instrument

In regard to this notion, the university is seen to have an important and major role to play in national development. The role of the university in development does not manifest through the production of high driven curiosity scientific knowledge, but largely through expertise exchange and capacity building. Again, it indicates that, the university's development agenda should be on contributing to reducing poverty and disease, to improving agricultural production, and to supporting small business development – primarily through consultancy activities (especially for government agencies and donor agencies) and through direct involvement in local communities.

3.4 The University as an engine for development

The thinking of this notion is that knowledge plays a central role in national development as opposed to the notion discussed above. It does not only view knowledge and its use as key, but also in improving healthcare and agricultural production, but also innovations in the private sector. This notion assumes that, the university is one of the critical institutions in the national development model. “The underlying assumption is that the university is the only institution in society that can provide an adequate foundation for the complexities of the emerging knowledge economy” (Maassen & Olsen 2007, p.15). They also argued that when it comes to producing the relevant skills and competencies of employees in all major sectors, as well as to the production of use-oriented knowledge, the university is the only source.

Based on the above review of the four notions of the role of the university and the extent to which these notions relate to national development strategy, this study argues that if the role of UDS in enhancing development in northern Ghana is towards the notions of instrument and ancillary then there is marginal role of new knowledge in the development strategy, however if the role of UDS is geared towards the notions of self-governing and engine of development, then the study can conclude that there is a strong role of new knowledge in development strategy. Secondly, based on the review, this study holds the assumption that, if the role of UDS strongly emphasizes on the notion of ancillary and self-governing then we will conclude that UDS is not part of development strategy, in the same vein if the notion of ‘engine’ and ‘instrument’ of the role of UDS is dominated then the study can confirm that UDS is part of development strategy.

3.0 Methodology

The purpose of this study was to examine the role of UDS in enhancing socio-economic development in northern Ghana and secondly to ascertain whether or not knowledge production and the university is part of national development strategy. . In aiming to achieve the descriptive and exploratory objective of the study, the study employed a qualitative approach as its research strategy. This approach according to Creswell (2007) gives the researcher the opportunity to understand the context in which participants make decisions about a problem or an issue “tell us about why people responded as they did, the context in which they responded, and their deeper thoughts and behavior that governed their responses” (p. 40). Therefore, to capture these aspects

this study selected qualitative research as its research strategy. Case study was adopted as a research designs since it is typically used to answer questions especially in situations where the investigator has little or no manipulative control. For the purpose of examining the role of UDS in northern Ghana, the case study research was chosen. This is because it allows one to examine contemporary phenomena in their real-world context (Yin, 2003).

Semi-structured interviews were conducted among seven UDS senior members; this is made up of three management and four senior academic staff. The semi-structured interview was an essential part of the study, since it provided an avenue for respondents to share their thoughts, views and understanding on the role of the university. Documents such as UDS annual reports, UDS strategic documents, UDS handbook coupled with the national development strategy, Ministry of Education Strategic Plan and the Ministry of Science and Technology provided valuable insights in helping to map up the current roles of UDS in northern and to examine whether or not knowledge production and the universities are part of national development strategy. In terms of document analyses, Robson points out that documents are ‘unobtrusive and non-reactive’ (2002, p. 349). As he explains, the researcher does not need to directly contact the person producing the document, since it could trigger many challenges including intimidation from some respondents and also difficulties in meeting them. In this study, the employment of the conceptual framework served as a lens that guided the collection of data and aided in the interpretation of data. . Hence, the analytical framework for this study links the objective of the study, research question and the choice of methods. A critical data analysis was done based on open-coding, axial coding, and selective coding (Neuman, 2000).

4.0 Results & Discussion

In order to understand the role of UDS in northern Ghana and to ascertain whether or not knowledge production and the universities are part of national development strategy. It provides a descriptive account which is based primarily on responses from respondents and documents analysis both from UDS and the national development strategy, Ministry of Education Strategic Plan and the Ministry of Science and Technology. Data analysis reveals three main themes of the roles of UDS i.e. workforce developer/human capital development, innovation building and third mission activities. This is done with the guide of the research question in focus and the conceptual framework. And this will help us to interpret the role of UDS based on these four notions and further determine whether or not knowledge production and the universities are part of national development strategy.

4.1 Role of UDS as a Workforce developer/ Human capital development

Respondents interviewed argued that universities are in the business of developing the future workforce by educating students who later assume public, private, and civic positions and that is one of the key roles UDS is playing in enhancing socio-economic development in northern Ghana. This role falls within Castell’s (2001) fourth role of training bureaucracy. This role however, extends beyond conventional academic programs.

“You see we are engaging in local development needs to respond to the needs of the labour market”. Also the establishment of new faculties since its inception means that we at UDS are

adapting existing programs and also establishing new ones in response to Ghana's labour market needs" (UDS 05).

"It is in this regard that in 2008, UDS established the Faculties of Education, Law, Life Long learning and Business. In furtherance to this, executive and continuing education programs to serve both the region and the nation at large have been initiated and realignment of existing programs with those fields where there are local undergraduate and graduate hiring needs" (UDS 02).

The establishment of the faculty of education is in response to a pressing local labour market needs. The aim of the University in creating such a faculty is to assist in producing teachers for the education sector in northern Ghana. Government on its part absorb and retain such graduate teachers by introducing a special allowance in addition to their basic salary, provision of bicycles and motorcycles to teachers as incentives. *This is aimed to motivate teachers to accept postings to deprived communities where their services will be more needed.* With about 70% - 80% of the population in northern Ghana predominantly into peasant farming. Considering the number of people involved in farming activities the University in its wisdom created the Department of Agribusiness with the aim of boosting agriculture activities. In this regard UDS feels that agriculture needs to be done in commercial form. And this therefore calls for the training of manpower that will help local farmers in that direction with new methods, techniques of farming and new species to increase yields.

Moreover, on government part in stimulating local socio-economic development fertilizers, insecticides, tractors, and farming inputs are given to farmers at a subsidized price and flexible payment mode. An interviewer stressed that;

"In the current dispensation of knowledge economy and society, the importance of lifelong learning is very key. In realizing this goal, respondents interviewed emphasized that, UDS has established the Centre for Continuing Education and Interdisciplinary Research (CCEIR)".

"It was revealed by respondents that the aim of CCEIR is to organize professional programs for non-traditional students who might not find it possible to combine work and regular education. In response to this, the Centre has initiated some distance learning programs". "It also coordinates distance learning and sandwich programs. In this regard teachers, civil servants who want to broaden their knowledge and enhance their skills do not necessarily have to apply for leave for studies but study under flexible mode".

With the widespread criticisms from society to universities in Ghana of which UDS is not an exception in producing thousands of unemployed graduates of which some qualifications are not relevant in today's job market, a brilliant initiative to facilitate the employability of graduates in northern Ghana and the country as a whole is the establishment of the guidance and counseling unit UDS. This unit is mandated to organize career and guidance seminars for final year students and link them to available job opportunities. They are also to train, graduates on how to create and manage their own businesses i.e. educating students to be self-employed. Some students have come together to develop business proposals but financing of these initiatives is a problem. In an effort to encourage graduates to be entrepreneurial, government has established the youth enterprise fund to support graduates with venture capital who have business ideas and business proposals. Mentorship is provided till they develop into a fully-fledged business.

“Again, in ensuring the development of labour force, respondents posit that UDS has a policy of admitting forty percentage of applicants within the catchment area of northern part of Ghana. Since financing of universities in Ghana is based on cost-sharing policy, opportunities for brilliant but needy students and students from poor background are awarded scholarships by government through the Ghana education trust fund (GET fund) to enable such students complete their various programs of study at UDS”.

A respondent emphasised that these roles by both UDS and government stimulate local economic development through equity, developing human capital, establishing faculties to adapt to the needs of the local economy goes a long way to contribute to the socio-economic development in the country (UDS 06).

In summary, based on the interpretations of the role of UDS, we can associate this broad role of human capital development or workforce developer to the notion of the university as an ancillary, which emphasises much on the role of the university (UDS) in producing educated skilled labour for the job market.

4.2 Innovation Building

Lester (2005, p 7) defines innovation to mean “the ability to conceive, develop, and/or produce new products and services, to deploy new production processes, and improve on those that already exist”. As already pointed out in this study, the people of northern Ghana depend mainly on agriculture for their livelihoods. A senior member revealed that, the Faculty of Agriculture (FoA) has collaboration with the Savannah Agriculture Research Institute, a unit of the Council for Scientific and Industrial Research to engage in ground breaking research relating to food and fiber crop farming. The aim is to introduce improved technologies to enhance agricultural productivity. It was also revealed that the FoA has a program for the major crops cultivated in northern Ghana, including sorghum, millet, maize, groundnut and cowpeas. *“A senior member recounted that supply farmers with different varieties of improved seeds. Also, through the support of the German Agency for Technical Co-operation (GTZ) we are introducing farmers, among other things, to knowledge about dry season farming, chili pepper and bee keeping”.*

According to respondents some academic unit such as the department of animal science has a partnership with the Veterinary Department of the University of Glasgow which aimed at improving the nutritional quality of animal feeds for local farmers. Farmer groups were formed to be educated on how to improve the nutrient level of their feeds. The Department of Agricultural Mechanization and Irrigation Technology is equipping local farmers with the expertise in building irrigational facilities in their farms. A senior academic in the department whose specialty is in dam construction is helping farmers in this area. These initiatives are supported by international agencies - World Bank, European Union (EU) and other donors. *“In conjunction with the local government and the faculty of Agriculture, respondent opined that, there has been a mechanism through which knowledge is disseminated to local communities. A respondent recounted the effort by the animal science department hosting a radio program where they disseminate their research findings and also offer advice on some best practices of farming”.*

This explains that the main activities of donor agencies (EU and GTZ) are towards poverty reduction, while senior academics in respective departments benefit individually through financial returns from working with such projects which does not relatively aid in the overall institutional purpose. This could be attributed to the weakly institutionalized externally funded activities which weakens the academic core's ability to make a sustainable impact on development (Maassen, 2012). A respondent emphasised that *“since the Ministry of Education (government) operates in the absence of a framework which could be likened to ship sailing without a compass, there is no direction or a roadmap in terms of university development”*.

The dominant notion associated to the UDS based on the findings is an instrument of national agenda. From the findings it was revealed that there is a lot of collaboration through expertise exchange and capacity building with foreign universities such as the University of Glasgow, and international organizations and donor agencies such as World Bank, European Union and German Agency for Technical Cooperation. All these agencies are contributing to reducing poverty and diseases, to improving agricultural production, and to supporting small business development in northern Ghana – this is primarily through direct involvement in local communities.

It must also be emphasised that most of these projects and capacity building initiatives are for a timeframe and are discontinued when the project is done.

4.3 Outreach Services/ Third Stream Activities

The OECD (2007) report emphasises that development is not only about assisting business to succeed but also a larger form of development both serve economic objectives and are ends in themselves. A respondent asserts that *apart from teaching and research, service to the community has become one key vital aspect on the part of their responsibility, yet this role is frequently underestimated*. Many universities make a huge contribution to health, and this can be turned to communities to solve public health matters. Furthermore, much of what might be referred to as the development-related issues of the university usually are labelled as ‘third mission’, which is variously referred to as ‘engagement’, ‘service’ or ‘community outreach’, this could comprise academics being members of committees in the public or private sector, offering assistance to small businesses, helping with short courses, or involving in contract research for outside customers, more often than not, the economic development-related tasks and issues of the institution fall under its engagement role. Respondents interviewed enumerated that the efforts of UDS in establishing a program known as Third Trimester Field Practical Program (TTFPP). This program according to a senior member is aimed at inculcating service-oriented activities in students. Hence, during the third trimester, all first-year students, for instance, are assigned to chosen districts after a one-week orientation as to what they are to do in the field, at the district level. The students are again dispersed to chosen communities where they are to go to the rural communities and districts and help people tackle practical problems confronting them. The program entails almost all stakeholders in the development area of the various communities.

An interviewer stressed that *“The university teams up with governmental and non-governmental associations in the various communities and work alongside with the people in the communities”*.

This is done so that, there is collective teaching and learning by all engaged in the development agenda in the localities (Kaburise, 2003).

Again a senior member stressed that *“In addition to the community profiling, identification of major challenges and offering possible solutions, the students also engage mostly in teaching at the basic and secondary schools in their located communities” (UDS 02).*

“Besides, as part of the program, we give public talks to the communities – issues on HIV/AIDS, encouraging the communities to send their children to school, and good environmental practices are cited as some of the things they do” (UDS 03).

As a way of helping to improve the health needs of the people in northern Ghana, the School of Medicine and Health Sciences has in place a yearly program dubbed Community-Based Education and Service (COBES). Students are expected to go in groups of ten and stay in some rural community but there will be a clinic there. They go and stay there for six weeks and as part of the stay go to these clinics and find out the common diseases that are reported on the daily basis so they can help come out with some solutions through their medical training.

It is done every year and they do continue in the same community” Based on their findings, the student groups organize community talks and education on health issues and how to control these common diseases to the local community members.

In summary, based on the findings we can conclude that the dominant notion as revealed by respondents is towards the notion of the ‘university as ancillary’. This stems from the fact that, the notion of ancillary involves a wide range of third mission activities, such as community development and this can be ascertained from the brilliant initiatives such as Third Trimester Field Practical Program (TTFPP), Community-Based Education and Service (COBES) to offer community services.

4.4 Whether or not knowledge production and the university (UDS) is part of national development strategy.

In order to present the findings of the question above, it is prudent to present a brief documentary review of the main national development strategy, science, technology and innovation policy and finally a brief a strategic intention of Education in order to ascertain Whether or not knowledge production and the university (UDS) are part of national development strategy.

Two key national developments are namely, the Growth and Poverty Reduction Strategy (GPRS II) (2006-2009) and the *Ghana Vision 2020*. To what extent do these plans refer to a role for higher education in development? According to the GPRS II, the main goal of human resource development is to ensure the development of a knowledgeable, well-trained and disciplined labour force with the capacity to drive and sustain private sector-led growth. With respect to education, the priority policy interventions that would deepen and sustain the progress made in the sector under GPRS I and accelerate growth included the following (NDPC, 2008):

- 1. Increase access to and participation in education and training at all levels;*
- 2. Bridge gender gaps in access to education in all districts;*
- 3. Improve the quality of teaching and learning;*
- 4. Improve efficiency in the delivery of education services; and*
- 5. Promote science and technology education.*

With respect to human development, the *Ghana Vision 2020* document states the following (RoG 1995: vii):

“The basic goals of human development are to reduce poverty, increase average incomes and reduce disparities in incomes and opportunities. These goals will be achieved by reducing the rate of population growth, reducing infant and child mortality and general morbidity, improving food security and nutrition and further increasing access to health services, safe water and sanitation, and adequate housing. They also involve the achievement of universal basic education and adult literacy, especially for females and increased access to secondary and tertiary education. The technical proficiency of the labour force will be given further improvement through increased technical and vocational training”.

The most important recent strategic planning policy relating to education are the Ministry of Education’s *Education Strategic Plan 2003-2015* and the Ministry of Environment, Science and Technology’s *National Science, Technology, and Innovation Policy*. The main thrusts of these two documents are highlighted below, once again with a view to identifying the extent to which the role of higher education is mentioned.

The Education Strategic Plan presents a summary of government intentions and conditions that address the following policy goals for education (ibid: p, 14-16):

1. *Increase access to and participation in education and training;*
2. *Improve the quality of teaching and learning for enhanced pupil/student achievement;*
3. *Improve and extend technical/vocational education and training;*
4. *Promote and inculcate the values of good health and environmental sanitation in schools and institutions of higher learning and in their personal lives;*
5. *Strengthen and improve educational planning and management;*
6. *Promote and extend the provision of mathematics, science and technology education and training;*
7. *Improve the quality and relevance of academic and research programmes;*
8. *Promote and extend pre-school education;*
9. *Identify and promote education programmes that will assist in the prevention and management of HIV/Aids; and*
10. *Provide girls with equal opportunities to access the full cycle of education.*

National Development Plan on Science, Technology and Innovation Policy

According to the *National Science, Technology and Innovation Policy*, Ghana’s ambition to become a middle-income country requires a vision of development which fully applies and integrates science, technology and innovation into national development strategies to harness fully the nation’s total science and technology (S&T) capacity to achieve national objectives for poverty reduction, competitiveness of enterprises, sustainable environmental management and industrial growth. Specific objectives, among others, include the following (MEST 2010, p. 6):

1. *To facilitate mastering of scientific and technological capabilities;*
2. *To provide the framework for inter-institutional efforts in developing science, technology and innovation and programmes in all sectors of the economy to provide the basic needs of society; and*

3. *To create the conditions for the improvement of scientific and technological infrastructure for research and development, and innovation.*

The principal idea of the policy is to ensure that S&T drives all sectors of the economy. In order to achieve these objectives, sector policies, programmes and strategies would be implemented on the basis of the overall policy. Sector policies in agriculture, health, education, environment, energy, trade, industry, natural resources, human settlements, and communications shall be driven by sector-specific science and technology programmes and activities (ibid.).

In addition to the review on documents, two senior academics were of the view point that research is also one of the key functions of the University, and for a nation to develop there needs to be a great emphasis on research.. However, a respondent is of the above view:

“You see most of the research we conduct, some of them are even published in journals outside the country, I think since our research needs to make an impact we need to showcase to government and its key stakeholders the relevance of our research...we most often do that but I think policy makers are so much into the private sector and do not use most of our research output”

“I have supervised some MPhil and PhD thesis which have very interesting and relevant findings but the problem is that, these are not used and it’s lying there”

Some respondents elaborated that there is limited motivation from both government and policy makers for UDS to link their research to socio-economic development. What a respondents emphasise is that, academics are often used as experts in policy making process and also as resource persons for symposiums and conferences.

From the summary, despite these brief references to human resource development and education, and some respondents response there is very little in the documents about the role of higher education in development, or how the higher education system should respond to the needs of the knowledge economy. For the purposes of this study, it is important to note that except for reference to the issue of access, there is very little mention of higher education in this document.

5.0 Conclusion and Recommendation

The study sought to investigate the role of UDS in enhancing development in northern Ghana and secondly the extent to which these roles relates to national development, this becomes more important since the establishment of UDS had a clear mandate to serve as an agent of development. The study employed two sets of scenario, and the associated four notions (the university as ancillary, self-governing, as an instrument and engine of development) of the role of universities as developed by Maassen and Cloete (2006) and Maassen and Olsen (2007) was used as a conceptual framework to examine the role of universities based on the four notions and whether or not the creation of new knowledge has a role to play in the national development strategy and whether or not universities have a role in the national development strategy.

It was revealed from the findings based on semi structured interviews and document analysed that UDS are involved in developing human capital, innovation building and outreach services, which translates into the dominant notion of the university as ancillary and instrument for

development. This also means that knowledge creation have minimal role in the national development strategy and the university is implicitly not part of development strategy.

Irrespective of the tremendous role UDS are playing, there are some possible challenges that is limiting the full realization of socio-economic development. Challenges such as absence of policy framework agreed by university leaders, government and external stakeholders, weak institutionalized external funded projects by donor organization which hampers the core academic ability to make sustainable development, lack of specific role played by regional authorities has been identified as possible threat to the roles UDS is playing in stimulating socio-economic development.

Notwithstanding the above roles of UDS, lots more could be done to avert the possible threats which could hamper the achievement of socio-economic development in northern Ghana coupled with the fact that the Country is in a lower middle income status. It is recommended that there should be an adoption of policy framework that will link the university activities to national development plan which will not only stimulate socio-economic development but to contribute towards the global knowledge economy since global happenings has permeated both national and local higher education institutions not only in developed but developing country like Ghana .

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