



## **Qualitative Analysis of Competence-Based Approach to Recruitment and Selection Process in Private Tertiary Institutions in Ghana**

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### **Abstract**

This paper presents attempts to report and evaluate on how traditional approach to recruitment and selection in Private Tertiary was superseded by a competency-based approach. The study uses a qualitative research approach, conducting four intensive interviews and having focus discussions with HR managers, staff and senior officers who are involved in recruitment and selection process. The findings from in-depth interviews led to the following major propositions; the studies participants acknowledged the challenges and limitations of the existing recruitment and selection process and recognized the need for a more competency-based approach. Also, the respondents explained that implementation of the new system enable equal opportunities for all job applicants and make the process competitive. In this sense, it was highlighted that the key role of training of staff, senior officers involves in the process, development of a clear competency-based assessment model in the areas of job descriptions, interviews, and selection process aligned with the strategies, the post applied for and the business needs of the institutions, contributes to distinctive performance. The studies recommend that the new system of competency approach should be aligned to the business needs of the institutions, the development of policies to regulate the assessment of candidates for a job post. The study also contributes to HRM literature on competency based to recruitment and selection.

**Keywords:** Competency, Recruitment and Selection, Private Tertiary Education, Appointment and Promotion Committee

## **1. Introduction**

This study provides a case study showing how competency-based recruitment and selection process can be a critical factor to improve the processes of candidate search and selection in Private Tertiary Education in Ghana. Recruitment and Selection are generally considered to be fully interrelated processes (Jung, 2006). Several studies (Gable, Hollon, & Dangelo, 1992; Mak, 1995; Murphy & Shiarella, 1997; Heraty & Morley, 1998; Cascio, 1998) have argued that the outcome of high quality of employees is a sound recruiting practices through a high quality selecting practices which can predict better employee job performance. According to Bishop Barron, & Hollenbeek, (1983), from employers' perspective, recruitment and selection practices are to get maximum returns on investment from the human resources which is necessary for expected returns on investment such as profit. As reported by Bishop et al (1983) the employers devote resources in the recruitment and selection process because they expect the process to enable them to hire the competent and highest quality workers. Therefore, an organization that employs proper process to recruit and select skilled candidates will experience a higher level of job success from the employees (Howard, 1999; Vance & Foundation, 2006; Gill, 2007). Spencer et al., (1992) maintained that matching employee competencies and job requirement is to improve employee and organizational performance, as well as lead to increased satisfaction. This can effectively leverage individual team and organizational performance (Carroll & McCrackin, 1998). This is indicated by organizations moving away from traditional methods to competent based which has received much criticism in recent times. Using the resource-based approach to achieve performance explained how the organization is perceived as a unique set of resource and competence based on which a strategy for the best possible use of opportunities is defined.

However, considering the given criticisms directed at traditional recruitment and selection procedures, Beardwell and Wright (2004) pointed out that traditional recruitment and selection methods are increasingly failing to address the increased complexity, greater ambiguity and rapid pace of change in the contemporary environment. The ensuing evolution in response to the changing environment requires recruitment processes and selection decisions based on the individual's competence, specialized skills (physical or social) and abilities. A few studies conducted with the developed world confirmed the correlation with employee competence as the outcome from the recruitment process, Brown (2007). To this study, Farnham and Stevens, (2000) highlighted that the competency-based approach to recruitment and selection methods encompasses both the concepts of competence and its application to recruitment and

selection to identify the right competence for the organization. Therefore, competency-based recruitment and selection process is an area that has been featured in recent research but needs to be studied further.

In Ghana, most studies on recruitment and selection have focused on the practices (Asafo-Adjei, 2014; Djabatey, 2012, Adu-Darkoh, 2014) and there seems to be little extant literature on competency-based type of recruitment and selection process in Ghana. This was considered as the gap because an establish trend in recruitment and selection is that for an individual to perform well on the job, the organization must focus on hiring the required skills and competencies for particular post through the working of job description, selection and interview. This is relevant for the institution to get required competencies to achieve its performance and strategic goals. In line of this thinking, it is therefore imperative for this studies to pay attention to competency-based recruitment and selection process which has emerged as the most recent construct to determine the competencies the organization required, researchers have much to discover about its full potential as an important phenomenon in HRM compared to the traditional method of recruitment and selection process, The present study tries to lessen this gap by assessing recruitment and selection based on competence-based from the perspective of staff involves in recruitment and selection at Private Tertiary Institutions in Ghana.

Many different definitions of competence have been explained but they can be considered within two basic models: first, an output model on competence-based and an input model based on competency. The first measures accomplishment of candidates and the other is their potential. Roberts (1997) provided an operational definition of competence as work-related personal attributes, experience and skills, values and knowledge that a person draws on to perform their work well. Adopting a competence-based approach to recruitment and selection, it is debated that, it permits a more objective way of assessing job candidates because it uses clear job profiles and the same criteria for selection in each job interview and prevents the system to use discretion to favour one candidate over another. Considering criticism directed at traditional recruitment and selection procedures in terms of their adverse impacts on efficiency, effectiveness and equity, this case study has four main aims. First, to identify private tertiary institutions that have adopted competence based approach to recruitment and selection second, compelling reasons using competency-based approach and third, to assess the numerous benefits and challenges derived from using competency-based approach if such exist.

## **2. Theoretical Review**

Various theoretical viewpoints underscore the importance of human resources as a key determinant of an organization's competitive advantage. One dominant theory related to the human resources of the firm is Resourced-Based View (RBV). RBV is concerned with the idea that a firm's internal resources can become a direct source of sustained competitive advantage for the firm. This is distinct from traditional notions of competitive advantage popularized first by Porter (1985) which stressed competitive advantage was attained for the firm through external means such as products, location or customer base. Sveiby (2000) draws the distinction that while traditional views of competitive advantages, such as Porter's, are product-based, RBV is knowledge-based. The notion that a firm's human resources could be a source of sustained competitive advantage dates to 1984 (Fahy, 2000; Wright & McMahan, 1992) although it seems not to have gained much momentum as a mainstream theory in the academic literature until a decade late. To enable employees to become a source of a firm's competitive advantage, it is necessary to affirm several principles that underscore the link between a firm's human resources and its business strategy. According to Karami et al., (2004) four principles link the two: first, the firm must seek to ensure that it has capable and committed employees; second, the firm must commit to the strategic importance of human resources to the success of the business; third, human resource activities must be managed by specialists; fourth, human resource management is integrated into business strategy. Additional practical evidence supporting the competencies of employees as intangible resources of the organizations is premised on competency-based approach recruitment and selection process. The practices are responsible for leveraging and managing those competencies in ensuring that the organizations can obtain competitiveness, especially in terms of getting the right competencies of candidates for the organization. Similarly, Barney (1991) confirmed that competent employees, and at the same time possess the competencies needed by the organizations are valuable resources that are rare, non-imitable, non-substitutable and this promises that sustainable competitive advantage to be achieved.

### **2.1. Traditional Method of Recruitment and Selection Process in the Private Universities**

Traditional recruitment and selection practices in the private universities in Ghana are mainly for senior staff and senior members from the perspective of academic and administrative staff. The method is spearheaded by the Registrars of the Universities. The Registrar is considered the Chief Administrative Officer of the University. From the perspective of private universities in Ghana, the Registrar received a vacant new post from Faculties/ departments and submit for approval at the senior management level and

obtained approval for new posts, provide job descriptions and person specifications for "fine-tuning" by Human Resource Department. The Human Resource Division draft the job advertisements and for placement in newspapers and/or other media to the general public to put in their application. The Human Resource department sends information and application packs to potential candidates, collates submitted application forms, forwards applications to a constituted Committee in University for shortlisting, arranges job interviews and notifies candidates. Traditional selection methods commonly practised in the university are panel interviews and written references. Again in the private university, the universities have constituted Appointment and Promotion Committee [APC] and the composition vary from University. This APC is regulated by the University policy and outlines members of the committee. The Human Resource department is provided with the personnel representatives on interview panels, contacts referees and supplies written notification of selection outcomes unless feedback has been given to candidates by interview panels. Details of the traditional process of recruitment and selection for different categories of staff both academic and administrative vary but the description above outlines its most significant elements.

Within Private Tertiary institutions in Ghana, the major concerns about recruitment and selection in Private Universities included: insufficient guidance and training for the Human Resource Division; difficulties regarding the efficiency and speed of the recruitment process; and insufficient guidance on the composition and operation of interview panels. Concerns have also been expressed on lack of information given to candidates in advance of selection, too much reliance placed on interviews as a selection tool and weak monitoring of equal opportunities. This method of recruitment and selection process consequently to some extent get poor performance from the employee on the job after the candidate had successfully passed the selection interviews. This however proved to be the prime driver of the move towards a competency-based approach to recruitment and selection. The latter was not new to some private companies in Ghana which already used multi-method assessment and evidence-based selection techniques, to select employees. It also operates a competence-based training strategy. Against this background, and to address the issues raised by the study make it imperative for private universities to shift to a competency-based recruitment and selection system. The studies considered the components of recruitment and selection.

## **2.2. Job Description**

Early in the recruitment process applicants are often exposed to some form of job description or advertisement (Lucia & Lepsinger, 2009). Job descriptions that are used for recruitment are designed to

gain the attention of and attract applicants. It outlines the competencies considered essential for that particular post. Job descriptions generally include a job title, reporting relationships, a summary of responsibilities, the level of decision-making authorized, and hiring requirements information (Fogg, 2009). Armstrong (2009) maintained that job descriptions describe the outcome employees are expected to deliver in terms of key results or accountabilities.

Similarly to the proposition, Fogg (2009) explained a model of competency as behavioural, that a model articulates job descriptions defined within each occupational function of the job. Also, Daniels et al., (2011), maintained that job descriptions, traditionally focused on task-based format, but with the emergent importance of aligning human resources functions for better strategic use, competency information is appearing more frequently in job descriptions. In line with this argument, Studies by Sule, (2015) indicated that panel members on interviews have the responsibility to reviewed behavioural indicators for each competency at each level consistent in the question or as outlined in the competency framework of the post. Competency questions can then be drafted which best will elicit from candidates a demonstration of the competencies sought as per the job description based on the job description and in conjunction with the behavioural indications taken from the Competency Framework (UNHCR, 2014). Adoption of competency-based job descriptions by Organizations results to determine candidates whose skills correspond with the job opening of the organization, Daniels et al., (2011).

The view of Duosis, (1993) competency models involves job descriptions of the required qualities of a successful worker in a position, on a team, and within an organization. A framework of competency must be fluid, robust, and flexible to changes in technology, economic and other changes. Therefore, these models of competency newer in the organization have been restructured in their job, redesign of their work process which are few job incumbent with experience (Green, 2010). Competency-based job descriptions adopted by the organization determines the candidate whose skill corresponds with the opening of the job of the organization. Daniels et al., (2011).

### **2.3. Interviews**

Similar to the above argument, Ennis (2008) reported that the interview should be based on competency; a primary structured question during which the interview is designed to one or more specific skills and the response matches against pre-determined criteria. He further argued that the interviews are systematic with each question aimed at achieving a specific competency or skill. In line with this direction, as noted by Ennis (2008) the interviewees are required to exhibit their behavioural characteristics and reactions to

specific situations of which they are required to provide specific explanations from which the panel or interviewers will investigate further to establish the suitability of the candidate to the position applied. According to Green, (2013) the emphasis of the development of application of the competency in the contemporary issues in human resource management predominantly on the importance it plays in improving job performance which consequently affects the overall competitiveness of the organization. In line with this direction, Armstrong, 2009 further explained that the interviewees are required to exhibit their behavioural characteristics and reaction to specific situations of which they are required to provide explanations specifically from which the panel or interviewers investigate to ascertain the suitability of the candidate to the position applied. Hence, the competency-based approach as reported by Armstrong (2009) assists the organization to identify which selection techniques and required information to conduct the interview based on competency where the questions focus on particular competency required to meet the job specifications as set out in the competency terms. Adopting the model of competency to developed behavioural based interview protocols and assessment tools ensure that candidates who are fit for the work are selected and hired for the position.

#### **2.4. Selection**

However, the competency-based approach further assists the organization to identify which selection techniques; psychological testing is expected to produce useful evidence (Armstrong, 2009). Armstrong (2009) further explained that evaluating and interviewing job candidates specifically a required certain specific established criteria. The ability of the interviewee to effectively perform and contribute to perform duties and responsibilities depend on competencies such as job attributes, skills characteristics or quality that may be required at the process of selection. Despite the seemingly strong argument, empirical evidence by Tripathi and Agrwal (2014) posits that every job requires measurable, tangible, knowledge behaviour competency and interpersonal competencies to ensure that candidates who are best suited and can contribute to the overall business objectives are chosen. Empirical analyses suggested studies to improve the effectiveness of interviews at the selection phase; thus for example Warech (2012) suggested a strong tie exists the competencies selected for required job and performance. He further suggested a reviewed of the behavioural checklist completed for each applicant and assigned a numerical value to responses to each question. This behavioural checklist standard ensures that interviewers apply common standards and ratings that ensure consistency and accuracy of the observed and evaluated process of each applicant. Warech (2012) explained that the record of performance rating of the interviewers for each applicant,

calculate all scores on a given competency to determine the average to that results to the overall final score. Inconsistent with this argument, Taylor and Small (2002) observed that in the process of the interview adopting a descriptively anchored rating scale, such as frequency assessment of competency, could increase validity estimate to 0.63. The rationale of the rating competency selection and accuracy that outlines throughout the organization has the potential to offer the organization the capabilities of the candidates with the requirement of offered position; thus to identify the candidate best, and breach the gaps incompetency on the basis for initial new-hire learning plan (Draganidis & Mentzas).

Following this approach, Youn, Stepich, & Cox, (2006) even concludes that competencies are adopted on the basis for human resource management and organizations gain competitive advantage. The authors explained further suggests that the best way of matching people and the job is through policy formulations for aligning the potential workforce to realize organizational specific best practices, which are aimed at achieving and exceeding the desired organizational performance. It is argued in this line that Schoonover (2002) concludes that the implementation of long term competency-based recruitment and selection largely depends on the alignment of competencies with the organization's vision. The competency framework actively impacts the system and support vision, strategy and key individuals that can support the strategies. In this thinking, Soderquist, (2010) indicated that competency is the heart of HRM integrating vertical and horizontal HR activities and with the organization strategy.

### **3. Method**

The research employed a qualitative approach, consisting of interviews of both senior officers and officers recently involved in recruitment activity at the Private Universities in Ghana, as well as a discussion group of personnel and training officers and managers. This approach was adopted since the purpose of the study was to assess and understand the different meanings that participants placed on their experiences and not to gather data and measure cause and effect. The methods are chosen, interviews and a discussion group, were selected for their ability to enable deep probing, uncover new and non-verbal clues and give non-directive and open accounts of experiences. A sampling of officers, recently involved in recruiting, was both purposive and time linked. A list of officers was contacted across the private universities who were recently involved in recruitment and selection activities were asked if they would participate in the studies. Out of 45 senior officers identified, 35 opted to participate in the interview. These included senior officers who have participated in the universities recruitment and selection programme.



The sampling of human resource managers within the private universities who have participated in the recruitment and selection process was also purposive, with officers self-selecting whether to participate. Out of 25 HR and training officers identified, 13 were excluded since they were already included in the list of 35 recent recruiting officers. 12 of the remaining 25 HR and training officers agreed to participate in the research. In total 35 of the senior officers were interviewed comprising of 29 males and 10 females, while a total of 12 HR and training officers were interviewed comprising 7 males and 5 females, after being advised on the format of the interviews and guaranteed confidentiality. Pilot tests highlighted the importance of providing the managers with this information before the interview. As reported by Dorneyei (2007), the qualitative approach is the 'most often' collected through interviews and questionnaires. In a similar cohen, Masnion and Marison (2007) observed that interviewing is "a valuable method for exploring the construction and negotiation of meaning in nature. The value of interviewing is not only because it builds a holistic snapshot and analyzes words report detailed views of informants; but also, because it enables interviewees to "speak in their voice and express their thoughts and feeling (Berg, 2007). Interviews were semi-structured with participants invited to express their views on the purpose of recruitment and selection, the existing recruitment and selection process and their understanding of and benefit of competence and using competency-based recruitment and selection. They also discussed each stage of the recruitment and selection process. The interviews enabled an in-depth discussion and revealed the officer's beliefs, experiences, perceptions and attitudes, as well as knowledge and understanding of recruitment and selection. The data collected through interviews were transcribed and then integrated. All the data acquired were examined and categorized to provide evidence to address the research questions of this study. The identity of the research participants remained confidential in line with ethical norms and considerations.

In presenting the results of the interviews, care is needed in presenting the data and qualitative description must be used, rather than trying to "quantify" the information. The interviewer later used a separate contact summary form to document and code interview responses using pattern coding methods (Miles & Huberman, 1994). The interviewer then reviews all transcripts for negative evidence of the initial findings such as body language, voices, voice tones, etc. A final review of all of the data, themes, and table is conducted to identify multi-dimensional patterns. The procedure of data analysis will of three actions that take place instantaneously: data reduction, data presentation and concluding. Further, there are three footpaths of qualitative data analyses: data reduction, presentation of data by forming a set of information and efforts to draw conclusions or verification.

#### **4. Results**

Although there were several understanding as well as both benefit and challenges that respondents ascribe to competency based recruitment and selection, most of the respondents agreed on certain dimension encompassing the existing system and participants' attitude towards competency-based recruitment and selection and its implications. The respondents have the following to say:

##### **4.1. Adoption of Competency Based Recruitment**

There is a consensus in the view of the respondents regarding the adoption of competency based approach. The views of Respondents indicate that some of the private tertiary institutions have adopted such approach in recruiting and selecting of job applicants and others have no knowledge of such a concept. For instance, three of the respondents mentioned that:

*“One of the factors why in our universities we have adopted such a system of recruitment ad selection is to get that best applicant for the job. We educate and train human resource for national development so therefore, emphasis should be placed on getting the right staff with the requisite competencies and knowledge to help in that efforts.*

One of the respondents mentioned that:

*“I think because of cost the associated with the implementation of such a system makes it difficult for my university to wholly implement such a system. Although some of the aspect of our recruitment focus on competency based such as advertising for a vacancy is related to certain competencies the organization is looking for. Therefore, I believe that organization should inculcate competency based in all the recruitment and selection activity*

In a similar way, another respondent said:

In our university, we have adopted handbook on competency based recruitment and selection to guide HR managers, training officers and panel on interviews. The manual have matrix that measures and spell out required competencies needed for hire of new employees. I know that this do help my organization provide objectivity and fairness to all applicant who applied for any job advert.

##### **4.2. Compelling Reasons Implementing Competency Approach**

In terms of compelling reasons why private tertiary institutions in Ghana use competency approach, almost all the respondents echoed that the reasons using the new approach is that ii played important roles in the job performance of the employee as well as making the organization distinctive.

The respondents had the following to say:

*“All the studies participants were clear about the importance of recruitment of selection in finding the “best fit for the job”. Both the senior officers involved in the interviews and HR officers were critical of the existing system of recruitment and selection. While managers focused on the operation of the system in terms of time delays and concern with consistency, personnel and training staff focused on overreliance on interviews and the subjectivity inherent within the system”. Further, participants explained that the traditional approach of job description functions mainly as a tool for outlining roles of a job or position, usually a list of duties to be carried out by the applicant. While on the contrary, a competency-based job description emphasized experience, abilities, knowledge and skills that the individual can bring on the job. One HR manager commented that “employing and using the competency is very difficult to do since the system a rigorous is needed to ensure the best possible applicant are selected for the position”.*

Similarly, another respondent said:

*Most HR and training officers stated they were reliant on senior officers and more senior managers for considerable support in recruitment and selection activity and attributed this to a lack of training. HR managers and training staff noted that, in addition to training HR managers and support staff in the practice of recruitment and selection activity, from writing job descriptions, person specification and adverts through to assessing candidates, there was also a need to train managers in managing and administering recruitment activity. Managers’ reliance on personnel was attributed to their perception of the role of personnel.*

In the same vein, another respondent also said:

*“Personnel should “ensure that the process runs smoothly but most managers perceived the recruitment and selection system as being owned by personnel. Personnel from outside the University and who are part of the University Appointment and Promotion, however, saw their role in terms of providing specialist advice and ensuring consistency and compliance of appropriate best practices and adherence of policies. In terms of attracting applicants, staff noted that the need to have an awareness of the conditions in the industry, given the need for best value”, as well as portraying a good organizational image and providing applicants with the necessary information through the adverts and application pack. Most managers saw this as “the biggest part of personnel’s role” and felt it was personnel’s responsibility to ensure we advert appropriately”. Personnel, on the other hand, saw writing adverts and placing them in appropriate media is the managers’ role with assistance from personnel”.*

Also, another view of the respondents said that:

*“The application form currently used by the institutions needed “to be updated in line with the proposed changes in recruitment”. Managers considered existing forms were too general”. The purpose of the form was seen as providing an opportunity to “gain as much specific detail as possible”. The personnel and training group discussed the need to review the form to enable equal opportunities” monitoring. They also believed the form should provide candidates with*

*the opportunity to discuss their competencies and skills, how these were gained and how they could be applied to the job being applied for. Managers had several views on the place of interviews, tests and other forms of assessment. They recognized that a move toward competency-based recruitment would lead to the person specification being used as a "template from which we should measure the individual's ability to meet the essential and desirable criteria". With this perspective, managers felt that the correct design of the assessment process and exercises is crucial" and planning is important". Managers also acknowledged that the techniques used should vary according to the post". All managers agreed that interviews were a necessary part of the process", as they provided an "opportunity to check out the information given on the application". Personnel and training staff also agreed that face-to-face contact was needed but expressed concern at the inconsistency of existing interview arrangements across the department and accepted the need to plan and develop a more structured interview to improve "objectivity"".*

*Likewise Seniors officers clearly commented that "personnel who are involved in the interviews agreed that there is the need to involved heads of department of the concerned individual or candidate must be involved in the recruitment process preferably in interviews to determine the kind of competencies and set of skills that would be needed to perform creditably leading to superior performance. Most managers felt that a complement of selection techniques would provide "greater insight into a candidate's ability to meet the requirement of the post" and that for senior posts, in particular, verbal, written and numerical skills should be tested". Personnel and training staff were particularly concerned about the reliability and validity of any exercises used in candidates' assessments. The group felt that managers would need assistance in devising exercises, as well as training in the techniques for observing, evaluating, scoring and moderating each candidate's performance against set criteria". "Senior officers were of the view that decisions were being made in the current system after discussing the strength and weaknesses of each candidate, rather than by scoring and moderating against identified and agreed on criteria. Personnel and training staff also felt that the prime considerations in the decision-making process should be fairness and equity. They were concerned that some managers' tended to compare candidates against each other, rather than against their suitability for the post or identified standards. There was a perception that managers sometimes appointed candidates who failed to meet the expected standard, because of a need to fill the post. Personnel and training staff felt that the evidence and information available at the end of the process should feed into successful candidate's induction and performance development plan".*

Similarly also respondents said:

*"Both senior officers and HR managers agreed on the need to check references before making appointments. Senior officers considered the role of references in a competence-based recruitment system should be part of a factual check, not part of the assessment. Managers commented also on the subjectivity of references, noting the need to "check*

*facts". They promoted the use of a questionnaire approach to "target specific areas". Only two managers accepted the need to check qualifications and undertake health checks, whereas the HR managers wanted checks on a variety of records including police and licenses, depending on the post".*

It is noteworthy from the forgoing investigation had highlighted the need to train senior offers and HR managers and groups who are involved in the recruitment process in using competency-based recruitment and selection methods, with training encompassing both concepts of competence and its application to recruitment and selection. All research participants averred that training can be held for members who were are directly involved in the recruitment and selection process which focuses on both the theoretical knowledge and practical skills necessary for effective competency-based recruitment activity. On that backdrop, some participants commented on the fact that the recruitment and selection processes currently implemented in the Private universities in Ghana remain less effective as some of them adopt a closed process, aimed at employing family members, friends, or those who are known to some employees of the institutions. Participants agreed that the institutions should recruit from either internal or external applicants by applicable standards created by the organization.

#### **4.2.1. Benefit and challenges of using competence-based approach**

The implementation of the competency based approach has some benefit and challenges. The Following are the responses from participants on putting the new system to work effectively. The following are what respondents had to say:

*"Senior officers claimed that the HR managers needed to be more proactive in their recruiting activities and work together in doing this. This is necessary to develop a better awareness of the current issues in the labour markets- something that are normally not discussed during when the advertisement is drafted and the various media available to attract suitable candidates from the markets. Likewise, "The research indicated the need to developed effective job descriptions and person specifications to ensure candidates would be aware of the duties of the post and the skills and experience needed to fulfil the job requirements. Both also act as templates for all stages of the recruitment process, from advertising to induction and managing future employees. Competency job description takes the process ahead. It figures out the qualities and competencies necessary for success in the job and eventually offers some benefits for the organization. When competencies are incorporated in a job posting, it enables the person to know whether they meet the basic requirement to do the job".*

Similarly another respondent commented:

*“I believe using competency approach helps the colleges to give feedback to all candidates appointed and the justification of the decisions being made. In the new system, HR managers are required to summarise how candidates met or did not meet the competence criteria and to note the relevant score from the rating guide, following moderation with a fellow assessor. HR managers have summary forms for each exercise to assist them in justifying the selection decision. They are also required to adopt an “interpretative approach” to decision making, without being biased in doing this. Where the highest-scoring candidates are not appointed, the head of the department requesting a vacancy needs to know the justification for each decision. All candidates are encouraged to seek either telephone or face-to-face feedback with the HR managers. Internal candidates and successful external candidates are provided with an information summary of their performance against the criteria for all exercises so that this can be used for induction planning and training needs analysis as part of personal development plans”.*

Similarly also respondents commented:

*“Senior officers claimed that structured interviews needed to focus on professional posts such as academic position and administrative position for which specific qualification is essential, must have structured interview and one other appropriate exercise. These exercises, including presentations, written work, numerical tests and scenario and negotiation exercises are developed with HR managers support. To support the introduction of the new system the need to be training for existing staff, heads of department and relevant officers in the recruitment and selection process, to enable in the planning and designing exercises, as well as running the assessment effectively.*

*“The HR managers and other officers, in particular, acknowledged the importance of advertising and application packs, given the need for “best value”, limited budgets and to attract appropriate candidates. To introduce the competence-based approach, the department recruiting applicants developed applicants’ information packs with an application form, job description, and person specification forming the basic pack. It is imperative too, that in any forms of candidate’s assessment, to ensure that candidates are properly prepared for the assessment and receive adequate feedback. Both heads of department and HR managers need to make sure that individuals are aware that a more formalized process of selection is being undertaken. Candidates are informed of different selection exercises and given a scheduled date. Assessors of the exercises are also informed about their roles, the exercise they assess and how, when and by whom feedback and outcomes will be communicated”.*

Also, other respondents mentioned that:

*“Considering the new system, through the use of structured interviews and other exercises seeking to find evidence of individual competence, there is also a need to ensure qualifications are checked, particularly from the award institution. As noted, senior officers and other personnel observed in the studies that there was a need to move towards*

*a fact-based questionnaire request for references. The department and HR offices should adopt a questionnaire style reference request form asking the referee to confirm factual information regarding employment history, attitude and other disciplinary issues. The new reference form asks the referee to provide comments and, where possible, an example of the candidate's competence in areas that have been deemed crucial to the vacancy. Although these "crucial" competencies are tested in more than one assessment exercise, the reference provides a final checking mechanism to assist in ensuring the reliability and validity of the exercises".*

Similarly the respondent said:

*"With concerns raised about subjectivity in the recruitment and selection process and the need for an objective-based approach, the candidate's assessment has been thoroughly reviewed. Interviews, when used with other forms of assessment, are not good indicators of future job performance. Although they still have a place to play in candidates' assessments, they need to be more objective. Since the introduction of the competency-based system, interview questions are linked to the crucial and essential criteria detailed in the person specification. Interviews are now much more structured and evidence-based with less opportunity for bias. Scoring takes place with the use of a standard rating framework, which scores candidates from 1 to 5. For example, each score has a description with 1 meaning "ineffective", 2 "less effective", 3: "fully effective" 4 "excellent" and 5 "outstanding. Once interview responses are individually scored, assessors work together to moderate and agree on final scores".*

It is noteworthy from the forgoing discussions that all the respondents unanimously agreed on the benefits and challenges of the competency based approach. This suggest that the sampled institution placed high importance to the competency approach, and it is become increasingly important that the private tertiary institution in Ghana selected for the studies can achieve sustained competitive advantage if it hire the right competencies for the post applied for, taking into consideration the training of staff to understand the new system.

### **4.3. Discussion**

The studies assess competence based approach to recruitment private tertiary institutions in Ghana. The studies presented a proposition that the linked between recruitment and selection, based on competence that have not been considered by prior studies until now. Recruitment and selection formed an important process of activities of the institutions since it expected results in the selection of the best and well-deserving human resources appointed to support the activities of the institutions. If the processes are not well managed, the institutions will not employ the optimal human resource required to provide quality services to students, and consequently, affect the work performance of the institutions. This discussion of results of

the study relate to resource-based theory. As posited by Peteraf and Barney, (2003), the theory examines competitive advantage of the organization based on resources of the organization. The findings of the studies indicate that some of the private tertiary institutions in Ghana have adopted competency based approach to recruitment and selection. Some of the respondents indicated that the institutions have design matrix on required competency that assist them to effectively implement the new system. The adoption of competency based approach identified the applicant's skills, ability and competencies and its implementation depends on the readiness of the organization. This is thinking is line with Green (2010) observed that the success of the long term implementation of competency-based recruitment and selection depends on the alignment of competencies with the organization's vision. Also, with regard the reasons for implementing new system. Respondents summarily indicated that private tertiary institutions explained that the new system required a more objective system of recruitment and selection. It was also agreed, that employing organizations needed to be more efficient in their use of resources and more effective in terms of selection outcomes. The institutions needed to improve on recruitment and selection process by increasing objectivity, reducing reliance on traditional interviews and focusing on an evidence-based approach to selection. This support the view of Armstrong (2009), who averred that the implementation of the competency based identify which selection techniques and required information to conduct the interview based on competency where the questions focus on particular competency required to meet the job specifications as set out in the competency terms. Lastly, respondents explained the numerous benefits and challenges in inherent in the implementation of competency based approach, one of the respondents explained the benefit of using new system start from job description, person specification, selection and interview. As noted in the results The HR managers and other officers, in particular, acknowledged the importance of advertising and application packs, given the need for "best value", limited budgets and to attract appropriate candidates. To introduce the competence-based approach, the department recruiting applicants developed applicants' information packs with an application form, job description, and person specification forming the basic pack. It is imperative too, that in any forms of candidate's assessment, to ensure that candidates are properly prepared for the assessment and receive adequate feedback.

As noted in the studies, one of the challenges leading to this dilemma is the high cost associated with personnel, lack of government subvention to private tertiary institutions, nepotism and influence of personnel in position. This creates a lack of consistency in the factors that influence these processes, which is likely to affect the decision-making process. Therefore, the adoption of standardized and competencies criteria must be fostered in selecting the best candidate for the post. In consistent with view, Klett (2010)



reported that performance is enhanced as a result of the organization ability to attract, develop, harness and sustain competent employees. For the organization to develop competency-based recruitment they should put in place a mechanism that aligns hire competencies, skill set and talent at the instance of recruitment and selection. However, extant research has made no attempt to linked recruitment and selection process with competency based. This study fills this gap by qualitatively assessing the argument between recruitment and selection with competence-based.

### **5. Conclusion and Suggestions**

The studies found that the recruitment and selection process in the five (5) private universities was subjective, inconsistent and lacked awareness of the key procedural and equity issues. The selection was narrowly focused on interviews, application forms and reference checks and was not managed comprehensively, either by HR offices and the senior officers at the interview. The decision to move to a more focused, objective, competency-based approach to recruitment and selection required radical and positive changes to the existing system. The change process required two key approaches; training of staff and building a relationship, and formulating of policy that regulates the system.

It is hoped that the design and implementation of effective recruitment and selection processes tailored to an organization needs will benefit greatly the organization, enabling them to select the most appropriate and competent candidates for the position. This particular competency of candidates will usually be known during the assessment process. The policies adopted in the process of recruitment and selection of employees should be based on the specification of the job and the requirement of the organization. However, policies should be considered evaluation of employee achievement, the evaluation of organizational analysis, competencies, HR analysis of employees, available materials, organization needs and the viability of the process adopted. The Universities should also consider careful planning of the recruitment and selection process, legal consideration, fairness and support of the HR department are most important principles that should be implemented in the process, to ensure that most suitable candidates are chosen and to, as a consequence, ensure the optimal operation of the organization.

The study is original and contributes to the literature. In future research, examining and comparing applications in different universities may reveal different results. The study results offer a critical implication. By conducting the study in the context of private universities in Ghana, extends the literature and provide enrich understanding of human resource management literature on competency based to recruitment and selection. The focus of competence based approach to recruitment and selection activity

start from the working of job description, person specification, advertising and interview, with the organization placing emphasis on certain required skills and competencies to hire for particular post. Also, senior officers, heads of department, HR managers must be aware that when the process is based on 'subjectivity' and 'unfairness' will affect the organizations in future because the right caliber of competence was not employ for particular post. It is proposed that the authorities of the private universities should adopt proper policies on recruitment and selection activity that seek for an individual with the required competencies for the job. Also, staff involved in the working of job description, selection and interview must be properly train on the need to adapt to competency based system, understand how the system best for the organization in achieving its strategic goals. The study is original and contributes to the literature. In future research, examining and comparing applications in different universities may reveal different results.

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