

Strikes and Their Effects on Teachers in Colleges of Education in Ghana

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Abstract:

The causes, frequency, and effects of strikes among teachers in Ghana's Colleges of Education, focusing on both individual and institutional impacts was investigated in this study. The study employed a mixed-methods approach. The research utilised survey data from 200 teachers across ten public colleges with in-depth interviews of union leaders, administrators, and education officials. Findings reveal that the primary drivers of strikes are salary disparities, delayed payments, lack of promotion, poor working conditions, and ineffective grievance handling mechanisms. The effects on teachers are profound and multidimensional: professionally, strikes disrupt teaching, research, and career progression; economically, they result in financial hardship and uncertainty; psychologically, they induce stress, anxiety, and diminished morale; and socially, they strain relationships within families, institutions, and communities. At the institutional level, strikes cause academic calendar disruptions, reduce instructional quality, complicate management, and erode public confidence in teacher education. Coping strategies adopted by teachers, unions, and administrators are largely reactive and insufficient to address systemic issues. The study concludes with recommendations for harmonizing salaries, improving communication, strengthening dispute resolution mechanisms, and investing in teacher welfare as essential steps to prevent recurrent industrial actions and ensure sustainable, high-quality teacher education in Ghana.

Keywords: Teacher strikes, Colleges of Education, teacher welfare, industrial action, educational management, labour relations

INTRODUCTION

Industrial unrest, particularly strikes, has been a persistent feature of the educational sector, both internationally and in Ghana. Recent teacher strikes in Ghana's Colleges of Education have underscored ongoing controversies among educators, institutional administration, and government officials. Strikes generally stem from unaddressed issues over compensation, working conditions, professional development, and resource distribution (Gyimah 2024). The frequency and severity of these strikes have escalated, prompting worries over their wider consequences for educational quality, institutional stability, and teacher wellbeing.

Teacher education plays a crucial role in national development, as colleges of education in Ghana are essential in training competent instructors for primary and secondary institutions (Danku & Mishiwo 2022). When strikes hinder this process, the consequences are evident across the entire school system. Disrupted academic calendars, delayed graduations, reduced instructional hours, and decreased morale among staff and students are merely some of the consequences. The recurring nature of these industrial activities signifies deep-seated and systemic problems that require comprehensive understanding and targeted solutions (Nyan 2017).

Background to the Study

For many years, teachers in Ghana's education sector have gone on strike to get better pay, benefits, and working conditions. Strikes in colleges of education are usually planned and backed by unions like the

Colleges of Education Teachers Association of Ghana (CETAG), unlike protests that happen on their own. These strikes often persist for weeks or even months, which makes them considerably worse for schoolwork and the way the institution runs.

Principal factors instigating these strikes encompass compensation inequities between educators in colleges of education and their peers in other postsecondary institutions, protracted delays in the disbursement of recently negotiated allowances, absence of defined promotional trajectories, and insufficient physical and instructional resources (Nyan 2017). The elevation of institutions of education to tertiary status, without corresponding enhancements in service conditions, has exacerbated tensions. In addition to real issues, the psychological and emotional effects on instructors are also strong. Strikes can make people feel unhappy, helpless, and stuck in their jobs. Frequent strikes may make people think less of teachers since they may see them as not being dedicated to their jobs, which hurts the reputation of the teaching profession even more.

There is less research examining the impact of strikes on educators in Ghanaian colleges of education, despite their prevalence and significance. Current studies mostly focus on broad educational or economic implications, sometimes overlooking the personal viewpoints of the educators engaged. This study seeks to rectify this gap by providing a comprehensive analysis of the causes, prevalence, and diverse effects of strikes on educators in Ghana's colleges of education. Additionally, most of the studies on strikes and their economic and educational effects have mostly adopted the qualitative research design.

The study utilises both qualitative and quantitative data to address fundamental enquiries about the causes of industrial action, its repercussions for educators, and the overarching implications for educational delivery in Ghana. The research seeks to enhance policy and practice by thoroughly analysing these processes, so fostering improved labour relations and educational results.

Objectives of Research study

- Identify and analyse the main causes and frequency of strikes among teachers in Colleges of Education in Ghana.
- Explore both immediate and long-term consequences of strikes for teachers.
- Evaluate the broader effects of strikes on educational delivery, academic management, and student outcomes in Colleges of Education.
- Suggest policy and administrative reforms based on research findings.

Research Questions

This study is guided by the following research questions:

- What are the primary causes of strikes among teachers in Colleges of Education in Ghana?
- What specific professional challenges do teachers face during and after strikes?
- How do strikes influence the broader academic environment and the quality of teacher education in Ghana?
- What strategies can be implemented to minimize the occurrence and adverse impacts of strikes in Colleges of Education?

Significance of the Study

The regularity of strikes at Ghana's Colleges of Education and their extensive impact on educators need a concentrated investigation of the underlying causes of industrial action and its repercussions. This study is important because it sheds light on the unique problems that teachers face during strikes. This information can be used to create policies that will help improve labour relations, pay, working conditions, and dispute resolution processes in Colleges of Education for educational policy and reforms. The findings of this study will assist college administrators and governing councils in developing proactive tactics to

resolve staff concerns prior to their escalation into industrial action. The conclusions of this study will also help improve communication, prompt responses to requests, and open management practices. Lastly, this study calls for policies and actions that put teachers' well-being first by showing how strikes affect their personal and professional lives. This would undoubtedly improve the quality of education and the results for students. There is a lot of study on industrial activities in education, but not much on instructors at Colleges of Education in Ghana. By focussing on this important but not well-studied group, the study adds to the body of work on higher education, labour relations, and teacher wellbeing in sub-Saharan Africa. This will also provide researchers a place to start.

LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This section reviews or discusses current published material available on a particular topic. It attempts to synthesize and evaluate the material and information according to the research question(s), thesis, and central theme(s).

Global Perspective on Strikes in the Education Sector

Strikes as a type of industrial action are a continuous element of work relations internationally, particularly in the public sector. In developed countries, such as the United States, the United Kingdom, and several European nations, teacher strikes have historically been tied to issues of salary, benefits, class size, workload, and education funding (Bascia & Stevenson, 2017). Research in these contexts suggests that while strikes disrupt educational delivery, they also serve as critical mechanisms for renegotiating the terms of employment and highlighting systemic deficiencies in public education (Weiner, 2012).

The frequency of teacher strikes and their results in developed nations are typically affected by how well collective bargaining works and how well governments respond to union demands. For example, in the U.S., teacher unions have been very important in pushing for better compensation and working conditions, although their effectiveness has varied from state to state (Han & Keefe, 2020). In Europe, social partnership models have occasionally mitigated the necessity for prolonged strikes; yet, austerity policies and educational reforms persist in inciting industrial action (Bascia & Stevenson 2017)).

Teacher Strikes in the African Context

Teacher strikes in sub-Saharan Africa occur more often and last longer, and they are typically a sign of bigger problems with the system and the way it is run. Tikly (2011) found that African education systems had problems with not enough money, unpaid salaries, not enough teaching and learning materials, and bad enforcement of labour agreements. In Nigeria, Kenya, and South Africa, teacher unions often go on strike when discussions with the government don't work out (Oketch & Rolleston, 2007).

The effects of these strikes are considerable, including loss of instructional time, compromised academic performance, and growing public dissatisfaction with education systems. In many African countries, the lack of robust industrial arbitration mechanisms and the politicization of education further complicate dispute resolution (Bennell & Akyeampong, 2007).

Strikes in Ghana's Education Sector

Ghana's education sector has experienced periodic strikes across all levels, from basic to tertiary education. Teacher unions such as the Ghana National Association of Teachers (GNAT), National Association of Graduate Teachers (NAGRAT), and Colleges of Education Teachers Association of Ghana (CETAG) have been at the forefront of industrial action. The main grievances include salary disparities, delayed payment of allowances, lack of promotion, and inadequate teaching resources (Owusu et al., 2018; GNAT, 2021).

The transformation of colleges of education into tertiary institutions in 2012 brought new expectations regarding remuneration and professional development for lecturers. However, delayed harmonization of conditions of service and persistent resource constraints have led to dissatisfaction among college teachers

(Danku & Mishiwo, 2022). Recent strikes by CETAG have highlighted ongoing disputes over market premium, book and research allowances, and the lack of parity with university lecturers (CETAG, 2019). Strikes in Ghana's colleges of education typically result in the suspension of lectures, disruption of assessment schedules, and delays in the graduation of student teachers. The protracted nature of some strikes exacerbates tensions between teachers and management, and erodes trust in the ability of government to address labour grievances in a timely manner.

Effects of Strikes on Teachers

Professional Effects

Teacher strikes in colleges of education significantly disrupt professional activities. The immediate consequence is the suspension of teaching, research, and administrative duties. Professional development is stunted, as planned workshops, seminars, and research collaborations are often postponed or canceled. Teachers express frustration at the loss of momentum in pursuing academic projects and career advancement, particularly in institutions where promotions and research output are closely linked (Amoako, 2017).

Strikes can also affect teachers' reputations within the academic community. Colleagues in non-striking institutions may perceive those involved in industrial action as less committed or productive. Conversely, teachers who refrain from participating in strikes risk social isolation and accusations of disloyalty from their peers. In some cases, prolonged strikes lead to strained relationships between teachers and management, resulting in a polarized institutional culture that persists even after normalcy is restored (Baidoo, 2023).

Economic Effects

The economic impact of strikes on teachers in Colleges of Education is profound. Lost wages during unpaid strike periods, delayed salary payments, and the uncertainty surrounding future income can lead to financial hardship. Many teachers rely on their salaries as their primary source of income, and the interruption of regular pay exacerbates challenges such as meeting household expenses, paying school fees for their children, and servicing personal loans (Nyan, 2017).

In some cases, teachers are compelled to seek alternative sources of income during strikes, such as private tutoring or trading. However, these activities rarely compensate for lost earnings and may further detract from teachers' focus on their professional responsibilities when normal work resumes. The stress associated with financial instability can also affect teachers' productivity and engagement with their work.

Psychological and Emotional Effects

Strikes are inherently stressful events for teachers. The uncertainty about the duration and outcome of industrial action can result in heightened anxiety, frustration, and a sense of powerlessness. Teachers often experience guilt for the adverse effects of strikes on their students and the broader institution, compounding emotional distress (Adjei & Osei, 2016).

The protracted nature of some strikes in Ghanaian colleges of education leads to feelings of alienation and disillusionment with both the education system and the government. Prolonged industrial action can also trigger symptoms of depression, loss of motivation, and burnout. Teachers report feeling undervalued by policymakers and the general public, particularly when their grievances are met with indifference or negative media coverage (GNTDA, 2020).

Social Effects

Teacher strikes also have significant social repercussions. Relationships within families may be strained due to financial pressures and emotional stress. Social networks within the institution may become fragmented, as divisions arise between those who support and those who oppose the strike. In addition, teachers' social standing in the community may be affected, with some members of the public perceiving them as irresponsible or self-serving.

On a broader level, repeated or prolonged strikes can erode public confidence in the education system and diminish the perceived value of the teaching profession. This social stigma may discourage young people

from pursuing careers in teaching, further exacerbating teacher shortages and undermining the long-term sustainability of the education sector (Ampofo et al., 2019).

Institutional and Systemic Effects

Beyond individual teachers, strikes in colleges of education disrupt institutional functioning. Academic calendars are thrown into disarray, causing delays in student assessment, graduation, and progression to the workforce. The suspension of teaching and learning affects student morale, performance, and retention. Additionally, administrative processes such as budget planning, resource allocation, and staff development are hampered by the uncertainty created by industrial action.

Institutions may also face reputational damage, affecting their ability to attract and retain both staff and students. Donor confidence may be undermined, and partnerships with other institutions could be jeopardized by perceptions of instability. The cumulative effect is a weakening of the institutional capacity to deliver quality teacher education and meet national development goals

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The relevance of theory in any field of endeavour cannot be over emphasised. According to Kumar (2011) the theoretical framework serves as a foundation for a new study, as well as a tool for interpreting a given phenomenon. The researchers adopted two frameworks for this study. The frameworks are the conflict theory by Karl Marx and Labour and industrial Relations theory by Dunlop. These two theories were chosen to complement each other because ‘no one perspective gives a perfect view, but each illuminates our understanding of the subject’ (Chidi & Okpala 2012). There are several variations on all these themes and their combinations provide a robust lens for analysing workplace disputes, including strikes, and Labour Relations and Industrial Action

Conflict Theory

Conflict Theory, rooted in the works of Karl Marx and further developed by sociologists such as Max Weber and Lewis Coser, provides a robust lens for analyzing workplace disputes, including strikes. Conflict Theory posits that society is characterized by perpetual struggle between groups competing for limited resources. In the context of labour relations, this competition manifests in disputes over wages, working conditions, recognition, and authority.

Within Colleges of Education in Ghana, Conflict Theory helps explain the recurrent tension between teachers (as employees) and institutional management or government (as employers). Teachers’ demands for better salaries, timely promotions, and improved working conditions reflect their struggle to secure a fair share of institutional and national resources. Management and government, on the other hand, may resist these demands due to budgetary constraints, policy priorities, or political considerations.

The theory also sheds light on the power dynamics at play. Teachers’ unions leverage collective bargaining and strikes as tools to negotiate from a position of relative strength. Management and government responses, ranging from negotiation to punitive measures, illustrate attempts to maintain control and minimize disruptions. This ongoing negotiation is marked by periods of conflict (strikes, protests) and resolution (agreements, policy changes), with each episode influencing the balance of power in subsequent interactions.

Labour Relations theory

Labour Relations Theory explicates the dynamics among employees, employers, and labour unions in the workplace. It looks at things like collective bargaining, how workers are represented, how to settle disputes, workers' rights, and how to work together. The philosophy seeks to sustain a balanced relationship that benefits both workers and management. Bayar (2017) asserts that industrial relations theory thrived in the human resource management domain of business administration. This topic primarily examines the tripartite interaction between trade unions/syndicates, employees, and employers. Labour law and policy of the government. Labour relations theory complements Conflict Theory by focusing on the systems, processes, and institutions that mediate conflicts between employees and employers. In

Ghana, labour relations in the education sector are governed by a framework of laws (such as the Labour Act, 2003, Act 651), collective agreements, and the activities of unions and employer associations. Effective labour relations systems are characterized by open communication, regular consultation, and fair dispute resolution mechanisms. However, when these systems break down or are perceived as unresponsive, teachers may resort to industrial action. The frequency and intensity of strikes in Ghana's Colleges of Education indicate systemic weaknesses in grievance handling, collective bargaining, and implementation of agreements.

Labour relations theory also emphasizes the importance of negotiation skills, trust-building, and institutional capacity in mitigating industrial disputes. For example, studies have shown that where management-union relations are adversarial or marked by mistrust, disputes are more likely to escalate into strikes. Conversely, collaborative approaches—such as joint committees and participatory decision-making, can reduce the incidence and impact of industrial action (Amponsah, 2020).

Relevance to the Study

By applying Conflict Theory and Labour Relations Theory, this study situates teacher strikes within a broader sociopolitical and institutional context. These frameworks highlight the structural and relational factors that drive industrial action, illuminate the experiences of teachers, and inform recommendations for more effective dispute prevention and resolution strategies in Ghana's Colleges of Education.

METHODOLOGY

This section outlines the research approaches utilised to examine the phenomena. Kumar (2011:23) asserts that research methodology encompasses the many approaches individuals utilise to tackle challenges.

Research Design

This study adopts a mixed-methods research design, combining both qualitative and quantitative approaches to achieve a comprehensive understanding of the causes and effects of strikes on teachers in Colleges of Education in Ghana. The quantitative component captures trends, prevalence, and measurable impacts, while the qualitative component explores the lived experiences, perceptions, and coping strategies of teachers.

Population and Sampling

Population

The target population consists of all teaching staff in public Colleges of Education across Ghana, estimated at approximately 2,000 lecturers as of 2023 (GTEC, 2023). Also included are key informants from relevant unions, college administrators, and officials from the Ministry of Education.

Sampling Technique

A multistage sampling technique was employed:

Stage 1: Stratified the country into the Northern, Middle, and Southern zones, ensuring regional representation.

Stage 2: Randomly selected 10 public Colleges of Education (at least three from each zone).

Stage 3: Used proportionate stratified random sampling to select 200 teachers (about 20 per institution).

Stage 4: Purposive sampling was used for in-depth interviews with 10 union leaders, 5 college administrators, and 5 education officials.

Data Collection Methods

Surveys

A structured questionnaire was developed and distributed to the 200 sampled teachers. The instrument included both closed- and open-ended questions covering:

Demographic profile

Causes and frequency of strikes

Professional, economic, psychological, and social effects of strikes
Coping mechanisms and suggestions for improvement

In-depth Interviews

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with union leaders, college administrators, and education officials. Interviews explored:

Institutional policies and responses to strikes
Impact on management and academic planning
Effectiveness of dispute resolution mechanisms

Document Analysis

Relevant documents were reviewed, including:

Union communiques and strike notices
Government circulars and agreements
College academic calendars and administrative reports
Media reports and scholarly articles on strikes in Ghana's education sector

Data Analysis Procedures

Quantitative Data

Survey responses were coded and analyzed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). Descriptive statistics (frequencies, percentages, means) were used to summarize responses. Inferential statistics (e.g., chi-square, t-tests) explored relationships between variables such as demographic characteristics and perceived strike effects.

Qualitative Data

Interview transcripts and open-ended survey responses were analyzed thematically. Coding was done manually and with NVivo software, identifying recurring themes related to causes, effects, and institutional responses to strikes. Triangulation of data sources ensured reliability and validity.

Ethical Considerations

Ethical approval for the study was obtained from the Ethics Committee of the lead researcher's institution. Key ethical principles observed included:

Informed consent: All participants received detailed information about the study and consented to participate.

Confidentiality: Responses were anonymized and securely stored.

Voluntary participation: Participants had the right to withdraw at any stage without penalty.

Non-maleficence: Care was taken to avoid harm or distress, especially in discussing sensitive impacts of strikes.

Limitations of the Methodology

Despite efforts to ensure rigor, some limitations exist:

Self-report bias in survey responses and interviews may affect the accuracy of findings. The study is limited to public Colleges of Education; findings may not fully generalize to private institutions. Resource and time constraints limited the sample size and geographic coverage

Findings and Discussion

Causes of Strikes in Colleges of Education in Ghana

The analysis of survey data, interviews, and institutional documents revealed a complex array of factors driving strikes among teachers in Colleges of Education. While some causes are persistent and structural, others are episodic and context-specific.

Salary Disparities and Delayed Payments

A predominant cause cited by 85% of survey respondents was dissatisfaction with salary structures. Teachers in Colleges of Education consistently expressed frustration over disparities between their salaries and those of their counterparts in other tertiary institutions (such as universities and polytechnics). This sentiment was echoed by union leaders, who stated:

“The government’s failure to harmonize conditions of service across tertiary institutions has left college lecturers feeling undervalued and demotivated.” (Union leader, Interview)

Additionally, delayed payment of newly negotiated allowances, arrears, and statutory entitlements frequently triggered strike action. Teachers reported that the unpredictability of salary payments created significant financial stress and eroded trust in the government’s commitment to staff welfare.

Lack of Promotion and Career Progression

More than 70% of teachers surveyed identified stagnation in promotion as a major grievance. Many reported waiting several years for consideration for advancement, despite meeting the stipulated criteria. The transition of Colleges of Education to tertiary status raised expectations for clear and timely promotional pathways, yet bureaucratic delays and unclear guidelines persist.

“I have been on the same rank for over eight years. Promotions are delayed without explanation, and this is demoralizing.” (Teacher, Survey response)

Poor Working Conditions and Resource Constraints

Inadequate infrastructure and teaching resources were highlighted by 65% of respondents. Teachers cited overcrowded classrooms, lack of modern teaching aids, insufficient office space, and unreliable internet access as daily challenges. These substandard conditions not only affect teaching quality but also contribute to a sense of neglect.

“We are expected to deliver quality education, but facilities are woefully inadequate. This creates frustration and a sense of professional helplessness.” (Administrator, Interview)

Ineffective Communication and Grievance Handling

A significant proportion of respondents (60%) felt that poor communication between teachers, management, and government contributed to strikes. Many grievances were reportedly ignored or addressed only after industrial action had commenced. The lack of regular dialogue and transparent grievance-handling mechanisms exacerbated tensions and left teachers feeling marginalized in decision-making processes.

Policy Inconsistencies and Delayed Implementation

The introduction of new policies—such as the upgrading of colleges to tertiary status and changes in assessment or accreditation standards—without corresponding improvements in remuneration and resources was frequently cited as a trigger for strikes. Teachers perceived such policy shifts as increasing their workload and responsibilities without adequate compensation or institutional support.

Political and Economic Context

Interviews and document analysis revealed that broader political and economic circumstances, such as national budget constraints, changing government administrations, and macroeconomic instability, also played a role in the frequency of strikes. During periods of economic austerity or political transition, the likelihood of industrial action increased, as government priorities shifted away from education sector funding.

Summary

In summary, the causes of strikes in Colleges of Education in Ghana are multifaceted, with salary and promotion issues at the core, compounded by poor working conditions, ineffective communication, and broader policy and economic challenges. The persistence and interplay of these factors underscore the need for holistic and sustained solutions.

Effects on Teachers: Professional, Economic, Psychological, and Social

The study revealed that strikes in Colleges of Education have profound and multifaceted effects on teachers. These effects extend beyond the immediate period of industrial action, shaping teachers' attitudes, professional development, financial security, mental health, and social standing.

Professional Effects

A significant majority (78%) of surveyed teachers reported that strikes led to the disruption of teaching, research, and related academic activities. The suspension of lectures and assessment exercises often resulted in compressed academic calendars, forcing teachers to rush through course content when normalcy resumed. This had a negative impact on instructional quality and teacher-student engagement. Teachers also noted that prolonged strikes complicated their ability to meet key performance indicators, such as research output, conference participation, and service to the institution. As a result, many felt that their professional growth and chances for promotion were adversely affected. The lack of continuity in academic work also undermined collaborative projects, diminished motivation, and led to a sense of professional stagnation.

“Every time there is a strike, we lose academic time, and this affects our record for publications and service. It’s demoralizing and affects our career progression.” (Teacher, Interview)

Economic Effects

The economic toll of strikes was another major theme. About 72% of respondents cited significant financial hardship during strike periods, primarily due to loss of income, delayed salaries, or non-payment of allowances. Teachers with dependents or financial commitments such as loans faced acute stress, often borrowing money or seeking alternative, less stable sources of income during strikes.

For some, the economic instability was compounded by the need to pay for medical care, support extended family, or finance professional development activities out-of-pocket because institutional support was unavailable during industrial action.

“When salaries are delayed or withheld, it becomes a real struggle to meet my family’s needs. I’ve had to borrow money just to get by until things are resolved.” (Teacher, Survey response)

Psychological and Emotional Effects

The psychological impact of strikes was evident in the prevalence of stress, anxiety, and emotional exhaustion reported by teachers. More than 60% of respondents described experiencing heightened anxiety about their job security, the future of their students, and the uncertainty surrounding the resolution of disputes. Feelings of frustration, demoralization, and helplessness were common, particularly when strikes dragged on or when negotiations with authorities yielded little progress.

Interviews also revealed that some teachers experienced symptoms consistent with depression, including loss of motivation, reduced interest in professional activities, and difficulty concentrating. The emotional burden was intensified by the sense of being undervalued by both the government and society.

“The uncertainty, the waiting, the lack of recognition—it affects your mental health. Sometimes you wonder if it’s worth continuing.” (Teacher, Interview)

Social Effects

Strikes created tension within teachers' families and social networks. Financial difficulties and emotional strain sometimes led to conflicts at home, while differing views about the legitimacy of strikes caused divisions among colleagues. Teachers who participated actively in strikes occasionally faced criticism or misunderstanding from the broader community, who often perceived industrial action as disruptive or self-serving.

Teachers also reported a loss of social status, as repeated strikes reinforced negative stereotypes about the teaching profession. In some communities, teachers felt stigmatized or less respected, which further eroded their sense of professional and personal fulfillment.

“People in the community start to see teachers as the problem, not the system. It’s hard to regain respect after a strike, especially when strikes happen frequently.” (Teacher, Survey response)

Long-term Implications

The cumulative effects of strikes—professionally, economically, psychologically, and socially—contribute to a cycle of discontent and disengagement. This not only affects current teachers but may also discourage talented individuals from pursuing careers in teacher education, threatening the sustainability and quality of teacher training in Ghana

Coping Strategies and Stakeholder Responses

Understanding how teachers, administrators, unions, and government agencies respond to and manage the effects of strikes is crucial for developing sustainable solutions. This section outlines the main coping strategies and responses identified in the study.

Coping Strategies Adopted by Teachers

Teachers employed a range of coping strategies during and after strikes to manage the professional, financial, and emotional impact:

Professional Adaptation: Many teachers adjusted their teaching schedules and methods post-strike, resorting to condensed lessons, additional tutorials, or online platforms to recover lost instructional time.

Financial Coping: Teachers often sought alternative income sources, such as private tutoring, small businesses, or consulting. In some cases, they relied on support from family and friends or took out short-term loans to cover living expenses.

Emotional and Social Support: Peer support networks played a crucial role in helping teachers cope with stress and uncertainty. Teachers shared information, encouraged one another, and sometimes formed advocacy groups to amplify their voices.

Skill Development: A few teachers used strike periods to pursue further education, training, or research, viewing the downtime as an opportunity for professional growth despite the challenges.

“We form study groups and support each other emotionally. It’s tough, but sharing our experiences helps.” (Teacher, Interview)

Responses by Unions

Teacher unions such as CETAG played a central role in organizing strikes, negotiating with authorities, and advocating for teachers’ rights. Unions provided legal, financial, and moral support to members during strikes. They also facilitated communication with government representatives and the public, framing the narrative around teachers’ grievances.

However, some teachers expressed frustration with union leadership, citing perceived inefficiencies, lack of transparency, or inadequate follow-up on agreements reached after strikes. This highlights the need for unions to strengthen internal communication, accountability, and negotiation skills.

Institutional Adaptation by College Management

Administrators responded to strikes by revising academic calendars, reallocating resources, and implementing contingency plans for critical operations. In some cases, management engaged in dialogue with teacher representatives to resolve local grievances or minimize disruptions.

Administrators also offered counseling and support services to both staff and students affected by strikes. However, resource constraints limited the effectiveness and reach of these interventions.

Government and Policy Responses

Government responses included setting up negotiation committees, issuing press releases, and occasionally granting interim allowances or partial payments to address urgent grievances. In some cases,

government intervention led to the temporary suspension of strikes and the establishment of task forces to review policies.

Nevertheless, several participants highlighted the reactive nature of these responses, emphasizing that long-term solutions require proactive policy reforms, improved funding, and a more structured approach to labour relations.

Effectiveness of Coping Mechanisms

While these coping strategies helped mitigate some immediate challenges, they often fell short of addressing the root causes and long-term effects of strikes. Teachers' resilience and adaptability were frequently tested, and the recurring nature of strikes signaled the need for more sustainable and systemic interventions.

7. Conclusions and Recommendations

7.1 Conclusions

This study set out to examine the causes, effects, and management of strikes among teachers in Colleges of Education in Ghana. The findings reveal that strikes are a recurring and deeply entrenched phenomenon, driven primarily by salary disparities, delayed payments, lack of promotion, poor working conditions, and ineffective communication between teachers, management, and government authorities.

The effects of strikes are far-reaching. Professionally, teachers face disruptions to teaching and research, stalled career progression, and diminished morale. Economically, strikes introduce significant financial hardship and uncertainty. Psychologically, teachers experience stress, anxiety, and a sense of professional and societal undervaluation. Socially, strikes disrupt relationships within families, among colleagues, and between teachers and their communities.

Institutionally, strikes compromise academic calendars, reduce instructional quality, complicate administration, and erode public confidence in Colleges of Education. At a systemic level, the persistence of strikes signals deep governance and policy challenges in managing labour relations and resource allocation within the education sector.

Teachers, unions, and administrators have developed various coping strategies, but these are often reactive and insufficient to address the underlying issues. Government interventions tend to be short-term and lack the strategic orientation required for sustainable labour peace.

The cumulative impact of these dynamics threatens not only the welfare of teachers but also the quality and sustainability of teacher education in Ghana. If left unaddressed, the recurring nature of strikes may further erode the attractiveness of the teaching profession and undermine national educational goals.

Recommendations

Based on the findings, the following recommendations are proposed for key stakeholders:

For Government and Policy Makers:

Salary Harmonization and Timely Payment: Urgently review and harmonize salary structures between Colleges of Education and other tertiary institutions. Ensure prompt payment of all salaries, allowances, and arrears to restore trust and morale among teachers.

Strategic Funding and Resource Allocation: Increase investment in the infrastructure, teaching resources, and technology needed to support high-quality teacher education.

Regular Policy Review and Consultation: Institutionalize regular dialogue between government, unions, and college management to ensure that policies reflect the realities and aspirations of teachers.

Strengthen Grievance and Dispute Resolution Mechanisms: Develop transparent and efficient processes for addressing teacher concerns before they escalate to strikes. Establish independent mediation bodies where necessary.

For Colleges of Education and Administrators:

Enhance Communication and Engagement: Foster a culture of open communication and participatory decision-making within colleges. Ensure that teachers' voices are heard in all matters affecting their welfare and professional development.

Support Professional Development: Facilitate continuous training, research opportunities, and clear promotional pathways. Recognize and reward excellence in teaching, research, and service.

Implement Contingency Planning: Develop robust contingency plans to minimize academic and administrative disruptions during strikes, including options for virtual instruction and alternative assessment methods.

For Teacher Unions

Strengthen Leadership and Accountability: Build the capacity of union leaders in negotiation, communication, and conflict resolution. Promote transparency and accountability in union operations.

Promote Unity and Solidarity: Foster a unified front among teachers while respecting diversity of opinion. Use collective bargaining as a means to secure gains for all members.

Engage in Public Advocacy: Educate the public about the legitimate concerns of teachers and the impact of strikes on educational quality, aiming to build broader societal support.

For Teachers

Engage in Lifelong Learning: Use periods of industrial action as opportunities for personal and professional growth—through online courses, research, or networking.

Strengthen Support Networks: Rely on peer support, counseling, and community engagement to manage stress and maintain morale.

Participate Actively in Institutional Life: Take an active role in governance and advocacy to help shape the future of teacher education.

For the Education Sector as a Whole

Promote a Culture of Respect and Dialogue: All stakeholders should commit to respectful engagement, recognizing the central role of teacher welfare in achieving national education goals.

Monitor and Evaluate Reform Implementation: Establish clear benchmarks for the implementation of agreed reforms and hold all parties accountable for progress.

Areas for Further Research

This study recommends further research on:

Repeated strikes influence teachers' long-term career paths. The effect of strikes on how well students and teachers do their jobs and how long they stay in them. Comparative assessments of strike management tactics across various areas or educational sectors. The function of digital technology and other pedagogical approaches in alleviating the impacts of strikes.

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