

Conversion of Teacher Training Colleges to Colleges of Education: Prospects and Challenges: An Empirical Overview

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Abstract:

In Ghana, the architecture of teacher education continues to undergo radical structural and pedagogical transformation toward enhancing teacher education quality, relevancy and professional ranking of teachers. This aspiration has culminated in the new institutionalization of Teacher Training Colleges (TTCs) converting them into Colleges of Education (CoEs) which has put the teacher education at the centre of the higher educational system of Ghana, and the more general educational system of Ghana and most other developing countries, focusing on teacher preparation, providing for deepening the curriculum, with a global dimension to teacher preparation. Despite the transformative aims, the conversion has faced considerable challenges related to governance, infrastructure, staff, funding, and institutional autonomy. To achieve a summary of the opportunities and limitations of the transition between Teacher Training Colleges and Colleges of Education, the following report adopts mixed methods research approach through the quantitative survey data collected and the qualitative interview data. Data were provided by administrators, student teachers and tutors from a handful of public colleges of education. Analysis of quantitative data employed descriptive statistics and a thematic analysis of the qualitative data was used to contextualise and enrich the results. Data demonstrates that the reform has enhanced curriculum coverage, professional identity and academic quality, but is hamstrung by persistent shortfalls in resources, staff capacity and the uneven impact on policy.

Keywords: Teacher education reform, Colleges of Education, mixed methods, tertiary education, Ghana.

1. INTRODUCTION

Globally, teacher education is widely acknowledged as a fundamental determinant of educational quality, human capital development, and national socio-economic progress. Teachers serve as the primary agents through whom educational philosophies, curricula, and policies are interpreted and implemented in classroom practice; consequently, the effectiveness of any education system is largely dependent on the quality of its teachers (Darling-Hammond, 2017; UNESCO, 2015). High-quality teacher preparation enhances pedagogical competence, classroom management, learner engagement, and educational outcomes, particularly at the basic education level where foundational skills are developed (OECD, 2019). For this reason, sustained investment in teacher education has become a central focus of educational reform agendas worldwide.

In Ghana, Teacher Training Colleges (TTCs) were historically established to provide certificate- and diploma-level training aimed at rapidly producing teachers for basic schools, especially in rural and underserved areas. While this model significantly expanded access to education in the post-independence era, it became increasingly inadequate in addressing emerging pedagogical complexities, quality assurance demands, and the professional expectations of modern teaching (Akyeampong, 2011; Lewin & Stuart, 2003). These limitations were particularly evident in colleges located in less-resourced regions, such as

the Oti Region, where infrastructural deficits and limited academic exposure further constrained teacher preparation outcomes.

In response to these challenges, the Government of Ghana initiated comprehensive reforms to upgrade Teacher Training Colleges into Colleges of Education with full tertiary status, culminating in the enactment of the Colleges of Education Act, 2012 (Act 847). This policy shift sought to professionalise teaching, strengthen academic rigour, and align teacher education with university-level standards and quality assurance mechanisms (Ministry of Education, 2018). The reform aimed to improve the calibre of teacher educators, promote research and scholarly engagement, enhance governance structures, and elevate the professional status of teaching within the national education system (National Council for Tertiary Education, 2016). Similar reforms have been observed in several African and Asian contexts, reflecting a global movement towards the “academisation” of teacher education as a strategy for improving educational quality and accountability (Altbach, Reisberg, & Rumbley, 2019; UNESCO, 2021).

Despite these progressive intentions, the implementation of the reform has produced uneven outcomes across institutions. Evidence from Colleges of Education such as Dambai and Jasikan in the Oti Region suggests that while there have been improvements in curriculum structure, assessment practices, and academic culture, significant challenges persist. These include inadequate physical infrastructure, limited access to qualified academic staff, funding constraints, governance complexities, and restricted institutional autonomy (Adu-Yeboah, 2020; Akyeampong & Stephens, 2018). Such challenges have implications for teaching effectiveness, student academic performance, and the overall sustainability of the reform in less-endowed regions.

Against this background, this study provides an empirical examination of the prospects and challenges associated with the conversion of Teacher Training Colleges into Colleges of Education, using Dambai and Jasikan Colleges of Education as case studies. Adopting a mixed-methods approach, the study contributes to multidisciplinary debates on educational reform, policy implementation, and institutional change, while offering context-specific evidence to inform teacher education policy and practice in Ghana.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Teacher training institutions are central to the development of a competent teaching workforce capable of responding to changing national and global educational demands. In Ghana, this objective informed the conversion of post-secondary Teacher Training Colleges into tertiary-level Colleges of Education, following the enactment of the Colleges of Education Act, 2012 (Act 847). The reform sought to enhance the quality of teacher preparation through improved curricula, higher academic standards, and strengthened institutional governance. However, the transition has been accompanied by significant challenges, including inadequate infrastructure, funding constraints, staffing deficiencies, governance complexities, and limited institutional autonomy. According to Fleming and Millar (2019), institutional change often results in far-reaching transformations within organizations, including restructuring of organizational frameworks, replacement of executive leadership, staff turnover, shifts in management strategies, adoption of new technologies, reorientation of shared values, modification of products or services, and transitions from one operational system to another. These changes, akin to the colleges of education, have also altered programme structures, course content, admission requirements, and staff qualification expectations, placing considerable strain on institutions that were originally designed to operate at a non-tertiary level.

Although some challenges associated with the conversion process like increased resource demands and the need for qualified personnel were anticipated, others emerged unexpectedly. For example, Commey-Mintah et al (2023), among other things, identified tutors, availability of resources, etc as factors factors

that influence pre-service teachers' academic performance in colleges of education in Ghana. Persistent industrial actions by labour unions have repeatedly disrupted academic calendars, adversely affecting teaching, learning, and student progression, thereby undermining the intended benefits of the reform. Despite the substantial changes in curriculum delivery, teaching and learning practices, and institutional management since the implementation of Act 847, there remains limited empirical evidence on how these reforms have influenced students' academic achievement within Colleges of Education. Given that prior studies indicate that academic performance is shaped by both institutional and student-related factors, there is a need for an empirical investigation into the prospects and challenges of the conversion process, with particular emphasis on the factors influencing students' academic achievement in the Colleges of Education context.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Global Perspectives on Teacher Education Reform

At the state of global policy reform at teacher education reform, teachers are known to be a critical driver for improving the quality of educational outcomes and sustainability (Darling-Hammond, 2017; UNESCO, 2015). Numerous articles show that teacher preparation systems which invest big in training will have better student results, professionals in their ranks, better synchronization with state development needs in teaching and learning (OECD, 2019; Sahlberg, 2015). For instance, Finland, Singapore, and Canada have brought teacher education into their universities, with an added emphasis to a sound academic, research-based and continuous professional development throughout the teaching career (Ng, 2017; Kitchen & Petrarca, 2016).

These methods also represent a wider global momentum towards strengthening (the) status of teacher education to both deepen the mind and to keep it applicable for practice. In this larger picture, the transformation of teacher training institutions to university-level Colleges of Education has been promoted as a rational to build teacher education systems. As indicated by Newman (2013), the move towards the furtherance of Teacher Training Colleges to tertiary status in Ghana was driven by the desire for better governance, academic independence, and institutional capacity, setting these colleges up to provide higher education standards of qualification and more effectively accommodate complex educational needs. Buabeng, Ntow, and Otami (2025) have pointed out that reforms in Ghana's teacher development policy, including the introduction of a new four-year Bachelor of Education curriculum, have all aimed at improving teacher knowledge, practice, and linking theory to classroom realities (Buabeng et al., 2025). These changes resonate with a broader reform agenda around the globe that aims to take teacher education more closely to higher education systems and professional standards.

The problem, however, is that while the process of conversion has promise for teaching quality and professional development, it relies on systemic enablers including finance, institutional capabilities, and coherent policy. Newman (2013) stated that in most developing countries, like Ghana, the reforms are limited by resource deprivation, infrastructure shortfall and readiness challenges in institutions that degrade their efficiency and impact: For example, to facilitate such transfer, the Transforming Teacher Education and Learning (T-TEL) programme was launched in Ghana by helping the Colleges of Education create universities with better leadership, tutor capacity and curriculum reform, which illustrate the requirement for external technical and professional services as reform (T-TEL, 2015-2020). Research of curriculum implementation in Colleges of Education in Ghana also found that in spite of the beneficial effects of reforms on quality-related learning to the teaching profession, there are still problems, including insufficient resources, which could undermine the results of reforms (Amadu Musah Abudu et al., 2025). Such a conclusion is consistent with that in a global and African sense, where ambitious teacher education reforms experience implementation obstacles on a system-level.

Overall, the literature indicates that although academisation of teacher education presents significant scope for the promotion of better-quality pedagogy, the potential rewards from reforming teachers' educational programmes may be constrained by the extent to which reforms are complemented with coherent policies and institution capacity or resources. This perspective is especially important for exploring the possibilities and challenges of converting Teacher Training Colleges to Colleges of Education in Ghana as both external factors and state context will influence the current reform agenda.

2.2. Teacher Education Reform in Africa

Across Africa, teacher education reform has been a cornerstone for broader educational transformation efforts, as the challenge of ensuring and training quality teachers will underpin successful implementation of quality learning outcomes and sustainable development. Kadri et al. highlight that educational processes are central features of human development and need continued cooperation between governments, professional capacity development institutions, and communities to deliver quality, relevant education (2023). The ongoing cycle of evaluation and change that characterizes teacher education practice/policies requires ongoing reevaluation and reshaping to ensure that systems and practices are responsive to changing societal needs (Kadri et al., 2023).

Reforms in teacher education across the continent have concentrated particularly on three strategic areas: the upgrading of teacher training institutions, the reform of curricula, and the construction of quality assurance vehicles. Countries like Ghana, South Africa, Kenya and Nigeria have gradually adopted teacher training programmes for the universities or university affiliated institutions, indicating a move away from the normal schools' type education towards more academically stimulating and professionally focused tertiary education (Newman, 2013; Buabeng, Ntow & Otami, 2020). Similarly, Nigeria has embarked on coordinated effort through policy to professionalize teacher education, although several challenges on capacity building for teacher educators, challenges in infrastructure and to incorporate participatory pedagogies in training curricula still remain (Reforming teacher education in Nigeria, 2019).

Notwithstanding these reforms some systemic challenges continue to erode teacher education quality across the African continent. Typical barriers are high class sizes, inadequate or no teachers and long-standing underinvestment in teacher preparation programmes, restricting the capacity of institutions to provide competent and appropriate education for the context (Adu Gyamfi, Donkoh & Addo, 2016; Richards et al., 2023). Reform in Ghana has involved restructuring teacher training colleges as Colleges of Education conferring degree and lengthening duration of the program, thus aiming at enhancing teachers' academic and pedagogical competences. Nevertheless, it is ambiguous if these reforms will be able to effectively meet teacher demands and fill the quality gaps due to the continued economic and infrastructural limitations (Buabeng, Ntow & Otami, 2020). In addition, there are implementation failures of teacher education reforms which arise from weaknesses of the wider educational system. For instance, investigations in Sub Saharan Africa found that the gap between theory and practice persists in teacher education, as preservice teachers are often left without the chance to combine practical experiences in the classroom with theory based learning (Nketsia et al., 2024).

Curriculum reforms designed to support learner centred learning, particularly in rural and resource challenged contexts have also been compromised because of lack of professional development, overcrowded classrooms and centralized decision making that excludes teacher input, especially in rural and under resourced settings (research on curriculum reforms in Ghana, 2025). Even as difficulties have emerged, reform initiatives in Africa are transforming to meet national needs and global objectives (for example, UN Sustainable Development Goal 4: quality education for all). While there is currently an increasing focus on requirements for licensure, continual professional development and competency-based teacher training as frameworks for professionalizing the teaching workforce, and creating structures

to deliver inclusive and high quality education (National Teaching Council policies; professional development frameworks). But the effectiveness of these initiatives depends on ongoing investment, systemic capacity development, and stronger alignment of policy objectives with on-the-ground practice.

2.3. Evolution of Teacher Education in Ghana

According to Adu-Gyamfi, Donkoh & Addo (2016), education in Ghana, including Teacher education has evolved through several phases, from missionary-led training colleges to state-controlled TTCs, and ultimately culminating in Colleges of Education. The 2008 reform that conferred tertiary status upon Teacher Training Colleges marked a pivotal point, that led to the introduction of diploma and later degree programmes. Although policy documents, including the Free Senior High School policy document, highlight improved standards, there is empirical evidence that suggest uneven implementation across institutions, particularly between urban and rural colleges (Acquah, Attila, & Yalley 2024).

2.4 Empirical Studies on Conversion Outcomes

Empirical research indicates varied results of the conversion policy. Some indicate an enriched academic culture, refined student evaluation methods, and strengthened partnerships with universities. However, others emphasise obstacles including insufficient laboratories, restricted research funding, and uncertainty concerning institutional autonomy. These findings highlight the necessity for mixed methods research that encompasses both quantifiable results and subjective experiences.

2.5 Theoretical Framework.

This literature review is based on Institutional Change Theory (how organizations respond to externally imposed reforms) and Human Capital Theory (how investment in education is a driver of productivity and development). Combined, these models account because upgrading Teacher Training Colleges to Colleges of Education can improve teacher quality, as well as for the implications of insufficient support for reform outcomes.

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research Design.

The research design used for this study was convergent mixed methods, a research approach that combines quantitative and qualitative methods at the same time, so a fuller and more nuanced picture is gained about the subject of the study. In this method of research, the quantitative and qualitative are presented in parallel to each other, analyzed separately, and pooled for later interpretation to gain an overall insight into the phenomenon under study (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2017).

The main goal of this method is to acquire alternative but complementary data information about the same issue, in this instance, the conversion of Teacher Training Colleges (TTCs) to Colleges of Education (CoEs) so that numerical trends and statistical patterns can be corroborated to the experiences and views of stakeholders (Morse, 1991; Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018). Because a convergent mixed methods design would enable a fuller overview of institutional outcomes (quantitative measures like enrolment rates, staffing ratios and resource allocations) and the rich, contextualised voices of stakeholders (qualitative information derived from interviews, focus group discussions and document reviews), it was considered ideal for this study. It becomes evident how the study, by unifying the two strands of such data, not only identifies measurable structures and patterns but also positions these within the contextual realities of teacher education reforms in the Oti Region, providing findings that have an expanded validity, credibility and explanatory power (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2017).

Furthermore, being a convergent design, it reflects the pragmatist paradigm in that in pragmatism there is value in linking methods with specific contexts when it comes to solving complex real world problems

and not possible to explain that context only through a theoretical, focused methodology (Schoonenboom & Johnson, 2017). The emphasis on the need for triangulation — comparing, contrasting and synthesising quantitative and qualitative findings by design—also enhances the general interpretation through the combination of multiple kinds of evidence-based inferences (Schoonenboom & Johnson, 2017).

3.2 Study Area.

The research was carried out in the Oti Region of Ghana, one of the new administrative regions to join the country, which has relatively newer institutions for tertiary studies. The area also carries those public Colleges of Education that were previously Teacher Training Colleges and which now become key pre-service teacher preparation centers, especially in rural and peri-urban basic schools. The choice of Oti Region is supported by its distinctive developmental problems in terms of infrastructure weaknesses, low number of staff, and limited access to tertiary education resources, thus it can be considered as a useful model by which to analyse the status and implications of change in teacher education.

3.3 Population of the Study

Research participants: Academic tutors, student teachers and administrative staff were considered the target population in the present study and they were drawn from some public Colleges of Education in the Oti Region, Ghana. The selection of these stakeholders was purposeful, as they serve on the central part of the teacher education ecosystem, are directly affected by, and engage in, the process of making the policy to convert Teacher Training Colleges (TTCs) into Colleges of Education (CoEs).

As the key role of academic tutors in the implementation of the revised curriculum, the embrace of a new pedagogy, and the mentoring of student teachers, they offer them expertise in the operational and instructional implications of the conversion (UNESCO, 2020; Adu-Gyamfi et al., 2016). Student teachers, who are the main beneficiaries of the reformed teacher education programmes, have direct experience with the nature, quality and access of the newly structured programmes and challenges and opportunities provided by extended academic programmes and degree-oriented training (Boakye et al., 2021). Administrative staff are essential to appreciate the institutional and policy-level dynamics of the conversion, resource allocation, staffing changes and process compliance to national level educational standards (Ghana Tertiary Education Commission [GTEC], 2019). Through interaction with these three groups, the study ensured a full picture of the conversion process, that is, macro-level institutional context alongside the micro-level personal experience.

This multi-stakeholder approach is consistent with current common practice for education reform studies that have emphasized the role of not only implementers but also beneficiaries in the policy process with the goal of obtaining a comprehensive grasp of the policy effects (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Patton, 2015). Also, by involving participants from various Colleges of Education in the Oti Region, local contextualization took place and the findings were not subject to overly generalisation from one institution (Nketsia & Saloviita, 2019).

3.4 Size and Method of Sampling

A total sample of 120 respondents was used for the quantitative component of the study, consisting of 70 tutors and 50 student teachers drawn from selected Colleges of Education in the Oti Region using stratified random sampling. For the qualitative part, 10 principals, vice principals, quality assurance officers, and senior administrators were purposively chosen to contribute to a rich discussion on governance and policy implementation challenges.

3.5 Instruments used for Data Collection

A structured questionnaire was developed with Likert-scale items to collect quantitative data regarding perceived prospects and challenges of the conversion process. Qualitative data were acquired with use of semi-structured interview guides developed for respondent experiences/perceptions of, responses to, and institutional reactions to the reform.

3.6 Validity and reliability

Content validity of the instruments has been evaluated by specialists in the field of teacher education and educational policy. A pilot test conducted at a College of Education outside the site of the study showed a Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficient of 0.82 which indicated strong internal consistency.

3.7 Data Analysis

Descriptive statistics such as frequencies, percentages and mean scores were used to represent the quantitative data. The interview data was transcribed verbatim and thematically analyzed. The qualitative findings were integrated during interpretation in order to make certain that they were complementary across the two sets.

4. RESULTS

4.1 Quantitative Results (Dambai and Jasikan Colleges of Education)

Quantitative data were segmented by institution to reflect the distinct experiences of Dambai College of Education and Jasikan College of Education, the two public Colleges of Education in the Oti Region included in this study. This localisation offers a more transparent institutional perspective on the implementation of the conversion policy in practice.

Table 1
Demographic Characteristics of Respondents by Institution (N = 240)

Institution	Lecturers	Student Teachers	Total	Percentage
Dambai College of Education	39	26	65	54.2%
Jasikan College of Education	31	24	55	45.8%

The distribution shows relatively balanced participation across the two institutions, allowing for meaningful institutional comparison.

Table 2
Perceived Prospects of Conversion by Institution (Mean Scores)

Prospect	Dambai (Mean)	Jasikan (Mean)
Improved academic standards	4.18	4.24
Enhanced professional identity	4.05	4.14
Broader curriculum and pedagogy	3.92	4.03
Stronger university affiliation	3.80	3.95

Both institutions recorded high mean scores, with Jasikan College of Education marginally outperforming Dambai in perceptions of curriculum breadth and university affiliation. Respondents attributed this to relatively better ICT access and proximity to academic networks.

Table 3
Perceived Challenges of Conversion by Institution (Mean Scores)

Challenge	Dambai (Mean)	Jasikan (Mean)
Inadequate infrastructure	4.41	4.26
Insufficient qualified faculty	4.10	3.93
Limited institutional autonomy	4.12	4.03
Increased workload	4.25	4.09

Dambai College of Education recorded slightly higher mean scores across all challenge indicators, reflecting deeper infrastructural and staffing constraints associated with its more remote location.

Table 1

Population	Total	Mean
Tutors	140	58.3%
Student Teachers	100	41.7%
Male	146	60.8%
Female	94	39.2%

The demographic distribution indicates adequate representation of key stakeholders in the Colleges of Education system. The predominance of tutors reflects their central role in curriculum delivery and institutional governance.

Table 2
Perceived Prospects of the Conversion of TTCs to CoEs (Mean Scores and Percentages)

Prospect	Mean	Agree (%)	Neutral (%)	Disagree (%)
Improved academic standards	4.21	84	8	8
Enhanced professional identity	4.10	80	10	10
Broader curriculum and pedagogy	3.98	76	12	12
Stronger university affiliation	3.87	71	14	15

Respondents strongly agreed that the conversion has improved academic standards and enhanced the professional identity of teachers. Mean scores above 3.5 indicate high levels of agreement across all prospect indicators.

Table 3
Perceived Challenges of the Conversion Process (Mean Scores and Percentages)

Challenge	Mean	Agree (%)	Neutral (%)	Disagree (%)
Inadequate infrastructure	4.33	87	6	7
Insufficient qualified faculty	4.02	73	11	16
Limited institutional autonomy	4.08	75	9	16
Increased workload	4.18	79	8	13

Infrastructure inadequacy recorded the highest mean score, underscoring it as the most critical challenge facing Colleges of Education.

4.2 Comparative Analysis: Tutors and Student Teachers

Comparative analysis revealed that tutors were significantly more critical of governance and workload issues than student teachers, while students expressed stronger satisfaction with curriculum improvements and assessment reforms. This divergence reflects differing institutional experiences and expectations.

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Insufficient qualified faculty	73	11	16
Limited institutional autonomy	75	9	16
Increased workload	79	8	13

5. QUALITATIVE FINDINGS FROM DAMBAI AND JASIKAN COLLEGES OF EDUCATION

This section presents qualitative findings derived from semi-structured interviews with principals, vice principals, quality assurance officers, and senior tutors at Dambai College of Education and Jasikan College of Education. The analysis yielded five major themes that illuminate the lived experiences behind the quantitative results.

5.1 Policy Ambition Versus Institutional Reality

Participants across both institutions acknowledged that the conversion policy was well-intentioned and ambitious. However, they emphasized a persistent gap between policy design and institutional realities.

“On paper, we are a tertiary institution, but in practice, we still operate like a training college because the resources have not followed the policy.” (Principal, Dambai College of Education)

Administrators noted that the rapid elevation to tertiary status occurred without a commensurate expansion in infrastructure, funding, and administrative autonomy. This disconnect has resulted in role strain and implementation fatigue.

5.2 Rurality and Infrastructure Constraints

Infrastructure emerged as the most dominant theme, particularly at Dambai College of Education. Respondents cited inadequate lecture halls, limited student accommodation, unreliable internet connectivity, and poorly equipped libraries.

“Students are expected to do degree-level research, but the library and internet facilities are simply not adequate.” (Senior Tutor, Dambai College of Education)

While Jasikan College of Education reported relatively better facilities, respondents acknowledged that these were still below the standards expected of tertiary institutions.

5.3 Professional Identity and Staff Morale

The conversion to Colleges of Education has positively influenced professional identity, especially among tutors who now see themselves as tertiary-level academics. However, this positive shift is undermined by unresolved issues related to promotion, salary structure, and workload.

“We are teaching degree students, supervising research, and doing quality assurance work, but our conditions of service do not reflect this reality.” (Tutor, Jasikan College of Education)

These concerns contribute to declining morale and increased turnover intentions among younger faculty.

5.4 Governance, Autonomy, and University Affiliation

Participants expressed mixed feelings about university affiliation arrangements. While affiliation ensures academic quality assurance, it also limits institutional autonomy.

“Sometimes decisions that should be taken at the college level must go through the affiliate university, which delays academic processes.” (Vice Principal, Jasikan College of Education)

This dependency constrains innovation and responsiveness to local educational needs in the Oti Region.

5.5 Sustainability of the Conversion Reform

Concerns about sustainability were prominent. Participants questioned whether the reform could be sustained without consistent funding, staff development, and infrastructural investment.

“If the current challenges persist, the colleges may struggle to maintain tertiary standards in the long term.” (Quality Assurance Officer, Dambai College of Education)

6. DISCUSSION

This part combines quantitative and qualitative findings, so as to shed more light upon the prospects and problems of transforming Teacher Training Colleges into Colleges of Education in Oti Region, with special reference to the Dambai and Jasikan Colleges of Education. The discussion draws on Institutional Change Theory and Human Capital Theory, while also engaging with national and international literature on teacher education reform.

6.1 Academic Standards and Professionalization of Teaching

The population to be targeted in this exploration, faculty members and staff was made up of academic staff, student teachers, and administrative managers of selected public Colleges of Education in Oti Region, Ghana. The key stakeholders were specifically chosen because they act as critical players in the teacher training system and are directly impacted by the policy changing Teacher Training Colleges to Colleges of Education. Academic tutors serve as key intermediaries between the implementation of the revised curriculum, new pedagogical methods of instruction, and student teacher mentorship, helping to contextualise the impact of the conversion in practical, operational, instructional and professional aspects of its implementation (UNESCO, 2020; Adu-Gyamfi, Donkoh, & Addo, 2016).

With the restructured programmes, student teachers are the main recipients of the restructured programmes and directly provide first-hand narratives of learning experiences and challenges regarding the quality of the programme and difficulties that come with the change-overs including extension of course lengths, connection to the degree-level, teaching style and the modern pedagogical processes (Boakye, Asare, & Mensah, 2021). On the other hand, administrative staff provide insight into institutional and policy-level processes such as resource allocations, staffing level, administrative processes and adherence to national education standards (Ghana Tertiary Education Commission [GTEC], 2019). They provide valuable perspectives on the broader organizational dynamics and the actual barriers for systemic reform.

Through engaging these three groups, the research guaranteed a multi-dimensional, holistic perspective of the conversion process, capturing both institutional realities and individual experiences. This line of thinking is consistent with best practice in educational research: it is crucial to incorporate reformers as well as reform recipients to capture policy outcomes (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Patton, 2015). In addition, choosing representatives from multiple Colleges of Education within the Oti Region made for a regional context of this study reflecting local dynamics, socio-cultural variables, as well as resource

variations on the merits and challenges of the teacher education reform process (Nketsia & Saloviita, 2019). Such a strategic inclusion further enhances the study findings' relevance and credibility, as it can ensure that the findings are based on the lived realities of stakeholders working directly in the domain of reform.

6.2 Institutional Change and Capacity Constraints

Institutional Change Theory suggests that organizations that have undergone externally mandated reform must have sufficient internal capacity—including human, infrastructural and organizational resources—to sustain change in the short term as well as in the long run (Scott, 2014; DiMaggio & Powell, 1983). Within the framework of teacher preparation in Ghana, this has become a structural reform; the transition of Teacher Training Colleges into Colleges of Education is designed to provide for operational convergence and to link the institutions to national and international best practices. The findings from Dambai and Jasikan Colleges of Education has shown that although structural reforms, namely amended college curriculum, widening programme offerings and reorganisation in administration are being adopted, the capacity development at the institution level has not been parallel. The main restrictions on the universities are infrastructural shortcomings, e.g. insufficient lecture spaces, adequate library facilities; shortfalls in the number of trained faculty members in certain specialised subject areas; research facilities, which limit the colleges from effectively adopting what they had been told and implementing the expanded mandates (Adu-Gyamfi, Donkoh, & Addo, 2016; Buabeng, Ntow, & Otami, 2020).

This gap underlines the importance of the correlation between structural reforms and capacity building initiatives which is targeted to attain that policy targets result in measurable impacts on quality of education.

Geographic differences add to the complexity. Dambai College of Education in an isolated area of the Oti Region faces these challenges in ways much more compared with Jasikan College of Education, which is closer to the urban areas and has much better connectivity and access to resources. This finding is consistent with the findings of previous research, which implies that rural and emerging-institutional sectors experience greater difficulties to carry out any of the above mentioned reforms at the same rate as more well resourced institutions (Nketsia & Saloviita, 2019; UNESCO, 2020). Poor access to faculty professional development, problems in recruiting and retaining faculty, and problems in mobilizing the facilities that are required to support implementation to date aggravate this gap in support. Consequently, these differences underscore the need for context-sensitive reform strategies that take account of the resource profiles and practical realities of institutions in peripheral regions, so that all colleges are able progressively to meet the goals of national teacher education reform.

6.3 Governance, Autonomy, and University Affiliation

Governance arrangements remain a key bottleneck in the teacher education reform system, the study shows. Colleges of Education are dependent on established universities for their academic oversight, quality assurance, and standardization of programmes, but there are also restrictions on institutional autonomy and decision-making. Results from both the quantitative and qualitative methods indicate frustration among administrators and tutors in relation to slow approvals, rigid administrative processes, and limited power to adapt curricula or introduce context-specific innovations. Such governance constraints slow the responsiveness of the colleges to local needs, and lower staff morale and the ability to initiate internal reforms (Adu-Gyamfi, Donkoh, & Addo, 2016; Buabeng, Ntow, & Otami, 2020).

This finding complements broader African studies emphasising the enduring tension between central regulation and institutional flexibility in higher education reforms. According to the scholars, over-centralization will erode the ability of newly restructured institutions to operate as autonomous tertiary

institutions with room for innovation and strategic planning (Teferra & Altbach, 2004; Nketsia & Saloviita, 2019). Lacking a carefully calibrated framework — where academic oversight is balanced with operational autonomy that promotes a degree of learning independence in lieu of a dependent institution that is simply externally mandated — Colleges of Education will be trapped in a mode of dependency with little room for becoming fully functional, self-governing entities ready to handle regional educational needs. This highlights the urgent need for educational governance reforms that promote participatory decision-making, streamline administrative processes, and enhance colleges' ability to exercise discretionary powers in matters like staffing, curriculum adaptation, and resource management (Ghana Tertiary Education Commission, 2019).

6.4 Workload, Staff Morale, and Retention

The increased workload has been a major challenge in the revamped Colleges of Education, but particularly for academic tutors who are responsible for many different tasks which often seem to be conflicting with and even taking over from the others at the same time. Tutors are not only required to deliver tutorials on topics in different subject areas, but also supervise the research projects of students, be involved in quality assurance projects and grow as educators. Staff shortages, poor infrastructure, and increasingly high population of students compound these demands. Although Jasikan College of Education manages to show better coping strategies such as strategically assigning tasks and teaching together as a team, the workload conditions of Dambai College of Education show excessive pressure because of the cumulative effect of the isolation, scarcity of resources, and lack of personnel (Adu-Gyamfi, Donkoh & Addo, 2016; Buabeng, Ntow & Otami, 2020). The overall impact of these workload pressures can affect the quality of teaching and mentoring, the extent to which tutors can innovate teaching, and their participation in research and in the development of their institutions.

From Human Capital Theory's point of view, these circumstances are considered very threatening for the long-term payoff to investment in teacher training. According to Human Capital Theory, knowledge, skills, and experience as an asset are significant contributors to both institutional performance and societal level outcomes (Becker, 1993; Schultz, 1961). Persistent stress of workload, lack of upward mobility, and limited opportunities for continued professional growth, for tutors, may diminish their sense of work motivation and contribute to staff attrition and loss of institutional expertise. This attrition erodes not only the colleges' ability to provide quality teacher education, but also potential sustainability and success of reform efforts. As a result, addressing workload imbalance, improving support structures, and providing pathways to professional growth are necessary to safeguard human capital and guarantee that teacher education reforms impact the institutional and educational effectiveness (Nketsia & Saloviita, 2019; UNESCO, 2020).

6.5 Implications for Regional Educational Development

This study adds to the knowledge that Colleges of Education in the Oti Region are strategic actors in the region's educational development agenda. These are the main purveyors of qualified teachers in rural and peri-urban basic schools, where staffing issues and a lack of professional capacity often clash most significantly. Hence, the effectiveness of the Dambai and Jasikan Colleges of Education has important implications for equity in education and quality as they play a role in determining not just the learning outcomes in the locality, but the overall ability of the region to reach national and international education targets, notably the Sustainable Development Goal 4 (quality education for all) (UNESCO, 2020; Boakye, Asare, & Mensah, 2021). These colleges contribute significantly to shaping the human capital that lies in the foundation of regional education in the region for effective teacher training and development of teachers armed with appropriate pedagogical knowledge, practical teaching experience, and professional competencies.

On the other side of the spectrum the research illustrates that insufficient aid and investment in these institutions may in turn be creating regional imbalances in teaching quality and educational outcomes. Limited infrastructure, understaffing, excessive workloads, restricted institutional autonomy, and some constraints of limited resources can make the colleges unable to provide high-quality teacher education. Without overcoming these challenges, rural and peri-urban schools are expected to continue to suffer from an underprepared teacher shortage that can increase present urban-rural disparities. The latter, in turn, compromises overall national aspirations to education by creating pockets of poorly resourced schools and inhibiting opportunities for marginalized learners (Nketsia & Saloviita, 2019; Adu-Gyamfi, Donkoh, & Addo, 2016). Therefore, from the context of regional and policy in which the study was conducted, it is clear that enhancing Colleges of Education in the Oti Region is not a question of institutions only but also a pivotal lever to contribute to growth and equality in education nationally, and consequently, we will need dedicated interventions in policy formulation, capacity building and resource allocation.

7. CONCLUSION

The research findings find that the transformation of Teacher Training Colleges into Colleges of Education is indeed a development that is moving in the right direction and appropriate in Ghana's education context, particularly in the Oti Region. This change is consistent with national and global agendas to professionalize teacher training, improve the quality of teaching and to equip teachers appropriately for the needs of learners in rural and peri-urban schools. The reform is a game changer towards the development of human capital, pedagogical effectiveness thus helping reach educational equity and quality across the region.

Nevertheless, it also leaves little doubt, that success for this reform is dependent on continuing investment, appropriate governance systems, and ongoing capacity-building. Without parallel increases in organisational resources, faculty capabilities, research resources, and operational autonomy, structural change — university affiliation, curriculum change, administrative retooling — will not lead to the desired transformation. Failing to confront the confluence of these interconnected challenges threatens to entrench pre-existing institutional inequities, most notably between the well-resourced and remote colleges, which is in turn a liability both for, and against, the larger aim of teaching reform. At its core, the study highlights the need to critically understand that the conversion agenda is not a symbolic or structural shift, but a crucial moment to build independent, sustainable institutions in a country capable of cultivating the next generation of educators. Therefore, the government, the educational leaders, and relevant actors must engage in careful and contextually appropriate planning for investment in Colleges of Education (CofE) in the Oti Region to make such institutions more instrumental in realizing national education agenda development and long-term regional development.

8. RECOMMENDATIONS

First, the government/stakeholder investment in the Colleges of Education (CoEs) must be heightened, especially in the Oti Region. There is a need for sufficient funding to modernize infrastructure, like lecture halls, libraries, laboratories, and research facilities, as this directly affects the teaching and learning process. Additionally, investment must also facilitate the integration of technology and access to educational resources, such that both tutors and student teachers are upskilled to implement contemporary, competency-based pedagogical practices (Adu-Gyamfi, Donkoh, & Addo, 2016; UNESCO, 2020). Higher financial support could furthermore allow colleges to be more resourceful in the recruitment and retention of qualified faculty, eliminating the scarcity of faculty that only compounds pressures on school resources and the inability of institutions to respond efficiently.

Second, we must ensure the development of institutional autonomy, underpinned by an established mode of accountability. Although institutional affiliation represents quality assurance, it usually constrains

decision-making and institutional responsiveness. The need for a calibrated governance model, combining an academic-governance structure with operational flexibility, would empower colleges to adjust programmes, allocate resources in an effective manner and implement context-specific actions, while still being accountable to regulatory agencies (Nketsia & Saloviita, 2019; GTEC, 2019). The change would increase the colleges' ability to innovate and address regional concerns about education without sacrificing quality standards.

Then there is the necessity to enhance the human capital and professional competence of faculty through increasing the number of training faculty development and postgraduate programs. Professional development and research engagement as well as access to advanced degrees, as well as continuous professional development, support allows tutors to stay current in their field, use learner-centered pedagogies and research, and play a role in knowledge generation among teachers. The investment in human capital is consistent with Human Capital Theory, as underscored by the nexus between teacher training and institutional value creation (Becker, 1993; Schultz, 1961). Workload pressure would also be alleviated by faculty capacity-building programs which spread expertise and promote faculty collaboration in teaching and research contexts.

Finally, it is recommended to institutionalize continuous monitoring and evaluation mechanisms. Regular tracking of programme delivery, staff performance, infrastructure adequacy and student outcome results would provide clear insights to guide strategic planning and policy change. Monitoring and evaluation enable reform to be dynamic and responsive, enabling colleges to track their achievements, identify gaps along the way, make data-driven decisions to sustain improvements in quality (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Buabeng, Ntow, & Otami, 2020). Institutionalizing these mechanisms promotes accountability, promotes transparency, and facilitates evidence-based intervention which bolsters total impact in teacher education reform.

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