

Challenges Faced by Tutors of Selected Colleges of Education in Volta Region of Ghana in Undertaking Further Studies

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Abstract This study was conducted in 2018 purposely to discover the challenges being faced by the various tutors of Colleges of Education who enrolled in further studies programmes for status change in their profession. Two colleges were sampled with a total number of 17 participants in data production under qualitative design which employed semi structured interview and thematic content analysis. Key findings include time constraint on tutors as they battle to find time to teach students, as their commitment to work at the College as well as find time to attend lectures of their own further studies programme. Others were financial constraint, relationship strained with friends and marriage partners and health challenges. Ways of finding solutions include hosting weekend courses, taking bank loans and family support. It concluded that the transitional tutors suffered and needed to have greater support from policy, government and respective colleges of transitional staff. Recommendations include Governing Councils of Colleges of Education instituting Professional Development Policies to support staff, implementation of Co-operative Education to support such staff and increase in GETFund Staff Development Bursary as well as timely payment of same.

Keywords: Colleges of Education, Challenges, Tutors, Further Studies, Teaching

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1. Introduction

1.1. Background to the Studies

Positive change in organisations is always a desirable thing that every productive organisational leader would seek for. When positive change happens, the workforce achieves its vitality for the world of work. In the global education landscape especially tertiary education, it is acknowledged that critical thinking and innovation play crucial roles in providing solutions to the numerous challenges of society as means of promoting positive change [1,2]. According to Juru [3], higher education in Africa is an engine for driving the socio-economic development and transformation of the continent. This can only happen when the workforce undergoes continuous capacity building to sharpen existing skills and knowledge and update their professional status. This demand leads to upgrade of qualification of the knowledge givers, promoters, facilitators-teachers. According to Saleem, Rani and Dogar [4], incompetent and demoralised teachers account for a country's poor education system and why the relevance of a competent instructor in the instruction

process cannot be underestimated. Given the complex nature of the teaching environment, it is impossible for teachers to remain useful and relevant with their initial pre-service training. It is therefore imperative and prudent for teachers to constantly keep pace with current and rapid changes in their practice. Thus, continuously, the call for teachers to upgrade their professional status has been a topic, and Ghana is not an exception, in order to meet national, continental and global standards. Juru opined that operational qualifications framework for the African continent can play a crucial role in unlocking potential by providing common grounds and a framework for recognising and comparing qualifications across different countries and institutions and, hence, facilitating the mobility of students and labour. Kudzai Mashininga in 8th June, 2023 Special Report of University World News maintained that the implementation of African Continental Qualifications Framework (ACQF-II) is a grand plan to support the comparability, quality and recognition of qualifications between countries – including higher education qualifications. The Association of African Universities' project officer for higher education, Marie Eglantine Juru, emphasised same when she reiterated that developing and implementing an African Qualifications Framework is a necessary step to align various educational

systems, standards and practices across African countries and that the process requires sustained commitment, financial resources and political support from African governments, educational institutions and higher education-related regional organisations. According to Juru [3], a continental qualifications framework will provide a common set of standards and guidelines for qualifications across different African countries and facilitate the recognition and comparability of qualifications, making it easier for institutions and employers to evaluate, compare and recognise academic qualifications. To him, the framework will result in international recognition and competitiveness and increase the visibility of African qualifications and enhance the international recognition and competitiveness of African higher education with possibilities for international collaborations, partnerships and research opportunities, eventually increasing Africa's participation in the global knowledge economy for a more transparent and consistent system that enhances the mobility of students and labour within Africa and beyond. Professor Kwasi Yankah, for instance, echoed that due to globalisation, spurred on by knowledge-based societies and technological advancement, quality education and its corresponding qualifications have become an important element in all national and international initiatives, agenda and plans for development. He stressed that no country could achieve meaningful and sustainable development if it does not depend on products of its local education and foreign institutions for its manpower needs [5].

Of course, this continental and global demands put pressure on the various countries to put legislative instruments in place to get their educational workers match the standards being required. Thus, the Ghana government stepped up its effort in upgrading teacher training by converting all teacher training colleges in the country into tertiary institutions by Act 847. This conversion brought an additional qualification demand on the curriculum deliverers, teachers and all other workforce to upgrade their qualifications to match the tertiary education standards globally. Thus, teachers who did not have at least research masters degree in their areas of operation had to undergo further studies. This did not happen without constraints as challenges. Anecdotes from such staff in the Colleges of Education are enough to point out clearly to anyone hearing them to know that some challenges are battling such tutors. **Similar things happened when the Polytechnics in Ghana were converted to Technical Universities and their lecturers' qualifications had to change to match the new status, [6].** Issues of access and students' success are crucial. Patrick [7] said that to raise a generation of critical thinkers who act sustainably, higher education must look beyond prestige and profit to a more profound commitment to student access and success and that through opening access, potentials are unleashed and through building capacity for success, goals are achieved. This study seeks to uncover critical issues in the domain of challenges that the colleges of education tutors faced in their further studies towards professional status change.

1.2. Statement of the Problem

The Colleges of Education existed as post-secondary non-tertiary institutions called Teacher Training Colleges until 2012 when Act 847, Colleges of Education Act was passed to elevate the colleges into tertiary institutions [8]. The college staff who did not have researched masters were required to undertake further studies to match the new status of the colleges. Thus, a number of them enrolled on programmes at various universities and mostly combined their studies with the regular work of tutoring back at the colleges variously as there was no study leave with pay for them. The success of these staff on their further studies also serves as a strong human capital development success of the colleges they teach at. Such challenges could serve as hindrances to the completion rate of the tutors on such further studies programme. As leaders in the colleges of education system, we undertook this study to enable us fill the gap in information regarding challenges that such staff undergo especially as related to the specific colleges and their affected staff studied, in order to unearth such challenges and coping strategies to inform the readers of the research findings on what must be done to support such transitional staff for success of the college and analogous institutions in such transitioning phases.

1.3. Objectives

The study is to:

1. Discuss the kind of challenges the tutors are facing whilst pursuing their postgraduate degree programmes
2. Inquire into how the tutors' challenges are being addressed by stakeholders, tutors themselves, college administrators and the National Council for Tertiary Education

1.4. Significance of the Study

The findings of this research would open the eyes of stakeholders to the challenges that transitional staff face in improving their professional status. This would inform government better on scholarship and other opportunities that could be instituted for the citizenry for better human capacity development practices in the country. This would go a long way to enhance the image of Ghana in its care for the citizenry. The participants of the study would discover facts in handling their challenges. Transitional staff of analogous institutions could also be better informed of how to handle their challenges in improving their professional status if they get hold of this research findings in the field. Administrators would be better informed of support systems they could adopt to help their transitional staff which would go a long to even improve administrative and personnel relationship. The methodology adopted for this research would be very informative to incoming researchers in the field who lay their hands on this work and comprehend the content. Thus, the study has contributed to knowledge in the field.

Above all, the published findings of this study would

contribute to knowledge and theory on tutor professionalism in existence. It would, therefore serve as a guide for incoming researchers.

1.5. Delimitations

The study concentrated on challenges being experienced by transitional staff in their professional upgrading for better change and how such challenges were being handled. Thus, all the staff in the concerned zone of all the colleges in the Volta Region were included as selected from two colleges, one public college and one mission college.

1.6. Limitations

The findings of the study cannot be generalised. Readers could however utilise any information in the findings that relate to their situation(s).

2. Selected Literature Review

2.1. Challenges that Transitional Tertiary Staff Face in Pursuing their post-graduate Degree Programmes

Baharak [9] conducted a study on challenges faced by international postgraduate students at the College of Education of the Faculty of Educational Studies, University Putra Malaysia, and came out with the following findings among others:

1. Inappropriate and expensive accommodation. It was found that accommodation facilities were not only inappropriate, unsafe, poor, and inconvenient (particularly university hostels), but also very expensive (essentially the private guest houses).

2. Transportation delays. The results of the interview he conducted indicated that the students had easy access to transportation inside and outside the campus, but some students have complained that the buses did not run on time. Most of them stated that the buses did not usually run on time and this was a very big problem especially for those living outside campus. Sometimes they had to wait for the bus for 1 hour and even more.

3. Food being low in quality and sanitation. He revealed that all the students had a problem with food at the campus restaurants. The students had no idea of where to find suitable food. They were not satisfied with quality, sanitation and taste of Malaysian foods. They noted quality and sanitation of local restaurants on campus were very low. They said campus restaurants were not neat and different animals passed under the tables meant for eating on, and this development soiled the level of cleanliness of such places. All students agreed there were not enough restaurants at the university campus.

4. Unsatisfactory library internet speed. Majority of the students complained about low internet speed at the library to enhance effective studies. They said this discouraged them sometimes from going to the library, and described the internet situation as awfully slow and limited at times.

5. Social environmental maladjustment. The students

mentioned that they had difficulties in adjusting to the culture of the environment. These cultural adjustments were related to behavioural ability to fit in.

6. Difficulties in getting support from supervisors. Some students mentioned that their supervisors did not have enough time for holding regular meetings with them. Others reported they did not obtain clear feedback from their supervisors. However, some students said they did not have any problem with their supervisors and had respect from them.

Ellis [10] mentioned that postgraduate students are working professionals who are attempting to balance workplace pressures, family obligations and self-induced anxieties with returning to a formal graduate learning environment. This kind of further studies management has not been easy with many students, and it sometimes results in poor academic performance and inability to complete programmes. Student demographics are changing at the university, as more working professionals are enrolling in the university with no intention of leaving their jobs while pursuing their graduate degrees. At the same time, students expect to have the opportunity for grants, scholarships, teaching assistantships, and other funding opportunities during their graduate studies which do not happen as expected. Osei and Adu [11] also mentioned inadequate institutional sponsorship for academic staff development programmes as one of the transitional challenges the academic staff of the colleges of education pursuing further studies encounter in their professional development efforts. This means that enough institutions are not available to provide sponsorship or scholarship opportunities for lecturers on further studies at the colleges of education. For example, it is only Ghana Education Service Trust Fund (GETfund) that offers them sponsorship. She summarily concluded that the academic staff are confronted with numerous challenges ranging from finance to absence of policy that guides academic staff development which is greatly affecting the academic staff in some selected colleges of education.

Brett, Sheridan, Harvey and Cardak [12] conducted a study on the major challenges regional students in Australia face while pursuing higher education and identified high cost of transportation among others. They noted that over the past five years, student population in Australian universities had increased with many of such students commuting to undertake study and they face considerably higher transport costs. This development caused the National Centre for Vocational Education to carry out investigations into the challenge and come out with applicable recommendations to ameliorate the plight of the students. It recommended replacing public transport subsidies with fuel subsidies for the regional students where there are no public transport options. This was to provide more equitable support for transport.

Tutors pursuing postgraduate degrees at the colleges of education have to manage their studies while working at the colleges. Alexandru [13] has identified having less time for yourself and your family as a challenge in combining study and work. He believes that studying for a degree while working full-time may mean facing a few very demanding years, which could appear difficult for both you and your loved ones (family). More often, you will have to put many of your hobbies on hold for a while

in order to concentrate on your studies. Another challenge he came out with is having more stress and less energy. He said this is especially true during exam periods or when asked to meet important deadlines. He stressed further that students with jobs that require creativity, like the work of writers, may experience occasional creative blocks due to fatigue. He contends that this development may also affect the grades obtained by such students. This is a confirmation of what Ellis [10] said earlier. He adds that a further challenge to such postgraduate students is having less time for school activities, study groups or projects. He contends that a great part of university life is about creating new contacts and building a future professional network. However, the job being done at college may interfere with the student's social life and require alternative means of communication, mostly through online services. Many teachers on postgraduate studies hardly have enough time for school activities, and study groups because they are constantly torn apart by both workplace demands and study expectations. An additional challenge bedevilling teachers on further studies is experiencing unexpected developments. He was of the view that unpredictable events may interfere with the student's study schedules. Such unexpected events may be unplanned important business meetings, working overtime, etc. These exigencies affect effective studies of teachers on postgraduate studies. Above all, he identified financial aid risks as another challenge. He asserted that some universities offer financial aid exclusively to unemployed students who put up excellent academic performances and that holding a job whilst in school might affect a student's scholarship eligibility. The low grades that such students may get also cancel their scholarship eligibility. Since such students have to manage only the money they get from the work they do in catering for themselves in school and their family, it puts a lot of financial strains on them. His assertion is just in line with what Osei and Adu [11] discovered in their studies.

Larbi [14] mentioned the replacement of academic staff on further studies when the mode of professional development is off-the-job training as a major challenge facing many of the tertiary institutions in Ghana. Academic staff who embark on Master of Philosophy and Doctor of Philosophy programmes are supposed to study on a full-time basis at the university campuses. Whilst they are off their employed institutions, who should replace them for teaching and learning to continue? If nobody can replace them, how could such lecturers manage their graduate studies with lecturing at their employed institutions? If care is not taken, this would discourage the lecturers from pursuing such programmes and get concentrated on studying only master's degrees without philosophy. These lecturers who do not embark on researched master's degrees are not qualified to supervise college of education students' research works. This development would have ripples on quality research, teaching and learning and put undue pressure on the few qualified lecturers.

2.2. How to Address the Transitional Challenges Facing Tertiary Staff in Pursuing Post-graduate Degree Programmes

Osei and Adu [11] in discussing how academic staff development programmes in Colleges of Education could be improved suggested adopting strategies, such as, establishment of an autonomous unit responsible for academic staff development programmes in each college, having an adequately resourced academic staff unit in the colleges of education, colleges as institutions using part of their internally generated resources or funds to support the academic staff development programmes, granting of study leave to academic staff to upgrade, conducting academic staff development in collaboration with higher learning institutions, upgrading institutions should come with the package of academic staff development programme, academic staff development activities should come with improved conditions of service, introduction of formal training programmes to academic staff as an alternative to institutional education and introducing schedule training in the colleges of education as an alternative to education in higher learning institutions for the academic staff. Larbi [14] opined using motivators as tools for influencing staff on further studies. He asserted that motivating staff development in both monetary and non-monetary terms would encourage them to participate and benefit from staff development programmes and this would eventually reflect positively in their work output.

Newman [15] holds the view that teachers at the colleges of education should also be assisted by the Government to acquire qualifications required for teaching in tertiary institutions. Larbi [14] said this would help get required academic staff to teach in the institutions as their tertiary status demands. Osei and Adu [11] stressed the importance of available resources in assuaging the challenges by explaining that plans and desire to give staff members training and development may be there but if the resources to conduct such plans are not available, it cannot be implemented. He was referring to resources in the form of experts to facilitate the development programme be it internally or externally organised, money to run staff development programmes and other facilities. Additionally, he suggested provision of support and said the support should go to both individual staff participating in the development programme and the institution organising the development programme. He hopes that if staff are supported to undertake developmental or professional development programmes, most of them will be willing to participate. He postulates that if institutions are supported to conduct staff development programmes for their employees to enable them upgrade themselves in all aspects, such institutions would as often as possible organise developmental programmes for their staff.

Osei and Adu [11] recommended the following as other ways of dealing with challenges in pursuing further

studies: The academic staff that are already in the system with qualifications below master's degrees should be given necessary support, both finance and non-finance by individual institutions to enable them to upgrade within the shortest possible time. He is of the opinion that this would help the institutions get the required academic staff to teach as their tertiary status demands. The individual institutions of the staff should structure their academic calendar so that their vacation period would correspond with the time higher learning institutions run sandwich programmes to enable such teachers to do their studies with a full concentration without combining teaching and schooling at the same time. Most respondents indicated this as the means academic staff would use to upgrade their current qualifications.

Ellis [10] recommended the following to ease the challenges:

1. Provision of opportunities for scholarships and assistantships for part-time as well as full-time students.
2. Provision of support systems for students on critical thinking, writing skills and time management.
3. Making sure your loved ones support you as their help will be your most valuable asset.
4. Getting the sympathy of employers by telling them as soon as you can that you cannot work on a certain day for academic reasons. You have to suggest practical solutions to make up for the time lost and take responsibility for that.
5. If you are struggling to balance both work and study, seek advice and support as early as possible from your course tutor or lecturer. In exceptional circumstances, deadlines may be extended as a result.
6. Avoid missing lectures to undertake work. If you miss classes and submit work late or of poor quality, it will seriously damage your chances of getting a good degree.

Dzandu [16] informed stakeholders at a Dodowa conference that GETFund staff development fund is extended to Colleges of Education to help the tutors upgrade themselves to master's degrees. The question is: How readily available is this grant to the tutors to motivate them to upgrade?

3. Methodology

3.1. Introduction

The chapter discusses the methodology used in the conduct of the study. It describes the type of research design used, the population of interest with the sample and sampling techniques used, the type of instruments used to collect data and the pilot-testing of such instruments. It also discusses the procedures used in collecting data and the forms in which data were presented and analysed.

3.2. Research Design

The study adopted a qualitative design, which relies primarily on the collection of non-numerical data through

words, to be able to have the participants express their feelings and in-depth experiences in line with the challenges encountered in their processes in upgrading their professional status through direct enrolment on further studies, [17]. Under the qualitative, case study used specifically to unearth the details of the case of tutors in their upgrading challenges to discover the detailed account of the issues [18,19].

3.2.1. Research Philosophical Assumption and Paradigm Selected

Amoah [20] disclosed that there are three different paradigms for researchers to tailor their studies depending on the type of research being conducted and social constructivism is the most suitable for qualitative research and thus, this study goes with it to enable the participants to construct their idea, knowledge and meaning of what their challenges are in their further studies to change their professional status.

3.3. Population

The population in the study consisted of the following colleges and staff as the subject of the research [21]. This information is displayed at Table 1.

Table 1. Names of Volta Region government Colleges of Education and tutor population constituents

College	Principal	Vice Principal	Tutors	Total
1. Peki Col. of Educ.	11	3941		
2. Akatsi Col. of Educ.	11	4244		
3. St. Francis Col. of Educ.	11	3840		
4. St. Teresa Col. of Educ.	11	38 40		
5. Jasikan Col. of Educ.	11	3640		
6. E. P. Col., Amedzofe	11	3537		
7. Dambai Col. of Educ.	11	4244		
Total	77	270 284		

Source: Field data collected in 2018

3.4. Sample and Sampling Procedure

The seven government colleges of education in the research geographical area have virtually the same status change process in tutor professionalism characteristics since they were all upgraded in 2012 to tertiary status. Therefore, choosing anyone for study might produce similar results. Thus, the colleges were categorised into public and mission colleges and one each randomly selected (lottery method) from the two major categories, [22]. The purpose was to ascertain as to whether there would be some differences in their experiences of the participants in the research theme. Only the two colleges out of the seven in the region to ensure data manageability because qualitative research does not permit the use of large sample sizes which with even case study, one person could be used based on the Rule of Thumb by Nastasi [23]. Besides, large amount of data was expected to be generated through the interview sessions to be held with participants since they would have the chance of expressing their opinions on issues. All the participants were also purposively selected based on their tutor professional status and enrolment on further studies. The colleges and their specific samples are in Table 2.

Table 2. Sampled population from the 2 selected Colleges of Education in the Volta Region

Selected College	Tutors
1. Dambai College of Education (CA)	12
2. St. Francis College of Education (CB)	5
Total 17	

3.5. Instrument

A semi-structured interview guide was developed to collect data from participants in which some questions were pre-set and others left to be asked based on the responses to be given by the tutors during the interview sessions, [17].

The items were on challenges facing the affected tutors in the pursuance of post-graduate degree programmes; and how the affected tutors were addressing their challenges.

3.6. Pilot-Testing of Instrument

The instrument was pilot-tested at St. Teresa College of Education (mission) and Akatsi College of Education (public) as these colleges had similar characteristics with the study centres characteristics.

3.7. Data Collection Procedures

Letters of permission capturing the purpose of the study were served to the study centres and pilot colleges and the study only commenced after those permissions were granted. Consent forms were distributed to participants to consent to the process or otherwise. Actual data collection started after participants consented to the process.

3.8. Data Processing and Analysis Plan

The analysis adopted for the study is thematic content type. Human coder system was employed. Kusi [24] noted that qualitative data gathered in qualitative studies can be analysed manually (by hand with paper and pencil). Ward [25] corroborated their views and pointed out that in analysing data, there are human coders (manual analysis).

3.8.1. Data Analysis Utilised in this Study

Thematic content analysis adopted for this study had the following steps followed: preparation of data - data transcription was done here; defining the unit or theme of analysis- the theme of analysis which deals with classifying the content unit was done in this process; developing categories and coding scheme – sub-categories and coding scheme were developed in this stage for the analysis. The research questions served as a guide for grouping and analysing the data; pre-testing the coding scheme on a sample to ensure consistency-members of the research team coded the sample of existing data and compared their codes to ensure high consistency across. Coding of all the text was done. After coding the whole data set, validity and reliability were checked and high level of consistency proved the data was well coded as agreement was achieved among coders and measuring instruments, [26]. Inter-coder reliability indicated all coders have consistently and repeatedly coded the data the same way, regardless of which or what texts they

examined [25]. Inferences were drawn on the basis of themes to explore the properties, dimensions and identify the relationship and uncover patterns in order to present the analysis. Presentation of results under each theme and discussions on same were done. Low reference quoting was done where necessary.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1. Challenges Facing the Affected Tutors in the Pursuance of Postgraduate Degree Programmes

Research Question 1: What challenges are the tutors facing in the pursuance of their postgraduate degree programmes?

4.1.1. Specific Challenges Tutors Face

(i) *Challenges in management of college lesson delivery and university studies*

The tutors faced challenges and expressed them as follows:

There wasn't a study leave with pay. It was difficult to marry both (SIR2CA).

Combination was burdensome and tiresome. (SIR12CA).

It was too demanding and capital intensive. (SIR4CA).

It was very difficult because teaching and schooling at the same time is difficult. It normally affects lesson delivery. (SIR5CA).

Both are actually conflicting since they both need equal attention.(SIR6CA).

Majority of the tutors said they had challenges in the management of college lesson delivery and attending lectures which called for the tutors putting the following measures in place as make-ups:

1. Arranging and attending evening classes with students.
2. Organising weekend classes for students.
3. Travelling to college every weekend to teach students.
4. Making internal arrangements with colleagues to take over their lessons on the day they would be having lectures on university campuses in order that they could be present at college to teach on the less busy days.
5. Rescheduling time to suit both situations – 2 weeks out and 2 weeks in.

In view of these, the tutors had the following to say:

Management took notice of my absence from school. I sometimes must deliver lessons in the evenings between 7:00 pm and 9:00 pm and on weekends. (SIR1CB).

I had to travel every other week to teach on weekends. (SIR3CB).

Very challenging but internal arrangement was made to come and teach from Thursday through to the weekends. (SIR1CA).

I had to reschedule my time to suit both situations – 2 weeks out and 2 weeks in. (SIR9CA).

It was very difficult to manage the two but the use of time management was the key to success. (SIR10CA).

I must travel every week to college for lesson delivery and back to university for studies. (SIR11CA).

However, some tutors said they did not have challenges and remarked:

I didn't encounter any problem at all. (SIR2CB).

I didn't face much challenge since it was a sandwich programme which took place during vacations. (SIR8CA).

It came out clearly that the tutors had difficulty in sharing the limited time at their disposal among further studies, college teaching and family commitments. This agrees with the findings of Alexandru [13] who identified having less time for yourself and your family as a challenge in combining study and work. He believes that studying for a degree while working full-time may mean facing a few very demanding years, which could appear difficult for both you and your loved ones (family). This is corroborated by Miller [27] who opined that postgraduate students often face a unique set of challenges as they transition into more advanced academic work of which the challenges can vary widely, but they generally stem from the increased academic demands, financial pressures, and the complexities of balancing personal life with academic responsibilities and that the primary challenge is difficulty in managing time effectively

(ii) Financial Difficulties

Self-pre-financing of postgraduate studies

In pre-financing postgraduate degree programmes, the tutors had to go through the following challenges:

- Depending on loans to pay fees and paying high interests on them.
- Using monthly salaries besides loans from the bank for funding education.
- Paying fees without any refund from government.
- Difficulties in paying user fees.
- Difficulties in getting money to use to buy course materials and make other expenses on campus.

The tutors made the following remarks:

I have to take loans to be able to pay my fees and the reimbursement comes very late, sometimes after 2 academic years. (SIR1CB).

I manage to pre-finance my education from my monthly salary and loans from the bank. (SIR10CA)

I manage my salary to do that after which the college refunds all (SIR3CB).

It is a challenge because I have to depend on bank loans throughout the period under reference. (SIR3CA).

What do you mean by self-pre-financing, since I finance everything single-handedly and no pesewas is refunded to me? (SIR7CA).

Sometimes it is a challenge to me on what to use to buy course materials and make other expenses on campus. (SIR11CA).

I have financial difficulties in paying user fees. (SIR9CA).

It is very challenging. (SIR2CA).

College sponsorship package for those on further studies

Many tutors said there was no college sponsorship package for them aside what government through NCTE allocated to each college in the form of Staff Development Fund which is paid by NCTE. They added that the one paid by NCTE takes months and years to be paid to beneficiaries. They had these to say:

There is no sponsorship from college. (SIR2CA).

Not applicable in my college. (SIR8CA).

There is nothing at the time called college sponsorship package. (SIR6CA).

Not in terms of money but motivation (word of motivation) from the principal. Although the College sponsorship was there, thus Staff Development Fund from the GETFund, it takes months and years before the money gets to the applicants. (SIR10CA).

GETFund Sponsorship (Faculty Development and Research Fund) for further studies

The main challenge reported under GETFund bursary was undue delays in its payment by NCTE which does not make it directly beneficial at the time of pursuing postgraduate studies. There were others who never benefitted from it. The tutors said:

The research fund comes to be used to reimburse our fees, but sometimes it comes after 2 academic years when fees have been paid. (SIR1CB).

It was not regular. (SIR5CA).

I applied for it but have not been paid yet. (SIR8CA).

I never knew whether it existed for second cycle candidates and so never benefitted. (SIR3CA).

Some tutors however, have no challenge with it and one of them said:

There was no challenge. (SIR3CB).

On financial constraints of the tutors, a research conducted by Ellis [10] acknowledged that working students on further studies have to manage only the money they get from the work they do in catering for themselves in school and their family, and this puts a lot of financial strains on them. His assertion is just in line with what Osei and Adu [11] discovered in their studies when they mentioned inadequate institutional sponsorship for academic staff development programmes as one of the transitional challenges the academic staff of the colleges of education pursuing further studies encounter in their professional development efforts.

(iii.) Acquisition of good grades endangered

The tutors complained that the frequent movement from college to university campus to attend lectures and attending college functions affected their punctuality and regularity at lectures and consequently the grades made. Also, the combination of college and academic work affected the tutors' output of academic work at the university and hence affected the grades made by many of them. They said they did not have enough time to study. Some had to go through hectic experiences to get grades. The tutors retorted:

The commuting from Winneba to Hohoe affected some lectures. I was absent on some few occasions. (SIR3CB).

The commuting affects greatly my performance and grades. (SIR1CA).

It really affected some of my grades because at times I have to absent myself from lectures to attend very important college functions. (SIR5CA).

Due to combination of college work and academic work, learning output was affected, and thereby affecting my grades. (SIR3CA).

I do not get enough time for studies. (SIR11CA).

It was very hectic for me to acquire grades that made the programme successful. (SIR7CA).

This was a personal decision. I struggled to make such grades. (SIR2CA).

The grades I acquired were good though I could have done better if my condition were not harsh. (SIR1CB).

I passed the course. (SIR2CB).

However, there were some tutors who said they had no challenge with acquiring good grades and blurted:

All my grades were superb. (SIR4CB).

By the grace of God, good performance is being achieved. (SIR1CA).

Through determination and hard work and with God's grace, something good in terms of grade was realized. (SIR10CA).

I have to study hard to make good grades. (SIR9CA).

(vi) Unplanned and unexpected college events

The tutors noted that such events such as graduation ceremonies, commissioning ceremonies, head-counts, burial ceremonies, etc. prevented them from being regular at lectures, and put additional financial burdens on them as they attempted to honour them. They commented:

These disrupted some of my scheduled lectures, because one had to attend all such events. (SIR2CA).

There were times I had to come to college to attend college events whilst lectures were on-going on campus. (SIR11CA).

I couldn't be absent from some college programmes. I had to come down on two occasions for head count exercises. (SIR3CB).

It was very challenging because you have to come down to the college for these unplanned activities. (SIR1CA).

Sometimes one needs to travel to the college to participate in such events, and thereby putting additional cost on us. (SIR12CA).

This really put a toll on our finances. (SIR4CA).

It is worth noting that some tutors said such events did not pose any challenge to them and remarked:

I didn't have any problem. (SIR3CA).

I asked permission to be excused since such events were not planned. (SIR8CA).

College activities were a challenge but with determination and prayer, much work was done in the college as well. (SIR10CA).

(v) Management of family and studies

Tutors described their experience as a big challenge, very difficult, stressful and frustrating and pointed out the following as their challenges:

1. Inadequate funds to support both.
2. There was pressure on one partner in taking care of the children.
3. It created the fear of losing one's partner in some tutors.
4. The family had received little attention/ care.
5. Difficulties in leaving campus to attend to important family issues that cropped up.
6. The trouble of constantly making sure that you keep in touch with the family on phone and sometimes coming home.
7. Loss of concentration on academic work.
8. Interference in studies and family life.

The tutors passed comments such as:

It was difficult managing family and studies in the face of limited funds. (SIR1CB).

It puts strain on the management of the home and paying school fees. (SIR5CA).

There was pressure on my wife combining her business with taking care of four children. (SIR2CB).

It was a difficult task. Inadequate fund, attention/care and fear of losing my partner were the numerous challenges I faced. (SIR6CA).

It was difficult to have full time for your family due to the duration and distance of study centres. (SIR12CA).

It was a bit tough since I had to be thinking of my family back at home as I am on campus studying. (SIR7CA).

I am constantly making sure I keep in touch with my family on phone and sometimes come home. (SIR8CA).

I have to come home when there are family issues to attend to. This interferes with my studies a lot. (SIR11CA).

It was very difficult, stressful and frustrating. (SIR9CA).

I am coping with the situation but it is not easy at all. (SIR1CA).

Interestingly, some tutors said they did not have any challenges because their partners understood their situations and moreover, some of them had smaller and manageable family sizes. The tutors made comments like:

There was no problem to that effect. (SIR2CB).

It was not a problem because of small family size. (SIR4CB).

My family understood the situation and was very helpful. (SIR2CA).

A tutor went through with good time management practices nevertheless. He declared:

It was not easy to manage academic work with family issues but with time management, much was done to complete the course successfully. (SIR10CA).

All the above narrations from the affected tutors indicate clearly that their success of good grades and final completion were affected due to too much work schedule at both their work places and the universities of their further studies. Management of unplanned schedules in order to attend unplanned college events as well as management of family pressures all put dangers on the affected tutors. Moral, Tabien, Napoles, Nunez, and Guevara [28] maintained that class schedules is an influential factor in student's focus, punctuality and general success on a programme and thus anything that affect the attentiveness of students poses a challenge to participation, learning, and comprehension of the lessons towards overall success completion.

(vi) Unavailability of academic/professional policy at college

The tutors revealed that it was a challenge to them because there were no clear-cut guidelines for them to follow in the demand for higher education and this had a negative effect on their studies due to the financial constraints it imposes on them. They called for the institution of such policies. Others said since there was no such a policy, they had to act fast in order to avoid lagging behind. They expressed their opinions as follow:

No clear-cut guidelines to be followed in the demand for higher degrees. (SIR1CB).

Academic and professional development policy should be formulated and implemented even though T-TEL has started showing interest. (SIR1CA).

There is no such policy, hence one has to act fast personally. (SIR2CA).

It has a negative effect on my studies due to financial

constraints. (SIR8CA).

This has been a great challenge. However, there should be a policy guideline. (SIR10CA).

A tutor however felt that there was such a policy which was helping him/her in professional development. He responded:

There is and is helping build my professional capacity. (SIR4CA).

(vii) Inconveniences in movement from college to university campus for studies and back

The tutors described their experiences as very hectic, tedious, tiresome, stressful and capital-intensive. The challenges encountered were:

1. Travelling on bad and rugged roads.
2. Transportation cost payment difficulties.
3. Difficulties in having enough time to read for more knowledge on the course as hours were spent travelling.
4. Bearing the risk of travelling in the night to attend lectures the next day.
5. Sitting for hours travelling affected the health of some.

The comments passed in support of the challenges are:

Movement was difficult due to roads on which I travelled. (SIR1CB).

Transportation cost affected my movement sometimes. Sometimes I had to give excuses because I was not having money to travel to Hohoe. (SIR3CB).

Funding is very difficult, but I am coping with the internal arrangement. (SIR1CA).

It was capital intensive. (SIR5CA).

It was very difficult and challenging. One cannot have enough time to read for more knowledge on the course. (SIR2CA).

Movement was full of expenses, tiredness and above all, risks since most of the travelling was done in the night. (SIR7CA).

Very tedious and tiresome. (SIR12CA).

I spent more hours in travelling from college to university campus and back and this caused a lot of health hazards to me. (SIR11CA).

Others said though their experiences were stressful, they put strategies in place which saw them through. They said:

Very tedious and stressful but through proper planning and time management, I went through. (SIR8CA).

It was very hectic but with determination, it was crowned with success. (SIR10CA).

One tutor, however said he/she was not affected and retorted:

That did not affect me. (SIR2CB).

(viii) Difficulty in getting accommodation at the university

The challenges faced at and around the university campuses were:

1. High cost of rent at university facilities.
2. Payment of utility bills at the private hostels and guest houses.
3. Difficulty in getting accommodation at the university campuses.

The tutors commented as follow:

It was available but at a high cost. (SIR1CB).

I lodge at a guest house which was expensive by the way. (SIR2CB).

I had to rent a private hostel where I was paying utility bills. (SIR3CB).

Very expensive. (SIR12CA)

It was problematic and financially distressful. (SIR3CA).

It was a very big challenge due to financial constraint. (SIR4CB).

It was too expensive to afford. (SIR10CA).

Securing one and paying exorbitant rent was a great challenge. (SIR6CA).

I had the opportunity to be accommodated on the university campus, which I paid for. (SIR11CA).

It was very difficult to get one at the university itself. I had to rent outside the campus. (SIR9CA).

(ix) Difficulty in feeding on university campus

Tutors had challenges such as not having enough time to cook which called for depending on food vendors for feeding, being exposed to health risks for not cooking personally, difficulties in getting three-square meals due to financial constraints, not eating on time because of pressure of work, meals being expensive to buy from the food vendors and regarding it as an additional cost. The corroborated comments are:

I depend solely on restaurants because I don't have enough time to cook for myself. (SIR5CA).

Getting the three-square meal was not easy let alone to talk about the quality. (SIR6CA).

I am always buying from the food vendors, with the high risk of health challenges. (SIR7CA).

I sometimes cooked my own food but I mostly bought food from food vendors. (SIR3CB).

It was very difficult due to financial constraints. (SIR4CA).

It was very difficult this was due to high fees paid at the postgraduate levels. (SIR10CA).

I cultivated a bad eating habit since there was no time for me to eat or I don't eat at the right time, which is not good for my health. (SIR11CA).

It brings additional cost to us on campus. (SIR12CA).

A tutor described the feeding challenge as relative based one's financial standing. Thus, where you buy the food and the quality depend on the financial status of every tutor. This attracted comments such as:

It was relative based on one's financial standing. (SIR2CA).

It was very expensive. (SIR9CA).

I am managing with the situation. (SIR1CA).

For fear of contracting infections, a tutor chose to cook throughout and retorted:

I had to obtain kitchen equipment and cook my food always in order to be safe from infections. (SIR8CA).

(x) Difficulty in maintaining social relationship with others on campus

The tutors generally described the social relationship they had on campus as very cordial despite the limited time at their disposal. They passed comments such as:

It was exceptionally very cordial. (SIR12CA).

It was cordial and I received help from friends, for example, study mates. (SIR2CB).

I had very cordial relationship with my study mates as well as others. (SIR7CA).

For me there was no challenge. It rather facilitated learning. (SIR1CB).

Although there was no time on campus, social relationships cannot be neglected. (SIR10CA).

As a member of GRASAG, I attend all social programmes. (SIR8CA).

Some tutors thought that the nature of the campus relationship was not the best that they expected and expressed their reservations as follow:

It wasn't the best all the time simply because you sometimes had to struggle over something. (SIR6CA).

I was not able to socialize with other people or students except my course mates. (SIR3CB).

Millier [25] noted that social isolation challenge that many postgraduate students experience are as a result of they spending more time focusing on individual research, thus, find themselves distanced from peers or the wider academic community and that the sense of isolation can be heightened by the competitive nature of postgraduate studies, where students are often focused on their personal success rather than collaboration.

(xi) Ineffectiveness of internet facility on university campus and place of work

The challenges the tutors faced with internet at the university campus and at the workplace varied from place to place and are:

1. On university campus, it was restricted to some specific locations such as departments and some classrooms.
2. Ineffectiveness demanding personable ownership and use of bundles.
3. Irregularity of it from time to time.
4. Lack of internet facilities at some workplaces.
5. The workplace internet connectivity has been non-existent or ineffective.

The assertions made by the tutors to these effects are:

Internet access was restricted to some, areas of campus. (SIR1CB).

It was very challenging. One has to plan for a personal alternative. (SIR2CA).

Not stable, so I had to obtain my own laptop and bundle. (SIR8CA).

Not the best and needs improvement. (SIR3CA).

Not very effective. (SIR6CA).

Network at the university campus promoted more academic work than at the workplace. The workplace really lacks this facility. (SIR10CA).

Internet on campus in most cases does not function. (SIR12CA).

However, there were some tutors who described the internet situation at the university campus as very good and had these to say:

Internet at university campus department was very good, but I seldom used it because I was mostly at home. (SIR2CB).

It was very good. (SIR4CB).

Internet facilities were available and effective on university campus. (SIR7CA).

It was effective but not regular. (SIR9CA).

Ineffective internet on college campuses was a challenge to tutors on postgraduate studies. Baharak (2013) noted that majority of the students he researched on complained about low internet speed at the library to

enhance effective studies. The students said this discouraged them sometimes from going to the library.

(xii) Inadequate co-operation from thesis supervisors and course lecturers

Although some tutors indicated that their supervisors were cooperative, a good number of them did not have cooperative supervisors. Some narratives include the following:

Not easy because of time constraint. (SIR9CA).

He was exceptionally poor. He was not in the least co-operative. (SIR4CB).

My supervisor was not co-operative at all. (SIR5CA).

Most challenging, as my supervisor was almost always busy. (SIR1CB).

The expectations of the supervisor may sometimes not be met. (SIR6CA).

Very difficult and frustrating. (SIR9CA).

You may sometimes disagree over grades awarded (SIR6CA).

The above findings are similar to what Baharak (2013) found out among international postgraduate students at the College of Education of the Faculty of Educational Studies, University Putra Malaysia when he said some students had difficulties in getting support from supervisors. The students mentioned that their supervisors did not have enough time for holding regular meetings with them. Others reported they did not obtain clear feedback from their supervisors.

4.2. How the Affected Tutors' Challenges were Addressed by Stakeholders (tutors, college administrators and NCTE)

Research Question 2: How are the tutors' challenges being addressed by stakeholders (tutors, college administrators and NCTE)?

4.2.1. Tutors' Opinions on How they Addressed Their Challenges

The tutors mentioned the following as means they adopted to address their challenges:

- a. Seeking the intervention of God and advice from some members of their departments for a way out.
- b. Teaching students during the weekends and evenings instead of week days.
- c. Making a drastic cut on consumption expenditure.
- d. Taking the risk of travelling overnight either to be able to attend lectures at the university or to be able to reach college and teach students.
- e. Combining course work with thesis and teaching.
- f. Making internal arrangements with students for lessons to be taught in some evenings and on weekends and for other subject tutors to takeover allotted week periods.
- g. Ensuring effective time management by prioritizing needs and wants, and therefore avoiding attending weekend, family and social events.
- h. Living within means.
- i. Organization of extra classes to make up for the lost time.
- j. Contracting loans to solve financial problems.

- k. Liaising with lecturers to structure their time-table to favour tutors and their students at college.

The tutors expressed themselves as follow:

I sought the face of God and brought in some forward-looking personalities within the department who offered useful pieces of advice which saw me through. (SIR4CB).

I had to teach students on Saturdays and Sundays whenever I come to college. Sometimes I have to walk to the station and board a taxi to the campus instead of taking a car twice. (SIR3CB).

I manage my finance well. I plan my school work well. I related with authority in the college well. (SIR2CB).

I did a drastic cut on my consumption expenditure. I took a risk of travelling overnight either to attend lectures at the university or to be able to reach college and teach my students. (SIR1CB).

Combining course work with thesis and teaching. (SIR12CA).

I did internal arrangements in terms of coming down and phone calls. I am now thinking of contacting my students on Skype and also uploading my lecture notes on the internet for them. (SIR11CA).

Doing time management effectively. Avoiding most weekend events and some family or social events too. (SIR2CA).

By prioritizing my needs and wants. (SIR3CA).

Living within my budget and self-discipline, determination and time management. (SIR8CA).

I tried to manage my time well. I tried to live within my means. (SIR5CA).

Organization of extra classes to make up for the lost time. Appealing to colleagues to take up my classes whenever I am absent. Going for loans to solve problems. (SIR4CA).

I levied myself on monthly basis towards the success of the programmes coupled with loans from my bankers. (SIR7CA).

I was very frank in my dealings with the college and I am ready to help whenever I am in the college. (SIR9CA).

Liaising with lecturers to structure their time-table to favour me and my students on campus. Organizing weekend and evening classes for my students anytime there is an opportunity. (SIR11CA).

4.2.2. Tutors' Views on the Roles Played by their Colleges to Help Them Address their Challenges in Pursuing Postgraduate Degrees

In the words of the tutors, the following were the roles played by the colleges:

- a. Creating room for departmental internal arrangements among tutors to pursue further studies in turns.
- b. The principals facilitated the processing and payment of GETFund sponsorship package.
- c. Principals appealed to staff who are not on further studies to help take some periods of those on further studies to ease the pressure on them.
- d. Giving encouragement to tutors on the programme.
- e. Reducing their teaching loads and blocking subject periods on the timetable to enable tutors teach on specific days and have time for their university lectures.
- f. Writing of letters to GETFund for Staff

Development Fund to be paid to staff.

- g. Granting of permission to staff to upgrade themselves.

- h. Reading through thesis and asking ICT coordinator to help in the analysis.

- i. Structuring the timetable for the college to be in line with the university one to enable tutors teach their students every week during the normal class hours.

The tutors asserted their views as follow:

College created room for internal arrangement among tutors in the department to undertake further studies in turns in the absence of official study leave with pay. (SIR1CB).

The college facilitated the GETFund sponsorship which I received. (SIR2CB).

The principal appealed to one of the tutors to stand in for me whilst I pursued the course. (SIR3CB).

Other colleagues helped by stepping in to occupy the students anything I would not be able to come. (SIR1CA).

The principal and the college secretary would not just give up on their words of encouragement. (SIR4CB).

My school time-table committee blocked my subjects to be taught on Wednesdays and Fridays only. Here, I got time for university activities on Mondays and Tuesdays. (SIR2CA).

Letters were written to GETFund for Staff Development Fund, but they have not been very effective since moneys were not coming regularly. (SIR4CA).

There wasn't much significant role played by the college except for the limited time allowed to be out of class. (SIR6CA).

They granted me the permission to upgrade myself and reducing my teaching load. (SIR8CA).

College helped in reading through my thesis and in the analysis using the ICT coordinator. (SIR9CA).

Structuring the timetable for the college to be in line with the university to enable me teach my students every week during the normal class hours. (SIR11CA).

Making the teaching time-table flexible and adjustable. (SIR12CA).

4.2.3. Tutors' Responses on what NCTE Did to Help Them Deal with their Challenges

Though the financial provisions made by NCTE were inadequate to support the tutors, they identified the following as NCTE assistance to them:

- a. Payment of bursaries to tutors on postgraduate studies.
- b. Payment of Faculty Development Grant.
- c. Payment of monthly salaries.

To these, the tutors passed comments such as:

Financially, the bursary was heart-warning. (SIR4CB).

GET Fund had reimbursed the fees I paid while pursuing the program. (SIR1CA).

No help from government in any way at the time. (SIR7CA).

Government put in place Staff Development Fund which was a green light to encourage me to pursue the programme. (SIR8CA).

It is paying my salary and graduate allowance at the university. (SIR9CA).

4.2.4. Tutors' Responses on the Permanent Measures that Should be Put in Place to Tackle the Challenges Facing Them in Pursuing Postgraduate Studies

The permanent measures recommended for dealing with the challenges in postgraduate upgrading of the tutors are:

- a. Provision of full sponsorship for tutors on further studies by government which should include money, accommodation, computers, books, etc.
- b. Government should provide tutors with study leave with pay. This is to enable tutors who are not on further studies to teach for their colleagues who are pursuing various programmes.
- c. The affiliated universities should give scholarships to tutors to pursue higher degrees.
- d. The Faculty Development Fund from GETFund should be paid promptly after admission and application for it.
- e. Lecturers should understand the plight of tutors and help them achieve their goals without frustrating them in the thesis writing.
- f. Introduction of campus-based distance programmes for tutors during the holidays.
- r. Effective policies must be put in place to guide further studies in the colleges of education.

The comments passed by the tutors in relation to these recommendations are:

There should be full sponsorship/scholarship for tutors on further studies. (SIR5CA).

The government should grant us study leave with pay when we are going for the postgraduate programmes depending upon the number of years you have been on one grade. (SIR11CA).

There should be a reliable Staff Development Fund from the GETFund to help tutors who want to pursue postgraduate programmes. Also, management in its own way can sponsor equally tutors who want to acquire higher degrees. Furthermore, the affiliated universities should give scholarships to tutors to pursue higher degrees. GETFund should be up and doing, to pay tutors' school fees on time. (SIR10CA).

Lecturers should understand the plight of tutors and help them achieve their goals without frustrating them in the thesis writing. (SIR9CA).

Funds should be made available to the tutors as and when the tutors have admission, for fees and stipends. (SIR8CA).

There should be an across-the-board package for further studies for all tutors at the college level on annual basis probably from the government. (SIR7CA).

There should be prompt payment of Staff Development Fund and introduction of distance courses during the holidays. (SIR6CA).

The sponsorship package should include accommodation and provision of computers. (SIR4CA).

Full sabbatical/study leave should be granted tutors and money made available to them at the point of admission and not reimbursing them over 3 years after pursuing their studies. (SIR1CB).

There must be effective policies put in place to guide further studies.

(SIR2CB).

Tutors should be made to teach for their colleagues who are pursuing various programmes. (SIR3CB).

Miller [29] advised that students should seek opportunities for social interaction, whether through academic networks, study groups, or extracurricular activities and that building a supportive peer group can help mitigate feelings of loneliness and foster collaboration and idea-sharing for success on postgraduate programmes.

5. Conclusions

The tutors who went on further studies faced a number of challenges. These include but not limited to time and financial constraints, double work schedule burdening them and impacting their health; Poor grades on the programme as a result of too much occupancy on to college assignments; psychological trauma of fear of losing their partners in marital relationship and subsequently some even could not complete the programme. Though there were some support such as GETFund bursary, College Administrators agreeing for weekend classes to be organized by those tutors for their respective students and tutors' own savings towards the programme, non of these seemed adequate to alleviate the plights of the affected tutors as there were no robust professional development policy to cater for the welfare of such transitional staff in the colleges of the study

Recommendations

Governing Councils of all Colleges of Education and analogous institutions should put in place robust Professional Development Policies to support staff professional development with clear adequate provisions on financing, study leave, duration and related matters to help staff upgrade their status without hindrances. This would help staff to have enough time to study on the programme and perform well as well as generally prepare to get themselves well adjusted on their further studies programme.

In transitional period, College Administrators should implement Co-operative Education to support staff for a more practical and flexible experience as advocated for by Atiku and Dzinyela [28] to enable the staff complete their programme in time as a result of having better economy of their experience on their college campuses.

The Government through GETFund should increase budgetary allocation of bursary for staff development in the colleges to ease the financial pressure of such staff on further studies.

Colleges of Education tutors and staff who aim at going on further studies should search for additional scholarship opportunity to support them and ease their financial pressure.

Administrators of the Colleges of Education should devote part of their internally generated funds to support staff approved for further studies to help ease their financial pressure.

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