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Editorial Comment

The Journal of Transformative Education and Development (JoTED) is a peer-reviewed journal focusing on policy issues and practices that promote transformative education. In this maiden volume and issue, that is, Volume 1 (1), researchers and authors have contributed a wealth of high-quality and informative material. Volume 1(1) contains 10 articles that have gone through the peer review process at three levels by independent reviewers.

Philemon Doh Kwame Agbenyega employs the concept of *Blegeism* in *Mitso Aseye* (Make a Merry) as a theoretical perspective to compose a commemorative anthem for Dambai College of Education for the Golden Jubilee Celebration. This creative and innovative composition significantly contribute to the cultural and historical narratives of the institution in particular and education in general.

Benedicta Awusi Atiku, Eric Kwame Austro Gozah, John Erebakere, Sylvia Richlove Nortey, Lawrencia Afua Tilibe and Mercy Ekua Mensah explore the role of on-campus childcare centre in improving student mothers' learning outcome, focusing on academic achievement, maternal nutritional health, spousal relationship and child health. The findings show that the nursery school boosted academic performance of nursing-mothers through regular attendance, active engagement, and supported teaching, improving GPAs and programme completion. It also enhanced maternal health, strengthened parental relationships, and fostered children's physical and social development, demonstrating holistic benefits for families. The study concludes that such support systems as institution-based nursery should be implemented in all higher education institutions to promote inclusive and accessible education to all to fulfil SDG 4.

Godsway Kormla Agbenyegah, Patricia Mawusi Amos and Theresa Osahene investigate the cultural adjustment experiences of African international students in two Ghanaian universities. The study reveals that international students had high expectations and were amused by the new culture especially those who were first-time travellers outside their respective countries. From their lived experiences, the language, food, and social norms were their major adjustment challenges. The study concludes among others that the first-time experiences of international students had a lasting impact on their adjustment process and recommends that counselling units within universities develop competencies in multicultural counselling to attract international students.

Lawrencia Afua Tilibe and Godsway Kormla Agbenyegah examine the challenges of professional development of teachers in Adansi South District,

New Edubiase using a descriptive survey design. The study reveals several significant challenges including lack of teacher commitment to professional development programmes, insufficient funds, inadequate time allocation, lack of incentives post-training and a shortage of trained facilitators. The authors suggest strategies such as mentoring, active involvement of headteachers and staff in planning in-service training (INSET) activities and initiating resource provision for these programs.

Sylvia Richlove Nortey and Godsway Kormla Agbenyegah examine the academic stressors and coping strategies among student teachers at Dambai College of Education (DACE) in Ghana, using a descriptive survey design. The findings reveal that the most significant stressors include inadequate practical course facilities, high expectations, and revising for quizzes and exams. Coping strategies identified include physical exercise, social support and effective time management, with social support from friends and loved ones being the most effective. The study highlights some of the potential challenges that are associated with the delivery of transformative education in resource constrained environments.

Frank Awuah explores the relationship between Social Studies teachers' assessment beliefs and practices in Senior High / Technical Schools in the Volta and Oti regions of Ghana, using a correlational design. The results reveal a very weak and statistically insignificant relationship between teachers' assessment beliefs and practices. The author highlights the need for targeted professional development and policy interventions to better align teachers' practices with their educational philosophies.

Benedicta Awusi Atiku, Eric Kwame Austro Gozah and John Erebakyere investigate the strategic management of Dambai College of Education in the covid-19 pandemic situation using a quantitative survey design. The study revealed among others that adequate and equitable resource distribution of personal protective equipment, effective communication through collaboration, efficient use of resources, improved digital skill as well as inadequate digital skill among some staff and students attributed to the efficient management of the institution.

John Adukpo, Erica Kumi, Godwin Yao Gaaku and Charles Kwesi Gbungburi Wumbei analyse the stylistic features on Kwesi Brew's poem, 'The Mad Are Sane' and their effect on language in the poem. Five stylistic features/deviations were uncovered namely syntactic deviation, lexical deviation, phonological deviation, semantic deviation, and grammatical deviation. The authors observed that stylistic tools, particularly deviations and

their types, enable a more accurate interpretation of the poem, ‘The Mad Are Sane’.

Fred Alpha Adams explores the qualifications, status, and role of the librarians in the colleges of education and establishes the career options of the academic librarians in institutions of higher learning, using qualitative and employed a phenomenological research design. The study found among others that the qualifications of Colleges of Education librarians in the academic space are similar to those at the faculties and other librarians of technical and traditional universities. While the role of a college librarian seems similar across the colleges, the recognition and status of the librarians vary from college to college. The author recommends that academic librarians should be fairly and equitably treated across all tertiary institutions to curb librarian turnover from the colleges of education to the traditional and technical universities.

Anita Avevor analyses the use of metaphors in ‘the Kitchen Chimney’ by Robert Frost and focuses on the usage of metaphors in conveying various themes. The analysis uncovers how the poet uses metaphors to convey deeper meanings and emotions associated with domestic life and the passage of time.

The editorial team is grateful to all reviewers for the useful feedback they offered on the papers they reviewed and the professionalism they exhibited through the review process. To the Principal of Dambai College of Education, the team would like to say a big thank you for the continual financial and logistical support which has made the maiden publication of JoTED possible.

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Utilisation of the Concept of *Blegeism* in *Mitso Aseye* (Make a Merry) Choral Anthem of Dambai College of Education Golden Jubilee Celebration

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Abstract

Dambai College of Education (DACE), established on October 18, 1974, in the Oti Region of Ghana, planned to mark its golden jubilee in 2024, later rescheduled to 2025. As part of the commemorative activities, the College initiated the composition of an anniversary anthem to encapsulate its institutional memory. Data for the anthem were sourced using convenience sampling from archival documents, brochures, and institutional themes. Thematic Analysis guided the development and coding of relevant themes for the composition. Integrating the philosophical framework of *Blegeism*, the project explored the convergence of cultural identity and musical expression, situating the anthem *Mitso Aseye* within the tradition of African Art Music. The composition underscores the significance of commemorative anthems in reinforcing institutional heritage and connecting with broader audiences. It is posited as a valuable cultural artefact and a resource-rich reference point for future academic exploration.

Keywords: *Blegeism, Concept, DACE, Dambai, Mitso Aseye, Composition*

Introduction

The concept of *Blegeism* (i.e., the approach of *Blege* to Ghanaian Art Music Composition) is a philosophical and cultural framework, which is rooted in African specifically in the Ghanaian tradition, offering a unique lens through which to analyse and appreciate the rich musical heritage of Ghanaians.

Blegeism, which accentuates the interconnectedness of human experience, community, and the natural world, provides a profound context for exploring the distinctions of Africa especially, the Ghanaian people's musical experiences and their cultural expressions. The paper seeks to scrutinise the utilisation of *Blegeism* in the *Mitso Aseye* (i.e., Make Merry) choral anthem, composed for the Golden Jubilee celebration of the Dambai College of Education. By probing into the lyrical, melodic, harmonic and musical elements of the anthem, the paper aims to direct light onto the ways in which the concept of *Blegeism* informs and enriches the cultural and institutional narratives of the Dambai College of Education, as reflected in this iconic choral piece. Through this analysis, the researcher wishes to contribute to a deeper understanding of the cultural significance of *Blegeism* and its enduring influence on the artistic expression of the Ghanaian musical culture and the College's historical journey at large. In the attainment of her 50 years of existence, management of the *Dambai* College of Education took a strong stand to celebrate this milestone and did everything humanly possible to achieve this feat. To this effect, management used a variety of ways including printing of Anniversary paraphernalia (i.e., anniversary *lacoste*, cloth, key holders, cups, and brochure), inauguration of Journal of Transformative Education and Development (JoTED) to aid both print and online publications, hosting pieces of facts in the College's website among other things. All these attempts are to tell the history of the College. What was hidden from this pursuit was that not everybody who needed to hear this history have access to the archival tools needed to retrieve these facts from the electronic media; the current trend of hosting vital information about tertiary institutions among whom the Dambai College of Education dwells. More to it is that some people are reading phobic but sound non-phobic to keep information for themselves. These categories of people who are among our cherish audience world over also needed to have knowledge of the College. They therefore will be left out if nothing else was done to assist them. This apart, a composition of a commemorative anthem was imperatively needed to serve as a bridge between socio-cultural and historical data and the anthem's composition. This arose the problem of what to do in order to serve the interest of these categories of people as well as how to maintain socio-cultural practices and historical antecedence through the sound of music. This evoked the dire need to create sound effect through music to connect our most

cherished audiences around the globe. Readily, the concept of *Blegeism* become a vehicle through which this is achieved.

This paper adopted qualitative approach to pick and sieve relevant data on the College from files, brochures, college motto and the anniversary theme to compose a commemorative anthem. Convenience sampling technique was used to pick documents from the College registry for data sourcing. Focusing on addressing societal inequalities through research and action as a transformativist who is geared towards emancipatory goal, the researcher aimed at using musical sounds to remove oppressive systems and structures that will impede access to the College. Ethnographic research design, which allows interpretation of qualitative data was used as a paradigm. Interpretive paradigm describes a philosophical position, which considers reality as a social creation, which is experienced subjectively (Kusi, 2012). Kusi posits that ethnography is a design, which expects the researcher to spend a prolong time within a natural setting to which he or she becomes a member while studying them and collecting an observational data. The researcher is an assistant lecturer in Dambai College of Education for more than five years and achieved a full membership of the said community and has immersed himself into the matters of the College. Convenience sampling was used to select documents from the College registry for data sourcing. Thematic analysis was employed to interpret and develop themes from the data collected. After thorough studying of the chosen documents, facts were picked as data and coded, themes were generated and reviewed to settle on final themes of Suffering, Hatred, Neglect, Underdevelopment, and Success, which made easier the composition. Thematic analysis is a technique for analysing qualitative data in which a set of data is read through, and themes are discovered by looking for patterns in the meaning of the data. Making sense of the data is an active reflexive process where the researcher's personal experience is crucial. Caulfield (2022) postulates that “it is limitless for literature to observe thematic analysis as an approach to qualitative data analysis. It usually refers to it as a collection of texts, such as interview or a transcript”. Laptop computer and finale software were the tools used.

Agordoh (1994) observes that in Africa, music has many uses. It does not only function as an accompaniment to various activities, but it is also for entertainment. This is true as in this paper, music is not used only as an avenue for entertainment. It was used as a link between socio-cultural activities and history to connect the global audience. As well, music becomes one of the

strongest tools the paper used to communicate the needs of the College to her intended cherished audience in the African way.

The paper leans on the theory of Bogdan and Biklen (1992) which states that qualitative research has a design to suggest otherwise would be misleading. How they proceed is based on theoretical assumptions (the meaning and process are crucial in understanding human behaviour, the descriptive data are what is important to collect, and that analysis is best done inductively) and data collection traditions such as participant observation, unstructured interviewing and document analysis. These provide parameters, the tools and the general guide to proceed. Analytical study of documents on the College gleaned volume of data for the composition of the 50th Anniversary Anthem.

In providing a frame to situate the study, Euba (1993) says African Art Music as a form of music that is universal to all Africans, and which will probably be used more for contemplation than to serve as accompaniment for social events. Such music in order to be truly African must use the stylistic and instrumental materials of African music or at least, a preponderance of them. It is evidently implied that a piece of music must feature such musical idioms known in African music vein in order to be considered as African Art Music. So, in composing African Art Music, dances or a dance in an African vein, instrument(s) that feature(s) in that dance and indigenous tongue(s) must be used. Therefore, in the composition, the bell and rattle patterns are written for, in the anniversary anthem. It is true that [modern African] composers have often attempted to Africanise their works by using African tunes and rhythms, but, in their preoccupation with Western forms, such borrowings have been quite minimal, and their works must be regarded as extensions of Western art music rather than a continuation of African tradition in music (Euba 1970). *Mitso Aseye* (Make Merry) anthem moves in the opposite direction of what Euba was pointing to. The anthem showcased many African forms from the very beginning till the end to situate itself in African musical orientation and resisted the temptation of becoming an extension of Western music. The *atumpan* introduction calling for silence (i.e., *Mizi Doḍoe*), the announcement of the double bell saying “*Agoo*”, the indigenous linguistic media that introduced the anthem (i.e., *Ewe, Twi, Kaachi* and *Nchumuru* languages), and the use of *Agbadza* ensemble are all test cases of the African art musical orientation of the piece. In support of Euba, Agbenyega (2015) cited in Agbenyega (2022) opines what becomes known to this study as the theory of *Blegeism*; saying that for music to be truly African, and for the term African Art Music to be meaningfully define, conception of musical communication

must be African in origin but not only the composer. African music should be set to African dances, language contour must strictly be observed, rhythmic patterns must be African. Hence in composing his music, *Blege* will always ask himself the following questions thus: If *Ewe/Eve* people are to sing their song, which;

- i. dance will they set it to (traditional dance e.g., *akpi*, *agbadza*, *gahu*, etc.)?
- ii. type of instruments will they play on it (i.e., instruments of a particular dance)?
- iii. type of people (i.e., males or females) will play the instruments?
- iv. type of song will they want to sing on the dance (i.e., the dance vein.)? and
- v. how would the song go (i.e., movements that will be made on the song, rhythm of the dance.)?

The theory of *Blegeism* offers a rare opportunity to examine the intersection of cultural philosophy and musical composition that grounded *Mitso Aseye* (Make Merry) piece in African Art Music. Utilisation of the theory of *Blegeism* and the theoretical frameworks of Agordoh (1994), Bogdan and Biklen (1992, p. 8), and Euba (1993, p.4,) made easy the composition of the 50th Anniversary Anthem.

Analysis of *Mitso Aseye* (Make a Merry) anthem

Make Merry is one of the original compositions of the researcher, a Ghanaian art musician from *Mafi Dadoboe* in the Central *Tongu* District of the Volta Region. Make Merry, a hundred and ninety-five measure anthem, was composed in May 2024 as a commemorative musical artefact towards the celebration of the fiftieth anniversary of the Dambai College of Education.

An analytical overview of *Mitso Aseye* (i.e., Make a Merry) reveals the following under these thematic areas:

1. Use of African indigenous instruments
2. Observance of tonal inflections
3. Sensitivity to speech rhythm and prosody
4. Application of dynamic indicators

Use of African indigenous instruments

One of the distinguishing features that identify an African composer of African art music is his or her ability to make use of African indigenous instruments in his or her compositions. The use of African musical resource including instruments, idioms and rhythms by the composer of African art music is an indication of the composer's firm grasp of knowledge in his indigenous genres. In following the footsteps of the concept of *Blegeism*; an approach to Ghanaian art music composition, Zanga (2021) states "Composers of African art music must be the ones who have in-depth knowledge about indigenous African music and must be well versed in it. They need also to be very skilful in the idioms of their indigenous African music so that they can flexibly bring their skills to bear on their art compositions, and eventually make such compositions sound African" (p.17).

Nketia, respectively cited in Agbenyega (2015) and Zanga (2021), was quoted affirming that

A composer must master the fundamentals of African melodies and rhythms so that he can create African tunes.... When he is able to do this, he needs not always to borrow from the traditional repertoire, for he can create tunes that would be true to the traditional idioms (p.17).

Make a Merry reveals a skilful utilisation of African instruments such as the talking drum (*Atumpan*) and the double bell (*Gakogui*). Examples are evident from measure 1 through to 5 and 11 to 14. He assigned these instruments to their traditional tunes and rhythms, thereby making them depict their true African identity in a typical African art composition. Interestingly, the last two sections (E and F) starting from measure 139 to 184 have been dedicated to a full scale *Agbadza* (i.e., a recreational dance from the *Tongu* and the *Anlo* people of the Volta region of Ghana) accompaniment.

Observance of tonal inflections

Most African languages including Ewe are tonal; the rise and fall in tones help immensely in meaning making. In other words, a change in the contour of a word or syllable gives birth to a significant change in meaning. According to Agordoh (1994),

One of the major problems confronting composers of Ewe choral music arises from the fact that our traditional music composers are also the poets who have to make up their own words. The work of a composer-poet is judged not merely by the beauty of his/her music but by quality of his lyrics too (p.46).

Agordoh was also cited in Zanga (2021) arguing, “For the above reason, a word (group of words) must be properly in toned musically for the true meaning to be conveyed or understood. It is therefore clear that to sing Ewe words to European tunes is unsatisfactory.” Applying that knowledge, the researcher/composer tailored his melodies to fit appropriately to the intonational inflections of the Ewe language, hence facilitating lyrical meaningfulness.

Sensitivity to speech rhythm and prosody

The essence of vocal music is to convey message through words. Rhythm and prosody also play significant roles in meaning making. That is the reason the melodic rhythm should not depart from the speech rhythm of the spoken language. In the views of Palmer (2006), “Musical prosody is a complex, rule-governed form of auditory stimulation, and it can move listeners emotionally in systematic ways.” In *Make a Merry*, the researcher/composer paid strict attention to the rhythmic and prosodic nuances of the Ewe language and tactfully applied them to his lyrics.

Application of dynamic indicators

To effectively communicate his message to his audience, the researcher/composer utilised varied dynamics markings as he put himself in the shoes of his audience. Some of the dynamics included *mp*, *p*, *pp*, *ppp*, *mf*, *f*, *ff*, *fff*, *sfz*. This act in turn enhances the performance of the music so as to convey the composer’s envisaged emotional feelings to the listener.

Opening on a Submediant note

Usually in diatonic scales, the tonic, dominant and mediant notes are used at the openings of songs. But here, the researcher/composer used the submediant note to open *his* *Make a Merry* (measure 6) purposely to create an effect. This was done to give emphasis to and enhance the semiotic effects of the lyrics in question - *Mizi dɔdɔe* - to mean “Give me your attention”.



Fig. 1

Use of different chords for the same texts

A unique compositional skill observed in Make a Merry is the use of different chords for the same set of texts. There are number of instances where the researcher deployed varying chords to go with specific phrases with the intent and purpose of laying emphasis. This is exemplified in measures 6 to 8, 63 to 70 and 81 to 89.



Fig. 2

Use of consecutive 6ths, 3rds and 5ths

It is also worthy to take note of the researcher's flair for the use of consecutive 6ths as one of his harmonic techniques. Several instances in the composition attest to his love for consecutive 6ths to portray a special harmonic taste. Any time he did, the intended sonorous sense is obvious. References could be made to bars 7 to 8, 19 to 21 and 83 to 85 to mention but a few. Another visible

harmonic technique which was skilfully used by the researcher is the consecutive 3rds progressions. On many occasions, he used consecutive 3rds as a harmonic device to construct a kind of two parts harmony as in measures 22 to 23, 122 to 125, 127 to 137 and 163 to 166. In other scenarios, he used the 3rds in complete chords for tutti as can be found in measures 39 to 43, 51 to 53 and 106 to 108. Western compositional rules frowned on harmonies of consecutive 5ths. However, among some Ewe groupings in Ghana, specifically among the *Tongu* and *Anlo* people of the Southern Volta, their traditional musical harmonies are built with consecutive 5ths. From that background, and in order to depict a typical traditional Southern Volta flavour, the researcher/composer made purposeful use of consecutive 5ths, a sharp departure from the Western world. Examples can be found in bars 76 to 79, 117, 120 to 121 and 178.

Texture

Section C is made of fugal exposition. This allows the four parts to come in turns starting from soprano part and ending on the bass part. This made the overall sound effects to be densely populated making the piece not only to be contrapuntal but highly polyphony.

For emphasis, *Make a Merry anthem* is a choral work that draws inspiration from the Theme: *50 Years of Modelling Society through Excellent Teacher Education: Successes, Challenges and Prospects* and other historical and cultural antecedence for its composition. The Anthem takes its audience through varied shades of moods to dramatically exhibit the plethora of challenges the College had gone through from its inception to its current struggles and her future expectations. It covers six sections identified as Section A, B, C, D, E and F. These sections focused on specific messages the anthem delivered.

Being cognisant with the linguistic environment of the College, the researcher/composer used, *Eve*, *Twi*, *Nchumuru*, *Kaachi* and English languages as medium to communicate the message the anthem carries to its audience. English language formed a major part of the song against the expectations of *Blegeism*, which preaches development of taste for a complete grown home food. This medium becomes imperative to demonstrate the formal linguistic environment of the College. The *Eve*, *Twi*, *Nchumuru* and *Kaachi* languages put together formed a small portion of the anthem. Section A, where the latter languages are located is the overture of the anthem.

The piece is composed in a compound duple time. The tonic key is D major but has gone through a few transient modulations. Some of these brief movements were made into related major and minor keys of **G** and **A** majors and **b** minor. Others were just mere chromatic decorations. The anthem is thoroughly composed. Yet, the *agbadza* section featured Call-And-Response form.

Section A

To contextually situate it into African musical practices, the anthem dramatically opens with an *atumpan* introduction playing a command for silence (i.e., **Đođoe nezi, dođoe nezi, dođoe nezi toŋ, toŋ, toŋ, toŋ, dođoe nezi**). Figure one showcases the graphic of the scene.

Fig. 3

MITSO ASEYE
In Evergreen Memory of the 50th Anniversary (Golden Jubilee) Celebration of the Dambai College of Education
 Agbenyega Philemon D.K.
 May 4, 2024

SECTION A

Atumpan overture

Đo đoe ne zi, do đoe ne zi, do đoe ne zi toŋ, toŋ toŋ toŋ do đoe ne zi

Voice responds replicates the twin talking drums (i.e., *atumpan*) patterns in SATB (i.e., Soprano, Alto, Tenor, Bass) but with varied rhythmic movements in parts.

Mi zi do đoe, mi zi do đoe toŋ mi zi do đoe

Mi zi, mi zi mi zi do đoe

Mi zi, mi zi mi zi, mi zi, mi zi do đoe

Fig. 4

A two-bar rest was observed to dramatically give meaning to the command placed by the *atumpan* and the chorus. In breaking the ennui of the silence, a gong pattern comes following; in a town-crier manner (*i.e., tin, gon, gon, gon, gon gon gon gon gon gon gon gon gon, tin gon*). Chorus resumes seeking audience's attention for a message through singing:

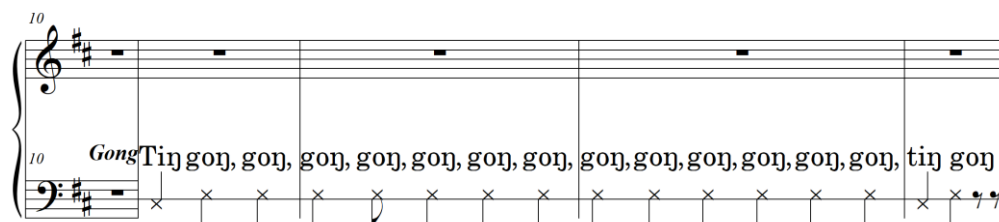


Fig. 5

After the gong comes the announcement, saying:

TEXT IN EWE

TEXT IN ENGLISH

Ago!

a symbolic knock on the door of audiences' heart to listen for the announcement

*Dumegãwo kple dumeviwo
keŋ misee*

To wit: community leaders and the leads listen

*Dɔmemegãwo
dzikpɔlawo siã*

kple To wit: all departmental heads and parents/guardians

Mina tom, dua dzaa

To wit: grant me your listening, everybody

*Mina mɔm magblɔ nya 'dɛ na
mi*

To wit: permit me to tell you something

*i.e., ge metua xo na 'daba o
dee*

It continues to say as people of old will put it; it is preposterous for the young to relate experiences of the past to the elderly Yet, your permission I sought to go against the norm

Re-emphasising the need for perfect silence, the song switched code into *Twi*, *Nchumuru* and *Kaachi* to express the need for silence thus:

TEXT IN

TEXT IN ENGLISH

Twi: Monye komm na mere ka bibri Keep quiet let me tell you something
akyere mo

Nchumuru: Mowɔa dinn san toe Keep quiet let me tell you something
asan ko dwi me ne

Kaachi: Mekore bele ben se we koso Keep quiet let me tell you something

The composer failed to do this section in English language not only for dramatic purposes but to also linguistically demonstrate the real happenings around the communication and social environment where the College exists. This also demonstrates the inter-culturalism of the anthem making it suitable for the listening of people of diverse linguistic orientations. It also exhibits the bi – musicality of the composer.

37 *rit.*
p Mo nye komm Mo nye komm Mo nye komm Mo nye.....

41 m're 'ka b'ri bi a ky're mo pp Mo wɔa dinn sa'n toe

46 a san ko dwi me ne O Mekore bele ben se we koso ppp

Fig. 6

Section B

Comparing the building of the Dambai College of Education to a small seed sown a time in history, the song drawn the attention of the listening public to the historical antecedent of the foundation of the institution. It was a seed of luck, a seed of love, and a seed of development, nurtured it to enviable maturity. It has grown into a very giant tree. It spread branches all over. It provides shade on homeland; it has grown to give shade to our motherland. *Blege* in his *NUKUWULA* used the concept of storey building and made sound behaved likewise. (Fig. v is extract from *nukuwula*)

Extract from Blege's Nukuwula



Fig. 7

Demonstrating the relevance of the concept of *Blegeism*, the researcher adopted the style used in *Nukuwula* to address the feeling that the College is a small seed sown that germinated, nurtured, grown, bore fruits to feed many people to their fill. Indeed, DACE as a tree bore fruits for people, animals, birds, communities, colonies, gives them comfort, brought happiness to homes. It bore many good seeds. Section B is to be sang twice. This is a demonstration of the diverse people who were trained in the College, others who are being trained now and the thousands of them who will be trained in the future escapades of the College. It is also a reference to the limitless people who were employed, being employed and will be employed to work in the

various sectors of the College for their livelihood and those of their dependents.

55

vui la To gbui wo

Gbe de ka leble ma ke le ble ma vui ke wo.....

Le ble ma vui la To gbui wo

55

Fig. 8

59

ble ma fa—ku nyuia de

A seed of peace, a seed of love, a seed of it was a

59

81

SECTION B

It fed peo-ple, fed a-ni - mals, fed ma-ny birds, fed all na -

It bore fruit, it bore fruit, it bore fruit, it bore fruit, it

81

It fed peo-ple, fed a-ni - mals, fed ma-ny birds, fed all na -

63

accel.

growth, Was nur-tured, wa nur-tured, was nur-tured, was nur-tured, seed of growth It sprout, it grew, ma-tured, spread bran-

63

Fig. 9

Section C

This section moves in fugal expository form. Soprano starts the section. It is followed by Alto, then Tenor and finally Bass part joined to end the section. The sound moved in an interwoven manner, making sound to meander among homophony, heterophony, and polyphony to make the overall sound effect to be contrapuntal. The message in this stretch is for the audiences to be happy to have lived to meet the day of the golden jubilee celebration of the College. There is a repetition of the section. Technically, tenor part coupled the soprano part as bass also coupled the alto part. In doing so, soprano and tenor parts called in the tonic D major key while alto and bass part responded in the dominant A major, which is a relative major key to the tonic key. This described another kind of Call-And-Response relationship among the parts putting the piece in the domain of African Art Music. The figure below is a proof of case.

92 SECTION C

Make a, make a, let's make mer-ry we're a-live to meet this Ju-bi-lee

97 Mer-ry, make a mer-ry we're a - live to meet this mile-stone O,

Make a, make a, Let's make mer-ry we're a-live to meet this Ju-bi-lee Make a mer-ry, Make a, make a,

Fig. 10

Section D

This section acknowledges the fact that since the inception of the College, thousands of people were trained in various programmes (Certs. "B", "A", Diploma, UTDBE, Degree, SANDWICH) and have been very successful in all these life changing ventures. Yet, the journey to these achievements has been a daunting task as we laboured through the mountains to the valleys, through many deep, deep caves tearfully and walked through very many muddy, muddy, muddy, muddy grounds. But today, the College is somehow

walking on a levelled grounds with joy and happiness. Let the songs of happiness play, songs should play. The section is repeated twice.

SECTION D

Ma-ny, ma-ny, ma - ny years we e-xist, and we ven-tured, with
 Ma-ny, ma-ny, ma - ny, ma-ny, ma-ny years we live we ven-tured, yes, with

Fig. 11

Section E

This part in a back-and-forth manner showcases *Agbadza* dance movement with full instrumental accompaniment. The section implores the audience to be happy for, God kept us alive to meet the day of the anniversary. Many people could not live to meet the day. Even many students and workers could not complete their mission in the College. Yet, we, are alive to meet the day with success. Be happy, praise the great God. Sing, dance, be happy and make merry. Let the sound of all kinds of drums (membranophones) and string instruments (chordophones) as well as the almighty double bells (idiophones) vibrate with thunderous joy to celebrate the day. Leaders and subordinates should rise to the occasion with dance movements. These are done with constant repetitions to sum up the section in a gleefully diminishing manner for seven times.

This part is to be performed in Agbadza Dance Vein

Tin gon go gon gon gon tin gon go gon gon tin gon
 Pa pa ti pa pa ti pa ti pa ti pa
 tin gon go gon gon gon tin gon pa, pa ti pa pa ti pa ti pa ti pa pa pa ti pa pa



Fig. 12

Section F

This is the final section of the piece. Here, the audiences are encouraged not to feel miserable as the day is a day of merry making. They are admonished to make so much merry. The College will expand, grow and develop from strength to strength and become a giant community among her peers within the soonest time. In a rather relaxed and solemn manner, listeners are asked to believe in our hopes and aspirations and pray with us as assuredly, God shall respond to our call and make our struggles not to go in vain. The song ended with a rapid movement (*presto*) on the words: Make a merry. The composer here again implores College management to walk this talk towards the achievement of its projections. Talking to people who matters, moving closely to the offices that have the answers to our problem, striving to bridge the infrastructural deficit of the College and finally working hard towards transforming the College into full university status bringing truly tertiary education to the doorsteps of a marginalised region like *Oti* should be pursued without looking back.

194

Presto

Make a mer-ry.

194

Fig. 13

The Anthem was originally composed largely in Ewe (i.e., *Eve*) language. It was later translated into English language. This latter choice became necessary to reflect the official lingua franca of the College.

Find below the texts of the anthem for soprano and alto parts for SATB, both the *Ewe, Twi, Nchumuru, Krachi* and English versions arranged from left to right respectively.

SOPRANO PART IN EWE	SOPRANO PART IN ENGLISH
Mizi dɔdɔe, mizi dɔdɔe toŋ mizi dɔdɔe.	XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX XXXXXXXXXXXX
Agoo, dumegãwo kple dumeviwo keŋ misee	XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX XXXXXXXXXXXX
Mina tom, dua dzaa	XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX XXXXXXXXXXXX
Ɖaba o ɔee	XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX XXXXXXXXXXXX
Mina magblɔe ko dzro lo	XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX
Monye komm m're-ka b'ri-bi aky're mo	XXXXXXXXXXXX XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX
Mowɔa dinn sa'n-toe asan ko dwi me ne	XXXXXXXXXXXX XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX
O, meko re bele ben se we koso	XXXXXXXXXXXX

<p>Gbe d̥eka le blema vui la t̥ɔgbuiwo fa ku nyuia d̥e le blema</p> <p>Ḍagbe fe kue, lol̥o fe kue, tsitsi fe kue</p> <p>Wode tsi, wode tsi, wode tsi, wode tsi wode tsi, wode tsi, wode tsi wòtsi</p> <p>Ed̥'a-l̥o he d̥o v̥ov̥l̥i d̥e denyigba dzi</p> <p>Etsi vu tsy̥o denyigba dzi</p> <p> : Amewo d̥u, el̥āwo d̥u, exewo d̥u, duk̥owo d̥u, 'vak̥owo d̥u kp̥o gb̥o d̥e me, dzidz̥o va 'fe</p> <p>Etseku nyuiwo s̥oŋ : </p>	<p>XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX XXXXXXXXXXXX</p> <p>XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX XXXXXXXXXXXX</p> <p>XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX XXXXXXXXXXXX</p> <p>XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX XXXXXXXXXXXX</p> <p>A seed of peace, a seed of love, a seed of growth</p> <p>Was nurtured, was nurtured, was nurtured, was nurtured, was nurtured, was nurtured, was nurtured, it grew</p> <p>Spread branches, and providing a shade on our homeland, it grows to hedge our motherland</p> <p> : It fed people, fed animals, fed many birds, fed all nations, fed colonies, got them comfort, happiness home</p>
ALTO PART IN EWE	ALTO PART IN ENGLISH
<p> : Mikp̥o, mikp̥o, mikp̥o dzidz̥o m̥iel'a-gbe fe sia tso m̥i d̥o lo</p> <p>Mikp̥o, mikp̥o, mikp̥o dzidz̥o be fe sia va tso d̥o lo</p> <p>Dzidz̥o kp̥o gbe 'nye; aseye hawo ne d̥i bobobo bobo be m̥iel'a- gbe fe sia va tu : </p>	<p> : Make a, make a, let's make merry we're alive to meet this Jubilee</p> <p>Make a merry, make a merry for the Jubilee year is here</p> <p>Let us rejoice today; may Jubilee songs echo very loud, aloud, we are alive to see this day: </p>

<p> : Fe gedegede siwo miedzō la, ye míeh'a-me'ō, míekpō ta le agbedōa wōwō me</p> <p>Míezō towō dzi, baliwo me, agado gagagāwō me kpl'a-dātsi</p> <p>Míefli kpo, fli ve kple vevesese</p> <p>Zō ba finyafinyafinyafinyawo me</p> <p>Egbe ya míele zōzrē fe zōm kple dzidzō 'seye dzidzō 'seye hawo ne dī, hawo ne dī : </p> <p> : Midzō dzi, midzō dzi Mawu l'a- gbe dē ta na mi fea tso mi dō</p> <p>Midzō dzi, midzō dzi Mawu l'a-gbe dē ta na mi fea tso mi dō: </p> <p>'Me gedegede woetsi mōa dzi, 'me gedegede woetsi mōa ta</p> <p>Míawo ya míega l'a-gbe egbe tso dō lo,</p> <p>Midzō dzi (<i>Go back to the repetition</i>)</p> <p>Midzi ha, midu ye, mikpō dzidzō mitso'a-seye</p> <p>(<i>Go back to the repetition</i>)</p> <p>Gàkogoe'o ne dī kple dzidzō yli bobobo</p> <p>(<i>Go back to the repetition</i>)</p> <p>Egbee nye mía nkeke miga lé blanui o</p> <p>Dzi ne dzō mi</p>	<p> : Many, many, many years, that we live and we ventured, with success, throughout this life changing game</p> <p>Laboured through mountains to the valleys; through many deep, deep, deep, deep caves tearfully</p> <p>Undulating grounds, with many a pain</p> <p>Walked very many muddy, muddy, muddy grounds</p> <p>Yet today, we are walking on a leveled ground</p> <p>With joy, merry, merry, songs should vibrate, songs should echo: </p> <p> : Be joyous, be joyous God with us, sustaining our lives, the Jubilee's here</p> <p>Be joyous, be joyous God with us, sustaining our lives, the Jubilee's here: </p> <p>Many so many people gave up, many so many people bowed out</p> <p>But we are so fortunate to see this milestone</p> <p>Be joyous (<i>Go back to the repetition</i>)</p> <p>Let us sing, jubilate, let's give praise and make a merry.</p> <p>(<i>Go back to the repetition</i>)</p>
--	--

Míakeke ta ɖe ‘dzi, míatsi ɖe ‘dzi azu du xɔ ɲkɔ míatɔwo dome yeyiyi kpui’a-ɖe	Let double bells ring making a beautiful noise <i>(Go back to the repetition)</i>
Mido gbe ɖa loo; doe ɖa, Mawu awɔɛ na mi’a- lea	This’ the jubilee day, feel not miserable Be so happy
Mitso’a-seye.	We shall keep expanding, we shall go far, to be a renowned nation among our peers in the soonest time Let us keep praying; pray, pray; the Lord shall make it happen Make a merry

The score is captured in appendix I for full access of other parts.

The paper discovered that until recently, there was an abject lack of interest and neglect in the Dambai College of Education by stakeholders leading to her poor infrastructural development. Typical examples are the stalled campus access road network, administration complex block and auditorium projects, which were reincarnated by the current administration, unavailability and enough and befitting dormitory facilities for learners to commensurate a college status, a sting of insufficient bungalows for staff, and an erratic water system. The effect of this under resourced nature of the area and mistreatment led many people to shun the company of the College. To attest, many workers declined appointments to work in the College, trainees always chose the College as their last preference. For association, staff of other colleges jeered and look at workers of DACE as a second option to consider. Yet today, the College is gearing towards the pinnacle of development; seriously rubbing shoulders with her peers. Many workers are expressing high interest to work in the College. The College is not able to even admit thousands of applicants with attractive grades who chose her as a first option for their professional training. This new paradigm shift did not just come on silver platter. It was by dint of hard work through talking and walking the talk for the College to come this far. The study concluded that anniversary anthems significantly contribute to the cultural and historical narratives of institutions and should not be

overlooked. The researcher is of no doubt that this commemorative anthem will remain a cherished institutional memory and cultural artefact that would connect the Dambai College of Education with her global audiences.

Conclusion

This paper discovers a striking change in the College's status, from underdevelopment and neglect to a reputable and competitive institution. Its managements' diligence, commitment, and prayers are credited with this progress. This journey is reflected in the Golden Jubilee anthem, which captures the College's setbacks and victories. Although the anthem's score offers a wealth of information for additional musical and cultural analysis, it is advised that future scholars look more closely at its significance. The study's conclusion exhorts interested parties to keep up their relentless pursuit of complete university autonomy.

Again, the concept of *Blegeism* offered a path for the composition Make Merry, this giant commemorative anthem, placing it in the domain of African Art Music. This made the researcher/composer utilised compositional idioms of *agbadza* dance, which is Ghanaian traditional dance vein. Test cases are the use of local instruments such as the twin talking drums (i.e., *atumpān*), which introduces the anthem, the use of the gong for announcement in the night crier mode, the use of *sogo* (master drum), *kidi* (medium pitched and size supporting drum), *kagan* (smallest and highly pitched supporting drum), *akaya* (rattle), *gaḍoḍo* (double bell) instruments to accompany the *agbadza* dance section, and the use of local languages of Ewe, Twi, *Nchumuru* and *Kaachi* at the beginning of the anthem. Speech rhythm, tonal inflection and language are all obediently Ghanaian except the use of English language to represent the official lingual Franca of the College.

Agordoh (2004) in his analytical works, displayed the chosen musical scores of Dr. Ephraim Amu (the Teacher) and Prof. Nicholas Zinzendorf Nayo (the Taught) in the book "The Music of Amu and Nayo" to aid understanding and easy access to these works. Towing the same line and for want of not making this paper vague especially to the music elites, the score of the anniversary anthem, which absolutely is the product of the research is captured in the paper as appendix I to aid access of the huge data it provided.

Ethical Statement

The study involves non-human participants and was rigorously reviewed and approved by seasoned institutional Professors who had to their credit more

than fifty published articles that surfaced in peer reviewed journals worldwide. Gathering data for the paper, pieces of information were surfed from graduation and matriculation brochures, paper files, the College motto, and the anniversary theme. The manuscript has been proofread to improve its language semantics, concepts and analytical principles. The ensuing composition is also post scripted.

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5. My wife and children for their endurance.

Conflict of Interest

The researcher avows that there is no conflict of interest with regards to the publication of this paper.

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Generative AI Statement

As the author of this study, I minimally used the AI tool (ChatGPT) only for the purpose of summarising especially the abstract in order to accurately get the number of words required by the journal. After using this AI tool, I reviewed and verified the final version of the study. I, as the author, therefore, take full responsibility for the content of the published work.

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Appendix

MITSO'A-SEYE

In Evergreen Memory of the 50th Anniversary (Golden Jubilee) Celebration of the Dambai College of Education

Agbenyega Philemon D.K.
May 4, 2024

SECTION A

Atumpan overture

Mi zi do doe, Mi zi, mi zi, —

mi zi do doe tori mi zi do doe
Mi zi, mi zi mi zi do doe
mi zi, mi zi

Gong

Voice A goo — Du me gā wo kple du me vi wo ken

Mi na tom

mi see Do me me gā wo kple dzi kpo la wo siā *ffz* *fff* Dua dzaa —

Mi na mām ma gblō nya 'de na mi Tsi tsia wo gblæ be
To gbo be tsi tsia wo gblæ, wo

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024-303-6414

51
ge me tua xo na 'da ba o dee. Ga ke mi na ma

31
gblæ me se be

36
gblæ ko dzro lo Mo nye komm
rit. Mo nye komm Mo nye komm m're

42
'ka b'ri bi a ky're mo pp Mo wæ dinn sa'n toe a san ko dwi me

48
ne O — ppp Me ko re be le ben se we ko so a tempo ff Mi se, mi se

55
vui la Tɔ gbui wo
Gbe de ka le ble ma ke le ble ma vui ke wo fa ku nyuia de le
Le ble ma vui la Tɔ gbui wo fa, tɔ gbui wo

ble ma
fa ku nyuia de

A seed of peace, a seed of love, a seed of growth, Was nur-tured, it was a seed of growth It

wa nur-tured, it grew, was nur-tured, ma-tured, was nur-tured, spread bran-ches, was nur-tured, was de-

nur-tured, was nur-tured, it grew Spread bran-ches, and pro-vi-ding a shade on our home-ve-loped, was nur-tured, it grew and

land It grows to hedge our mo-ther-land

SECTION B

It fed peo-ple, fed a-ni-mals, fed ma-ny birds, fed all na-It bore fruit, it bore fruit, it bore fruit, it bore fruit, it

It fed peo-ple, fed a-ni-mals, fed ma-ny birds, fed all na-

tion, fed co-lo - nies, got them com - fort, hap - pi - ness home, It bore ma - ny good fruits.
bore fruit, it bore fruit, it bore fruit, it bore fruit, it bore ma - ny good fruits It

tion, fed co - lo - nies, got them com - fort, hap - pi - ness home, It bore ma - ny good fruits

good fruits. **SECTION C** Make a, make a, let's make mer - ry we're a - live to meet this Ju - bi - lee

Mer - ry, make a mer - ry we're a - live to meet this mile - stone O,
Make a, make a, Let's make mer - ry we're a - live to meet this Ju - bi - lee Make a mer - ry,
Make a, make a,

make a mer - ry, for the Ju - bi - lee is here
make a mer - ry for the ju - bi - lee year is here Let us re - joice to -
let's make mer - ry we're a - live to meet this Ju - bi - lee Make a mer - ry to -
Make a, make a,

day: _____ may Ju - bi - lee songs e - cho ve - ry loud, a - loud, we are
day let's make mer - ry we're a - live to meet this Ju - bi - lee _____

110 **SECTION D**

a-live to see this day Ma-ny, ma-ny, ma-ny years we e-xist, and we ven-tured, with

110 Ma-ny, ma-ny, ma-ny, ma-ny, ma-ny years we live we ven-tured, yes, with

116 in

suc-cess, thro'-out this life chan-ging game La-boured thro' moun-tains to the val-leys; thro'

116 suc-cess, thro' this life chan-ging game And we la-boured thro' moun-tains to the va-leys;

122

ma-ny deep, deep, deep, deep cave tear-ful-ly Un-du-la-ting grounds, ei, with ma-ny

122

127

a pain Walked ve-ry ma-ny mud-dy, mud-dy, mud-dy grounds Yet, to-day, we are wal-king on

127

132

With joy, mer-ry, mer-ry

— a le-veled ground Ju-bi-lee songs should vi-brate, songs should e-cho

132

with joy, mer-ry mer-ry

SECTION E

This part is to be performed in Agbadza Dance Vein

Double Bell

Rattle

146 Be jo-yous, be jo-yous God with us, sus-tai-ning our life the Ju-bi-lee is here Be jo-yous, be jo-

151 yous God with us, sus-tai-ning our lives, the Ju-bi-lee's here *mf* Ma-ny, so ma-ny peo-ple gave up,

156 *f* -ma-ny, so ma-ny peo-ple bowed out *ff* But we are so for tu-nate to see this mile-stone

161 Make a mer-ry

Be joy - yous

Let us praise the Great God

Go back to bar 150-153 without repetition

Let us sing, ju-bi-late Let's give praise and make a mer-ry

167

Go back to bar 150-153 without repetition

All kinds of drums play, string ins-tru-ments

Let dou-ble bells ring ma-king a beau-ti-ful sound bowed grace-ful-ly with joy-ful sounds

Go back to bar 150-153 without repetition

173

SECTION F

Lea-ders be up, the leads be up, ju-bi-late

Go back to bar 150-153 without repetition then to bar 146-153 con replica 7 times diminishing each time till it dies off. Then continue at Coda.

This' the Ju-bi-lee day,

178

feel not mi-se-ra-ble Be so hap-py We shall keep ex-pan-ding, we shall go

184

great, great na - tion pret-ty soon Be lieve

far, to be a re-nown na - tion a-mong our peers in the soo-nest time

re-nown na - tion a-mong our peers pret-ty soon

re-nown na - tion a-mong our peers in the soo-nest time

189

it;

Let us keep praying Be lieve it pray, pray the Lord shall make it hap-pen

Presto

Make a mer-ry.

The role of on-campus childcare centre in improving student mothers' learning outcome: A case study of Dambai College of Education, Oti Region, Ghana

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Abstract

This study explored the positive impact of Dambai College of Education nursery on student- nursing-mothers' educational attainment by focusing on academic achievement, maternal nutritional health, spousal relationship, and child health. Using qualitative approach, structured interviews were conducted on nine student-nursing-mothers sampled through purposive and census sampling.

The nursery school boosted academic performance through regular attendance, active engagement, and supported teaching, improving GPAs and program completion. It enhanced maternal health, strengthened parental relationships, and fostered children's physical and social development, demonstrating holistic benefits for families. The study concluded that such support systems as institution-based nursery should be implemented in all higher education institutions to promote inclusive and accessible education to all to fulfil SDG 4. Research the nursery's impact on staff career fulfilment and graduates' long-term careers. Investigate strategies to replicate nurseries in Ghana's Colleges of Education lacking such facilities.

Keywords: *Student-Nursing-Mothers, Nursery School, Educational Attainment, On-campus Childcare, College of Education*

Introduction

In Ghana, higher education institutions including certificate, diploma, and bachelor's degree-awarding Colleges of Education are structured to admit full-time high school graduates, typically assumed to be unmarried and childless. Consequently, these institutions historically lacked nursery facilities to accommodate students with children. However, societal trends in the 21st century reveal a growing prevalence of early adulthood marriages and parenting among high school graduates, driven by factors such as socioeconomic disparities (e.g., poverty among young women and financial influence of male partners), improved nutrition, and cultural pressures. Prior to recent reforms, female students who became pregnant or married during their training faced mandatory dismissal under teacher education codes, resulting in high dropout rates. Student Nursing Mothers (SNMs) continue to face systemic barriers, including rigid class schedules, inadequate institutional support, and financial strain from childcare costs, which collectively undermine academic performance and engagement (Amos *et al.*, 2021; Osafo, 2017; Ashipala & Natanael, 2022).

The integration of Ghana's Colleges of Education is also hinged on the SDG 4 of inclusive and equitable education and has led to policy reforms. Conversions from diploma- to degree-awarding institutions now need to be flexible enough so as to make provision for pregnant students and SNMs. The Dambai College of Education, for example, opened a nursery within the college to resolve the childcare problems. The study differentiates between the two groups of the traditional student (no constant childcare demands) and the student nursing mother (SNM) to determine how the nursery affects academic

achievement.

On-campus nurseries are crucial for the success of student-parents globally. Access to low-cost childcare near the PSIs correlates with higher completion rates due to the fact that it allows SNMs to balance parenting and academics (Reichlin Cruse *et al.*, 2018; Gault *et al.*, 2019).

Psychological safety of near childcare facilities also enhances the concentration and decreases the stress (Navarro-Cruz, 2020; Nagaddya Mallawa Arachchi, 2023). Yet, these facilities are a rare resource in Ghanaian higher education and serve to reinforce inequities and subvert the demand of SDG 4 for universal access.

Recognising this gap, Dambai College of Education established a nursery school to support both staff and student nursing mothers who require childcare services. Given the significance of this intervention, the college sought to evaluate the impact of the nursery on the academic performance of student nursing mothers, prompting this scientific inquiry. Thus, this study examines the impact of the on-campus nursery and related support interventions on the academic outcomes of student nursing mothers at Dambai College of Education.

Research questions

1. What was the impact of the college nursery on the student-nursing-mothers' educational performance on their educational attainment at the College?
2. What was the impact of the College Nursery on the student-nursing-mothers' maternal nutritional health on their educational attainment at the College?
3. What was the impact of the College Nursery on the student-nursing-mothers' spousal relationship or health on their educational attainment at the College?
4. What was the impact of the College Nursery on the health of the enrolled child on the educational attainment of the student-nursing-mothers at the College?

Theoretical framework

The theoretical foundation of this study is anchored in Role Conflict Theory, which examines how individuals navigate multiple societal roles such as

mother, student, or teacher and the challenges arising from conflicting expectations (Dankyi, Dankyi, & Minadzi, 2019). Rooted in broader Role Theory (Biddle, 1986), this framework posits that human behaviour is shaped by social identities and contexts, with individuals conforming to predictable behavioural patterns aligned with their societal roles. Role conflict occurs when individuals face incompatible demands from simultaneous roles, leading to diminished effectiveness in fulfilling responsibilities (Amos *et al.*, 2021).

Role conflict manifests in two primary forms. First is intra-role conflict, where contradictory demands arise within a single role (e.g., balancing academic deadlines with caregiving as a student- nursing-mother). And second is inter-role conflict, where demands span multiple domains (e.g., reconciling maternal duties with academic obligations) (Amos *et al.*, 2021; Adofo, 2013). The study applies theoretical lens to analyse how institutional childcare support and mitigates inter-role conflict for student-nursing-mothers. The study on Dambai College of Education investigates the interplay between role conflict resolution and educational outcomes, emphasising the role of on-campus nurseries in aligning with SDG 4's goals of inclusive education.

Conceptual framework

The conceptual framework posits that on-campus nursery schools help nursing mothers balance parenting and academic responsibilities by alleviating childcare burdens. This support enables them to fully engage in academic activities while accessing necessary support from lecturers and peers. As illustrated in Figure 1, the availability of on-campus nursery schools may positively influence their learning experiences and outcomes.

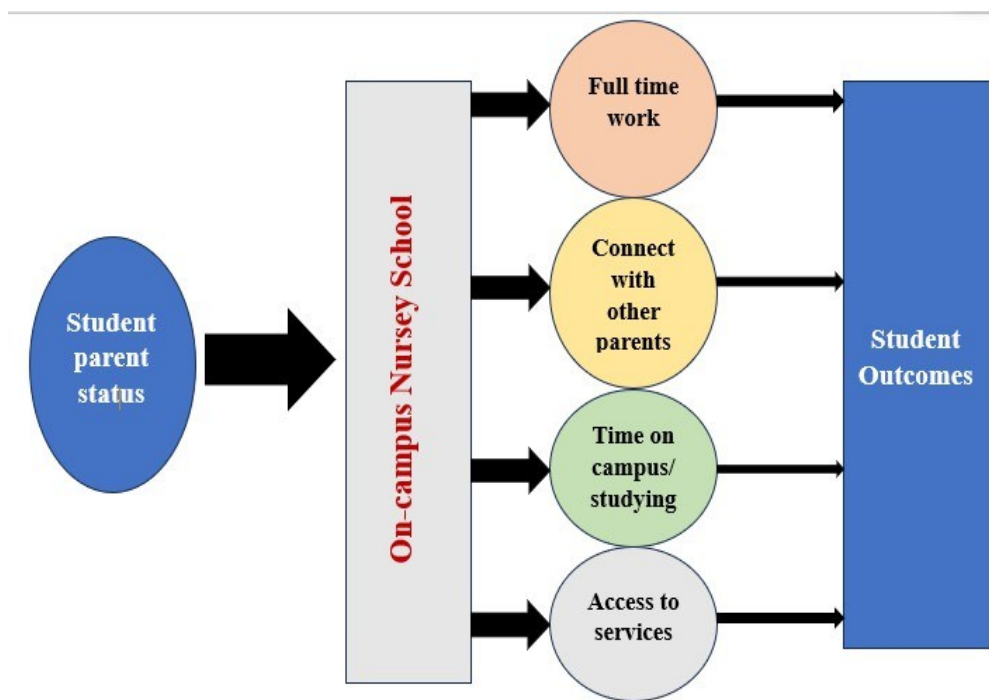


Figure 1: Role-Conflict Model of Student Parents (Adapted from Dillon, 2023)

The role-conflict model (Figure 1) conceptualizes the shared responsibilities of student parents. This model demonstrates that access to on-campus nursery schools' benefits student-parents by: Improving their time management; Fostering peer connections; Increasing available study time; and Enhancing access to academic support. These factors enable student-parents to balance their responsibilities more effectively, ultimately leading to improved learning experiences and better academic outcomes.

Methods

Approach and design

This study used a descriptive phenomenological design to explore the lived experiences of student-mothers. Phenomenology aims to reveal the universal essence of a phenomenon by analysing participants' everyday experiences while suspending researchers' preconceived assumptions (Vanderstoep & Johnston, 2009). Through retrospection and reflection, the study examined student-mothers' perceptions of their dual roles, including their challenges,

coping strategies, and academic impacts (Christensen, Welch, & Barr, 2017). In this approach, researchers serve as mediums for reporting experiences with minimal reinterpretation. The phenomenological design provided a comprehensive understanding of student-mothers' realities within higher education institutions, offering rich insights into their academic and personal struggles.

Sampling methods

The census method used was purposefully for selecting all nine nursing mothers enrolled at Dambai College of Education. Given the small population and shared characteristics among participants, this approach ensured a comprehensive exploration of their experiences. Systematic sampling was used to gather responses, facilitating an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon (Elmusharaf, 2012; Flick, 2010).

Instruments

A structured open-ended interview guideline was designed and used for data collection, enabling participants to freely articulate their experiences in alignment with the study's thematic framework.

Data collection and analysis

The analysis followed Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-step framework, beginning with multiple readings of the transcribed data to ensure familiarity. Initial codes were generated based on recurring ideas and then grouped into broader themes reflecting key insights from participants' responses. Participants' responses were coded (e.g., P1, P2, P3) and categorised into emerging themes. Themes were reviewed and refined to ensure coherence and accuracy. To enhance trustworthiness, reflexivity, triangulation, peer debriefing, member checking, and low reference quoting were employed throughout the process.

Results and Discussions

The study explored the impact of the College Nursery School on student-nursing-mothers educational attainment at Dambai College of Education. A phenomenological design was adopted, with structured interviews used to gather qualitative data from participants. The findings and discussions are interpreted through the lens of role conflict theory, with results organised to align with the study's research objectives.

What was the impact of the college nursery on the student-nursing-mothers' educational performance on their educational attainment at the College?

Academic performance and attendance

Participants universally highlighted the nursery's role in improving academic engagement and outcomes. For instance, P1 reported a steady rise in their CGPA from 3.46 to 3.63, attributing this to uninterrupted class attendance, timely assignment submissions, and focused exam preparation: *"...with the nursery, we attended lectures regularly, completed assignments on time, and passed exams to progress through semesters."*

Similarly, P4 linked their academic improvement directly to childcare support, while P3 noted the nursery resolved chronic absenteeism:

"...the nursery gave us time and energy to focus on coursework, especially attending scheduled classes."

Even participants like P6 and P8, who saw no GPA gains, maintained stable academic performance, underscoring the nursery's role in preventing setbacks.

Mental health and psychological relief

The nursery alleviated **stress and anxiety** associated with childcare, fostering mental bandwidth for academic work. P1 emphasised:

"Peace of mind about my child's safety let me concentrate fully on academics...." P2 and P5 echoed this, linking psychological relief to productivity:

"...knowing our children were professionally cared for reduced anxiety, helping us complete assignments."

This aligns with Navarro-Cruz (2020), who identified childcare as critical for reducing stress and enhancing academic focus.

Time management and structured routines

The nursery's **schedule alignment** (e.g., 6:30 a.m. opening) enabled efficient planning. P6 and P7 highlighted how this structure allowed them to balance classes and parenting. P8, who nearly deferred due to overwhelming assignments, stated: *"The nursery helped manage pressure from teaching portfolios and reports..."*

Such logistical support mitigated role conflict, freeing participants from the

need to rely on siblings (P1's sister resumed her education) or external caregivers.

Role conflict resolution and alignment with literature

The nursery directly addressed competing parental-academic roles, a challenge well-documented in existing literature. Ashipala and Natanael (2022) noted that student-mothers often sacrifice study time for childcare, while Ladi (2020) highlighted rushed or postponed academic tasks. The nursery's structured environment countered these issues, reducing absenteeism (Amos et al., 2021) and fostering engagement. P5 and P7's improved CGPAs (from 2.6 or 2.7 to 2.9 respectively) exemplified this shift, resonating with Esia-Donkoh's (2014) emphasis on institutional support for academic success.

The impact of college nursery's transcended childcare, fostering holistic academic empowerment. In addressing mental health, time constraints, and role conflict, it enabled SNMs to thrive academically while balancing motherhood. Mixed GPA outcomes (e.g., P6 or P8's stability vs. others' gains) which suggest further refinements, such as academic counselling and provision of teaching learning resources will enhance efficacy. Nonetheless, the nursery exemplifies SDG 4's vision of inclusive education, offering a replicable model for Ghanaian higher education.

The introduction of the College nursery at Dambai College of Education significantly transformed the academic trajectories of student nursing mothers (SNMs). Academic performance and attendance emerged as the central theme, which was attributed to their success of reliable childcare. Participant P1 highlighted how the nursery enabled consistent class attendance: "... with the nursery in place, we were regular in lectures, completed assignments on time, and passed exams to move through semesters successfully." Similarly, P3 noted, "The nursery gave us time to focus on coursework, especially attending classes at scheduled times." These improvements were quantifiable: P1's CGPA rose from 3.46 to 3.63, while others (P2, P4, P7, P9) reported GPA increases of 1.6 – 2.0. Even participants like P6 and P8, who saw no GPA gains, maintained stable academic performance as a critical outcome given by their dual responsibilities.

Mental health and psychological relief underpinned these academic gains. Participants universally emphasised the peace of mind derived from

professional childcare. P1 explained, *"I no longer worry about my child's well-being, which lets me concentrate fully on academics."* P2 echoed this, linking reduced anxiety to academic productivity: *"... the psychological relief helped us complete assignments for professional portfolios."* This aligns with Navarro-Cruz's (2020) assertion that childcare alleviates stress, fostering academic engagement.

Time management and structured routines further supported SNMs' success. The opening session of the nursery's 6:30 a.m. allowed participants like P6 and P7 to align childcare with class schedules. Respondent P8, who nearly deferred due to overwhelming assignments, stated, *"The nursery helped me manage pressure from teaching portfolios and reports..."* By resolving logistical challenges, the nursery mitigated role conflict a theme emphasised in literature (Dankyi *et al.*, 2019; Ashipala & Natanael, 2022). For instance, P1's younger sister, previously a caregiver, could resume her own education, illustrating how institutional support extends beyond individual SNMs to broader kinship networks.

Alignment with global evidence reinforces these findings. The nursery's role in reducing absenteeism and academic disruptions mirrors Amos *et al.*'s (2021) observations, while its psychological benefits reflect Navarro-Cruz's (2020) focus on mental security. As Esia-Donkoh (2014) argues, such structured childcare is pivotal for student-parents navigating competing roles.

In conclusion, the impact the nursery school made transcended academics success, fostering holistic well-being and equity. By addressing these systemic barriers time constraints, mental strain, and role conflict exemplifies how institutional support aligns with SDG 4's vision of inclusive education. While challenges like variable GPA outcomes persist, the nursery's success in stabilising academic progress underscores its necessity in Ghanaian higher education.

What was the impact of the College Nursery on the student-nursing-mothers' maternal nutritional health on their educational attainment at the College?

Enhanced nutritional practices

The nursery enabled SNMs to transition from reliance on fast food to **balanced, home-cooked meals**. Participant P1 highlighted:

"... without the nursery, I wouldn't have time to prepare varied, balanced

meals. Now, I shop and cook in bulk during free periods, ensuring my family's health."

Others, like P8, contrasted past struggles skipping meals or eating instant noodles with current habits:

"...now, I prioritise dietary needs when the nursery is open, cooking healthy meals instead of resorting to 'indomie'."

This shift aligns with Ashipala & Natanael's (2022) findings that childcare access reduces time poverty, enabling healthier dietary choices.

Institutional support and routine structuring

The college's flexible meal schedules (e.g., extended breakfast/lunch windows) and nursery hours provided SNMs with the time autonomy needed to balance nutrition and academics. P9 noted: *"... the new meal schedule lets me collect food at my convenience, avoiding the rush that once left me without meals."*

Participants P2, P5, and P6 emphasised how this structure allowed them to *control meal quality*, avoiding roadside food of uncertain nutritional value.

Holistic well-being and theoretical alignment

Beyond nutrition, the nursery fostered routines integrating physical health. P9 shared:

"... with leisure time from childcare, I attend exercise sessions, improving my energy for studies."

This aligns with Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory (Friedman & Allen, 2011), where supportive environments (e.g., nurseries, flexible policies) empower individuals to adopt positive lifestyle changes. SNMs reported:

- Reduced stress from meal planning.
- Increased mental bandwidth for academic tasks.
- Time allocation for shopping, cooking, and exercise.

The nursery's impact transcends childcare, addressing systemic barriers to health equity. By providing time, structure, and autonomy, it enabled SNMs to prioritise nutrition and well-being a critical factor in their academic success. These findings underscore the necessity of **institutional childcare support** in fostering environments where student-parents can thrive holistically, aligning

with SDG 3 (health) and SDG 4 (education) objectives.

What was the impact of the College Nursery on the student-nursing-mothers' spousal relationship or health on their educational attainment at the College?

Institutional flexibility and proximity to spousal support

The College's rare but critical accommodation granting special permission for spouses of SNMs with infants under two years (e.g., P4, P7) to reside in Dambai demonstrates institutional recognition of caregiving challenges. This policy enabled shared parenting responsibilities and reduced logistical strain: *"The nursery support has given my husband and me time to attend lectures and reduce tensions from juggling parenting and academics."* (P4)

For others with spouses outside Dambai, reliance on kinship networks (e.g., siblings) mirrored Ghanaian cultural practices, though lack of spousal proximity intensified caregiving burdens.

Strengthened spousal relationships and communication

The nursery alleviated childcare pressures, fostering emotional resilience and stronger marital bonds. P7 noted:

"We now enjoy peaceful moments together; our bond has grown stronger, deepening our love." Distance-parenting SNMs leveraged technology (e.g., phone, WhatsApp) to maintain communication, building trust and reducing anxieties about infidelity.

Mental health and emotional well-being

All participants unanimously reported reduced stress and improved mental health. P4 emphasised: *"...knowing my child is cared for reduced my stress, letting me approach family life with joy."* This aligns with Amos et al., (2021), who link institutional childcare to enhanced familial bonds and emotional stability.

Role conflict mitigation and academic-family balance

The nursery addressed inter-role conflict (Biddle, 1986), where parenting and academic duties clash. Pre-nursery challenges included:

- Exhausting 3:40 a.m. routines to juggle chores and breastfeeding.
- Mental instability from balancing infants and lectures. post-nursery, SNMs like P8 highlighted:

“Reliable childcare let me focus on studies and well-being, improving my quality of life.”

Cultural and policy implications

The nursery's success underscores the need for scalable institutional policies in Ghanaian higher education. By supporting SNMs regardless of spousal proximity, the College aligns with SDG 4 (inclusive education) and SDG 5 (gender equality), offering a model for addressing systemic inequities.

The nursery's impact transcends childcare, reshaping spousal dynamics, mental health, and academic outcomes. By reducing role conflict and fostering trust, it exemplifies how targeted institutional support can transform student-parent experiences, advocating for broader adoption across educational systems.

What was the impact of the College Nursery on the health of the enrolled child on educational attainment of the student-nursing-mothers at the College?

In response to the impact of the nursery to their children's health, towards they student-nursing- mothers' academic attainment, participants unanimously praised the services, describing them as comprehensive and impressive. They shared that the nursery ensures their babies were well cared for throughout the day.

To all the participants, their children to the nursery were equipped with double sets of clothing, diapers (pampers), and toilet rolls (T-roll), soap, bibs and other baby care stuffs. The attendants diligently change the babies' diapers and clean them with water whenever necessary, ensuring their hygiene is maintained. Dirty clothes are immediately replaced with clean ones, keeping the children comfortable and fresh always / throughout the days.

All participants maintained that the nursery has collaborated with a community health nurse who visits regularly to provide immunisations, making it convenient for parents to stay on top of their children's healthcare. Parents simply include the weighing card in their child's bag, and the necessary vaccinations are administered at the nursery school.

The participants noted variously that the level of care their children receive at the nursery is exceptional, giving them peace of mind and allowing them to focus on their academic and personal responsibilities. One parent remarked,

'The care for our babies has been nothing short of impressive. It's comforting to know that our children are in such capable and attentive hands' (P5).

One participant (P3) noted, *'... honestly, with the support of the nursery, we were able to achieve academic success that we wouldn't have otherwise. Many of us, who were managing both childcare and our studies, graduated with second-class upper honours, and one of us even graduated with first-class honours—something truly remarkable'.*

All the participants confirmed that they have noticed positive changes in their babies' health and social lives since enrolling them in the nursery school. They observed that their babies have become more social, confident, and independent. The children no longer require the constant presence of their mothers and are able to communicate with others more effectively. Additionally, they are more active and engaged, showing greater enthusiasm for interaction and play. The nursery has not only contributed to their health but also to their social development, fostering skills that will serve them well as they continue to grow.

The nursery's impact extends to children's development, fostering improved social, emotional, and physical growth. Student-nursery mothers observed greater confidence, independence, and communication skills in their children. These findings align with Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory, which highlights the significance of nurturing environments for child development. The emphasis on nutritious meals and active play-based supports both physical and mental well-being by corroborating Mahaffey *et al.*, (2015), who advocated for inclusive policies to address the unique challenges faced by student-mothers.

Participants experiences shared indicated that the nursery has had a profound impact on their ability to focus on their education. Knowing that their child is in safe hands in a supportive and enriching environment that allowed to engage fully in class activities, work on subject projects, attend Supported Teaching in School, writing of reports, and complete assignments without the constant worry of childcare. This peace of mind has significantly improved their concentration, productivity, and overall academic performance at the College. The participants agree that the nursery's intervention made it possible for them to balance family and academic responsibilities, leading to impressive academic achievements.

Broader implications for inclusivity

The nursery school underscores the importance of institutional support for student-parents who play dual roles. These findings echo Mahaffey et al., (2015), who advocated for inclusive policies to address the unique challenges faced by student-mothers. Similar time period should not be given to student-nursery mothers and non-student-nursery mothers. The Gender Equality and Social Inclusion (GESI) policies as presented by SDG 4 and, adopted by Ministry of Education and Dambai College of Education further illustrate the role of institutions in promoting equity and inclusivity, ensuring that adult learners receive adequate support to succeed.

Conclusion

This study highlights the positive impact of Dambai College of Education nursery on its student- nursing-mothers educational attainment. By addressing childcare needs, it enhanced academic performance, maternal nutritional health, spousal or family relationship, and child development. These findings underscore the importance of institutional support systems in enabling student- parents to balance their dual roles effectively. Future research should explore the impact of the College nursery on the career fulfilment of beneficiary staff; long-term career development of beneficiary student-nursing-mothers (graduates); and investigate strategies for replicating school nursery across other higher educational institutions that do not have such facilities especially the Colleges of Education in Ghana.

Recommendations

The study recommends that: Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) which do not have institutional nursery should consider establishing on-site nursery schools.

HEIs should develop inclusive education policies that provide support system for students-nursing- mothers to achieve their educational aspirations.

Further research should be conducted on impact of the college nursery on career fulfilment of beneficiary staff of the College likewise long-term career development of beneficiary students (student-nursing-mothers who have graduated and, on the job,).

As an additional support, HEIs, especially, Colleges of Education in Ghana who are still practicing the 'traditional dining system' should as a matter of urgency adopt flexible canteen system that support the maternal nutritional health of

student-nursing-mothers. Guidance and Counselling units should also be strengthened to support such family type students.

Ethical Statement

Written consent was obtained from participants prior to the commencement of interviews, ensuring voluntary participation and ethical adherence.

Conflict of Interest

The authors affirm that there is no conflict of interest with regards to the publication of this article.

Authorship Contribution Statement

Atiku: Concept and design, data acquisition, critical revision of manuscript, supervision and final approval. Gozah: Data acquisition, critical revision of manuscript and supervision. Erebakere: Data analysis / interpretation and drafting manuscript. Nortey: Data acquisition. Tilibe: Data acquisition. Mensah: Literature review.

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Generative AI Statement

As the authors of this work, we minimally used the AI tool (ChatGPT) for the purpose of summarising. After using this AI tool, we reviewed and verified the final version of our work. We, as the authors take full responsibility for the content of our published work.

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Cultural Adjustment Experiences of African International Students in Two Ghanaian Universities

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Abstract

The movement of students to study abroad has increased during the past two decades. Emerging economies are increasingly recognised not only as sources of outbound international students but also as significant destinations for incoming students in the global education landscape. The purpose of the study was to examine the cultural adjustment experiences of African international students in two Ghanaian universities: the University of Cape Coast and Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology. In all, 12 participants were selected purposively from the two universities. The study was qualitative using phenomenological design. Semi-structured interview guide was used to collect data. The data collected was analysed thematically. The study revealed that international students had high expectations and were amused by the new culture, especially those who were first-time travellers outside their respective countries. From their lived experiences, the language, food, and social norms were their major adjustment challenges. The study concluded that the first-time experiences of international students had a lasting impact on their adjustment process.

Those who were received well by the host community adjusted more quickly than others who felt unwelcome. It was recommended that university counselling units develop competence in multicultural counselling to attract international students. Future studies should focus on non-African international students studying in Ghana.

Keywords: *African International Students, Adjustment, Cross-culture, Ghana*

Introduction

People travel from one country to another for a variety of reasons, including tourism, temporary stays, immigration, and seeking refuge. (Ward, Bochner & Furhnam, 2001). The transition to a new cultural environment presents a complex array of challenges for newcomers, often characterised by various uncertainties. This adjustment process can lead to significant stress and difficulty as individuals navigate unfamiliar norms, values, and practices. (Yusoff & Chelliah, 2010). The population of international students around the globe has increased from two to five million between 1999 and 2016 (OECD, 2018).

In 2014, more than four million students left their home countries to study abroad, and it is predicted that this number will double by 2024 (British Council, 2014).

Beyond their significant economic impact, international students play a vital role in enriching our understanding of diverse cultures and addressing global issues. Their presence not only enhances cultural exchange but also fosters a more interconnected world. (Lieb, 2016; Haynie, 2018). The advantages of having international students include enhancing intercultural education at the higher level, providing global viewpoints, fostering international relationships, and equipping local students for effective cross-cultural communication and appreciation of cultural diversity (De Araujo, 2011). From the viewpoint of the nation that sends international students, numerous parents and students see studying abroad for higher education as a significant and advantageous opportunity to discover new cultures while enhancing their academic knowledge and career skills. (Lin, 2010). Residing and pursuing education in a foreign country often signifies a significant transition phase for an individual, and this journey entails various cultural, environmental, and psychological adaptations. (Chen, 1999).

While pursuing higher education abroad has its advantages, international students might face greater adjustment challenges compared to local students, potentially affecting their academic performance, as well as their mental and physical well-being (Nicholson, 2001). Cross-cultural adaptation involves more than just adjusting to the language, food, social customs, and

surroundings; it also includes how these changes affect individuals as they engage with the culture and environment around them. Hotta and Ting-Toomey (2013) affirm that American students studying abroad encounter challenges related to academics, language barriers, housing, financial concerns, difficulty in gaining social acceptance, health and leisure matters, as well as racial discrimination. Many of these international students perceive themselves as a minority and inferior to the surrounding university community.

According to the literature, cultural distance is another factor that appears to have a significant connection to adjustment (Newsome, 2016). This concept refers to the degree of difference between an individual's native culture and that of the host country (Narouz, 2018). Numerous studies have shown that a wider gap between the cultural norms of the host and home countries tends to hinder the adjustment process, often resulting in more difficulties (Newsome, 2016; Rujipak & Limprasert, 2016). For instance, Newsome (2016) reported that when international students share cultural or ethnic similarities with their host environment, they tend to experience smoother socio-cultural integration. Similarly, Yeh and Inose (2003) identified cultural distance as a contributing factor to acculturative stress. Additional research has revealed that individuals perceiving a greater cultural divide are generally less inclined to engage socially with members of the host society (Chapdelaine & Alexitch, 2004; Suanet & Van de Vijver, 2009). In summary, perceiving a large cultural gap can result in social integration challenges during the adjustment phase (Jack, 2014). However, in such cases, support systems, particularly social support, may help some individuals manage these challenges more effectively (Tao, Dong, Pratt, Hunsberger, & Pancer, 2000).

Apart from cultural distance, students' ability to adapt is also heavily influenced by how much social support they perceive they have. According to Berkman and Glass (2000), social support refers to either the perception or reality of being cared for, appreciated, and integrated into a supportive social network. Scholars typically categorize social support into four key forms: emotional (expressing appreciation and concern), instrumental (offering tangible resources or assistance), informational (providing advice and guidance), and companionship (participating in recreational activities with others) (Cohen & Wills, 1985). Numerous studies have highlighted a strong association between social support and positive adjustment outcomes (Yusoff & Chelliah, 2010). For instance, research involving international students in their first year found that higher levels of support were linked to improved adaptation to college life (Ramsay, Hooker, Campbell, & Cao, 2007). Likewise, findings by Poyrazli et al. (2004) showed that international students who felt more supported reported lower levels of stress related to cultural

adjustment. However, contrasting evidence by Ward, Bochner, and Furnham (2001) suggested that there may be no direct correlation between social support and students' adaptation experiences.

Adjustment can challenge a person's sense of well-being and may lead to homesickness, the loss of support networks, feelings of loneliness, culture shock, difficulties in building relationships, perceived discrimination, and financial challenges (Russell, Rosenthal & Thomson, 2010). The success of international students often depends on how well they adapt culturally, making it an important area of focus. Issues related to cultural adjustment may involve difficulties in understanding the norms and culture of foreign countries, language barriers, and challenges with racial and ethnic discrimination (Sam, 2001). Adapting to these new settings can be a stressful undertaking (Hamamura & Laird, 2014) as students must adjust to different cultural values, food, and climate. Despite promoting intercultural understanding, international students often struggle with barriers that affect their educational journey (Pandian, 2008). Tepeci and Barlett (2002) emphasised that international students, as a diverse population, often encounter a range of difficulties related to academics, unfamiliar environments, and social as well as psychological adjustment. Because of their varying educational backgrounds across cultures, international students studying abroad may find it particularly difficult to engage with local students and adapt to host environments (Pandian, 2008).

According to Misra and Castillo (2004), international students typically face an adjustment phase as they adapt to new academic frameworks and social settings. During the 2018/2019 academic year, the United States recorded over one million international students for the fourth consecutive year, accounting for around 5.5% of the total enrolment in higher education institutions. This number, totalling 1,095,299, marked a slight rise of 0.05% compared to the statistics from the 2017 Open Doors Report on International Educational Exchange (IEE, 2019). In the United Kingdom, data from the Higher Education Statistics Agency (2019) show an increase in international student enrolment, with 485,645 individuals pursuing degrees, up from 458,520 the previous year. In Asia, China has emerged as a major hub for international education, a trend driven by its growing economy. As reported by the Ministry of Education in 2018, Chinese universities and colleges hosted 492,185 students from 196 countries, spread across 1,004 institutions in all 31 provinces, a 0.62% increase (3,013 students) from 2017 figures.

Africa is also participating in the global rise of international student mobility. Universities across the continent continue to attract significant numbers of students from abroad each year. According to ICEF Monitor (2017), there has

been a global decline in the number of university-age students opting to study in their home countries. In contrast, African higher education institutions have experienced consistent growth in international student enrolment, a trend projected to continue until around 2080 (ICEF Monitor, 2017). Supporting this observation, the Institute of International Education (IIE, 2016) reported a 19.6% increase in the number of international students entering sub-Saharan Africa during the 2015/2016 academic year. These developments highlight Africa's emerging status as a favoured destination for global scholars.

Daejoong (2011) noted that developing nations are increasingly significant not only as sources of students but also as destinations for international student recruitment. Students are no longer solely migrating to developed countries as they did previously; they are now also choosing to study in developing nations. Ghana holds a prominent position in the development of modern mass education in West Africa and has become a leading destination for international students within sub-Saharan Africa. It is second only to South Africa in hosting the largest population of international students pursuing degree programs, although comparable figures for Nigeria are currently unavailable. According to the UNESCO Institute for Statistics (2019), there has been a notable surge over the past decade in the number of students from nearby West African countries selecting Ghana for their higher education. Between 2007 and 2015, the international student population in Ghana increased dramatically by 838%, rising from 1,899 to 17,821. Although this number was later adjusted to 12,978 in 2017, largely due to the enrolment of students from Nigeria, the country's appeal to international students remains strong. The inbound mobility ratio—a measure of the proportion of international students in the total tertiary enrolment—stood at a globally high level of 2.8% in 2017 (UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2019).

The expansion of public universities, the emergence of local private institutions, and the opening of branch campuses of foreign universities in Ghana have all played a role in attracting more international students, particularly from neighbouring countries such as Nigeria, Togo, Ivory Coast, Benin, Mali, and Burkina Faso. Furthermore, students from outside the West African region, including nations like Gabon, Kenya, and Cape Verde, are also pursuing their studies in Ghana. For many years, Ghana has been a prominent country sending students abroad for higher education (UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2019). However, this trend is shifting as Ghana is now becoming a popular destination for more international students from around the globe. While there is considerable information regarding the rise in international student numbers, there is limited understanding of how these students adapt and how these adjustments, or lack thereof, influence their educational experiences. Without this insight, the growing presence of international

students may not be sustainable, as increasing difficulties with adaptation could deter new students from coming to Ghana. This highlights the necessity to investigate the cultural adjustment experiences of international students enrolled in Ghanaian universities.

Statement of the problem

Over the past three decades, the internationalisation of higher education has gained significant momentum and is now a central element in policy and strategic planning at both national and institutional levels (OECD, 2012). This internationalisation yields concrete benefits to the economies of host nations and promotes advancements in their economic, educational, and innovation systems (Anwar, 2012; OECD, 2016). Typically, international students contribute more in terms of tuition fees compared to their local counterparts. Additionally, their living costs significantly boost the economy of the host nation (OECD, 2016). Students from abroad introduce fresh viewpoints and enhance cultural awareness within the host community (OECD, 2016). In addition, international students can contribute to the development of enduring diplomatic ties between their countries of origin and their host nations. Nevertheless, despite the advantages of studying abroad, international students might encounter more challenges in adjusting than local students, which can affect their academic performance, as well as their mental and physical well-being. In the Ghanaian context, little attention has been given to the adjustment experiences of international students and the potential impact these experiences may have on the host country.

Studies suggest that the cultural experiences students expect to encounter frequently influence their choice of a host country for higher education (Tsegay, Zegergish & Ashraf, 2018) and the degree of hospitality the country extends to foreign students. Therefore, universities in Ghana need to enhance their understanding of the adjustment process faced by international students to enrich their cultural experiences. The overall satisfaction of most international students could lead to positive word-of-mouth, which in turn may encourage more of these students to enrol in local universities. Limited existing research has concentrated on the mobility of international students within West Africa (Asiedu, 2016) and on the motivations and implications of foreign students coming to Ghana (Frempong, 2015). Based on the suggestions from Asiedu (2016) and Frempong (2016), it is suggested that further research be conducted on the adjustment experiences of international students within their universities.

Geographically, some studies focused on international students in the capital city of Accra (Sam, Tetteh & Amponsah, 2013). Accra is already a cosmopolitan town where a lot of its dealers are immigrants or migrants. This

research examined the adjustment experiences of international students in two different cities away from Accra, to look at the diversity in the experience of international students. The research was carried out in Cape Coast and Kumasi, home to the UCC and KNUST, respectively. This geographic scope may offer a more well-rounded understanding of the issue. Additionally, the study addresses the coping strategies and support systems available within Ghanaian universities that assist international students in their adjustment process.

Research questions

1. What cultural antecedents impact international students' adjustment experiences?
2. What support systems exist in Ghanaian universities to help international students adjust?

Research paradigm

This study was grounded in the interpretivist framework. Interpretivists adopt a relativist view of reality, proposing that a single phenomenon may hold multiple meanings depending on the perspectives through which it is understood, rather than being anchored to one objective, measurable truth (Crotty, 1998). The cultural adaptation of international students within universities can differ from one country to another due to the unique policies of both the state and the university regarding the integration of international students.

Research approach

The method utilized was the qualitative research approach. This approach facilitates the exploration and comprehension of individuals' subjective experiences (Creswell, 2013).

Research design

Among the various designs within the qualitative research approach, this study adopted a phenomenological design, which focuses on understanding participants' perspectives on the topic. This approach involves exploring the lived experiences of individuals, using their personal accounts as primary sources of data (Mudhovozi, 2011).

The role of the researcher

One of the defining features of qualitative research is that the researcher acts as the primary instrument in the processes of data collection and analysis (Creswell, 2012). The researchers were outsiders, our roles were largely limited to asking questions, employing probes for clarification and elaboration, taking notes, and analysing the data obtained from participants.

Site and sample selection

The choice of purposive sampling was used to sample international students who meet the inclusion criteria. A total of twelve (12) participants were selected. There were seven and five from UCC and KNUST respectively.

Instrumentation

A semi-structured interview was thoughtfully used to gather in-depth information, address any questions that respondents found unclear, and encourage further exploration of topics (Bryman, 2008). The primary goal of the interview was to gather invaluable insights into the cultural adjustment experiences of international students. The interview was carried out in English, as it serves as the singular medium of instruction for international students, ensuring everyone feels included and supported.

Trustworthiness of data

Lincoln and Guba, as referenced in McGowan (2017), suggested that the trustworthiness of any research study hinges on establishing credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. Credibility was established through member checks, where participants received the interview transcripts for validation, and the findings were shared with them. For transferability, the researchers conducted an ongoing analysis of the interview transcripts. To uphold dependability, participants were informed that their involvement in the study was entirely voluntary, with the option to withdraw at any point or decline to respond to any questions. Finally, confirmability was verified by sending interview responses back to the participants to ensure accurate representation and to address any concerns that arose during my continuous analysis.

Data analysis

For the analysis of qualitative data, the researchers followed a five-step process outlined by Creswell and Creswell (2018): organizing and preparing the data, conducting an initial read-through, coding the information, developing themes and detailed descriptions, and finally, presenting the findings.

Ethical considerations

The researchers adhered to all ethical guidelines followed by researchers during their studies, which included the following: preventing plagiarism, obtaining informed consent, and ensuring confidentiality.

Results

Table 1: Demographic information of participants

Variable	Categories	Total
Gender	Male	9
	Female	3
Level	100	3
	200	5
	300	4
University	UCC	5
	KNUST	7
Country	Nigeria	5
	Cameroon	1
	Ivory Coast	3
	Togo	1
	Benin	2

From Table 1, the majority of the participants in the research are from Nigeria which is five (5). The rest of the countries represented in the study are Cameroon (1), Ivory Coast (3), Benin (2) and Togo (1). The two universities in the studies also had seven (7) and five (5) students respectively from UCC and KNUST. A total of nine (9) males and three (3) females took part in the study. 7 and 5 international students were selected from the two as a result of saturation of data. The study also comprised only African international students because, at the time of data collection, all European and American international students contacted were called back home as a result of a rapid increase in COVID-19 cases in Ghana.

What cultural antecedents impact international students' adjustment experiences?

From the interviews, the participant named many cultural antecedents that impede their adjustment process into the university community. Notable among the reasons are the language, local foods, social norms, and others.

Communication problem or language gap

English was the main language of communication between international students and the local community. However, many international students faced linguistic challenges, not only with English but also with Ghana's indigenous languages, such as Twi and Fante. Several participants in the study

experienced difficulties with language, especially those from countries where English is not the dominant language.

Language is the official language of their home country.

“When I came first, I did not speak the language the English was very difficult for me. Because in my country I just speak French. They speak some English at school but is not proper English. Or so it was very difficult for me to speak the English and it was hard for me to understand the English”. (Participant 4)

“Apart from the students, most of the workers in the bush canteen, taxi drivers and market cannot speak the English language. So, at first, I usually fall on my Ghanaian friends or my roommate to take me to the market. Because the name of the things is different, you will be looking for one thing for a very long in the market with a lot of descriptions”. (Participant 5)

“The one which is not good is that is when your friends laugh at you which they can’t speak my French too hmmm. For the lectures also speak the English in class as if we can all speak like them”. (Participant 8)

Communication difficulties intensify when the language of instruction diverges from that of the host nation. The findings are consistent with a study conducted among Asian international scholars at a university in the Flemish region of Belgium, which revealed that these individuals faced a dual challenge: they needed to improve their English for academic purposes while also learning Dutch for everyday social interactions with the local community (Wang & Hannes, 2014). Furthermore, their peers studying in the Midlands similarly observed that, owing to linguistic inadequacies, they faced challenges in comprehending educators and assimilating course content, as well as in forming friendships with local residents (Busher, Lewis & Comber, 2016). The process of acquiring a second language transcends mere vocabulary or grammatical structures; it encompasses the acquisition of symbolic elements inherent to a distinct ethno-linguistic community. This implies that non-English-speaking international students had the burden of learning the English language in addition to Twi or Fante.

The language challenges for international students from English-speaking countries were quite different.

“The language was a struggle for me. The way you mention things and call places is different from my country. I had to adjust to those names.

For example, like am going to my city that's how I will call hostel". (Participant 1)

"With the Ghanaian students too, you can all be in a group chatting and they will just change the language to their local dialect which makes you being left out. In conclusion to what I have to say if that language plays a very significate role in the daily life of the international student". (Participant 2)

"For you know Ghana and Nigeria all do have English as their official language. But there is a difference between how we pronounce thing and you do it here. It happens that somethings I mention some words but the Ghanaians do not get it at first". (Participant 3)

"We also have some jargons which is not same here. At my place taxi is called "keke". They are certain things when you say in my language which are so funny. So if you are doing something and the person ask, are you cooking? Then you will say no I am running. That is just fun. When I did it to someone here, the day I did it the person almost bit me. He said if not something he would have slap me. That was a normal thing in Nigeria even Mom I always do it to her. I have to tell the person I am sorry. When I came and they are speaking their language I do feel they are talking about me, I was feeling uncomfortable". (Participant 6)

Communication involves the encoding and decoding of both verbal and non-verbal information, which is crucial for successful cross-cultural adaptation. Wu, Garza, and Guzman (2015) found that even when international students are admitted to universities based on strong English proficiency, as demonstrated by their entrance examination scores, they still encounter difficulties in using the language effectively in everyday situations and classroom settings. The international students have to now learn the contextual use of words and also learn the non-verbal cues. Most of international students do not get the meanings of slang, idioms, jargon, abbreviations, and some expressions that seem familiar to locals, but weird to international students.

Food or local cuisines

Another thing the international students admitted it was a source of worry to them was the food. They narrated that, the taste, texture and aroma of the foods are different from their home country even when look the same.

"Hmm when we talk about culture, food is number one the quality of the food here. It may be similar but that is how we prepare it. As we

talk now, I am still straggling with most of your foods. That is why I have decided to cook my foods. The foods here are also very species". (Participant 1)

"I am the type that like food. And I have been trying to get accustomed with the Ghanaian dishes but I have not fully there yet". (Participant 3)

"On our campus we have a place where they prepare home food. That is where to eat when we do miss home. Most of the Ghanaian foods looks very nice and attractive but taste is not very good to me. Sorry to say that". (Participant 4)

"Your food too was a worried to me. We don't have the same food. The food it's the same way you cook rice but you put a lot of things in your jollof rice and fried rice. You add a lot of vegetables and species". (Participant 5)

"I can definitely say our foods are not the same. At my place we take a lot of soup. So even when you go to buy rice it is mostly serve with soup but that is not done in Ghana". (Participant 7)

"For me I don't think I will be able to eat much of the Ghanaian food". (Participant 8).

Research indicates that food is a significant aspect of daily life in the host country that often raises concerns for overseas students (Alakaam, Castellanos, Bodzio & Harrison, 2015). International students undergo a process of cultural adjustment as they adapt to the flavours of local Ghanaian cuisine and seek out options that are reminiscent of the tastes from home (Brown, Wynne, Piggins & Lucas, 2010). International students mostly have to master the local foods because they are mostly served at popular food joints in and around the university campuses.

In contrast, three of the international students also enjoyed the local Ghanaian cuisines and have learnt how to prepare them.

"When I came to Ghana first, I find it difficult to enjoy the meals. But for now I can say I am a master of the foods. I can now cook the banku and prepare the okro soup too. I once tried the fufu but it did not end well". (Participant 2)

"I have now come to enjoy the foods here. One other food that I enjoy is the rice bowl and the groundnut soup. It's too nice". (Participant 11)

“I think it was only the first semester that I was not able to eat the food very well. I don’t know how to cook myself so I have to learn very fast. I do really enjoy the Ghanaian foods”. (Participant 12)

From the report, it shows that some international students easily adjust to the new environment by learning how to eat the local Ghanaian foods. Others have even developed the skills of preparing the food. Preparing and eating the foods will reduce the cost of living for the students because most its more expensive to always eat from food joints.

Differences in cultural norms

Nine out of the twelve participants in the research stated that they are still not conversant with the cultural norms of the host country.

“One change I notice was that, when someone visits you here, whether you are older than the person or not it is the person who have to greet you. But at my place it usually the children that greets the elderly”. (Participant 5)

“Over here, yes really you people are kind of polite. Even if you meet somebody on the roadside they greet and add please to whatever they say. Is kind of different compare to us”. (Participants 7)

“I think Ghanaian love funeral a lot. The first time we went for a friend’s funeral I was surprised about the quantity of the food and drinks that were shared. We ate and drunk over there but was given some to take home too”. (Participant 9)

It appears it was difficult for international students to completely denounce old norms and values and fully embrace the new ones. This diversity in cultural norms was particularly noted in the Francophone international students and Northern Nigeria students interviewed. Hollensen (2011) observed that cultural norms are beyond an individual's control and are shaped by the interactions among people and societal, governmental, and institutional factors such as clubs and workplaces. Abu-Rabia (2017) posited in his research that the anxiety and disorientation stemming from unfamiliar cultural norms and behaviours are significant contributors to feelings of homesickness, isolation, and depressive states in individuals.

How do the international students experience cultural adjustment?

The theme of coping strategies illustrates the adaptive mechanisms employed by international students in response to their educational context. The majority of participants in this research cultivated deliberate strategies to navigate

institutional dynamics and effectively achieve their self-defined academic objectives.

Personality

Five of the participants (41.67%) mentioned that their personality was a tool they relied on to cope with the cultural antecedents they encountered. Personal characteristics such as outgoing and friendly nature helped them to adjust to the experiences.

“Yes, for a person like me. I am one who is able to make friends easily at any moment. I don’t hold myself back when I get to new places. What I do is to quickly start to mingle with the people. I think that have helped me to adjust”. (Participant 4)

“I was able to cope with the culture changes because I am a very quiet type. I am always in my hostel, class or library. With that I don’t have to interact with a lot of people. I think that is one thing that have help me adjust”. (Participant 6)

“Yeah I will say from the way I way brought up. You are not to be choosey kind of person you go with anything. I am somebody who is out going”. (Participant 7)

“For me am a soldier who can leave under any circumstances. The way I am, am able to make friends quickly and cope with and situation”. (Participant 8)

“I am my own master. The training I had from my parents helped me to leave everywhere with no difficulty”. (Participant 11)

Parental training or home culture influenced the adjustment process of international students in Ghanaian universities. Overall, interview data revealed that personal experiences best prepare international students to properly adjust to Ghanaian universities. International students exhibit a diverse range of personalities and coping mechanisms to navigate the stresses of studying abroad. According to Suprpto Saragih and Al Ardha (2019), it is essential for these students to cultivate a secure “cross-cultural identity” that harmonises their values, beliefs, and customs with those of the host culture. This integration fosters the perspective that one’s own culture and the new culture can be seen as complementary entities rather than adversarial. Furthermore, Tepeci and Bartlett (2000) suggest that international students demonstrate improved cultural adaptation when they exhibit the qualities of a

“cultural chameleon,” allowing them to blend into their host environment while simultaneously maintaining pride in their native language and cultural heritage. This dual challenge contributes to a more fulfilling educational experience and positively impacts the overall well-being of international students.

Network Relationships

Six of the research participants (50%) mentioned the network they were able to create with the local students greatly helped them to adjust to the university. Almost all the students one way or the other depended on their Ghanaian to assist in the adjustment process. It was evident in the interview data that some of the international students engaged their roommates, study mates or classmates in building a network of friends to adjust. Jean-Francois (2019) suggests that international students actively seek out opportunities to forge relationships that can aid in their integration into the host community.

“For me one very important thing that helped me to adjust was my Ghanaian roommate. He was of such a great help to me. When I was struggling with the food and language he was there to assist me. He was I like a brother I needed. Sometimes when I feel homesick, he comforts me”. (Participant 1).

“I was lucky I made a Ghanaian friend. He eventually held my hands to show me all the I needed to know. He eventually took me through all that I want from buying of the form to locating my hostel and took me round the campus”. (Participant 2)

“I additional to all the helps, I had a Ghanaian friend who stood in for me. He was there to assist me around. I think I met him the 5th day when I came here”. (Participant 3)

“The advice I will give any international student was is to get a Ghanaian friend. For that was what helped me”. (Participant 5)

Apart from the circle of friends the international friends used. Some also depended on the administrative staff (administrators, secretaries, security) and lectures also provided the needed help to international students on a personal level. These two participants built a reliable network with the administrative who was of assistance to them.

“The administrator in my department took me as her own child. She was the one who guided me on the way to go on campus. She also provided timely information I need. She even gave me money on a few occasions”. (Participant 9)

“I think I was the adopted son to Prof. he took me in. he was the first person to organised a birthday party for me. He made me feel at home”. (Participant 11)

In a study examining the academic and sociocultural challenges encountered by international students in South African universities, Wu et al. (2015) found that those experiencing difficulties in communication with lecturers, staff, and domestic students tend to exhibit poorer academic performance. This communication barrier hampers their ability to engage effectively in collaborative group work, which is often a critical component of academic success. Consequently, it becomes imperative for international students to rapidly adapt to collaborative learning environments in order to mitigate the stress and anxiety associated with maladjustment. Moreover, studies on Chinese international students at U.S. universities have shown that forming friendships with local students played a key role in cultural integration, offering valuable insights into the local way of life (Heng, 2017). The findings suggest that a broader social network among host peers enhances the overall experience of international students, allowing for greater enjoyment and participation in the host society.

Learning the language

All the interviewed data showed that international students made efforts to learn English languages and other Ghanaian languages (Twi and Fante).

“From my home country we speak the Fonne which have some similarities with the Twi. So I quickly learn the language to help me communitive with the rest. At first it was not easy but now I can speak the Twi”. (Participant 9)

“I have managed to learn a lit tittle bit of Fante. I remember one incident in the market where one lady shouted on me in the market because she was asking me to give her way in Fante which I did not understand”. (Participant 4)

“I also notice that most of Ghanaian enjoy talking in their local language. You need to learn the language before you can penetrate. That is exactly what I am doing”. (Participant 5)

“For now, am learning the language to keep me going. With the help of my study mate I can now speak and understand the Twi”. (Participant 7)

“Personally, I can speak seven (7) different languages. So, I knew leaning the local Ghanaian languages was the way to go. I can confidently say that, I am a bit fluent in the Twi”. (Participant 8)

“I can now go to the market and buy all the I needed speaking only the Fante. Learning was not easy at first but I did my best. I think am left to learn the accent”. (Participant 10)

One major challenge is the acquisition of discipline-related terminologies in the local language. This skill is vital for the interaction of internationals with the host. Because language is such a significant aspect of daily life, it is very likely to be a potential stressor. Those international students who can acquire the language can participate more in the daily interactions with the host (Asiedu, 2016).

Use of technology

It was evident in the study, a large number of international students used various application software such as Google Maps, Twi Guide, Asante Twi and English to enhance their adjustment process.

“What I did to reduce the stress in Ghana was to download some application from my app store. I really made use of the google map to look for any location I need. I also use some Twi apps which give the translation and even gives the correct pronunciation of the words”. (Participant 2)

“You know we are in a technological world. So I use apps to learn the language”. (Participant 3)

“I was first introduced to the local Akan dictionary and translator by a friend. Since then I was helpful in many ways”. (Participant 4)

“Youtube was readily available for use. I am the shy type and I find it difficult to make friends, for my phone is my teacher”. (Participant 10)

Technology is now an integral part of the human socialisation. Software applications have come to improve the efficiency of the individual. It will be of great help when the students are provided with the internet so they can have access to software applications to be able to develop the skills needed for adjustment. The finding implies that those who have access to technological tools such as smart smartphones, tablets or personal computers used the gadgets as companions or personal teachers to adjust to the new environment.

Conclusion

The findings revealed that communication barriers or language problems, differences in the taste of Ghanaian foods and variations in social norms were very high. The participants' responses highlighted that different aspects of culture are crucial for international students to fully adapt to the Ghanaian environment.

The results of this study also showed that international students used different adaptive mechanisms to cope with cultural challenges. Notable among the coping strategies is learning the Ghanaian languages, the use of software applications, their personality and social support.

Recommendations

- i. To the university management, it is recommended that they adopt and implement tailored programs, such as International Student Day or dedicated department units, to support international students in adjusting more quickly. The findings indicate that orientation programs alone are insufficient; therefore, sustained efforts are needed to help international students navigate cultural differences.
- ii. Universities should develop or adopt user-friendly software applications to facilitate access to essential information for international students. Since the study found that international students rely on technology as an adaptive mechanism, providing digital resources will enhance their ability to overcome communication barriers and adjust more effectively.

Ethics Statements

The participants provided their consent to take part in the study. The Department of Counselling Psychology approved the topic.

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Conflict of Interest

The authors affirm that there is no conflict of interest regarding the publication of this article.

Authorship Contribution Statement

Agbenyegah: Concept and design, data acquisition. Amos: Data interpretation and Supervision. Osahene: Critical revision of manuscript

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As the authors of this work, we minimally used the AI tool (ChatGPT) to reframe some sentences.

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Managing the Professional Development of Teachers: Challenges Faced by the Public Primary School Headteachers in Adansi South District, New Edubiase

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Abstract

Professional development for teachers is critical for improving educational quality and student outcomes. In Ghana, the Ghana Education Service has implemented a teacher professional development policy to enhance the quality of education. However, there is no mandatory training for teachers transitioning to leadership roles, posing challenges to effective teaching and school management. This study investigates the management of professional development for teachers in public primary schools in the Adansi South District, Ghana, focusing on the challenges faced by headteachers and the strategies they employ to overcome these challenges. Using a descriptive survey design, data were collected from 30 head teachers, nine circuit supervisors, and the District Training Officer through questionnaires. The study revealed several significant challenges: lack of teacher commitment to professional development programs, insufficient funds, inadequate time allocation, lack of incentives post-training, and a shortage of trained facilitators. These challenges hinder the effective management of teacher professional development and negatively impact educational outcomes.

To address these challenges, the study suggests strategies such as mentoring newly appointed teachers, active involvement of head teachers and staff in planning in-service training (INSET) activities and initiating resource provision for these programs. By adopting these strategies, head teachers can create a more supportive environment for continuous teacher development. These measures are essential for enhancing the quality of education and fostering professional growth among primary school teachers in the Adansi South District.

Keywords: *Professional Development, Headteachers, Education, Management, Adansi South*

Introduction

Investment in teacher professional development is crucial globally. Crawford (2014) found that it enhances student performance and teacher competencies in the U.S. and Europe. This process yields social benefits, knowledge, and skill acquisition by teachers, and improves student academic performance, prompting many countries to invest in such programs. According to the OECD (2005), Sweden supports teacher development with salary incentives, paid working time, salary progression, and promotion.

The UK, Luxembourg, Lithuania, Canada, Switzerland, and the USA offer induction programs for new teachers to improve lesson delivery skills. Norliza et al. (2011) noted that developing countries also invest in teacher development to improve proficiency and education quality. Authorities allocate resources to enhance teacher competencies. Professional teachers should continuously seek better methods to meet student needs. However, more efforts are needed in teacher development, as it is vital for quality education and school improvement. Despite its benefits, this area often receives insufficient attention and is left to head teachers. Ghana recognised the urgent need for quality teachers to enhance its educational system quality, as highlighted by the "Preliminary Education Sector Performance Report" (2008: Ministry of Education, Science and Sports, MoESS). This report shows critically low proficiency in basic education, with less than 25% of youth reaching proficiency in English at Basic six (B6) and only 10% in Mathematics. The Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (2007) further revealed low proficiency among Grade 4 and Grade 8 students in Science and Mathematics. To address these challenges, the Ghana Education Service introduced the INSET Project in 2003, aiming to improve teachers' knowledge of academic content for greater competence.

Several international and national organisations have supported initiatives to enhance teachers' professional skills and knowledge. Notably, the Japan International Cooperation Agency and the Ghana Education Service

collaborated to establish standards, core values, and ethics for the teaching profession, fostering the development of world-class teachers who can significantly impact pupils' learning and achievement (Ministry of Education, 2012). Schools are established to help society achieve its goals through teaching and learning, necessitating proper management to realise these goals. Effective management is crucial for the educational sector, as no school system can achieve its objectives without it. The primary school headteacher plays a vital role as a manager, creating a conducive environment to enhance teaching and learning. The school's success in achieving its goals hinges on how effectively it manages its teachers.

The Government of Ghana justifies its substantial annual expenditure on primary education through initiatives like the Ghana Education Trust Fund (GETFUND) for infrastructure, the Ghana School Feeding Programme in rural public primary schools, and capitation grants. Nevertheless, many educationists believe that the outcomes do not match the investment. Since the introduction of the Capitation Grant in 2001 and the Ghana School Feeding Programme in 2006, there has been a significant increase in pupil enrolment in Adansi South District's public primary schools in the Ashanti Region. The teaching staff in Adansi South primary schools comprises Senior High School leavers, holders of the Four-year Teacher Certificate ('A'4 year), the Three-year Teacher Certificate ('A'3-year Post Sec), and those with Diplomas and Degrees. Notable achievements include improved pupil enrolment and increased teacher recruitment.

However, insufficient focus on teachers' professional development presents management challenges for primary head teachers in the district. Quality education is inherently linked to quality teachers, who are essential for facilitating meaningful education and positively influencing pupils' learning outcomes. Due to significant changes in the curriculum, society, and the educational system, continuous training and professional development are essential for teachers to remain effective in this dynamic environment. There is overriding evidence that teacher quality in terms of preparation and qualification strongly influences pupils' level of achievement (Darling-Hammond et al., 2001).

Most teachers who lack knowledge in certain subject course content teach inadequately or not at all. It is for these reasons that the teacher needs to grow professionally to meet the demands of the changing educational system. Adentwi (2000) asserts that there is a need to equip teachers to be able to handle changes occurring in the curriculum through professional development programmes.

These programmes include individual development, in-service training and peer collaboration, study groups, peer coaching, or mentoring. Whenever drastic changes are introduced into the curriculum which teachers are not well equipped to handle, there is a need for the teachers to go through professional development programmes.

Statement of problem

Enhancing educators' professional learning is vital for transforming schools and improving students' academic outcomes (Darling-Hammond et al., 2009). To align with federal requirements and public expectations in Ghana, the Ghana Education Service introduced a teacher professional development policy to enhance education quality. Teachers, upon graduating from colleges and universities, are appointed as professionals without job orientation. Research indicates that enhancing teachers' skills and knowledge leads to improved student performance (Darling-Hammond, 2009). Hence, professional development allows teachers to stay updated on new methods, perspectives, and policies, thereby promoting quality learning by enhancing their teaching skills and knowledge. Cardno (2005) notes the absence of mandatory training for teachers transitioning to middle or senior leadership roles, highlighting the necessity for such training to improve their competencies for effective teaching and leadership. Studies by Atsenga (2002) and Agala and Odebro (2009) also demonstrate a strong link between training and academic performance. Many primary school headteachers assume their roles without managerial training, facing new challenges. Effective management requires these headteachers to possess adequate managerial skills and sufficient human and material resources.

Continuous teacher training and professional development are essential for effective performance in an evolving educational environment (Atsenga, 2002). Teacher professional development is vital to achieving educational goals. Improving the national education system requires enhancing teacher quality and supporting their professional development, which should not be the sole responsibility of primary school head teachers, even with in-service training on new curriculum courses. Teachers often perceive their head teachers as lacking in-depth knowledge in these areas, leading to low-quality and irrelevant training, posing challenges for head teachers and affecting pupils' academic performance in the Adansi South District. Headteachers face challenges in finance, pupil indiscipline, inadequate staff training, poor community relations, curriculum management, and insufficient professional development for teachers. They often lack formal leadership training and are appointed based on their teaching records rather than academic qualifications and leadership skills. Research indicates that the quality of teaching is the most significant factor in a pupil's success. Many head teachers lack the skills and

knowledge to organise new courses for their teachers, often replicating ineffective learning experiences from their past. Schools in the district are under pressure to improve performance, and head teachers are increasingly expected to ensure these improvements.

Research questions

1. Examine how the professional development of teachers is managed.
2. Explore the strategies used by the public primary school head teachers to overcome the challenges of professional development of teachers.

Methods

Design

The research design is a descriptive survey. It is suitable to gather enough information on the issue under study from a relatively large number of cases at a particular time.

Sampling and sampling techniques

The study population encompassed 104 public primary school headteachers in the nine (9) circuits, all nine circuit supervisors, and the District Training Officer, all in the Adansi South District, New Edubiase, in the Ashanti Region. Out of this population, the researcher sampled 30 headteachers, one circuit supervisor, and one training officer through a stratified random sampling technique from each circuit. Three schools were selected from the smaller circuits and four from the larger circuits.

Instrumentation

A questionnaire was used to collect data from the participants.

Reliability and validity

The reliability of the instrument was determined through pilot testing the instruments. Piloting aims to help identify issues of ambiguity and uncertainty in the instruments (Kankam & Weiler, 2010). Through piloting the researcher established some items of the questionnaires that were not clear to the respondents. The questions were rephrased to elicit the required responses. The face validity of the instruments was assessed by three experts in research methodology: one from the Department of Educational Administration and Management at the University of Education, Winneba, and two from the Adansi South District Education Office.

Data analysis

At the end of the data collection exercise, questionnaires were thoroughly inspected for completeness and were analysed using the Statistical Package

for Social Scientists (SPSS) software because it is a quick and reliable way of processing the data. Descriptive, descriptive statistical analysis was used.

Ethical considerations

Ethical considerations concerning individual academics and key informants within the district largely focused on the principles of confidentiality, anonymity, and informed consent. To ensure the anonymity of participants, instead of the names of the participants as a means of connection to their responses, code numbers, and code names were assigned to participants and schools for easy analysis. The participants were also briefed personally by the researcher to seek their consent for the study. Participation in the study was optional and open to only participants who were ready to partake, and they were also assured that there could be no expenses or payments made for contributions to the research. Finally, the researcher also reassured participants that the information gathered was only for academic purposes.

Results

Table 1 below presents the demographic profile of the respondents involved in the study, focusing on key variables gender, age, academic qualification, professional rank, and teaching experience.

Table 1: Demographic information on the respondents

Variable	Variable Category	F	%
1. Gender	Male	23	77
	Female	7	23
2. Age (yrs)	20-29	00	00
	30-39	13	43.3
	40-49	14	46.7
	50 above	3	10
3. Academic Qualification	Diploma	12	40
	Degree	16	53.3
	Masters	2	6.7
4. Rank	Assistant Director I	2	6.7
	Assistant Director II	5	16.7
	Principal	6	20
	Superintendent		
	Senior Superintendent	17	56.7
5. Teaching Experience (yrs)	1-5	3	10
	6-10	7	23.3

	11-15	7	23.3
	16-20	9	30
	21 and above	4	13.3
6. Years as Headteacher	0-4	7	23.3
	5-9	8	26.7
	10-14	7	23.3
	15-19	4	13.3
	20 and above	4	13.3

Table 1 shows that the sample consists of 30 participants, with a majority being male. Specifically, 23 participants (77%) are male, while the remaining 7 participants (23%) are female. The age range of the participants predominantly falls between 30 and 49 years. Notably, no participants are under 30 years. The age group of 30-39 years comprises 13 participants (43.3%), whereas the age group of 40-49 years includes 14 participants (46.7%). Only a small proportion of the sample, 3 participants (10%), are aged 50 years and above.

The educational background of the respondents shows that most hold a degree. Specifically, 16 participants (53.3%) have a degree, followed by 12 participants (40%) with a diploma. A minority of the respondents, 2 participants (6.7%), possess a master's degree. In terms of professional rank, the respondents are distributed across various levels. The largest group is the Senior Superintendents, comprising 17 participants (56.7%). This is followed by 6 participants (20%) who are Principal Superintendents, 5 participants (16.7%) who are Assistant Director II, and 2 participants (6.7%) who are Assistant Director I.

The respondent's teaching experience varies, with a significant proportion having considerable years of service. The largest group includes those with 16-20 years of experience, accounting for 9 participants (30%). Those with 6-10 years and 11-15 years of experience each comprise 7 participants (23.3%). Fewer respondents, 4 participants (13.3%), have over 21 years of teaching experience, while those with 1-5 years of experience constitute 3 participants (10%).

The study's demographic profile regarding years of experience as a headteacher shows a diverse range among the 30 respondents. Specifically, 7 respondents (23.3%) have served as head teachers for 0-4 years, and another 7 respondents (23.3%) have 10-14 years of experience. The largest group consists of 8 respondents (26.7%) with 5-9 years of experience. Additionally, 4 respondents (13.3%) each have served for 15-19 years and 20 years or more.

To what extent does managing the professional development of teachers pose a challenge to the primary school headteachers?

The first research question sought to assess the opinion of respondents on the challenges by Primary head teachers in managing the professional development of teachers in Adansi South District. The research question was addressed by asking respondents to rate items on a Likert-Scale about their knowledge in challenges in managing the need for professional development of teachers. The scale was as follows:

1 - Strongly Agree 2- Agree 3 - Undecided 4 - Disagree 5 – Strongly Disagree

The results of the general perception of respondents about challenges that are faced by headteachers in managing teacher professional development needs of Primary School teachers in Adansi South District are presented in Table 2.

Table 2: Challenges faced by Headteachers in Managing Teacher Professional Development

Challenges	Min	Max	Mean	SD	Skewness		Total
					t	SE	
Teachers are not committed to teacher PDP	1	2	1.43	.504	.283	.427	30
Lack of funds to organise INSET in schools	1	3	1.30	.535	1.621	.427	30
Inadequate time for PDP in schools	1	4	1.43	.679	2.029	.427	30
Lack of incentives for teachers after INSET	1	2	1.23	.430	1.328	.427	30
Lack of trained teacher PD facilitators to coordinate INSET	1	2	1.50	.509	.000	.427	30

Results in Table 2 show that with regards to whether how teachers were committed to professional development most teachers rated “agreed” to the assertion while minority of the respondents rated “strongly agreed”. The mean response on the assertion was 1.43 which deviated significantly by 0.504. This

response corresponds to “strongly agreed” with respect to the standard deviation.

This implies that most of the respondents agreed that teachers were not committed to professional development programs. Similarly, in response to whether head teachers lacked funds for organising INSET in schools, majority of respondents indicated “undecided,” while the smallest group of respondents indicated “strongly agreed.” The average response was 1.3, with a deviation of 0.535 from the mean response. On average, respondents agreed with the statement; however, most indicated “undecided” regarding the fact that the lack of funds to organise INSET in schools for teachers was a major challenge for head teachers.

Regarding whether inadequate time for teacher professional development programs in schools was a significant challenge for headteachers of primary schools, the responses indicated that most respondents "strongly agreed" with this assertion, while a minority "disagreed." The average response score was 1.43, with a standard deviation of 0.679. This indicates that, on average, respondents acknowledged that there was inadequate time for professional development programs in schools, despite a few disagreeing with the statement.

Additionally, respondents were asked about the lack of incentives for teachers after the In-Service Training (INSET) programs. According to the results, most respondents "agreed" with the statement, while a smaller group "strongly agreed." The mean response for this question was 1.23, with a standard deviation of 0.43, which also corresponds to "agreed." On average, respondents recognised that there was a lack of incentives for teachers following INSET training.

Finally, headteachers were asked if they lacked facilitators to coordinate INSET activities. The mean response was 1.5, with a standard deviation of 0.509, indicating that respondents generally "agreed" with this statement. The standard deviation suggests that most respondents concurred with the belief that there was a lack of facilitators to coordinate INSET activities.

The findings of the study also showed that the responses were positively skewed. Most of the responses to the statements of challenges in managing professional development needs of Primary School teachers by head teachers were agreed to by respondents except responses of lack of facilitators to coordinate which was normally distributed. This was confirmed in a normality test on responses. The Shapiro - Wilk statistics for all the 5 items or statements were significant since their $p\text{-value} = 0.000 < 0.05$. This implied that the null

hypothesis that responses were normally distributed was rejected and concluded that responses were not normally distributed but skewed.

The first research question seeks to identify the challenges that headteachers face in managing the professional development of teachers. On average, headteachers noted several challenges, including a lack of commitment from teachers to engage in professional development, insufficient funds to organise in-service training (INSET) in schools, inadequate time allocated for professional development programs, a lack of incentives for teachers following INSET, and a shortage of trained professionals to facilitate INSET activities. These findings align with comments made by the Circuit Supervisor and Training Officer.

As Mc Gilchrist (2004) highlighted in his study, there are four core characteristics of an effective headteacher: recognising pupils' rights, having professional and high-quality leadership, concentrating on pupils teaching, and focusing on creating a learning organisation. These objectives are achievable through funding and teacher participation. However, in the part of the world where funding and commitment of workers are scarce, especially in rural settings, several challenges confront school managers. Crawford (2014) also asserts that it is essential that a teacher feels confident in the headteacher's ability, respects his/her abilities, and has an appreciation for his/her achievement. If the headteacher can assist his/her teachers to develop professionally then there must be fair treatment and mutual trust. But if there is a lack of justice, it will lead to a lack of confidence in the head teacher.

A study in support of the various challenges confronting headteachers in managing teacher professional development identified challenges such as lack of funds, commitments, incentives, and inadequate personnel (Crawford, 2014; Mc Gilchrist, 2004). In addition, Mankoe (2007) indicates that teacher professional development programmes are sometimes jumbled with the result that participants are invited to seminars or workshops without adequate prior notice which will enable them to make adequate preparation.

Also, Mankoe (2007) added inadequate time for teacher professional development programmes as being a serious challenge as there is no time allocation for teachers on the official school timetable to enable them to meet. It is now the duty of this headteacher to fix these programmes during the break which is just limited for any effective studies to take place, and this does not make any difference on their job. In corroboration with Mankoe (2007), Brown (2003) argues that teacher professional development programmes that are of longer duration and time span is more likely to contain the kinds of learning opportunities necessary for teachers to integrate new knowledge into practice. But if these activities are too short and offer limited follow-up of

teachers once they begin to teach. This results in teachers going back to their former way of teaching.

What strategies are adopted by the head teachers to overcome these challenges?

The fourth research question sought to assess the opinion of respondents on strategies to overcome challenges by Primary head teachers in managing the professional development of teachers in Adansi South District. The research question was addressed by asking respondents to rate items on a Likert-Scale about their knowledge of strategies in overcome challenges in managing the need for professional development of teachers. The scale was as follows:

1 - Strongly Agree 2- Agree 3 - Undecided 4 - Disagree 5 - Strongly Disagree

The results of the general perception of respondents about strategies to overcome challenges that are faced by the headteachers in managing teacher professional development of Primary School teachers in Adansi South District and presented in Table 3.

Table 3: Strategies to Overcome Challenges of Teacher Professional Development

	Min	Max	Mean	SD	Skewness t	SE	Total
Headteacher s mentor newly appointed teachers posted to their schools	1	5	1.7 3	.90 7	2.062	.427	30
Headteacher s are actively involved in planning INSET activities in the schools	1	2	1.4 7	.50 7	.141	.427	30

Funding of teacher professional development programmes is the responsibility of the headteacher	1	5	1.63	.928	2.217	.427	30
Headteachers appoint curriculum leaders to plan INSET base on teachers' needs	1	4	1.43	.728	1.971	.427	30
Resources for INSET programmes are provided from the head teacher's own initiatives	1	5	1.97	1.217	1.665	.427	30

Results in Table 3 show that with regards to whether headteachers mentor newly appointed teachers posted to their schools, majority of respondents rated “strongly disagreed” to the assertion while a minority of the respondents rated “strongly agreed”. The mean response on the assertion was 1.73 which deviated significantly by 0.709. This response corresponds to “agreed”. Taking the deviation from the mean into consideration the response corresponds to “undecided”. On average, most of the head teachers agreed or were undecided on the fact that mentoring newly appointed teachers posted to their schools. Similarly, responses on whether head teachers are actively involved in planning INSET activities in the school as a strategy for overcoming challenges showed that a maximum number of respondents rated

“agreed” while the least group of respondents rated “strongly agreed”. The average responses by respondents were 1.47 and the deviation from the main response was 0.507. This means that on average, most respondents agreed that when head teachers are actively involved in planning INSET activities in the school, it helps overcome challenges of teacher professional development.

Regarding whether funding teachers' professional development programs would help overcome some challenges, the results showed that most respondents strongly disagreed with that assertion, while a minority rated it as strongly agreed. The average responses by respondents were 1.63 with 0.928 standard deviation from the mean response. The interpretation of the results on average corresponds to “agreed”. However, taking the deviation in response into consideration, it can be inferred that most respondents were undecided about the assertion. Again, respondents were asked whether engaging curriculum leaders to plan INSET based on teachers' needs would help solve teacher professional development challenges.

Results from Table 3 indicate that most of the respondents rated “disagreed” with the statement while a minimum group of respondents “strongly agreed”. The mean response by respondents was 1.43 and deviated by 0.728. On average, respondents agreed to involve curriculum leaders in planning INSET. Finally, head teachers were asked whether resourcing for INSET programs provided by the headteacher's own initiatives could help combat the challenges. The results showed that maximum responses made by respondents rated “agreed” as they upgraded themselves. The mean response was 1.97 with a 1.217 standard deviation. This corresponded to “agreed”. Considering the standard deviation, majority of respondents were indecisive with the statement on the average.

The findings of the study also showed that the responses were positively skewed. This was confirmed in a normality test on responses. The Shapiro-Wilk statistics for all the 5 items or statements were significant since their $p\text{-value} = 0.000 < 0.05$. This implied that the null hypothesis that responses were normally distributed was rejected and concluded that responses were not normally distributed but skewed positively.

The second research question was to find strategies to overcome challenges of teacher professional development. Most respondents (head teachers) suggested that mentoring of newly posted teachers, active involvement of teachers in curriculum planning of INSET activities and provision of resources for INSET program form the head teachers' own initiatives.

The study of Steyn and Tecle (2008) reveals that, as a leader and motivator of the school, having the responsibility for the development of staff training

programmes school-based and assisting teachers. Particularly the newly trained to meet classroom challenges. He/she is to create a conducive atmosphere to enable change to occur. Also, Moos (2000) established that the expectation in England appears to be that the headteacher should bring his/her vision to school, whereas in Denmark the headteacher is expected to initiate the dialogue with the teachers to build a shared vision together with them. When teachers are part of the management process it will help carry change effectively.

Additionally, Cladwell (2008) indicates that it takes ten thousand hours of deliberate practices that promote continuous improvement to master a complex skill. This translates into about seven (7) years for those working in schools. Finally, every newly recruited teacher is excited and wants to be successful. Initially, however, they may find it difficult to do it successfully as they may be lacking in the necessary knowledge, expertise or experience (Anderson and Cawsey, 2008) and Mankoe (2007) also asserted that, coaching involves the essential steps taken to help teachers to acquire a teaching skill which they will use in classroom.

Conclusion

The study reveals that primary school head teachers in the Adansi South District face significant challenges in managing teacher professional development, including a lack of teacher commitment, insufficient funds for INSET activities, inadequate time allocation, a lack of post-INSET incentives, and a shortage of trained facilitators. To address these issues, head teachers should mentor newly appointed teachers, actively engage in planning INSET activities, and take initiatives to secure resources. Encouraging a culture of continuous learning through motivational sessions and involving teachers in decision-making can enhance their commitment. Additionally, integrating professional development into the official school timetable can ensure adequate time for these activities. To address the shortage of facilitators, schools should train staff members and collaborate with teacher training colleges and educational consultants to bring in external expertise. Implementing these strategies is crucial for fostering professional growth among teachers and improving education quality in the district.

Ethical Statement

The Department of Educational Administration and Management, University of Education Winneba gave an introductory. Also, the Adansi South District education directorate gave the go-ahead for the research to be conducted.

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Conflict of Interest

The authors affirm that there is no conflict of interest with regard to the publication of this article.

Authorship Contribution Statement

Tilibe: Conceptualisation, design, analysis and writing. Agbenyegah: Critical revision of the manuscript and technical support.

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An Investigation into Academic Stress and Coping Strategies Among Students at Dambai College of Education

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Abstract

The study examines the academic stressors and coping strategies among student teachers at Dambai College of Education (DACE) in Ghana. College students typically manage various responsibilities, such as academics, extracurricular pursuits, and personal commitments, which frequently result in considerable stress. The study was guided by the academic stressors affecting students' performance and the coping strategies employed by students of Dambai College of Education to overcome the stressors. A descriptive survey design was used, involving 110 randomly sampled students from DACE. Data was gathered using a structured questionnaire and examined with descriptive statistics, including mean and standard deviation. The findings reveal that the most significant stressors include inadequate practical course facilities, high expectations, and revising for quizzes and exams. Coping strategies identified include physical exercise, social support, and effective time management, with social support from friends and loved ones being the most effective. The study highlights the need for improved support systems and resources to mitigate academic stress and enhance students' well-being and academic performance at DACE.

Keywords: *Academic Stressors, Coping Strategies, College Students, Education*

Introduction

The classroom serves as a pivotal component of the collegiate experience for students, complemented by their involvement in various extracurricular activities. The 2016 American Time Use Survey by the U.S. Department of Labour reported that full-time college and university students dedicate approximately 3.3 hours each day to academic activities. In addition, these students dedicate approximately 2.4 hours daily to employment and engage in leisure and sports activities for about 4.1 hours each day. A study by Amponsah and Mensah (2018) indicates that circumstances within the colleges of education in Ghana exhibit comparable trends, highlighting the significance of both academic and non-academic engagements in shaping the overall student experience. On average, students in colleges read at least eight courses per semester. The demand on the college student is not only academic time in the lecture hall, but they also engage in other important social activities.

Teacher training should be viewed as a practical professional qualification, requiring student teachers to apply the theories and methods learned in their coursework to real-world classroom environments (International Task Force on Teachers for Education [TTF], 2017). This integration not only reinforces theoretical knowledge but also enhances the practical skills essential for effective teaching. The Ghanaian New Colleges of Education Curriculum implemented in October 2018, has four different pillars for students to master, namely: Subject and curriculum knowledge, Literacy studies, Pedagogical knowledge, and Supported teaching in school (School Placement Handbook, 2018). All four pillars of the Ghanaian College of Education Curriculum exert different levels of stress on the individual student.

A physical response to a challenge is what is termed stress (Chu, Marwaha & Sanvictores, 2020). A deadline for an assignment, a Student's Representative Council (SRC) meeting, a class presentation, and financial issues might trigger stress. As learners propel gradually in their education ladder to the tertiary level, they encounter more stressful and uncooperating issues like challenging concepts, assignments, tough course outlines, and pairing with other problematic students in the same room as well as hall and these cause academic stress, they have to cope effectively and manage (Hudecheck, 2020).

Research conducted by the American Psychological Association (APA) alongside a survey by the American Institute of Stress in 2014 revealed that approximately 73% of individuals reported experiencing varying levels of psychological stress. Furthermore, findings from a 2009 study indicated that youth are particularly vulnerable to heightened stress levels, largely attributable to the academic pressures and expectations imposed upon them

(Smith & Brown, 2009; Johnson and Smith (2012) posited that certain groups of students are especially susceptible to the challenges posed by academic stress, particularly during transitional phases that occur at both individual and social levels. Contemporary understandings of stress have led to its characterisation as a lifestyle crisis (Masih & Gulrez, 2006). Therefore, examining the causes and impacts of academic stress is crucial for designing effective and suitable intervention measures in higher education settings.

The transition from secondary education to the college environment, alongside the demands of the academic curriculum and the pressures associated with summative assessments, constitutes significant factors contributing to student stress. Research conducted by Misra and Castillo (2004) highlights these elements as pivotal in understanding the sources of stress experienced by college students. Previous studies have identified academic-related factors as predominant stressors among college students (Smith & Doe, 2018). As students transition to tertiary education, they encounter the challenge of adapting to the demands of independent living, often without the support of parents or family structures to assist them in managing their time effectively (Hayble, 2002). The complexity of tertiary education has increased markedly; students are now presented with an array of academic programs that must be completed within a constrained timeframe, often neglecting essential breaks for self-care and overall well-being. Academic stress has emerged as a significant contributing factor to elevated suicide rates, a concern that has reached alarming levels in various countries (Lee & Larson, 2000). According to Lee and Larson (2000), stress can be understood as a dynamic interplay among environmental stressors, an individual student's cognitive appraisal of those stressors, and their subsequent reactions. The pressure experienced by learners is increasingly troubling, leading to a notable rise in suicide attempts within this demographic. Notably, the physiological and psychological stress response activated in individuals tends to be consistent, irrespective of the specific situational triggers involved (Smith & Doe, 2018). There are various types of stress, including marital stress, anxiety during examinations, and stress related to daily work, among others. The various types of stressors elicit comparable physiological responses within the human body. This phenomenon is largely attributable to the activation of the adreno-medullary system, which functions as a component of the sympathetic division of the autonomic nervous system, as well as the adrenocortical axis (Bourne & Yaroush, 2003). The physiological responses to stress often culminate in the "fight or flight" reaction, a vital survival mechanism. During times of intense stress, noticeable physiological responses often include a faster heartbeat, higher blood pressure, quicker breathing, and increased circulation to skeletal

muscles (Bourne & Yaroush, 2003). While these stress-related bodily reactions tend to be consistent, the underlying causes of stress can vary greatly.

Several stressors identified in an academic environment may involve overwhelming assignments, ineffective time management, social challenges, and competition among peers (Fairbrother & Warn, 2003). Other individual stressors may involve difficulties in managing finances, changes in living arrangements, and struggles to maintain a balance between academic and personal commitments (Byron, Brun & Iver, 2008). The structure of the education system itself can create conditions that intensify stress among students. Contributing factors include congested lecture rooms, the pressure of semester-based assessments, limited access to adequate facilities and resources, and the shared accommodation of male and female students within the same residence halls (Awing & Agolla, 2008). Ang and Huan (2006) noted that heightened expectations contribute to rising stress levels. Personal stressors may also stem from financial pressures, adjustments to new living environments, and the challenge of juggling academic obligations with personal life demands (Byron, Brun & Iver, 2008). The design of the educational system can foster circumstances that elevate stress levels among students. Key stress-inducing elements include overcrowded classrooms, the demands associated with semester-based evaluations, inadequate educational infrastructure and resources, and mixed-gender housing arrangements in student residences (Awing & Agolla, 2008). In 2012, a student from the College of Science, Technology and Applied Arts of Trinidad and Tobago (COSTAATT) sadly died by suicide, reportedly due to distress over academic performance and the overwhelming pressure of examinations (Jones, 2012). A 2012 report in *The Lancet* highlighted that university students in India struggle significantly with handling examination failures (Reddy, Menon, & Thattil, 2018). The National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) reported that in 2015, there were 8,934 student suicides in India, primarily due to depression related to exam failures. It is likely that many more suicide attempts went unreported, further highlighting the severity of the issue. Additionally, a 2019-2020 study on academic-related stress among nursing students in Ghana revealed that 73% reported feeling stressed due to school-related pressures. Students enrolled in regular programs were 0.09 times less likely ($p < .0001$) to experience stress compared to those in the modular training program. Additionally, female students were 2.18 times more likely ($p < .0001$) to report stress than their male peers (Smith & Doe, 2021).

Stressors manifest in various forms within academic settings, home life, and social interactions. Approximately 94% of medical students in Nigeria reported that they found their educational program to be stressful (Oku et al., 2015). In that same study, around 82% cited excessive workload, 76.4% noted

inadequate holiday time, and 76.2% mentioned a lack of time for recreational activities as their stress sources (Oku et al., 2015). A similar high-stress level of about 73% was also observed among nursing students in Nigeria (Ezeh et al., 2016). Stress can have serious consequences, including the development of detrimental behaviours like substance abuse (Kassel et al., 2003).

Managing stress is essential for individuals' well-being, and there are various methods to alleviate stress. Coping involves the strategies individuals use to direct their thoughts and behaviours in response to perceived internal and external challenges (Folkman & Moskowitz, 2004), helping them adapt to situations they perceive as threatening. Active coping strategies involve constructive behaviours aimed at altering or addressing stressors, while avoidant coping strategies consist of ineffective behaviours that do not directly address the stressors (Krohne, 1993). Academic stress can be alleviated through proactive strategies like effective time management, seeking support from others, and engaging in recreational activities (Blake & Vandiver, 1988).

Statement of the problem

The characteristics of DACE students are multifaceted. The institution is home to a diverse community that includes both traditional students, who typically navigate their educational journey shortly after high school, and non-traditional students, who may be returning to education after a significant gap or pursuing their studies later in life. This unique blend enriches the academic environment, fostering a vibrant exchange of experiences and perspectives. Some of the students are married couples and others are relatively old. Many non-traditional students take the opportunity to travel home to address urgent family responsibilities, such as childcare. With this background, some of them skip lectures and experience comprehension challenges when studying; others fail to write quizzes, while some keep recording low marks, which demoralises them (Smith, & Doe, 2021). In attempts to adjust to the academic environment of Dambai College of Education (DACE) and life in Dambai town as a whole, they face numerous difficult situations that can lead to stress-related behaviours and various health problems such as headaches, insomnia, fatigue, hypertension, and loss of appetite, which are commonly associated with stress (Dambai Health Centre, 2022). The difficulties encountered by student teachers in the College of Education have been intensified by the frequent industrial actions taken by Tutors. From 2022 to 2024, there have been numerous strikes by the Colleges of Education Teachers Association of Ghana (CETAG) (Zurek, 2023). These strikes resulted in lost contact hours, which further compressed the academic calendar and increased pressure on students to complete the course material in a shorter timeframe. Research has not yet been conducted in these new areas of stress. This study endeavours to identify

the principal sources of stress experienced by student teachers at DACE and to analyse the strategies they employ to cope with the stressful situations encountered during their academic pursuits on campus.

Purpose of the study

This study aimed to examine the stressors and coping skills of students at Dambai College of Education.

Research questions

1. What are the academic stressors affecting students' performance at Dambai College of Education?
2. What are the coping strategies employed by students of Dambai College of Education to overcome the stressors?

Description of the study area

Dambai College of Education (DACE) is an institution of higher learning that focuses on training teachers for Basic Schools. DACE is among the 46 public Colleges of Education and receives guidance from the University for Development Studies. Situated in Dambai, which serves as the regional capital of the Oti region. The College offers four 4-Year Bachelor of Education programs in Basic Education, specialising in Early Grade, Upper Grade, and Junior High School. Additionally, the college provides Distance and Sandwich programs that are conducted by the University of Education (UEW) in Winneba and the University for Development Studies (UDS) in Tamale.

Description of the study design

The descriptive survey design is used because it allows for the collection of a large amount of data from a diverse group at once, offering a detailed understanding of events and clarifying individuals' perceptions and behaviours based on data gathered at a single point in time (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2009). Additionally, it identifies the existing variables within a specific context and, at times, explores the relationships between these variables, making it particularly useful for addressing relevant and significant research questions (Johnson & Christensen, 2012).

Population

Polit and Hungler (2004) describe a population as the complete group of individuals, elements, or entities that meet a set of defined characteristics or criteria. In the context of this study, the target population comprises all students enrolled in levels 100 to 300 at Dambai College of Education, totalling 800 students. This demographic serves as the focus for the research, enabling a comprehensive analysis of the specified variables within this educational institution. However, the accessible population consisted of 370 Early Grade and Upper Primary specialisation students. This cohort was

selected because some students had previously expressed dissatisfaction with their specialisation, which may potentially serve as a source of stress for them.

Sampling technique and sample

The study employed a proportional stratified sampling technique to select a total of 110 participants from the target population of 370 students across levels 100, 200, and 300. This approach ensured fair representation of both Primary and Early Grade specialism students. To determine the number of participants from each level, the total sample size (110) was distributed proportionally based on the total number of students in each level. As a result, 36 participants were selected from level 300, 27 from level 200, and 47 from level 100. Within each level, participants were further allocated between Primary and Early Grade specialism students according to their respective proportions. This resulted in the selection of 27 Primary and 9 Early Grade students from level 300, 20 Primary and 7 Early Grade students from level 200, and 26 Primary and 21 Early Grade students from level 100. The participants were allocated 45 minutes to complete the questionnaire. This duration was deemed appropriate given that the questionnaire comprised only one and a half pages. This methodology was also considered suitable as it facilitated the completion and return of the questionnaire within the lecture period.

Instrument

The main tool used for data collection in this study was a structured questionnaire. According to Subar, Ziegler, and Thompson (2001), the main rationale for utilising a questionnaire lies in its ability to efficiently and cost-effectively access a substantial number of respondents. Additionally, this method facilitates the collection of quantifiable responses pertinent to the research inquiry, which can subsequently be subjected to rigorous analysis. The researcher developed a comprehensive questionnaire consisting of three distinct sections aimed at addressing the research questions and gathering demographic data from students. All items within the questionnaire were closed-ended, employing a four-point Likert-type scale to gauge responses.

The first part of the study focused on the demographic details of the participants, including factors such as sex, age, and educational background. The subsequent section examined the various stressors experienced by the participants. The third section was dedicated to exploring the coping strategies employed by the respondents. A Likert scale questionnaire was utilised, featuring a four-point response format: Strongly Agree (SA) = 4, Agree (A) = 3, Disagree (D) = 2, and Strongly Disagree (SD) = 1. The researcher opted for this questionnaire format due to the literacy of the participants, ensuring they were capable of comprehensively reading and responding to the survey items.

Validity and reliability

The face validity of the instruments employed in this study was validated by soliciting evaluations and constructive feedback from colleagues within the field. This process facilitated the necessary modifications and corrections to attain a satisfactory level of face validity. The instrument was subsequently pilot tested, yielding a reliability coefficient of 0.780, determined through Cronbach's Alpha. A sample of 25 students from Jasikan College of Education participated in the pilot testing phase.

Data analysis

Data analysis involves the systematic organisation and deconstruction of data into its fundamental components, coupled with the application of statistical methods to the raw data to derive conclusions pertinent to the research questions that instigated the study. In this process, questionnaires collected from participants were meticulously numbered, edited, and coded to ensure data integrity. Given that the majority of items utilised a four-point Likert-type scale, responses were quantitatively scored as follows: 4 for "Strongly Agree," 3 for "Agree," 2 for "Disagree," and 1 for "Strongly Disagree." The coded responses were subsequently entered into SPSS version 23; a robust software program designed for quantitative data analysis. To analyse the biographic data of respondents and to address the research questions, statistical techniques including frequencies, percentages, and means were employed.

Results

Table 1: Demographic information on the respondents (N = 110)

Variable	Variable Category	F	%
1. Gender	Male	58	52.7
	Female	52	47.3
2. Age range (yrs)	19-24	77	70
	25-34	27	24.5
	30-34	6	5.5
3. Levels	100	54	49.1
	200	32	29.1
	300	24	21.8

Table 1 provides a summary of the participants' gender distribution. The sample included 58 males (52.7%) and 52 females (47.3%), reflecting an even gender representation. The participants were grouped into three age ranges: 19-24 years, 25-29 years, and 30-34 years. A significant majority of the participants, accounting for 70%, fell within the 19-24 years age group. This was followed by 24.5% of participants in the 25-29 years age group, while the 30-34 years age group comprised 5.5% of the sample. The participants'

academic levels were classified into three distinct categories: Level 100, Level 200, and Level 300. It was observed that a significant portion of the participants (49.1%) belonged to Level 100, while 29.1% were associated with Level 200, and 21.8% were part of Level 300.

What are the academic stressors affecting students' performance at Dambai College of Education?

The study included 110 participants (N=110). The responses were classified according to these mean ranges: 0.00-1.59 (Strongly Disagree), 1.60-2.59 (Disagree), 2.60-3.59 (Agree), and 3.60-4.00 (Strongly Agree). The results showed a mean of 3.26, which falls within the Agree range, indicating that participants' opinions were generally high. The data is further summarised using key indicators where M represents the Mean, SD denotes the Standard Deviation, SA stands for Strongly Agree, A for Agree, D for Disagree, and SD for Strongly Disagree.

The responses were organised into two groups: agree and disagree. This approach was taken to make the results easier to interpret. The Mean (M) values listed below served as benchmarks for understanding the levels of respondents' opinions: $M \leq 2.59$ indicates Low, while $M \geq 2.60$ signifies High.

Table 2: Academic stressors affecting students' performance at Dambai College of Education

Indicators of AS	SA	A	D	SD	M	SD
Inadequate facilities for practical courses	58(52.7)	36(32.7)	8(7.3)	8(7.3)	3.31	.896
Challenges in finding reading materials for the various course	34(30.9)	60(54.5)	9(8.2)	7(6.4)	3.10	.801
High expectations from parents and tutors for maintaining high grades adds to your academic stress level	47(42.7)	46(41.8)	11(10)	6(5.5)	3.22	.839

High stress you experience due to balancing coursework with STS	57(51.8)	45(40.9)	6(5.5)	2(1.8)	3.43	.683
Revising for quizzes and examination	55(50)	48(43.6)	7(6.4)	0(0)	3.44	.614
Inadequate support from course tutors	27(24.5)	49(44.5)	23(20.9)	11(10)	2.84	.914
Lecture room environment not conducive for learning	53(48.2)	48(43.6)	7(6.4)	2(1.8)	3.38	.690
Having to study after a day's work	52(47.3)	41(37.3)	11(10)	6(5.5)	3.26	.853
Feeling there is a label (negative) attached to my selected programme	39(35.5)	50(45.5)	15(13.6)	6(5.5)	3.11	.839
The lack of adequate support systems in the College of Education significantly contributes to my academic stress	63(57.3)	40(36.4)	4(3.6)	3(2.7)	3.48	.700
Overall mean					3.26	.738

Academic stress

The study (Table 2) reveals that the majority of students (52.7%) strongly agreed, and 32.7% agreed that inadequate facilities for practical courses contribute to their academic stress, resulting in a high mean score ($M = 3.31$, $SD = .896$). This result is consistent with earlier studies that suggest a lack of

resources and facilities can impede students' capacity to participate in hands-on learning, leading to heightened stress (Johnson & Taylor, 2019). Access to relevant and up-to-date reading materials is crucial for academic success. When students struggle to obtain necessary texts and resources, it can lead to increased frustration and anxiety, further exacerbating academic stress (Brown et al., 2018). About 30.9% of students strongly agreed, and 54.5% agreed that challenges in finding reading materials for their courses contribute to their academic stress, with a mean score of 3.10 ($SD = .801$).

The study shows that a significant proportion of students (42.7% strongly agreed and 41.8% agreed) reported that high expectations from parents and tutors to maintain high grades add to their academic stress ($M = 3.22$, $SD = .839$). This is consistent with findings by Lee and Larson (2017), who noted that parental and tutor expectations can place immense pressure on students to perform academically. This pressure can lead to a heightened sense of stress and anxiety, as students strive to meet these expectations often at the expense of their mental health (Kim & Rohner, 2015).

Most students (51.8% strongly agreed and 40.9% agreed) experience high stress due to balancing coursework with STS, resulting in a mean score of 3.43 ($SD = .683$). Miller and Fraser (2019) agreed that dual demands of coursework and field responsibilities can lead to significant time management challenges and increased stress levels.

Exam-related stress is a common phenomenon among students, as highlighted by numerous studies (Hembree, 1988; Zeidner, 1998). The pressure to perform well in quizzes and examinations can lead to anxiety and stress, negatively impacting students' mental health and academic performance (Cassady & Johnson, 2002). Half of the students (50%) strongly agreed and 43.6% agreed that revising for quizzes and examinations is a significant source of stress, yielding a mean score of 3.44 ($SD = .614$).

Moreover, 24.5% of students strongly agreed, and 44.5% agreed that inadequate support from course tutors is a stress factor, with a mean score of 2.84 ($SD = .914$). This result highlights the crucial role of strong tutor-student relationships and support systems in reducing academic stress. According to Tinto (2017), the role of faculty support is pivotal in student retention and success. Inadequate tutor support can lead to confusion and frustration, contributing to heightened stress levels as students navigate their academic responsibilities (Anderson & Carta, 2018).

The physical learning environment is essential for fostering student engagement and enhancing learning outcomes. According to research conducted by Barrett et al. (2015), various factors—including lighting,

temperature, and noise levels—have a significant effect on students' capacity to concentrate and succeed academically. Creating an optimal learning space can therefore greatly influence students' performance. Poor learning environments can exacerbate stress and hinder effective learning, emphasizing the need for educational institutions to invest in creating conducive learning spaces (Tanner, 2017). A considerable number of students (48.2% strongly agreed and 43.6% agreed) felt that the lecture room environment was not conducive for learning, resulting in a mean score of 3.38 (SD = .690). Many students (47.3% strongly agreed and 37.3% agreed) reported that having to study after a day's work adds to their stress, with a mean score of 3.26 (SD = .853).

The stigmatization of certain academic programs can significantly impact student self-esteem and increase stress. As Goffman (1963) noted, stigma can lead to social exclusion and internalized negative perceptions, affecting students' mental health and academic motivation. The study reveals that 35.5% strongly agreed and 45.5% agreed that there is a negative label attached to their selected program, contributing to their stress levels ($M = 3.11$, $SD = .839$).

Students also pointed out that the lack of adequate support systems in the College of Education significantly contributes to their academic stress (57.3% strongly agreed and 36.4% agreed), resulting in the highest mean score of 3.48 ($SD = .700$). Therefore, these findings are consistent with studies by Tinto (2012) and Karp et al. (2011) stated that comprehensive support services, including academic advising, counselling, and peer support, are vital in helping students manage stress and achieve their academic goals. The absence of such systems can leave students feeling isolated and overwhelmed, further exacerbating stress levels (Hussain et al., 2013).

What are the coping strategies employed by students of Dambai College of Education to overcome the stressors?

This paper with a sample size of 110 participants ($N=110$), the responses were categorized based on the following mean ranges: 0.00-1.59 indicates (Strongly Disagree), 1.60-2.59 represents (Disagree), 2.60-3.59 signifies (Agree), and 3.60-4.00 denotes (Strongly Agree). The results showed a mean of 3.24, which falls within the Agree range, indicating that participants' opinions were generally high. The data is further summarised using key indicators where M represents the Mean, SD denotes the Standard Deviation, SA stands for Strongly Agree, A for Agree, D for Disagree, and SD for Strongly Disagree.

The responses were categorized into two groups: agree and disagree. This classification was used to facilitate a clearer interpretation of the results. The

following Mean (M) values were used as thresholds for understanding participants' opinions: $M \leq 2.59$ indicates Low, and $M \geq 2.60$ indicates High.

Table 3: Coping strategies employed by students of Dambai College of Education

Indicators of CS	SA	A	D	SD	M	SD
Participating physical exercise	56(50.9)	51(46.4)	3(2.7)	0(0)	3.48	.554
Seeking support from friends and loved ones	70(63.6)	33(30.0)	6(5.5)	1(0.9)	3.56	.643
Seeking support from Tutors and Counsellors	63(57.3)	41(37.3)	5(4.5)	1(0.9)	3.51	.632
Engaging in recreational activities or hobbies	59(53.6)	44(40.0)	7(6.4)	0(0)	3.47	.616
Spending time with nature (lake, forest, animals)	9(8.2)	36(32.7)	52(47.3)	13(11.8)	2.37	.800
Meditation and relaxation techniques	52(47.3)	44(40.0)	13(11.8)	1(0.9)	3.34	.720
Healthy lifestyle, including diet and sleep	76(69.1)	30(27.3)	4(3.6)	0(0)	3.65	.549
Believe in effective time management strategies	77(70.0)	30(27.3)	2(1.8)	1(0.9)	3.66	.563
Take drug or other prescriptions	7(6.4)	27(24.5)	33(29.1)	44(40.0)	1.97	.958
Religious practice of praying or trusting God	62(56.4)	37(33.6)	7(6.4)	4(3.6)	3.43	.772
Overall mean					3.24	.681

Coping strategies

Research by Rebar et al. (2015) indicates that engaging in regular physical exercise can lead to enhanced mood, decreased anxiety, and overall improved mental health. This can be attributed to the physiological effects of exercise, which include the release of endorphins and the lowering of cortisol levels. Such biological responses play a significant role in making exercise an effective method for managing stress, as highlighted by Salmon (2001). The study (Table 2) recorded that students (50.9% SA, 46.4% A) agreed that physical exercise helps them cope with stress, resulting in a high mean score ($M = 3.48$, $SD = .554$). This indicates that physical activity is a widely used and effective coping strategy among students.

The highest mean score was for seeking support from friends and loved ones ($M = 3.56$, $SD = .643$), with 63.6% of students strongly agreeing and 30.0% agreeing. This underscores the importance of social support in managing stress. Social support is widely recognised as a critical factor in stress reduction and emotional well-being. Cohen and Wills (1985) describe social support as a buffer against stress, providing emotional, informational, and instrumental assistance. The presence of a supportive network can enhance individuals' resilience to stress by offering a sense of belonging and reducing feelings of isolation (Thoits, 2011).

A significant number of students (57.3% SA, 37.3% A) reported seeking support from tutors and counsellors as a coping strategy ($M = 3.51$, $SD = .632$), highlighting the role of institutional support services. This finding is consistent with the literature emphasizing the importance of accessible and effective support services within educational institutions. Research by Sharkin (2004) indicates that counselling services play a vital role in helping students manage stress and other mental health issues. Furthermore, supportive interactions with tutors can enhance students' academic experience and provide essential guidance and encouragement (Tinto, 2012).

More than half of the students (53.6% strongly agreed and 40.0% agreed) engaged in recreational activities or hobbies to cope with stress ($M = 3.47$, $SD = .616$), indicating the value of leisure activities. Leisure activities and hobbies provide a necessary break from academic pressures and contribute to overall well-being. According to Iwasaki (2003), engaging in enjoyable activities can lead to positive emotional experiences, reduce stress, and enhance the quality of life. The concept of "flow," described by Csikszentmihalyi (1990), suggests that deeply engaging in an activity can lead to a state of heightened focus and enjoyment, which is beneficial for stress relief.

The study found meditation and relaxation techniques helpful ($M = 3.34$, $SD = .720$), suggesting these techniques are relatively effective but not as widely adopted as other strategies. Meditation and relaxation methods, including mindfulness practices and deep breathing exercises, have demonstrated effectiveness in alleviating stress and anxiety. These techniques promote relaxation and enhance mental clarity, as supported by research conducted (Khoury et al., 2015). However, their adoption may be limited due to a lack of familiarity or perceived difficulty in integrating these practices into daily routines (Shapiro et al., 2008).

The importance of a healthy lifestyle, including diet and sleep, was evident with 69.1% of students strongly agreeing and 27.3% agreeing. This finding is consistent with extensive literature emphasizing the critical role of lifestyle factors in mental health and stress management. According to Knüppel et al. (2017), a nutritious diet positively impacts brain function and emotional regulation, while poor dietary habits are linked to increased stress and mood disorders.

Effective time management emerged as the strategy with the highest mean score ($M = 3.66$, $SD = .563$), with 70.0% of students strongly agreeing and 27.3% agreeing that it is crucial for balancing academic demands. As posited by Britton and Tesser (1991), learners who adeptly orchestrate their temporal resources are predisposed to attain superior academic outcomes and encounter diminished levels of stress. Time management skills are associated with greater self-regulation, enabling students to take control of their academic responsibilities and enhance their overall well-being (Zimmerman, Greenberg & Weinstein, 1994)

The findings showed that students (56.4% SA, 33.6% A) relied on religious practices, such as prayer and faith in God, to manage stress ($M = 3.43$, $SD = .772$), highlighting the importance of faith-based coping strategies. This finding reflects the significance of faith-based coping mechanisms among students. Religious practices can provide emotional comfort, a sense of community, and a framework for understanding and managing life's challenges. Pargament, Koenig, and Perez (2000) highlight that religious coping can be an effective means of dealing with stress, offering individuals a sense of control, hope, and meaning.

The coping strategy of taking drugs or other prescriptions had the lowest mean score ($M = 1.97$, $SD = .958$), with 40.0% of students strongly disagreeing, indicating it is not a preferred method for managing stress. This finding suggests that students are generally reluctant to use medication as a primary means of coping with academic stress. The reluctance to resort to pharmacological interventions could be attributed to concerns about side

effects, dependency, and the stigma associated with medication use for stress and mental health issues (De las Cuevas et al., 2014). The study reveals that students prefer non-pharmacological strategies, such as physical exercise, social support, and time management, which are perceived as more sustainable and holistic approaches to stress management.

Spending time with nature (lake, forest, animals) had a lower mean score ($M = 2.37$, $SD = .800$), with 47.3% of students disagreeing. This indicates that spending time in nature is less commonly used as a coping strategy, possibly due to limited preference. Although less commonly utilized, there is considerable evidence highlighting the mental health advantages of spending time in nature. Bratman et al. (2015) suggest that spending time in natural settings can help lower stress, boost mood, and improve cognitive performance. However, students' limited engagement in nature-related activities may be due to urban living conditions, academic schedules, and a lack of awareness of the benefits of nature (Gladwell et al., 2013).

Conclusion

This study provides valuable insights into the key factors contributing to academic stress among students and the coping strategies they employ. The findings highlight those inadequate facilities, difficulty accessing reading materials, high expectations from parents and tutors, balancing coursework with additional responsibilities, and the learning environment are significant stressors. Social and institutional support systems, particularly from friends, tutors, and counsellors, play a crucial role in alleviating stress.

Effective coping strategies, including physical exercise, social support, recreational activities, and time management, were widely adopted, while pharmacological interventions and nature-based approaches were less preferred. The low engagement with nature-related strategies suggests a need for increased awareness and accessibility. College and academic counsellors should implement both short- and long-term strategies to reduce student stress levels.

Recommendations

Based on this study's findings, we are recommending that colleges of education should prioritise the enhancement of infrastructure and resources, particularly for practical courses, to alleviate academic stress among students. Institutions should ensure the availability of comprehensive reading materials and create supportive learning environments that are conducive to balancing academic demands with additional responsibilities.

Additionally, the Counselling Units and other self-supporting units should be created based on class, hall and college level to provide the necessary help for the students.

Ethics Statements

Informed consent was secured from the study's participants.

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Conflict of Interest

The authors assert that there exists no conflict of interest pertaining to the dissemination of this scholarly article.

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Nortey: Concept, writing and design.

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Relationship between Assessment Beliefs and Practices of Senior High School Social Studies Teachers in the Oti and Volta Regions of Ghana

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Abstract

This study explored the relationship between Social Studies teachers' assessment beliefs and practices in Senior High Schools and Senior High Technical Schools in the Volta and Oti regions of Ghana. The research employed a quantitative approach and utilised a correlational design. Data was obtained from 196 Social Studies trained teachers through a structured questionnaire. The results of contingency table and a pairwise correlation analysis revealed a very weak and statistically insignificant relationship between teachers' assessment beliefs and practices, as indicated by a Cramer's V value of 0.0524 and a correlation coefficient of 0.0159 ($p = 0.8250$). This suggests that despite the prevalence of positive assessment beliefs among the teachers, these beliefs do not influence their assessment practices. The results underscore the need for targeted professional development and policy interventions to better align teachers' practices with their educational philosophies.

Keywords: *Classroom Assessment, Assessment Beliefs, Assessment Practices, Alternative Assessment, Traditional Assessment*

Introduction

Assessment is an essential part of the educational process. It acts as a means to evaluate student comprehension, inform teaching strategies, and offer feedback to students and educators (Black & William, 1998).

Effective assessment procedures are essential in education, especially at the senior high school level, to guarantee that learning objectives have been achieved and to ensure that students are prepared for postsecondary education, the world of work, as well as for life (Guskey, 2003). As a multidisciplinary subject that seeks to foster critical thinking and informed citizenship, social studies require assessment activities that promote high levels of analytical skills and values in addition to knowledge (Marzano, 2006). Teachers' beliefs about assessment contributes significantly to shaping their assessment practices. These beliefs, influenced by teachers' theoretical dispositions, educational philosophies, and personal experiences, underlie decisions on what to assess, how to assess, and how to use the results (Brown, 2004). Tittle's (1994) Classroom Assessment Theory postulate that there is a direct relationship between teachers' assessment beliefs and their classroom practices. Accordingly, teachers who hold strong, well-founded beliefs about assessment are expected to exhibit assessment practices that reflect these beliefs, thereby enhancing the effectiveness of the assessment process (Tittle, 1994).

The study was guided by the research question: What is the relationship between the assessment beliefs and practices of Senior High School Social Studies Teachers in the Oti and Volta Regions of Ghana?

By exploring the relationship, the study contributes to understanding how teachers' beliefs influence their practices and the extent to which these practices align with contemporary assessment theories (Gao & Watkins, 2002).

In spite of the critical role of assessment in the teaching and learning process, there is a growing concern that teachers' assessment practices may not necessarily reflect their beliefs, particularly in the context of Social Studies education in Ghana. Tittle's (1994) Classroom Assessment Theory suggest that teachers' beliefs should guide their assessment practices, but research evidence and observations by practitioners have revealed instances of a disconnect between what teachers believe about assessment and how they assess their students in the classroom. In the Volta and Oti regions of Ghana, Social Studies teachers undergo various experiences that may affect their instructional activities, particularly assessment practices. Limited instructional resources, large class sizes, and pressure to complete the curriculum (Ampofo, 2020) are among reported challenges that confront teachers in effectively undertaking teaching and assessment activities. To overcome these challenges, teachers' often resort to assessment choices and practices that are more practically convenient rather than those that reflect their theoretical beliefs about assessment (Stiggins, 2001). The potential mismatch between beliefs and practices raises questions about the

effectiveness of current assessment approaches in achieving educational goals. This study addresses the need to empirically investigate the relationship between Social Studies teachers' assessment beliefs and their practices in the teaching process. An understanding of this relationship is critical for identifying gaps between beliefs and practices and for designing strategies to support teachers in aligning their assessment practices with their educational philosophies (Pajares, 1992).

The importance of assessment in education cannot be overemphasised. It influences student learning, teacher effectiveness, and overall educational outcomes (Shepard, 2000). Since Social Studies as a school subject in Ghana seeks to produce informed and responsible citizens, it is essential that assessment practices are aligned with the educational objectives of the subject. This alignment can only be achieved if teachers' assessment practices are guided by well-founded beliefs that reflect contemporary theories of learning and assessment (Brookhart, 2011). By exploring the relationship between the teachers' assessment beliefs and practices, the study contributes to a broader discussion on the application of educational theories in classroom settings and enrich the assessment literature regarding the relationship between teachers' assessment beliefs and practices. The findings will provide empirical evidence to support or challenge Tittle's (1994) Classroom Assessment Theory and offer insights into its applicability in the Ghanaian context. The study findings will also shed light on the factors that influence teachers' assessment practices and inform policymakers, educators, and teacher trainers on how to better support teachers in aligning their practices with their beliefs, ultimately leading to more effective assessment strategies in Social Studies education (Guskey, 2003).

Review of Related Literature and Studies

Empirical literature review

Teachers undoubtedly hold a set of beliefs about the different aspects of education, which include teaching, learning and assessment (Chen & Cowey, 2016). This belief systems teachers' hold, arguably, influences how teachers approach the various aspects of education. Thus, beliefs are said to influence the way teachers approach teaching, teachers understanding of how students learn, or learning occurs, and the way assessment should be employed in the teaching and learning process, either for learning or of learning (Fives & Buehl, 2012). The outcome of empirical studies, such as that of Deluca and

Kluger (2010) and Brown (2008), fervently support the notion that teachers' prior belief about assessment influences their assessment choices and practices in the classroom. In a study to ascertain teachers' conceptions or beliefs about assessment, Brown (2004) identified four cardinal issues around which teachers' assessment beliefs may be centred or understood. The first three issues, Brown intimates, are the issues some researchers have variously suggested as purposes for assessment (Brown, 2004; Warren & Nisbet, 1999). Brown (2004) suggest that teachers' assessment beliefs can be ascertained by the extent to which they agree or disagree with assessment as a means to improve teaching and learning, a means to make students accountable for their learning, and a means to promote school and teacher accountability. The fourth, which is not a purpose of assessment, is whether or not assessment is relevant to the teaching and learning process (Brown, 2004).

Zhang and Burry-Stock (2003) have argued that since teachers are particularly responsible for assessing students learning, it is imperative to be concerned about the way they go about assessment of students. Bransford, Brown, Cocking, Donovan and Pellegrino (2000) assert that the emergence and growth of new conceptions of learning in education has brought forth a reconsideration of educational practices such as teaching and assessment. Bransford et al. (2000) argue that the new conceptions of learning have challenged the status quo with compelling evidence. The traditional paradigm of learning that has, for many decades, directed educational practices did not envisage assessment as an integral part of the teaching and learning process. Consequently, teachers' assessment practices were geared towards measuring or estimating what students know. Assessment principally served as a means to grade, promote and certify students. Against this backdrop, Shepard (2000, p.1) states that educationist conceptualising effective teaching did not 'assign a significant role to assessment as part of the teaching process'. A normal sequence of assessment practice, in the traditional learning paradigm, involve teaching a topic followed by testing students to assign grades or marks in order to gauge their mastery of the content.

Studies on the relationship between teachers' assessment beliefs and their practices have indicated differing outcomes. While some research (Brown, Kennedy, Fok, Chan & Yu, 2009; Calveric, 2010) have reported evidence showing a strong positive relationship between teachers' assessment beliefs and practices, others research (Azis, 2015; Chew & Lee, 2013) have presented findings that suggested significant discrepancies between teachers' beliefs regarding assessment and their actual practices. Nimehchisalem and Abdalla (2020) carried out research to explore the assessment beliefs and practices of Libyan English language teachers in secondary schools and to determine the

correlation between assessment beliefs and practices. The outcomes of the research revealed a moderately positive correlation between the teachers' assessment beliefs and practices (Nimehchisalem & Abdalla, 2020). Hussain, Idris and Akhtar (2019) carried out a correlational study on the assessment beliefs and practices of English Language Secondary School teachers in the Swat and Mardan Districts of Pakistan and found that the teachers had moderate classroom assessment beliefs. In respect of the teachers' classroom assessment practices, the study revealed the teachers preferred and employed traditional assessment techniques and practices frequently compared to alternative assessment techniques and practices. In addition, the study found a moderate level correlation between the teachers' classroom assessment beliefs and practices ($r=.576$). Othman (2018) conducted a study in Malaysia about secondary school English language teachers' beliefs about school-based assessment and the relationship between their school-based assessment beliefs and classroom assessment practices. Othman adapted Shim's (2009) validated questionnaire ($\alpha = 0.84$) to elicit the school-based assessment beliefs and practices of 174 teachers. The teachers' school – based assessment beliefs and practices were assessed in four main areas - planning, implementing, monitoring and reporting. Results of descriptive statistics analysis conducted indicated that the teachers had strong positive beliefs towards all the four aspects of the school -based assessment processes. A Pearson correlation conducted between the teachers' assessment beliefs and practices indicated that there was a significant positive relationship ($r=0.541$, $p<0.01$) between the teachers' assessment beliefs and practices. This finding of Othman's study concurs with the findings of a study conducted by Chan (2008) in Taiwan. The study investigated the teachers' beliefs and practices about multiple assessments. The study, which was purely quantitative in nature, surveyed 520 elementary school EFL teachers in Northern Taiwan. Among others, the study found that most of the teachers had strong positive beliefs towards the use of multiple assessments for assessment of students learning. Aside the positive beliefs towards the multiple assessments, the study results also revealed that the teachers practically employed multiple assessments in their teaching. A correlation coefficient analysis further discovered a significantly positive relationship ($r=.186$) between the teachers' beliefs of multiple assessments with their classroom assessment practices.

The outcome of some studies, however, contrasts the popular proposition that teachers' assessment beliefs positively relate with their practices. Widiastuti, Mukminatien, Prayogo and Irawat (2020) conducted a qualitative study involving Junior High School English teachers' beliefs and practices of formative assessment in Indonesia. Data were collected from the participants through semi-structured interviews, classroom observations and documentary

analysis. The outcome of the study revealed that teachers who continually take part in Continuous Professional Development (CPD) had strong positive beliefs towards formative assessment. However, the study also found that the teachers' formative assessment beliefs did not necessarily influence their formative assessment practices in the classroom. Further, the study revealed that the positive formative assessment beliefs the teachers professed when interviewed were not appropriately manifested in their teaching during the classroom observations. The study identified low Continuous Professional Development (CPD) on the part of some teachers, limited time allocation to subjects on the teaching timetable, high teacher workload, and other classroom conditions as factors that may be contributing to the inconsistency between the teachers' formative assessment beliefs and practices. This finding aligns with the outcome of a study conducted by Davis and Neitzel (2011) which found that the relationship between assessment beliefs and practices are influenced by classroom related and other factors sometimes beyond the control of the teacher.

Theoretical perspective and its application

The study is supported by Tittle's (1994) classroom assessment theory developed originally to investigate teachers' classroom assessment practices in Mathematics. The thrust of the theory is that there are three key dimensions with peculiar categories about classroom assessment deemed very relevant for consideration when studying or researching into classroom assessment practices.

The first dimension of the theory, according to Tittle (1994), is epistemology and theories. This dimension has three illustrative categories which are teaching and learning, curriculum, development and change. Tittle propounds that teachers have explicit and implicit knowledge and beliefs about classroom assessment. These knowledge and beliefs inform teachers' practices at the various stages of the classroom assessment process such as preparation, process, outcomes, feedback, interpretations and usage. Therefore, educationist and researchers need to be particularly interested in understanding these beliefs and knowledge of teachers in order to be able to assess the relationships and influences of the characteristics of assessments on these beliefs (Tittle, 1994).

The second dimension of classroom assessment practices is interpretation and usage. This dimension of the theory indicates that teachers' personal knowledge of classroom assessment is highly important and impacts their assessment practices (Dagdag & Dagdag, 2020). The beliefs are very essential

in that they inform the teachers teaching practices. That is, the teachers' belief systems about teaching, learning, and assessment related activities influence their assessment practices. Accordingly, two categories of knowledge are identified in this instance - knowledge related to teaching and learning and knowledge about the assessment process. The former relates to teachers' knowledge about the student and teachers own personal knowledge. This kind of knowledge is likely to assist in determining the effectiveness of teachers own teaching. The latter relates to the beliefs teachers hold about the effects of assessment on students before, during and after the assessment activities or process (Tittle, 1994). These beliefs may also include the teachers' beliefs about the effects of assessment on teachers themselves. For instance, the outcome of the assessment activities may provide information for the teacher to decide whether some topics need re-teaching or change in mode of teaching. Teacher intents and actions are also an important category under the interpreter and user dimension. Teachers' intentions and actions are informed by assessment information. For instance, the outcome of an assessment activity may cause the teacher to take actions such as changing teaching strategies at the instructional planning stage in order to change classroom interactions. Assessment information may assist the teacher on the type of instructional materials to use. The thrust of this dimension of the theory is that teachers hold beliefs and have knowledge that influences their classroom assessment practices and other teaching related activities (Dagdag & Dagdag, 2020).

The third dimension of classroom assessment practice, according to Tittle (1994), is assessment characteristics. This dimension is concerned about embedding assessment in the teaching and learning process, the format and mode of assessments that are carried out, scoring and evaluation of assessments and preparation, description and reporting of assessments. The teachers' beliefs about the role of assessment in the teaching and learning process are likely to determine the extent to which that teacher integrates assessment in on-going teaching and learning activities. A teacher who holds a traditional view of assessment is not likely to embed assessment in the ongoing instructional activities. Also, the usage or purposes for conducting assessments are most likely to include promotion, determination of level of mastery of content and for accountability purposes. Contrary, a teacher with a more constructionist or alternative view of assessment will integrate assessment in the ongoing instructional activity and purposely use assessment to promote learning. Depending on the purpose of assessment, the mode and format of assessment may differ (Tittle, 1994). Traditional assessments may take the form of multiple-choice responses, true for false, short answer questions and fill-in the gaps. Alternative assessments may be portfolio,

observation, interview and so on. Tittle referred to all activities surrounding the assessment process as assessment characteristics. These tasks involve the preparation for assessment, the execution of the assessment task, its evaluation, and the reporting or explanation of assessment outcomes, all of which aid in the interpretations of assessments (Tittle, 1994).

The theory therefore suggests a correlation between a teacher's epistemological and theoretical beliefs about learning, teaching, and assessment. Thus, the epistemological and theoretical beliefs of senior high school social studies teachers are expected to guide their design, implementation, and interpretation of classroom assessments since these beliefs form the foundation for their decisions on what to assess, how to assess, and how to use the results to support student learning. In line with the theory teachers' assessment practices should be a direct reflection of their assessment beliefs. This theory therefore provides a foundational premise for this study by proposing that if senior high school social studies teachers hold strong, well-founded beliefs about assessment, these beliefs should manifest, influence or correlate with their assessment practices in the classroom.

Methods

The quantitative research approach and correlational design were employed to explore the relationship between Senior High School Social Studies teachers' assessment beliefs and practices in the Volta and Oti regions of Ghana. The research approach allowed for the systematic collection and analysis of quantitative data on the respondents' assessment beliefs and practices, ensuring objectivity and generalisation (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The research design was appropriate for identifying patterns and measuring the strength and direction of the relationship between the variables without manipulating them (Fraenkel, Wallen & Hyun, 2019)

Sampling procedure

The study involved one hundred and ninety-six (196) Social Studies-trained teachers selected from an estimated four hundred and fifteen (415) Social Studies teachers in the two regions. The teachers were selected through a two-stage simple random sampling process from eighty (80) Senior High and Technical Schools across Volta and Oti regions of Ghana. Determination of the sample size was guided by Krejcie and Morgan's (1970) Table for determining the appropriate sample size from a given population. At the time of the study, the two regions had 98 public Senior High and Senior High Technical Schools, with 22 (22.5%) in the Oti region and 76 (77.5%) in the Volta region. In the first stage, 80 schools comprising 18 from the Oti region

and 62 from the Volta region were proportionally sampled. In the second stage, 196 qualified Social Studies teachers consisting of 44 teachers from the Oti region and 152 teachers from the Volta region were proportionally sampled from the selected schools.

Data collection instruments and procedure

The one hundred and ninety-six (196) Social Studies teachers responded to a self-administered questionnaire on teachers' assessment beliefs and assessment practices. Information on the teachers' (respondents') assessment beliefs and practices were solicited using thirty item survey adapted from Brown's (2004) Teachers' Conceptions of Assessment (TCoA) questionnaire ($\alpha = 0.78$), and a self-developed teachers' assessment practices inventory ($\alpha = 0.74$). The adapted thirty item four-point assessment belief Likert scale were made up of fifteen (15) positive and fifteen (15) negative statements each. Using reverse coding, the positive statements were coded as strongly agree (SA) = 4, agree (A) = 3, disagree (D) = 2, and strongly disagree (SD) = 1. Negative statements were coded as strongly agree (SA) = 1, agree (A) = 2, disagree (D) = 3 and strongly disagree (SD) = 4. Respondents were to obtain a minimum of 30 scores and a maximum of 120 scores. The level of respondents' assessment belief was categorised into three (3) using range of scores: negative belief (30-59), positive belief (60-89) and highly positive belief (90-120).

The self-developed assessment practices inventory used to solicit information on the assessment practices of the respondents contained five (5) main questions (A, B, C, D and E). Each question was followed by a number of assessment techniques and practices. Respondents were to indicate the frequency at which they employed each of the thirty (30) assessment techniques and activities by using a four-point scale: Never (N), Sometimes (S), Frequently (F) and Always (A). The thirty assessment techniques and practices were made up of fifteen (15) traditional and fifteen (15) alternative assessment techniques and activities each. Reverse coding was used to rate the choice or preferences of respondents such that preference for alternative assessment techniques and activities was rated as never (N) = 1, sometimes (S) = 2, frequently (F) = 3, and always (A) = 4. Preference for traditional assessment techniques and activities were rated as never (N) = 4, sometimes (S) = 3, frequently (F) = 2, and always (A) = 1. Respondents were to obtain a minimum of thirty (30) scores and a maximum of one hundred and twenty (120) scores. The nature of respondents' assessment practice was categorised into three (3) using range of scores: negative practices (30-59), positive practices (60-89) and highly positive practices (90-120).

Ethical considerations

Creswell (2009) indicates that researchers should anticipate that at almost every stage of the research process ethical issues are likely to arise and encourages researchers to endeavour to adopt strategies to address such issues in order to protect the sanctity of the research findings. Schutt (2009) asserts that when it comes to data collection the confidentiality of information provided and anonymity of the participants who provide the information must be priority. Thus, the participants need to be firmly assured that their identity will be protected, or not to be disclosed at all times to any third party. In this research, concrete measures were implemented to guarantee compliance with rigorous ethical guidelines. Approval was secured from the heads of the participating senior high schools and departments of the teachers. This was meant to assure the schools and participants that any information elicited was to be used solely for academic purposes and nothing else. The research instruments utilised to obtain information from the participants stated clearly the information it sought to elicit and also guaranteed the participants of the confidentiality of their identity and anonymity of the information they provided. Another important ethical practice adopted was that question items for the data collection instruments were thoroughly reviewed by experts in the field to ensure that words used and the meanings they conveyed were not prejudicial to any individual, institution or group of persons.

Results and Discussion

The relationship between the respondents' assessment beliefs and assessment practices was examined at two levels: first, through a contingency table analysis, and second, via pairwise correlation analysis. Tables 1 and 2 present the results of contingency table analysis and a pairwise correlation analysis between the teachers' assessment beliefs and practices respectively.

Research question: What is the relationship between the assessment beliefs and practices of Senior High School Social Studies Teachers in the Oti and Volta Regions of Ghana?

Table 1: Relationship between SHS/SHTS Social Studies Teachers Classroom Assessment Beliefs and Assessment Practices

Respondents' Assessment Beliefs	Respondents' Assessment Practices			Row Total
	30-59 (Negative)	60-89 (Positive)	90-120 (Highly Positive)	
	f (%)	f (%)	f (%)	f (%)
30-59 (Negative)	0 (0.00)	1(0.51)	0 (0.00)	1(0.51)
60-89 (Positive)	16 (8.16)	157 (80.10)	0 (0.00)	173(88.27)
90-120 (Highly Positive)	3 (1.53)	19(9.69)	0(0.00)	22(11.22)
Column Total	19(9.69)	177(90.31)	0(0.00)	196 (100)

Pearson Chi-Square (2) = 0.5371, Pr. = 0.764, Cramer's V = 0.0524

Source: Fieldwork, 2025.

The Cramer's V value of the respondents' assessment beliefs and practices was computed to determine the strength of the association between the two. Cramer's V equals zero (0) when there is no relationship between two variables, and one (1) when there is a very strong association or relationship between two variables. The strength of the association between two variables is indicated by the value of Cramer's V scale which is interpreted as very weak [0.00 - 0.09], weak [0.10 - 0.19], moderate [0.20 - 0.39], relatively strong [0.40 - 0.59], strong [0.60 - 0.79] and very strong [0.80 - 1.00] (Kotrilik, William, & Jabor, 2011). Table 1 indicates that a majority of respondents (88.27%) exhibited positive assessment beliefs, with a similarly large proportion (90.31%) demonstrating positive assessment practices. However, only 11.22% of respondents held highly positive assessment beliefs, and no respondents showed highly positive assessment practices. The Cramer's V value of 0.0524, which falls within the "very weak" range [0.00-0.09], indicates a very weak association between the respondents' assessment beliefs and practices.

Table 2: Pairwise Correlation between SHS/SHTS Teachers' Assessment Beliefs and Practices

	Respondents' Assessment Beliefs	Respondents' Assessment Practices
Respondents' Assessment Beliefs	1.0000	0.0159 0.8250
Respondents' Assessment Practices	0.0159 0.8250	1.0000 -

Source: Fieldwork, 2025.

To further explore the relationship between the respondents' assessment beliefs and assessment practices, a pairwise correlation analysis as displayed by Table 2 was conducted. The correlation coefficient of 0.0159, with a p-value of 0.8250, suggests a very weak and statistically insignificant relationship between the respondents' assessment beliefs and practices. This result, indicating that only 1.59% of the variance in assessment practices can be explained by assessment beliefs, aligns with the Cramer's V finding of a very weak association (Table 1).

These results diverge from previous studies, such as those by Othman (2018) and Chan (2008), which reported a strong positive relationship between teachers' assessment beliefs and practices. Othman (2018) conducted a study to examine the relationship between English language teachers' school-based assessment beliefs and their assessment practices in Malaysia. The study adapted Shim's (2009) validated questionnaire to collect data on the teachers' school-based assessment beliefs and practices. The results of Pearson correlation analysis indicated that there was a significantly positive relationship ($r = 0.541$, $P < 0.01$) between the teachers' assessment beliefs and practices. Similarly, Chan (2008) conducted a study in Taiwan about elementary school teachers' beliefs and practices about multiple assessments. The study found that the teachers generally had a strong positive belief towards the use of multiple assessments for assessing learning outcomes. Further, a Pearson correlation analysis established a significantly positive relationship ($r = .186$) between the teachers' beliefs of multiple assessment and their classroom assessment practices. Hussain, Idris and Akhtar (2019) and Nimehchisalem and Abdalla (2020) also conducted two separate studies to ascertain the extent to which Secondary School teachers' assessment beliefs and practices were related in Libya and Pakistan respectively. The two studies independently established a positively moderate relationship between the teachers' assessment beliefs and practices.

Conversely, the findings align with studies by Widiastuti, Mukminatien, and Irawat (2020), which also reported a lack of significant correlation between formative assessment beliefs and practices among teachers in Indonesia. Widiastuti, Mukminatien and Irawat (2020) conducted a study about Junior High School teachers' beliefs and practices of formative assessment in Indonesia. The study reported that teachers who regularly took part in continuous professional development programmes had a strong positive belief towards formative assessment. However, the teachers' formative assessment beliefs did not necessarily relate with their assessment practices and consequently did not directly influence their formative assessment practices.

The assessment literature provides evidence indicating varying results regarding the relationship between teachers' assessment beliefs and practices. Though findings indicating a positively strong relationship between teachers' assessment beliefs and practices (Othman, 2018; Chan, 2008) appear to dominate the literature, this and other studies (Widiastuti, Mukminatien & Irawat, 2020) however found no evidence to suggest any meaningful relationship between teachers' assessment beliefs and practices. The variance in findings across studies underscores the complexity of the relationship between teachers' beliefs and practices, challenging Tittle's (1994) theoretical proposition that assessment beliefs directly influence classroom practices. This complexity may reflect the multifaceted nature of beliefs, which are influenced by a variety of contextual and personal factors that do not always translate into practice. The discrepancy could also be due to differences in educational contexts, cultural factors, or the specific assessment practices valued in different regions.

Conclusion

The study concludes that, there is a very weak and statistically insignificant relationship between assessment beliefs and practices among the Senior High School and Senior High Technical School Social Studies teachers surveyed. Despite the majority of the respondents exhibiting positive assessment beliefs, both the correlation analysis and Cramer's V value indicate that these beliefs do not significantly influence or predict their assessment practices.

These results diverge from studies that report a strong positive relationship between teachers' assessment beliefs and practices, challenging the theoretical assumption that teachers' beliefs directly drive their classroom practices. The findings align with research suggesting that the relationship between beliefs and practices is more complex, possibly influenced by contextual factors such as educational policies, institutional demands, and classroom realities that may override or mediate the impact of teachers' beliefs on their practices.

Recommendations

In view of the outcome of the study, it is recommended that continuous professional development programmes for teachers should focus not only on reinforcing positive assessment beliefs but also on translating these beliefs into effective classroom practices. Continuous professional development and training should include practical strategies for aligning assessment practices with theoretical beliefs. Also, it is important that further studies explore the role of contextual factors, such as school culture, curriculum demands, and assessment policies, in shaping teachers' assessment practices. Understanding these influences could provide insights into why beliefs may not always translate into practice and help tailor professional development to address these barriers. It is important, also, to encourage mentorship programmes so that experienced teachers with well-aligned beliefs and practices are made to mentor less experienced teachers as a way of bridging the gap between assessment beliefs and practices. Additionally, fostering a culture of peer collaboration could also allow teachers to share successful strategies for implementing belief-driven assessment practices.

Conflict of Interest

The author confirms that there are no conflicts of interest related to the publication of this article.

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Management of Higher Educational Institutions in Pandemic Situations: The Case of Covid-19 in Dambai College of Education

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Abstract

Outbreak of Covid-19 revolutionised global education system and Ghana was no exception. This study explored the heat period of Covid-19, 2020/2021 and 2021/2022 academic years on strategic management of personnel, material resources and contact hours. Quantitative procedures employed determined faculty, students and material resource management whilst qualitative approaches used ascertained efficiency of resource management. Fourteen staff members and nineteen students conveniently sampled answered close and open-ended questionnaires. Findings include adequate and equitable resource distribution of personal protective equipment, effective communication through collaboration, efficient use of resources, improved digital skill as well as inadequate digital skill among some staff and students. Conclusion was that resilient managerial strategies facilitated effective use of contact hours and economic resources however improvement on digital skill among all sectors should be pursued. Recommendations include implementing continuous professional development programmes on technological competence for members of the College community, procurement of additional technological resources, and designing college-based Learning Management System (LMS) were necessary.

Keywords: *Management, Higher Education Institution, Pandemic, Covid-19, Dambai College*

Introduction

Educational institutions, like any other organisation, have their clear path and calendar of operation. Colleges of Education in Ghana are among the many post-secondary institutions which through the passage of Act 778, Education Act, were recommended to be transited into tertiary institutions from their former known non-tertiary status. Thus, by Act 847, Colleges of Education Act 2012, all the teacher training colleges were transited into tertiary institutions. The Colleges always have their annual schedules of activities which often were religiously followed in ensuring the smooth running of their mandates for teaching, research and community services. The case of 2019/2020 and 2020/2021 academic years became different from the norm. A number of deviations had to be allowed and managed for continuation of society and general growth of education in the country. The 46 public Colleges of Education like all other educational and corporate institutions were hit hard by the negative impact of the deadly Covid-19 novel virus.

Coronavirus disease (COVID-19) is an infectious disease caused by the SARS-CoV-2 virus (World Health Organisation, 2020). The Covid-19 pandemic disrupted the academic calendars of Colleges of Education, jeopardising their role in producing competent teachers for basic schools. Given that basic education is foundational for child development and national education, such disruptions pose significant risks. The government of Ghana took precautionary measures to mitigate the impact of the disease in anticipation of its potential ravaging effects.

Prior to the confirmation of the outbreak in Ghana, a readiness assessment was conducted, and a response strategy developed led by the National Disease Surveillance Department of Ghana Health Service. In addition, the country conducted orientation at the Kotoka International Airport (KIA) and other Ports of Entry for effective screening and handling of suspected cases as well as contact tracing training for Alumni and Residents of the Ghana Field Epidemiology and Laboratory Training Program (Ghana FELTP and staff of the Ghana Health Service (GHS). The GHS and all other Ministry of Health (MoH) agencies had heightened routine surveillance in all health facilities. Government of Ghana on 11 March, committed \$100 million to enhance Ghana's coronavirus preparedness and response plan. The Ministries of Health, Information and media instituted aggressive mass education and

campaigns to create the necessary awareness in Ghana (Kenu, Frimpong & Koram, 2020, p. 72).

According to Sasu (2022), by March 14, 2020, Covid-19 cases were registered in the country and by December 2020, a total of 54,771 cases had been registered. The cases went up to have a record of 142,986 by 31st December 2021. January 5, 2022, witnessed an overall total of 148,079 Covid-19 within which 876 were newly confirmed cases with an overall number of deaths reaching 1,313 (Sasu, 2022). These cases had student infections inclusive. The welfare of the youths is of paramount concern to all citizens. The youths also form the greatest population of the education populace of the country. The protection of all citizens including students from the ravaging effect of the disease is the outermost concern of all governments all over the world. This had led to issuance of several directives on management of work at various sectors of economies.

Particularly in Ghana, the education sector had to take to blended teaching and learning modes in tertiary education. Track systems were held to reduce the number of students in institutions for in-person's lessons. Ghana Tertiary Education Commission served several letters to tertiary educational leaders to reiterate total obedience to the directives in observance of Covid-19 protocols to avoid infection and reinfection of students and workers. A number of updates were given on monthly bases by His Excellency, the President of the Republic, Nana Addo Dankwa Akufo-Addo on the infection rates and also precautionary measures to take in all households, institutions and individually to curb the infection rate of the country. The country's Ministry of Health also circulated several letters and memoranda for compliance by all citizens to ensure the country does not totally run down due to the pandemic and related impact.

Initially, vaccines were unavailable in Ghana, prompting caution among educational leaders, particularly College Principals, regarding operational practices, especially considering the unique boarding system of Colleges of Education. The World Health Organisation (WHO) and International Labour Organisation (ILO) issued warnings in their Policy Brief regarding the need for adequate accommodation and feeding facilities to ensure social distancing if colleges reopen for in-person instruction.

Nonetheless in some sectors there are clear trends indicating increased risk of transmission. This is notable for service and sales workers, cleaning and domestic workers, education workers, meat-processing workers, hospitality workers, drivers and transportation workers, public safety workers, construction workers and the people in social service occupations. Workplaces

with physical person-to-person contact, inadequate ventilation, common eating areas, shared work accommodations and travel are more likely to report COVID-19 outbreaks. The evidence supports the existing WHO and ILO recommendations for preventative measures for COVID-19, such as remote work directives, restricting worksite entrance to key workers, physical distancing, routine screening, isolation of infected persons, contact tracing and quarantining of contacts, regular worksite disinfection (especially of high touch surfaces), hand hygiene, environmental monitoring and appropriate use of personal protective equipment (WHO & ILO, 2021).

McCormack (2021) highlights that the Centre for Disease Control and Prevention in the United States warned educational leaders in February 2020 about the potential drastic impact of Covid-19 on school operational systems. This prompted institutional leaders worldwide, including Ghana, to innovate engagement methods due to the global impact of the pandemic (Brock, Beach, Musselwhite & Holder, 2021). Schools globally, including the USA, had to adapt instructional delivery significantly in the spring 2020 semester. Consequently, Colleges of Education in Ghana shifted to online engagement to mitigate the negative effects of clustered face-to-face lessons, despite facing challenges (Arias, Swinton & Anderson, 2008).

The covid-19 pandemic has significantly disrupted global educational systems, including Higher Education Institutions (HEIs), and this has necessitated research into how leadership managed institutions during the crisis. Dambai College of Education, like many HEIs encountered unique challenges, including the abrupt shift to online learning, resources constraints, and the need to ensure the safety and wellbeing of the college community. This research is crucial to understand how the college navigated the challenges, the effectiveness of the strategies that were employed by leadership, and the prospects of those strategies for future pandemic preparedness. Examining this pandemic situation in the case of Dambai College of Education provide valuable insights into the unique challenges that confronted HEIs in resource-constrained settings. This research is essential to inform policy and practice on management of HEIs during pandemics. The outcome highlights best practices and innovative strategies used by management of Dambai College of Education, which could serve as blueprints for analogous institutions. The research identified approaches that enabled work progress among faculty and students, teased out mechanisms that resulted in efficient resources utilisation and cost reduction, and the general effect of the pandemic on the institution, where actionable recommendations are offered to enhance resilience and adaptability in the face of future disruptions.

Although numerous research has explored the effect and impact of the covid-19 pandemic on HEIs globally, there remains a gap in unearthing how Colleges of Education in Ghana, especially resource-constrained settings like Dambai College of Education managed the pandemic. There exists extensive research that focused on universities globally and in Ghana, where researchers generally overlooked the unique strategies colleges of education in Ghana adapted to navigate the complexities of the covid-19 pandemic (Shinde & Mahadalkar, 2018; Gyampoh, 2020; Mncube, Mutongoza and Olawale, 2021). Also, there appear to be limited empirical evidence on the long-term implications of pandemic management strategies on the contextual Ghanaian teacher education programmes and the capacity of these programmes to produce quality teachers in a post-pandemic era (Ibrahim, Gusau & Uba, 2020; Tadesse & Wuluye, 2020; Di Pietro, Biagi, Costa, Karpinski, & Mazza, 2020). This research seeks to fill this gap by providing detailed analyses of the strategies used to manage a typical college of education in Ghana (Dambai College of Education), offering insights that are critical for strengthening teacher education institutions in similar contexts.

Purpose of the study

Thus, many institutions if not all, carried out some paths of management of their institutions in unique ways as viewed suitable. This research envisioned to analyse and review what happened so far in the College within the two academic years, 2019/2020 and 2020/2021, which were the peak periods of the Covid-19 pandemic worldwide. Relevant questions institutional leaders need to ask and answer in mapping out their clientele engagement include but not limited to 1) how should staff and students be managed to ensure effective work progresses? 2) How should staff and students be engaged to ensure effective and efficient use of resources during the pandemic? 3) How could the period of the pandemic be managed in educational institution to avoid economic down-drum? This study concentrates on Dambai College of Education in analysing the management of educational institutions within the pandemic to unearth the positive and the negative effect made by covid-19 pandemic on the development of the College.

Research questions

The study was guided by the following questions to give it a focus.

1. Which strategies were adopted to manage staff and students for effective progress of work in the college during the Covid-19 pandemic?
2. How were students engaged to ensure effective and efficient use of resources in the college during the Covid-19 pandemic?

3. How were institutional resources managed in curbing economic down-drum in the College during the pandemic?
4. What was the effect of the Covid-19 pandemic on the College of Education?

Significance of the study

In practice, the study produced information relevant in helping College Management of Dambai College of Education and analogous institutions in crafting strategic paths in managing periods of pandemics to ensure effective and efficient running of their sectors. The study also revealed the strategies adopted by the Students Representative Council in harnessing the opportunity to increase productivity in institutional management and teaching-learning experiences during the period of the pandemic. This information therefore would guide other students' leadership to improve their sectors of engagement. The study has revealed practicable blueprints that challenge leaders to transform difficulties into opportunities and guide the practices of leaders in the management of institutions during natural eventualities. The research has revealed the need for management to engage staff in contextually based technology-driven professional development programmes towards maintaining the global mandate of providing education that meet the industrial needs of society.

Theoretically, the revelations of the study give historical evidence of pandemic management, and this contributes knowledge to the theoretical perspective of educational administration. The theoretical and methodological paths adopted by the study serve as guidance and research frameworks for modelling the infection, spread and prevention of similar pandemics. The study has revealed a concept map of the Bertalanffy's Systems Theory that can guide investigations regarding managing pandemic in higher educational institutions.

For policy, the study brought on board information relevant to Ghana Tertiary Education Commission (GTEC), Ministry of Education (MoE) and all the teaching universities including National Teaching Council (NTC) with respect to management of Colleges of Education in similar pandemics. The Oti Regional Coordinating Council, Krachi East Municipal Assembly, Krachi East Education Directorate, the Chonky Traditional Area, VOLTI PRINCOF, TTAG and other stakeholders of Dambai College of Education would find the content of this research very informative for planning of support for the College and other institutions in their jurisdictions. The findings of the study will also inform management of the need to consider the level of compliance of community members when formulating policies towards managing institutions during pandemics. The success of educational administrative

policies is heavily influenced by the community members' level of compliance.

Theoretical and Conceptual Framework

The objectives of the study were based on approaches of organisational management in higher educational institutions in Ghana. Therefore, the theoretical antecedence of the study is underpinned by Systems Theory. The theoretical perspectives of Von Bertalanffy's Systems Theory (1968) form the stands of the study. Bertalanffy's Systems Theory (1968) was used to establish basis for describing the organisational strategic Inputs made, Transformations undertaken, and the resulting Outputs and Feedback obtained while managing the institution during the pandemic. The systems theory opined that institutions are made of systems with goals that must be achieved (Mele, Pels & Polese, 2010; Mncube, Mutongoza & Olawale, 2021).

The application of systems theory provides a robust theoretical perspective for understanding the complexities of managing HEIs during the covid-19 pandemic, especially in the case of Dambai College of Education. The systems theory underlines the interconnectedness and interdependence of the respective components within an institution, such as administrative structures, teaching and learning processes, resource allocation, and stakeholder engagements, which were all critically affected by the covid-19 pandemic. Dambai College of Education is a complex system, and the systems theory provides a framework which allows a holistic analysis of how disruptions in one or more components (for example, change of academic calendar, sudden shift to online teaching) reverberated across other components (for example, resources utilisation, staff workload, institutional finances, student performance) of the College. The adaptation of the systems theory to unique environments like the Dambai College of Education aligns with the unique challenges posed by covid-19, which enables this research to identify the immediate response strategies of the College as well as the long-term systemic strategies needed for resilience and sustainability. The systems theory is therefore an ideal lens for examining the multifaceted management strategies employed by leadership to manage the complexities of the covid-19 at Dambai College of Education and derive lessons that are applicable in similar institutions during such crisis.

It is postulated that the theory comprises four phases which are inputs, transformation, outputs, and feedback (Mncube *et al.*, 2021; Shinde & Mahadalkar, 2018; Mele *et al.*, 2010). The "inputs" were defined as the capital and human resources that contributes to operating the institution (Mncube *et al.*, 2021). The capital resources and human resources need to be well planned, organised, and motivated towards achieving the institutional goals (Mncube *et*

al., 2021). Different covid-19 resources were provided, and staff and students trained towards managing the pandemic within the college. Health professionals of the Ministry of Health also provided expert supports towards managing the pandemic.

At the “transformation” stage, the processes include the guidelines and directions that controls and regulates the resources utilisation towards attaining the institutional goals (Mele *et al.*, 2010; Mncube *et al.*, 2021). The transformation phase is said to be vital as it should provide clear procedures for effective resources usage and define duty roles for all field players. The formation of committees to monitor covid-19 souvenirs, establishment of covid-19 isolation centres, building ICT competence of teachers and students, and decentralised distribution of covid-19 resources were transformative procedures towards controlling spread of the pandemic.

Also, “outputs” represents the final results and services provided by the institution, justifying the resources invested into managing the institution to achieving some defined goals (Mele *et al.*, 2010; Mncube *et al.*, 2021). The outputs are measured based on the initial goals of the institution upon which resources were provided and some transformations undertaken. The system of effective online lessons and equity in access to safety materials represent outputs of the covid-19 management process.

Finally, “feedback” is obtained from the human resources who undertook the transformations. Feedback is obtained through research, which measures how the resources were used, report improvements and challenges in operating the system (Mele *et al.*, 2010; Mncube *et al.*, 2021). Highly satisfactory feedback about the strategic management of the institution during the pandemic was reported. The systems theory in this study informed the democratic and collaborative leadership approach in managing the institution where students, staff, SRC and leadership worked collectively together towards controlling the pandemic. The theory guided in tracking the input resources and transformation procedures by the institution and compared it with the accompanying outputs and feedback in the context of managing Dambai College of Education during the covid-19 pandemic.

The effect of the “transformations” using the available “inputs” results in an “output” which is assessed through research to obtain “feedback” for institutional management is conceptualised in Figure 1.

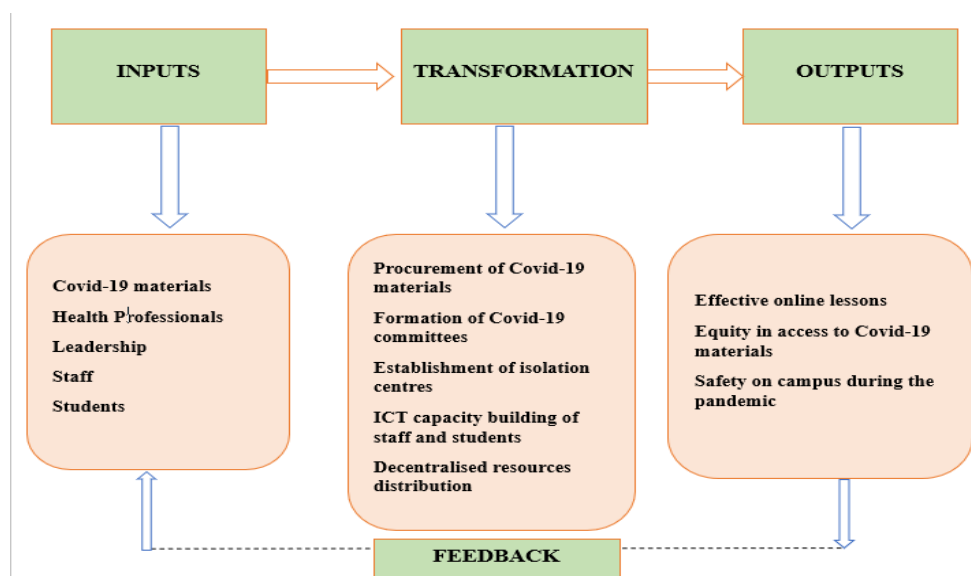


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework Based on General Systems Theory for Managing Institutions during Covid-19

Source: Adapted from (Shinde & Mahadalkar, 2018; Mncube, Mutongoza and Olawale, 2021)

Following Mncube *et al.* (2021) disposition of the General Systems Theory as exemplified in Figure 1, the “inputs” phase in this study is characterised by the covid-19 materials and the human resources including health professionals, institutional leaders, staff and students who are following and undertaken various transformation procedures using the inputs to manage the covid-19 pandemic in the institution. Some transformation procedures that were employed includes procurement of the covid-19 materials, formation of emergency committees, establishment of isolation centres, building the digital competence of staff and students, and adopting decentralised mechanism of resources distribution. The theoretical outputs were hypothesised to be the institution’s ability to transit into effective online lessons, ensure equity in access to Covid-19 safety materials, and maintain safety for continuous academic activities amidst the pandemic.

Literature Review

Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) management strategies employed during covid-19 pandemic

During the Covid-19 pandemic, countries, corporate organisations, educational institutions and the world experienced challenges that were

globally intertwined. It was the first time some corporate and educational institutions faced such a global pandemic. The inexperienced institutional leaders with respect to such pandemics for the first time in their leadership roles had to adapt and design strategies that would sustain their institutions through the pandemic.

Research has reported that the covid-19 pandemic caused HEIs to adapt remarkable to the situation using different strategies that meet the needs of students and faculty members efficiently. According to Mncube *et al.* (2021), institutions have designed and provided support materials in the form of course guides, new teaching-learning approaches, and resource packages for transforming instruction to the online space. Also, managements have instituted special learning platforms, and reorganised assessment procedures for various fields of study that are accessible to their students irrespective of location (Mncube *et al.*, 2021). Due to the minimal face-to-face interaction, students and parents were connectively engaged and supported through social media platforms, using text messages and emails (Mncube *et al.*, 2021).

Higher Educational Institutions (HEIs) also developed specific guidelines within their campuses that described how to prepare and respond to the covid-19 emergency cases. HEIs in Ghana instituted emergency response plans, emergency and crisis management plans, and school continuity plans to ensure safety through the school year (Gyampoh, 2020). Again, the institutions were reported to have established covid-19 isolation centres on each campus, intensified education on safety measures, and allocated PPEs to department heads and student leaders for easy access.

Within the Ghanaian context, stakeholders and managements of HEIs introduced online emergency remote teaching systems as a measure to sustain academic activities amidst the pandemic (Ibrahim, Gusau & Uba, 2020). Gyampoh (2020) reported that mentoring universities of Colleges of Education in Ghana extended their virtual teaching-learning platforms to affiliate colleges to ensure continuous teacher education.

Effect of covid-19 pandemic on Higher Education Institutions (HEIs)

The impact of the novel coronavirus was very direct on the education sector across the world. Basic schools, colleges and universities were compelled to be closed to control the spread of the virus, which posed difficult challenges to the students, teachers and parents. Analyses of the consequences of the virus revealed that it intensified the social inequality gap in schools (Tadesse & Wuluye, 2020). Less privileged students who attend low resourced schools experienced low or no distance online learning during the pandemic whilst

advantaged students in technologically equipped schools experienced well designed distance and online programmes through online learning management systems and other robust and interactive online learning platforms (Tadesse & Wuluye, 2020). Globally, the education system adapted online teaching-learning pedagogies for continued learning, but the lack of ICT infrastructures and internet connectivity were challenges to families in developing and underdeveloped countries. The technology competence of teachers in disadvantaged schools to design appropriate online learning content is low which also affected effective teaching-learning processes (Di Pietro, Biagi, Costa, Karpinski, & Mazza, 2020).

The unplanned and immediate need for schools, teachers and students to shift from traditional face-to-face to distance and online instruction posed several difficulties including finance, teachers' digital skills, ICT infrastructure and resources, internet access, online teaching approaches and effective students' assessment and evaluation strategies (Tadesse & Wuluye, 2020). Teachers were challenged on how to remodel online-based assessments for students, and how to monitor the students during assessments. According to Osman (2020), the assessment of students' performance in online learning during the pandemic in areas such as technical competence, teaching-practicum, and practical skills was notable difficult.

Another stringent impact of coronavirus was the resources and financial burden brought upon schools at a season where normalised financial supports were not readily available to the institutions. Colleges of Education relies on tuition fees from students for major operations. Due to schools' closure, the expected financial sources were closed which affected the progress of usual academic routines of the institutions (Mncube et al., 2021). Colleges of Education like many other public institutions relied on governmental and non-governmental agencies for protective equipment and teaching-learning resources. The unaffordability and inaccessibility were described to have serious negative implications on students of higher educational institutions (Haleem, Javaid, & Vaishya, 2020).

Ofori-Manteaw, Dzidzornu, and Akudjedu (2022) reported variant effects of covid-19 on HEIs including heavy traffic on internet connectivity, difficulties getting access to facilities to engage in practicum, and limited time to engage in interactive academic discourses. Research students also experienced challenges with data collection procedures and support from supervisors due to limited face-to-face interaction (Ofori-Manteaw *et al.*, 2022).

Methods

Research paradigm, approach and design

The study used multiple research methods to obtain and analyse data. Results interpretation and discussions were anchored on the assumptions of the post-positivist paradigm where variant perspectives are used for conclusions (Mncube *et al.*, 2021). A mixed method approach was adapted to obtain both quantitative and qualitative data. The approach was employed to determine the in-depth experiences of staff and students of Dambai College of Education during the peak of covid-19 in relation to the thematic areas of the research. The research thereby employed the concurrent embedded mixed methods design where both quantitative and qualitative data were used to augment each other to explain the experiences of the participants. The management strategies adopted by leadership to manage staff and students was described using quantitative data. In research objective two, qualitative data was used to describe how staff and students effectively and efficiently used available resources during the pandemic. Finally, the third and fourth objectives which concerned how resources were managed to avoid economic downturn as well as the effect of the pandemic on the College were respectively addressed using quantitative data.

The adoption of the embedded mixed methods design was justified by the use of different types of data to address different specific objectives and the results augment each other towards addressing the main objective of the study. The design formulated the dependent variable as the management strategies leadership adopted to manage Dambai College of Education during the Covid-19 pandemic. The independent variables were strategies leadership mounted to manage staff and students, how staff and students effectively and efficiently used available resources, what strategies leadership adopted to avoid economic downturn, and how the pandemic affected (positively/negatively) the College. By principle, the design allowed collection of both qualitative and quantitative data simultaneously for addressing the respective themes of the study.

Sample and sampling techniques

The population of the study was made of the academic and support services staff, and all level 400 students at the College. The study sample was obtained through convenient sampling. This sampling procedure was employed due to compliance of the College community members to covid-19 protocols. Thus, available staff members and students at the point of data collection responded to the questionnaire. The sample of the study is 53 participants comprising 14 academic and support services staff and 39 level 400 students. The sample size was obtained from the sample size calculator provided by Raosoft Sample

Calculation Guide (Al-Sayaghi, 2023). With a staff population of about 50, a sample of 14 was an appropriate representation (Al-Sayaghi, 2023). Also, the Level 400 students had a population of about 280 students, and 39 were conveniently sampled as participants of the study.

Research measures and data analysis

Both quantitative and qualitative data were collected using close-ended and open-ended questionnaire. Quantitative data was collected using the closed-ended questionnaire while the qualitative data collected with the open-ended questionnaire. The quantitative data was obtained using a five-point Likert scale and multiple response items. The qualitative data was also obtained from self-reported open-ended questionnaire. All sampled respondents (14 staff and 39 students) responded to both the quantitative (close-ended Likert-scale) and qualitative (open-ended items) questionnaire, and all 53 participants responded to the exact same type of questionnaire. The research questionnaire for staff and the students was structured in five sections: Section one contained the personal profile of the participants; section two was a five-point Likert scale which sort to determine the satisfaction of participants about how they were managed; section three was open-ended questionnaire designed to determine how staff or students used resources effectively and efficiently; section four also used multiple response items to determined how institutional resources were managed to curb economic down-drum; and section five used a five-point Likert scale to ascertain the effect of covid-19 on the college. The validity of the measures was ensured and the internal reliability coefficients of the five-point Likert scale measuring satisfaction of participants with respect to management's managerial strategies was 0.825 for staff and 0.807 for students. The Cronbach alpha of the multiple response items measuring management of resources to curb economic down-drum was 0.963 for staff and 0.873 for students. Finally, the reliability coefficients of the five-point Likert scale measuring the effect of Covid-19 on the College were 0.825 for staff and 0.758 for students.

The quantitative data was analysed using descriptive statistical tools whilst content analysis was used to thematically present responses from the qualitative data and supported with participants' direct quotes. Research objectives one, three and four were addressed using quantitative data. Statistical tools used were frequency counts and percentages, means and standard deviations. Qualitative data which was analysed and presented in themes and direct quotes of participants were used to address research objective two.

Results and Discussion

This research is structured to determine how the College staff, students and instructional time were managed to sustain academic activities; how management ensured effective use of resources, how resources were managed to curb economic down-drum; and the effect of the pandemic on the College. The results are presented in the order of the research questions.

Demographic characteristics of participants

The study used teaching staff, support services staff, and level 400 students at the College for the study. Table 1 details the demographic features of the study participants.

Table 1: Demographic characteristics of research participants

Demographic characteristics	Categories	Frequency	Percentages (%)
Sex	<u>Staff (N=14)</u> Male	13	92.9
	<u>Staff (N=14)</u> Female	1	7.1
	<u>Students (N=39)</u> Male	24	61.5
	<u>Students (N=39)</u> Female	15	38.5
Staff years of experience	(1-5) years	6	42.8
	(6-10) years	4	28.6
	(11+) years	4	28.6
Staff Highest Academic Qualification (N=14)	Masters with Research	10	71.4
	Masters without Research	4	28.6

Source: Field Data (2021)

Out of the 53 participants who completed the questionnaire, 73.6% (39) were students, while 26.4% (14) represented the academic and support service staff of the College. Hence, the managerial strategies adopted by management is predominantly reported by the students whom the decisions affect directly. The sex distribution of the sample was notable skewed, with 92.9% of staff and 61.5% of students being male, leaving only 7.1% of staff and 38.5% of students as female participants. Regarding the professional experience of staff, 42.8% had one to five years of experience, 28.6% had six to ten years, and another 28.6% possessed over eleven years of experience. This suggests a substantial presence of experienced faculty members within the College, potentially equipped with valuable managerial skills that proved beneficial in handling the challenges posed by the Covid-19 pandemic. In terms of academic qualifications, the majority of staff members (71.4%) held a Master's Degree with a research component, while a minority (28.6%) possessed Master's Degrees without a research component. This highlights the high professional qualification standards upheld by the College staff members. The high academic qualifications of the staff enabled them to adapt during the pandemic and made informed innovations such as transitioning to online teaching and learning and ensuring equitable access to resources.

Management of staff and students in Dambai College Education during covid-19

Descriptive statistics were used to describe how the management of Dambai College managed the staff and the students at the peak of Covid-19 during the 2019/2020 and 2020/2021 academic years. The level of satisfaction of the College community to the managerial strategies adapted by management towards sustaining academic and administrative activities of the institution was determined on a five-point Likert scale. The interpretation scale used for the means of the five-point Likert scale was: 1.0 – 1.8 (very low satisfaction); 1.9 – 2.6 (low satisfaction); 2.7 – 3.4 (moderate satisfaction); 3.5 – 4.2 (high satisfaction); and 4.3 – 5.0 (very high satisfaction). Means and standard deviations were used to report and explain both staff and students' experiences. The results are reported in Table 2.

Table 2: Staff and students' satisfaction with management strategies during covid-19

Management engagement with staff and students during Covid-19	Staff		Students		Overall management of staff and students		Satisfaction with management strategies
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	
Supply of covid-19 materials	3.93	.475	4.03	1.158	4.98	.071	Very high satisfaction
Prioritisation of community members welfare	3.71	.469	4.31	.766	4.01	.424	High satisfaction
Transparency with information	4.00	.679	3.90	1.046	3.95	.071	High satisfaction
Excellent communication	4.29	.611	4.03	1.013	4.16	.184	High satisfaction
Good listening to the concerns of college community	4.00	.555	3.74	1.186	3.87	.184	High satisfaction
Appreciating and encouraging teamwork	4.29	.611	3.77	1.111	4.03	.368	High satisfaction
Consistency and reliability	4.07	.475	3.77	1.202	3.92	.212	High satisfaction
Management was trustworthy	4.14	.535	4.05	.944	4.10	.064	High satisfaction
Exhibited good decision making	4.14	.475	4.28	.857	4.21	.09	Very high satisfaction

Demonstrated the drive to accomplish set goals	4.07	.616	4.44	.552	4.25	.262	Very high satisfaction
Overall	4.06	.334	4.03	.858	4.05	.023	High satisfaction

Source: Field Data (2021)

Dambai College's management employed a diverse array of strategies to ensure uninterrupted academic activities during the Covid-19 pandemic. Key measures included procuring PPEs, prioritising staff and student well-being, and maintaining transparent communication with the community. They emphasised transparency and collaboration, actively listening to feedback and fostering trust. Their decisive decision-making and commitment to safety underscored their reliability in managing the challenges posed by the pandemic effectively.

The results presented in Table 2 underscore the high level of satisfaction among staff, and students regarding the managerial strategies employed by leadership during the Covid-19 crisis. The overall mean score (Mean = 4.05, SD = .023) indicates that the management's handling of staff and students throughout the pandemic was exceedingly effective and satisfactory. This is evident by the reported high level of satisfaction (Mean = 4.21, SD = .09) with leadership's decision-making strategies exhibited during the period, which showcases the proactive leadership style of the management of the College.

Specific management strategies adopted by the institution received remarkable positive evaluations from both staff and students. Notable, the provision of PPEs revealed the highest mean score (Mean = 4.98, SD = .071), with an overwhelming 97.4% of participants acknowledging the receipt of Covid-19 preventive materials. These materials included items such as nose/face masks, hand sanitisers, health safety signages, and educational materials on Covid-19 prevention. Key supporting agencies in this endeavour included the Dambai College of Education (DACE) Management, the Government of Ghana (GoG) through Krachi East Municipal Assembly (KEMA), Oti Region of Ghana Education Service (GES), and ZoomLion Company. Consequently, the effectiveness of the management's strategies in addressing the Covid-19 pandemic closely aligns with the high percentage of positive responses from participants regarding the provision of these preventive materials. This strategy agrees with the global caution to governments and institutions to

ensure provision of PPEs to help reduce the spread of the virus (WHO, 2020). The reported high level of satisfaction of the students and staff regarding the provision of PPEs indicate the measure was significant towards ensuring safety of the college community.

Weine, Bosland, Rao, Edison, Ansong, Chamberlain, and Binagwaho (2021) affirm the importance of the management's transparency, effective communication, and accessibility in fostering community engagement during COVID-19. This approach cultivated a sense of shared responsibility and addressed the psychological impact of the pandemic. Stakeholder engagement, including the Students Representative Council (SRC), led to innovative solutions such as transitioning to a canteen system to reduce crowding and constructing a Sickbay on campus. These efforts demonstrate proactive management strategies that addressed the challenges posed by the pandemic.

Globally, the need to manage educational institutions during the Covid-19 to ensure safety while continuing academic activities became necessary. In Ghanaian educational institutions, and Dambai College for that matter, variant strategies were adapted by leadership to manage students and teachers, and other workers during the pandemic. These multifaceted strategies encompassed provision of PPEs through agencies; developed a decentralised system that monitors the welfare of members; and formulated open lines of quality communication that provides transparency, active listening and timely feedback.

Engagement of staff and students to effectively and efficiently use resources during covid-19 pandemic

Qualitative data was obtained from all staff and all students which enumerates the engagement strategies adopted by the institution to ensure effective and efficient use of resources during the Covid-19 pandemic. The results are reported in themes and supported with direct quotations from the participants.

Based on the staff and students' engagements towards efficient use of resources during the pandemic, various health safety resources were stated to have been provided by the institution to ensure safety of the college community members. These resources included PPEs like nose masks, hand sanitisers, and teaching-learning tools. Notably, MasterCard Foundation subsidised smartphones for needy students, while platforms like Zoom, Google Meet, Telegram, and WhatsApp enabled active engagement between management and the college community, facilitating continuous academic activities. The resources were described to offer a platform that provided active engagements between management and the college community and fostered continuous academic activities during the pandemic.

Themes from the self-reported questionnaire highlighted management's engagement strategies for effective resource utilisation among staff and students. Strategies included meticulous resource distribution and monitoring, provision of computers, smartphones, and internet services, and ICT capacity building initiatives.

Decentralised distribution and monitoring of resources: It was reported that the student leaders were engaged to foresee equitable distribution of the PPEs to the college student community. Respective Heads of Departments (HODs) were also engaged to distribute the available Covid-19 resources to departmental staff members. Student respondent '5' wrote, *'I was the rep for my Hall. The Covid-19 materials were always given to me every week. My Hall members come to me for their materials as and when they needed it.'* This revealed that student representatives were used to ensure easy accessibility of resources among the students. In a similar manner, HODs also made needed resources available to their respective departmental members. Student respondent '9' also highlighted that each hall representative was required to submit daily resource inventory to their hall tutors- *"I use to send report every day to the hall tutor, to know how much we have used and what we needed next"*.

The equitable distribution and monitoring of Covid-19 resources at the college involved collaboration between College Heads of Departments and student leaders, showcasing a decentralised management approach. This aligns with Gyampoh (2020), who illustrated how Ghanaian HEIs utilised emergency committees to allocate PPEs, establish isolation centres, and implement crisis management plans to ensure safety throughout the academic year.

Provision of computers, smartphones and internet services: This was reported to be an engagement strategy that enabled teachers to transit easily from traditional face-to-face teaching to online teaching strategies with less resource challenges. Personal computers were reported to be provided at different central points which were accessible to faculty and students. Smartphones were also provided for selected students to enable them access online resources for continuous learning amidst the pandemic. Through the SRC and NGOs, internet data was accessible on campus, at staff bungalows, and the students' residential halls. Staff "8" stated that; *"We were supported with internet service packages for online teaching-learning activities, and computers were provided at a central point where staff could go use for online instruction or design of online teaching-learning resources."* This initiative was directly related to the need to effectively support staff with necessary online resources and reduce access related factors. Student "2" confirmed how a smartphone was given to him and many other students to foster their ability

to join online classes and access learning materials both synchronously and asynchronously. Student 23 recalled; *“I was among the students who were given smartphones to help us join the online teaching sessions, take part in online group discussions, and access videos, audios, and soft copies of handouts”*. The course by leadership to ensure technological tools for staff and students were provided was remarkable noted by the respondents.

Mncube et al. (2021) found face-to-face interaction to be risky and costly during the pandemic, prompting a shift to online platforms for effective resource management. Engaging students and parents online facilitated learning continuity. Provision of synchronous and asynchronous online resources by teachers enhanced student participation, leading to efficient resource utilisation during the pandemic. Teachers, empowered with resources and capacity, and conducted online lessons with fewer challenges promoted effective resource utilisation during the pandemic. This initiative enhanced teachers' ability to engage students synchronously and asynchronously, aligning with literature emphasising HEIs' provision of support materials like computers, internet connectivity, and resource packages for online instruction (Mncube et al., 2021).

ICT-based professional development training: Both students and staff members of the college were reported to have been engaged in teaching-learning ICT-based training to enable lessons continue despite the pandemic. Basic lessons on how to follow and participate on respective online learning platforms was organised for the students. Student “11” reported that, *“the ICT tutors introduced us to Zoom, Google meet and Telegram, and taught us how we can follow lectures on each platform.”* Others also reported that the introductory lessons on how to use these platforms for learning lasted for a week, and it was their first-time gaining knowledge and experience of a different learning strategy other the traditional face-to-face lessons.

The results also revealed that ICT capacity building was organised for staff members to equip them with the necessary knowledge, skills and expertise to effectively use the ICT resources and platforms for effective teaching and learning. A professional based certificate course was rolled out for all faculty members. Staff ‘14’ revealed topical areas learnt during the capacity building which includes; *“how to teach using Zoom, Google meet, and Telegram; online assessment, use of different software for teaching and learning; effective communications on online platforms; and ensuring data safety during online interactions with students”* The efforts to equip the staff on how to use online teaching-learning platforms was reported to help reduced direct interaction between management, teachers, and students. It was also noted to have helped improve the pedagogical practices of teachers, which in turn

facilitated effective resources utilisation during the pandemic. Additionally, staff '31' recounted that the training sessions had helped them engage the students in appropriate assessment processes and evaluation of the learning process.

Capacity building courses aimed to enhance faculty's digital skills for designing, instructing, and evaluating online lessons during the pandemic is an evident practice in literature during the covid-19 era. For example, Ibrahim, Gusau, and Uba (2020) noted significant digital experiences gained by both students and teachers which enhanced professional knowledge, enabled effective engagement with students in the new normal education system, and optimised digital resources for teaching and assessment.

The college's leadership implemented effective resource management strategies during the Covid-19 pandemic, including decentralised distribution and monitoring, technological resource provision, and technology-based professional development for teachers and students. These strategies significantly impacted academic engagements and resource utilisation, maintaining a healthy academic community while sustaining continuous teacher education. The leadership facilitated a seamless transition to online instruction, maximised institutional resources, enhanced engagement, and managed the pandemic challenges effectively.

Management of institutional resources to curb economic down-drum during covid-19 pandemic

The repercussions of the Covid-19 pandemic have exerted considerable economic strain at global, national, and local levels, affecting every institution. To gain insight into how Dambai College of Education managed its available resources to mitigate economic downturn, multiple response items were used to obtain data and analysed using descriptive statistics. The results are presented in Table 3.

Table 3: Management of institutional resources to curb economic down-drum

Management of institutional resources	Staff responses		Students' responses		Overall Mean	
	Mean (%)	SD	Mean (%)	SD	Mean (%)	SD
Cost reduction strategies	85.7	9.02	75.5	5.48	80.6	5.29
Resources optimisation	82.2	9.24	75.7	2.83	78.9	3.32
Promoting efficiency and innovation	88.8	8.10	75.6	5.03	82.2	6.19
Technology maximisation	80.2	9.65	64.5	11.47	72.3	11.33
Overall Mean	84.98	4.43	72.8	5.55	78.5	4.35

Source: Field Data (2021)

The Management of Dambai College of Education demonstrated a strong commitment to maximising institutional resources to bolster the institution's economic stability during the covid-19 pandemic. The average percentage mean for the strategies employed in resource management was about 78.5%, indicating a robust effort to optimise resource utilisation.

Dambai College of Education's management employed various strategies to mitigate the economic impact of the covid-19 pandemic. They notably implemented cost reduction measures (Mean = 80.6, SD = 5.29), including cutting costs related to sporting events, staff meeting allowances, student enrolment, auxiliary programmes, and reallocating resources. This included acquiring cost-effective items like canteen furniture and cooking equipment, sewing new PPE kits and uniforms, and providing subsidised goods like mobile phones for needy students. Additionally, they expanded student

accommodation by constructing an additional hall of residence and established a sickbay through resources from the Students Representative Council.

The multifaceted cost mitigating approach implemented aimed to sustain the economic stability of the institution, which aligns with Tuffour, Cobbinah, Benjamin and Otibua (2021) emphasis of the need of financially prudent strategies during pandemics for efficient resource allocation. Apenteng, Oduro, and Owusu-Mensah (2021) similarly underscored the criticality of strategic resource allocation for institutional sustainability during economic downturns.

Resources optimisation was another vital aspect of managing the economic pressures (Mean = 78.9, SD = 3.32). This approach significantly contributed to cost reduction during the pandemic. It involved improved facility utilisation, strategic procurement of essential resources, repairs of assets ideal for programme execution, and the responsible use of electrical devices.

Efficiency and innovation in resource management played a pivotal role in sustaining the institution's economic strength during the pandemic. The overall mean of 82.2% suggests that innovative and efficient strategies implemented by the Management made a substantial impact in mitigating economic challenges. These strategies included involving student leaders in decision-making processes, fostering collaboration within the college community, ensuring timely completion of academic activities, offering value-for-money engagement, and encouraging healthy competition based on value.

Furthermore, the strategic utilisation of technology reduced the need for physical interactions and direct resource consumption while enhancing accessibility through interactive online learning platforms. The percentage mean for technology maximisation (Mean = 72.3, SD = 11.3) reflects the successful harnessing of technological potential of the College to improve resource efficiency, access, personalised learning, and collaboration during the pandemic. This involved the transition of face-to-face classrooms to online platforms, reduction in textbook and paper-related costs, adoption of online communication channels, and the implementation of user-friendly online assessment methods.

The college sustained its economic strength through effective cost reduction strategies, resource optimisation, innovative resource utilisation, and maximising available technology. Operational efficiency improved by leveraging resources fully and involving student leaders. This approach fostered trust, support, and collaboration within the college community. Technology integration reduced costs, minimised physical interactions, and

enhanced accessibility to online learning materials, showing its importance in reducing institutional costs during the pandemic.

These findings highlight the multifaceted nature of resource management during pandemics, covering financial management, operational streamlining, resource optimisation, innovation promotion, and technology integration. These strategies enable institutions to address pandemic challenges while maintaining their core missions. Owusu-Fordjour, Koomson and Hanson (2020) affirmed that a multidimensional approach is vital for navigating institutional economic challenges, to ensure continuity of academic activities during and after pandemics.

Effect of covid-19 on the College

The covid-19 pandemic which spread quickly across the globe disrupted almost every sector of society including education. Ghana, like many other countries experienced profound impact on its educational institutions including Colleges of Education. Dambai College of Education experienced variant challenges and transformations as it forged strategies of managing teacher education during the covid-19 pandemic. Means and standard deviations were used to report and explain the extent of the effect of covid-19 on the College. The interpretation scale used for the means of the five-point Likert scale was: 1.0 – 1.8 (very low effect); 1.9 – 2.6 (low effect); 2.7 – 3.4 (moderate effect); 3.5 – 4.2 (high effect); and 4.3 – 5.0 (very high effect). Table 4 presents the results of Dambai College of Education staff and students' responses regarding the extent of effect of covid-19 on the College.

Table 4: Effect of covid-19 on the College

Effect of covid-19 on the college	Staff responses (N=14)		Students' responses (N=39)		Overall Mean	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
Disruption in education and socialisation	3.40	.400	3.30	.394	3.35	.385
Curriculum implementation	2.29	.330	2.28	.355	2.29	.345
Access to technological tools	2.14	.287	2.23	.386	2.19	.312

Source: Field Data (2021)

The effect of covid-19 on every industry, and the education inclusive experienced unprecedented effects. The advent of the pandemic commenced with disruption of the education sector where school going children got compelled to stay home in order to manage spread of the virus. Educational

institutions ran into difficulties of maintaining a consistent academic calendar and implementing structured academic curricula across the world. It is reported that the college academic activities were disrupted, and students instructed to go home for a nationwide lockdown. The intended academic calendar was suspended pending return of the students or employ new instructional approaches of which many teachers were unskilled at adapting at the time.

Table 4 present findings indicating a profound disruption in the educational system experienced by the college community (Mean = 3.35, SD = .385) and significantly affected the socialisation experiences of both staff and students. The closure of the college during the global lockdown resulted in keeping one bracket of students at home to give enough space for another group to stay in school. The academic workload of faculty became increased due to the double-track system instituted. Notably, teacher-student interpersonal relationships and face-to-face interactions, which provide opportunities for guidance and scaffolding during learning, were minimised. Tadesse and Wuluye (2020) reported how the lockdown and distraction of the traditional academic structure widened the social gap between students in urban and rural communities. While urban communities are resourced to adapt quickly to online learning platforms, students in rural areas were unable to access immediate learning opportunities. In Dambai College, these challenges were evident, which caused leadership to collaborate with other institutions to provide mobile phones for needy students to help bridge the gap.

The implementation of the intended curriculum and the necessary time to execute curriculum objectives was a challenge during the covid-19 pandemic. Staff members highlighted time constraints in completing course objectives, due to the quick transitioning from traditional to technology-driven instruction. The mean score (Mean = 2.29, SD = .345) indicates a moderate acknowledgment of this challenge in adapting to the pandemic's impact. Similarly, the students expressed challenges of adapting to the new normal of unavailable hardcopy handouts, and their immediate inability to effectively use the synchronous and asynchronous learning resources. Specifically, it was reported that engaging students in practical learning activities and having enough group discussions were significantly reduced. In similar findings, Mahaye (2020) posited that about 14% of annual school curriculum coverage was lost due to the mandatory lockdown of schools to be reopened gradually in phases. To recover losses in academic work after the lockdown, Management in collaboration with SRC adapted to canteen dining system which made combination of lecture periods of students and their feeding more flexible, reliable and accessible.

The effect of covid-19 on the college included technological challenges, such as limited laptops for staff and students' inability to access smartphones for online learning. While central computers were provided for staff, inconveniences arose, causing interruptions during online lessons and limited accessibility. This led to rescheduling lessons and instructional time loss. Additionally, some staff and students struggled to operate effectively in the digital academic environment, requiring support from peers.

The covid-19 pandemic had a notable effect on Dambai College of Education, with both staff and students perceiving significant changes. Challenges included disruptions to the education system, curriculum implementation issues, and limited access to technology for some staff and students. However, the pandemic also prompted administrative collaborations, skill development, resource reallocation, and infrastructure construction. Overall, it had both negative and positive effects, highlighting the dual nature of effect on educational institutions like Dambai College of Education.

Key findings

This study was a path of inquiry to unearth managerial strategies adopted to manage Dambai College of Education during the covid-19 pandemic. From the results, the following key findings were realised.

Strategies leadership adopted to manage staff and students during the covid-19 pandemic:

1. There was adequate provision of personal protective equipment to the college community through governmental and non-governmental agencies.
2. The College management instituted a transparent communication system that enhanced accessibility and prompt feedback between leadership and the college community members.
3. Strategic welfare mechanisms were established which demonstrated the relevance of social support systems including the transition of students' dining system, and alternative use of resources for covid-19 sickbay.

How staff and students were engaged to ensure effective and efficient use of resources:

1. Implementation of a decentralised mechanism of resources distribution to ensure equity in accessibility.
2. Staff were provided with computers at defined locations and internet connectivity to facilitate online teaching and learning.
3. Smart mobile phones as well as internet connectivity was provided for needy students to support them access online teaching and learning resources.

4. Technology-based professional development programmes were designed and rolled out for teachers towards enhancing digital skills and competence.
5. Some staff and students had some challenges in effective use of digital and technological tools.

How institutional resources were managed to avoid economic downturn:

1. Adoption of cost reduction strategies were employed through reducing expenses on sports and staff allowances as such personnel related activities went down leading to budgetary allocation virement, suspension of auxiliary programmes, and acquisition of cost-effective items at subsidised prices.
2. Optimisation of resources was ensured through improved facility utilisation, strategic procurement of essential resources and assets such as canteen furniture, additional student hostel construction, Students Representative Council Sickbay construction, repairs of assets ideal for programme execution- renovation of science laboratory block into a more useful space, and the responsible use of electrical devices.
3. Innovative and efficient resource management approaches adopted such as transitioning traditional students dining system into canteen service where meals were taken in a more flexible and lecture schedule friendly manner from 6:00 am -10: am for breakfast, 12:00 pm - 2:00 pm for lunch and 4:00 pm - 6:00 pm for supper respectively to replace the one-time allotted dining period which often posed challenges to managing lecture schedules of individual programmes and students.
4. Effective time and other resource management system introduced ensured good level of satisfaction in academic engagement, offered value-for-money engagement, and encouraged healthy competition based on value.
5. Resources were managed through innovative maximisation of technology in reducing the need for physical interactions and direct resource consumption while enhancing accessibility through interactive online learning platforms.

Effect of the covid-19 pandemic on Dambai College of Education

1. The traditional academic calendar of the College was interrupted due to the nationwide lockdown.
2. Timely completion of annual teaching curriculum and course outlines was hampered.
3. Students were challenged in procuring smart mobile phones and teachers were concerned about visiting a central point to access technological tools.

4. Some staff and students had difficulties in operating effectively in the digital academic world though the period presented a unique opportunity for many staff and students to develop their digital skills.
5. The covid-19 pandemic also presented the challenge to College Management to rethink and adopt innovative ways of providing student's services which brought improvement on the administrative engagement of the institution including cost reduction strategies.

Conclusion

The College experienced variant challenges and transformations in the peak period of the covid-19 pandemic. Thus, the pandemic was a double-edged sword as it presented both challenges and opportunities in the operations of the College. It created substantial disruption in the regular mode of curriculum implementation due to nationwide lockdown and yet created opportunities for innovations. The strategies employed, provision of personal protective equipment to students and staff through statutory and ad hoc committees and transparent effective communication fostered a shared sense of responsibility and belongingness in addressing psychological and emotional impact of the pandemic. Decentralised distribution of resources, technological resources provision and technology-based professional development were adapted to ensure efficient resources utilisation. Though technological resources were leveraged on, and digital skills enhanced through professional development which helped the College to transit into online instruction and maintained academic engagements amidst the pandemic, some students and staff faced difficulties in managing teaching and learning effectively in their programmes of study / delivery due to deficiency in digital and technological competencies. Thus, improving digital skills of staff and students to enhance technological integration in new pedagogical and assessment approaches is needed.

Recommendations

1. The decentralised strategy of resource appropriation fostered equity in accessibility. It is thereby recommended that the College management should maintain statutory and ad hoc internal crisis and emergency management committees to monitor and manage safety, and health related challenges within the institution.
2. Deficiencies in technological resources and digital skills was reported. It is therefore recommended that management engages in procurement of additional requisite technological resources. A user friendly and secured information and online learning management system (LMS) is recommended to be designed for the College to provide space for post-covid-19 blended (face-to-face and online) teaching approaches.

3. The design and implementation of continuous professional development programmes by the College ICT unit on technological competence for staff should be continued to improve the digital skills of both staff and students.
4. It is recommended that leadership of the College continue to prioritise proactive communication and welfare mechanisms, and collaborative resource management strategies to sustain resilience and supportive academic environment in future crisis.

Ethical Statement

The study which involved human participants were reviewed and approved by the Council of the Dambai College of Education. The participants provided their written informed consent to participate in this study.

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Conflict of Interest

The authors affirm that there is no conflict of interest with regards to the publication of this article.

Authorship Contribution Statement

Atiku: Concept and design, data acquisition, critical revision of manuscript, supervision and final approval. Gozah: Data acquisition, critical revision of manuscript and supervision. Erebakere: Literature review, data analysis / interpretation, and drafting manuscript.

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Generative AI Statement

As the authors of this work, we minimally used the AI tool (ChatGPT) for the purpose of summarising. After using this AI tool, we reviewed and verified the final version of our work. We, as the authors take full responsibility for the content of our published work.

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Drawing the Boundaries: Unearthing the Stylistic Features in Kwesi Brew’s Poem, “The Mad are Sane”

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Abstract

The study analysed the stylistic features in Kwesi Brew’s poem, ‘The Mad Are Sane’. The analysis was done by identifying the stylistic features and their effects on language in the poem. Purposive sampling technique was used to select the poem, ‘The Mad Are Sane’. The study employed the formalist theory and stylistic approach in the analysis, interpretation, and evaluation of the poem. The study uncovered five stylistic features/deviations in the poem. The first stylistic feature is syntactic deviation which revealed that the poem is made up of a complex sentence, where the first part functions as a subordinate clause and the second part as an independent clause that summarises the subordinate clause. The second stylistic feature is lexical deviation which revealed that the poet uses words in an unconventional way, diverging from their ordinary usage to impart deeper meaning of the poem. The third stylistic deviation is phonological deviation, which revealed the use of /s/ sound in the words, “sanity” and “sane” to reflect how some abnormality in society as found in the poem has become common. The findings again revealed the use of semantic deviation in the poem, where the words fall into the semantic categories of synonyms and antonyms. Finally, grammatical deviation was identified in the poem, which implies that the poet intentionally disregards conventional rules of sentence structure.

The study concluded that stylistic tools, particularly deviations and their types, enable a more accurate interpretation of the poem. This study therefore aimed at introducing the stylistic techniques and their practical application in poetry analysis to students and readers of English language and literature.

Keywords: *Kwesi Brew, Literary Stylistics, Style, Formalist Theory, Foregrounding, Deviation*

Introduction

Kwesi Brew, an accomplished African poet, has authored several notable poetic works, including “The Mesh,” “The Mad Are Sane,” “A Scandal on The Head,” “Ancestral Faces,” “African Panorama,” and “Return of No Return.” His poetry delves into diverse and universal themes, ranging from the complexities of loss of status to the celebration of innocence and ancestral heritage. Brew’s worldview encapsulates both the beauty and ugliness inherent in life (Awaya, 1994). On the other hand, stylistics pertains to the analysis of literary language, focusing on the creative utilisation of language in literary compositions.

Interpreting poems through stylistic analysis offers a valuable approach (Awaya, 1994). In Kwesi Brew’s poem, “The Mad Are Sane,” despite its brevity, lies profound depth. Stylistics involves the application of linguistic tools to understand a text or piece of work. Mills (1995) defines stylistics as the examination of the language of literary texts, drawing from linguistic theories to conduct analysis. Stylistics, the analysis of literary language, occupies a central position in literary studies. Bradford (1997) characterises it as an intricate field, integral to understanding the diverse facets of literature, emphasising the significance of style in every scholarly contribution.

Similarly, Short (1996) characterises stylistics as an approach to analysing (literary) texts using linguistic description. This underscores the pivotal role language plays in stylistics. Recently, the tools and methodologies of linguistics within stylistics have become instrumental in interpreting literary texts. Providing a foundation based on linguistic evidence. Among the various literary genres such as poetry, drama and prose, poetry stands out for its utilisation of aesthetic language, demanding creative expression within concise, yet profound sentences (Awaya, 1994). The language employed in poetry significantly shapes the interpretation of poetic works, as meaning often lies within the intricacies of language craftsmanship. Kwesi Brew, a distinguished African poet, has made substantial contributions to the advancement of African poetry (Awaya, 1994). Despite his notable publications, Brew’s works have received comparatively less critical attention.

His distinct writing style sets him apart as a remarkable literary figure in poetry.

Engaging in stylistics entails delving into language, particularly exploring its creative applications (Simpson, 2004). Stylistics primarily examines how language is creatively fashioned into distinctive styles. Stylistic analysis offers a pathway for interpreting poems by applying linguistic tools to decipher texts or works of art. Similarly, Short (1996) characterises it as an approach to analysing (literary) texts through linguistic description. African poetry holds a unique position, being crafted by African poets. Therefore, Kwesi Brew's "The Mad Are Sane" is a succinct piece that delves into the normalisation of anomalies. Despite its brevity — composed of merely four lines — the poem carries profound thematic depth. The purpose of this paper is to dissect the stylistic elements employed in Brew's "The Mad Are Sane".

Literature Review

This aspect review works that have been done in the area of stylistics. It focuses on formalist theory, Style and stylistics, Foregrounding, Lexical deviation, Semantic deviation, Phonological deviation, Grammatical deviation, graphological deviation and historical deviation.

The formalist approach was developed in Russia by Vladimir Propp, Victor Shklovsky and Roman Jakobson in the 1900s. The origination of the approach in Russia has earned it the description, "Russian Formalism" to many instead of its actual name, "Formalism".

The central tenet of formalism is the emphasis on closely examining the intrinsic qualities of the literary work itself. Formalism has gained popularity among researchers as it offers a framework for appreciating literary texts on their own merits, allowing readers to understand and derive enjoyment from the inherent value of the work as a piece of literary art. Consequently, adherents of formalism become more astute and discerning through the application of its principles and adherence to its methodologies (Dobie, 2012). Russian formalists such as Vladimir Propp, Victor Shklovsky and Roman Jakobson in the 1900s argue that while everyday language is commonplace and ordinary, literary language diverges from this norm. It intentionally strays from the expected, utilising a plethora of literary devices at the author's disposal to render the familiar into something unfamiliar and intriguing.

Victor Shklovsky, one of the prominent figures within the Russian formalist movement, introduced the concept of 'Defamiliarisation' in 1900 to describe a literary technique that invigorates language, preventing it from becoming mundane or predictable. Defamiliarisation imbues a work with artistry, compelling the reader to remain attentive and engaged. It prompts the reader to scrutinise the text, encouraging a deeper exploration of its imagery and

themes in order to decipher the author's intentions (Dobie, 2012). From the formalist perspective, close reading is paramount; it entails analysing each element of the text independently to understand how they collectively contribute to its artistic integrity. Unlike other approaches such as structuralism that consider external factors such as historical context or author biography, formalism prioritises the text itself. Consequently, a cursory reading may overlook intricate details that only reveal themselves upon closer examination. Upon subsequent readings, readers may notice recurring motifs, patterns of language, and layers of meaning, ultimately discerning how these formal elements interact to shape the text as a whole. By meticulously observing these details, readers unravel the intricate workings of the text and its artistic significance (Dobie, 2012). This work applied formalism theory on Kwesi Brew's poem the 'Mad are Sane.'

Style and stylistics

Style refers to the distinctive way language is used in a particular text, discourse, or context. It encompasses various linguistic choices, including vocabulary, sentence structure, figurative language, and rhythm, all of which contribute to the overall effect and meaning of a text. However, defining style is complex, as different readers and scholars perceive it in varying ways (Wales, 1989).

Stylistics, as a discipline, delves deeply into textual analysis, scrutinising linguistic forms to facilitate interpretation. It closely aligns with practical criticism, as it provides a systematic way of analysing texts. Dictionaries define stylistics as "the science of literary style" or "the art of forming good style in writing." However, scholars offer more refined definitions. Leech and Short (1981) describe it as the linguistic study of style, while Widdowson (1975) characterises it as the examination of literary discourse from a linguistic perspective.

What makes stylistics unique is its role as a bridge between literary criticism and linguistics. This dual nature is reflected in its morphological structure: the "style" component links it to literary criticism, while "istics" connects it to linguistic analysis. Unlike traditional literary criticism, which often considers authorial intent, stylistics takes an objective approach, focusing on the text itself and providing linguistic tools for modern criticism (Kumar, 1987). Despite its name, stylistics is not limited to style alone; historically, it has examined various language varieties, including religious, legal, and scientific discourse.

The difficulty in defining style also lies in the diversity of linguistic choices available to writers. Carter and Stockwell (2008) argue that authors employ varied styles, such as racy, formal, or colloquial, to convey different effects.

They emphasise that style involves a deliberate selection of linguistic structures, although this selection is not always conscious. In literature and discourse, language choices can be intuitive or intentional, yet both have significant impacts on reader interpretation.

Within the broader field of linguistics, stylistics plays a crucial role in uncovering hidden linguistic patterns and nuances. It enables scholars to dissect texts into comprehensible segments, aiding in the interpretation of embedded meanings within literary works. By providing a systematic and analytical approach, stylistics enhances our understanding of language use in both creative and formal texts, making it an essential tool in both literary and linguistic studies.

Foregrounding

Before delving into the analysis of the chosen poem, it is vital to spotlight a significant concept in stylistics, 'foregrounding'. Foregrounding holds a paramount importance in stylistic analyses, particularly in poetry. Foregrounding is emphasising one element or aspect of a text over others, drawing attention to its prominence. Linguistic deviation and linguistic parallelism are the means through which foregrounding is achieved. Leech (1969) identifies various types of deviation in poetry, based on his examination of poems. These deviations include the following:

Lexical deviation

Lexical deviation refers to the intentional alteration or manipulation of standard word usage in language, often employed in literary works to achieve a particular stylistic effect. The lexicon of English Language fall into different word classes. Also, each word in English has a particular form and function. Apart from the words having different form or structure, they are also limited and definite in number or size. Lexical deviation, therefore, occurs when a particular word is given a form different from its normal form or structure, as in possessing different spelling due to some reasons. Deviations are typically used to draw attention, evoke specific emotions, or convey unique concepts that standard language may not adequately express. For instance, poets and novelists might invent words or repurpose existing ones to enrich their narratives and engage readers more deeply. Lexical deviation occurs when a word of a particular word is assigned a different word class. There are various ways in which lexical deviation can manifest, constituting (neologism), assigning unconventional meanings to existing words, or using words in unusual grammatical forms. (Coinage), Coinage refers to the creation of new words or phrases, often for branding or cultural trends. Malapropism, is the mistaken use of a word in place of a similar sounding one, often with unintentionally amusing effects. and sub-standard vocabulary.

Poets craft deviation by employing words in unconventional ways, departing from their ordinary usage. This technique imbues words with heightened significance, allowing for deeper expression of meaning and the presentation of aesthetic value within the poem. For example, lexical deviation can be seen in the following line:

*Stirred for a bird, - the **achieve** of the mastery of the thing!* From this example, the word *achieve* belongs to the category verb with its noun form as *achievement* but in the example above, the poet uses *achieve* as a noun because it is placed in the position of a noun since it is preceded by an article, 'the'.

Semantic deviation

Generally, semantics is one of the main branches of linguistics which deals with interpretation and meaning of words, sentences, and symbols. Semantic deviation is the unusual patterning of words or phrases to result in logically inconsistent or unconventional meanings for the overall meaning and aesthetic experience of the poems (Ali and Al-Shemmary, 2020). It implies that semantically deviated items are grammatically conventional, yet the meanings are unconventional. Again, semantic deviation refers to the phenomenon wherein an ordinary, seemingly straightforward word takes on a remarkable or surprising meaning within a poetic context. The interpretation of such words can be influenced by the poet's personal experiences and cultural background, adding layers of complexity to their significance.

Leech (1969) refers to semantic deviation as tropes with which words and phrases are considered at nonliteral and figurative levels of meaning. Leech (1969) identifies three forms of semantic deviation: semantic oddity, transference meaning, and honest deception. Semantic oddity deals with strangeness or bizarreness of meanings of certain expressions. There are five types of semantic oddity: pleonasm, periphrasis, tautology, oxymoron and paradox. Pleonasm – Using more words than necessary to say something. Example: "I saw it with my own eyes." (The phrase "with my own eyes" is unnecessary because "I saw it" already implies that.) Tautology – Repeating the same idea using different words, making it redundant. Example: "Free gift" (All gifts are free, so "free" is unnecessary. Oxymoron – A phrase that combines two opposite words. Example: "Bittersweet," "Deafening silence," or "Living dead". Paradox – A statement that seems contradictory but can reveal a deeper truth. Example: "The more you learn, the more you realise how little you know."

According to Leech (1969), these five types can further be categorised into two broad groups. Those that show semantic redundancy at one hand and those that show semantic absurdity at other hand. The semantic redundancy includes pleonasm, tautology and periphrasis while the absurdity comprises oxymoron

and paradox. It is interesting to note that the redundancy generally seems to be repeating an idea while the absurdity does not give sensible structures.

Both paradox and oxymoron deal with contradiction. In the case of the paradox, the contradiction happens at sentential level as it comprises groups of statements while oxymoron happens at word or phrasal level. The following examples illustrate oxymoron and paradox. An example of oxymoron: *Kola nut is a bittersweet stimulant*. From this example, *bitter* contradicts with *sweet*, illustrating an instance of oxymoron and it falls under semantic deviation. An example of paradox: *All humans are equal, but some are more equal than others*. The example above is a paradox in the sense that if all humans equal how some can be more equal than others.

Phonological deviation

Phonological deviation deals with pronunciation which is a typical feature of speech. Leech (1969) opines that the sounds of a language are linked to speech while in literature it mostly occurred in written form, and that explains why there are chances of phonological deviation in poems or texts. Texts that deviate phonologically give an indication of the social status or the educational level of the characters. In identifying phonological deviations, one needs to have in-depth knowledge about the sound system and their patterns in English. Again, phonological deviation pertains to deliberate alterations in sound patterns within poetry, crafted to enhance musicality, aimed at achieving rhyme.

There are two main categories of phonological deviation: conventional license of verse composition and special pronunciation for the convenience of rhyming. Conventional license of verse composition deals with the permission poets have to omit certain sounds of words they use to achieve an effect. These omissions sometimes make the reading of the poem faster.

For example, *do not and don't*. The second category, special pronunciation for the convenience of rhyming, deals with the poets' or authors' creation of their own words to achieve a particular rhyming scheme which may have certain musical effect on a piece. For instance:

*The boy came to my ho'e
And picked a big hoe*

The syncope on the word, *home* to have *ho'e* helps to have a common vowel [əʊ] for the two words ending the lines in order to have a common rhyming scheme.

Another form of phonological deviation arises from the use of incorrect sounds or mispronunciations, which may be fossilised or result from an

individual's speech defect. For example, some people pronounced *frame* as *flame* which is phonological deviation.

Grammatical deviation

Grammar, in its broad sense, involves every aspect of the in the context of language, grammar encompasses everything from the smallest grammatical unit to the structuring of words into the largest unit, which is the sentence. Grammatical deviation is the situation where words are formed through different medium than the acceptable means, and where words are patterned differently from the normal or the standard means of patterning words. One other grammatical deviation is the ungrammaticality of sentences. There are four main forms of grammatical deviation: wrong formation of words, incorrect or sub-standard grammar, syntactic re-arrangement, and the composition of the language items. In grammatical deviation, poets intentionally disregard conventions governing sentence structure. Grammatical deviation includes deliberate omissions of punctuation, such as periods, and the deliberate misuse of verb tenses, among other grammatical liberties.

The use of dialect

The limitations of the standard dialect often fail to capture the depth of emotion poets wish to convey (Lesle and McIntyre, 2020). Consequently, poets incorporate elements from their native dialects, known as “refined dialects,” to better express their feelings through their poems. This practice, termed “Dialectism” by Leech, enables poets to imbue their writing with greater emotional resonance. Kwesi Brew often infused his poetry with elements of dialectism—the use of words, phrases, or structures from a specific local dialect or language variety. His use of dialectism reflects his Ghanaian heritage, cultural identity, and oral traditions. For example, dialectism in his poem, “The Mesh,” Brew incorporates Akan linguistic structures and proverbs, which mirror the rhythmic and philosophical nature of traditional Ghanaian oral poetry. He uses expressions like “the talking drums” and “the elders’ words” to reflect Akan cultural expressions where wisdom is passed through oral tradition.

The use of register

Register, also referred to as “professional dialect,” encompasses the specialised vocabulary, grammar, and other linguistic features utilised by individuals in specific contexts or events. It is not universally employed but rather confined to particular groups. Occasionally, writers engage in “register mixing,” incorporating elements from different registers within their writing, (Leech, 1969).

Historical deviation

In this form of deviation, poets incorporate archaic words that have fallen out of common usage in everyday language. They do this to elevate the aesthetic quality of the poem. Poets may integrate words derived from Latin or Greek languages, such as "thou," "ere," or "hither," into their poetry.

Graphological deviation

Graphological deviation is the physical presentation of texts which is different from the standard way of writing. It deals with the study of writing systems. Graphological deviation involves the intentional disregard of punctuation rules, such as writing without capitalisation or spacing, or eschewing traditional rhyme schemes. Sometimes, certain written texts are underlined or capitalised for special effects. Graphological deviation can manifest in the use of punctuation, structure, orthography, typography, and fonting of characters in various writing.

Syntactic Deviation

Syntactic deviation in poetry refers to the intentional departure from standard grammatical structures to create unique artistic effects. Poets often manipulate syntax, such as word order, sentence structure, and grammatical rules, to enhance meaning, rhythm, and stylistic distinctiveness. These deviations help foreground certain elements, evoke emotions, and engage readers by breaking conventional linguistic expectations. The types of syntactic deviations in poetry include the following:

- a) Inversion (Hyperbaton) This is where poets alter the normal word order to achieve emphasis or maintain meter. For example: *"In silent night when rest I took"* (Anne Bradstreet) instead of *"When I took rest in silent night."*
- b) Ellipsis (Omission of Words): Here, certain words are omitted, but meaning is still conveyed through context. For example: *"Golden her wings, bright sun her eyes,"* where the verb *"are"* is omitted.
- c) Anastrophe: This is a subtype of inversion where adjectives or phrases are placed unexpectedly. Example, *"Deep into that darkness peering, long I stood there wondering, fearing"* (Edgar Allan Poe).
- d) Parallelism and Repetition: This has to do with using repetitive sentence structures to create rhythm and reinforce meaning. For instance, *"I have a dream..."* (Martin Luther King Jr.).
- e) Asyndeton and Polysyndeton: Asyndeton: This has to do with omitting conjunctions (e.g., *"I came, I saw, I conquered."*).
- f) Polysyndeton: In this type of syntactic deviation, excessive conjunctions are used (e.g., *"We laughed and cried and sang and danced."*).

Recent scholarly articles have explored various aspects of deviation in poetry, focusing on how poets intentionally deviate from linguistic norms to create artistic effects. For instance, Azadibougar and Ghazizadeh (2011) examine how deviations from standard language in poetry pose challenges in translation, particularly focusing on the works of Persian poet, Ahmad Shamlu. The research identifies eight types of linguistic deviation, including lexical, grammatical, phonological, and semantic deviations, and discusses their implications for translators. Fabb (2024) also explores how syntactic deviations in song lyrics and poetry break conventional grammar rules while maintaining poetic coherence. He argues that these deviations serve to reinforce meaning and artistic expression (Fabb, 2024). Again, Muhammad (2021) analyses various syntactic deviations in poetry, emphasising foregrounding — the way poetic language deviates to attract attention. He identifies inversion, ellipsis, and unusual word order as major syntactic tools used in poetry (Muhammad, 2021). Nofal (2014) also examines syntactic deviations in classical and modern poetry, particularly in Chaucer and T.S. Eliot, showing how deviations create ambiguity, enhance rhythm, and challenge reader interpretation (Nofal, 2014). Lastly, Ahmed (2021) delves into syntactic deviations in poetry, investigating how poets rearrange standard sentence structures to achieve particular stylistic effects. The study highlights the creative potential of syntactic deviation in enriching the expressive capacity of poetic language.

Therefore, syntactic deviations play a crucial role in poetry, allowing poets to break away from traditional sentence structures to enhance aesthetic value, rhythm, and meaning. Recent studies confirm that these deviations are not just stylistic choices but also powerful tools for engaging readers and deepening literary interpretation.

Methods

The paper employed a qualitative research approach to examine stylistics features employed in Kwesi Brews' poem, 'The Mad Are Sane'. Purposive sampling was employed to select the poem. The poem is made up of only four lines. The choice of the words employed by the poet necessitated the choice of this particular poem. and a consensual coding strategy was utilised, meticulously categorising the poem into stylistic features such as lexical deviation, grammatical deviation, phonological deviation etc. The study, therefore, employed stylistic analysis as a design to analyse, interpret, and evaluate the selected poem, focusing on the stylistic features in it. According to Jafaar (2014), using stylistic analysis to analyse a poem highlights certain deviant characteristics of the poem. Hence, stylistic analysis served as the analytical framework of the present study. The literary theory which was used as the theoretical foundation for the study is the formalist theory., Formalism

enabled the researchers to concentrate solely on the poem itself, disregarding external influences during analysis while stylistic analysis helped in analysing the stylistic features in the poem.

The above discussion has looked methodology that has been used in analysing the poem, the Mad are Sane by Kwesi Brew.

Analysis and discussion

The analysis and discussion are done based on the stylistic features identified in the poem. Also, evidence of these stylistic features identified in the poem are used to support and ground the discussions.

Kwesi Brew's "The Mad Are Sane" is a brief, four-line poem with a continuous structure and no rhyme scheme. The poem features deviant characteristics that make it stand out for lexical deviation. It is therefore essential to analyse "The Mad Are Sane" in the light of this that we set out to analyse foregrounding techniques used in the poem. The deviant stylistic features identified in the poem are discussed in subsequent paragraphs:

A stylistic analysis at the syntactic level

The poem is composed of a single complex sentence, as shown below:

"In these days, when abnormality has become the normal sign of sanity, the mad are sane."

In analysing this sentence, we added punctuation marks to clearly delineate the sentence structure. The poem's syntax is a complex sentence, where the first part, *when abnormality has become the normal sign of sanity*, functions as a subordinate clause and the second part *the mad are sane*, as an independent clause that summarises the subordinate clause. Although the poem is brief and appears simple, its complex structure adds a layer of complexity to its interpretation. The subordinating conjunction *when* typically serves as an adverbial marker of time, (Wiredu, 1999) but in this poem, it is used to indicate a condition, thereby turning the subordinate clause into a conditional clause. In poems, complex sentences allow poets to convey nuanced ideas and relationships between concepts, adding layers of meaning to their work. This complexity can mirror the intricacies of human thought and experience, providing a more profound engagement for the reader. This is what exactly Kwesi Brew did in his poem the Mad are Sane.

A stylistic analysis at the lexical level

Lexical deviation occurs when poets use words in an unconventional way, diverging from their ordinary usage to impart deeper meaning and enhance the

aesthetic value of the poem. In "The Mad Are Sane. Kwesi Brew employs lexical deviation to highlight and emphasise his message. In the poem:

When abnormality has become

The normal sign of sanity

The mad are sane.

The underlined sections of the poem highlight lexical incongruities that impact its overall meaning, reflecting the acceptance of numerous abnormalities in the country as expressed in the poem. These deviations symbolise the abandonment of African culture in favour of Western culture, which has often been equated with civilisation. Although this poem was written in the 1990s, it remains relevant to contemporary Ghana, where corruption, bribery, and economic mismanagement — once considered abnormal — have become accepted as signs of sanity. The *mad* in the poem likely refers to those who engage in these corrupt practices yet are deemed "sane" because they are aware of the rightness or wrongness of their actions.

A stylistic analysis at the phonological level

Phonological deviation involves the intentional manipulation of sounds to create musicality, often through the use of rhyme. One example of this is the identification of alliterated sounds in the poem. According to Simpson (2004), alliteration is a type of rhyme scheme that relies on similarities between consonant sounds. It occurs when a series of words begin with the same consonant sound, which is then repeated at regular intervals throughout the poem. An example of alliteration in Brew's poem is:

The normal sign of sanity.

The underlined sound is a voiceless, alveolar fricative, /s/, that mirrors the persona's mood, conveying a sense of surprise or disbelief. It highlights the persona's astonishment that behaviours once deemed unacceptable by society are now becoming increasingly common. The voicelessness of the sound /s/ and its sibilant nature further foreground the society's continuous low level of advocacy against these unacceptable conducts exhibited by unscrupulous individuals.

A stylistic analysis at the semantic level

Semantic deviation demonstrates how a simple, everyday word can carry an unexpected meaning. In the poem, the words fall into the semantic categories of synonyms and antonyms, with *abnormality* and *madness* being synonymous, as well as *sanity* and *saneness*. The poet therefore juxtaposes aberration with rationality and psychosis with clear-headedness. By using terms like *abnormality*, *mad*, *sane*, and *sanity*, the poet explores the mental or psychological state of individuals in contemporary times. This technique is

employed to comment on the mindset of people in "these days." Semantic deviation also occurs in the line 'the *mad are sane*'. The form of semantic deviation employed here is oxymoron which is the use of two words which contradict each other. This also foregrounds the idea that in recent times, conducts which were once frowned upon by society are now considered normal behaviours.

A stylistic analysis at the grammatical level

Grammatical deviation happens when poets intentionally disregard conventional rules of sentence structure. This may involve deliberately omitting punctuation marks within sentences or manipulating tense to influence the interpretation of the poem. In Brew's "The Mad Are Sane," the only punctuation mark used is a full stop (.), which concludes the poem. The absence of other punctuation marks highlights this grammatical deviation. The poem is presented below:

In these days
When abnormality has become
The normal sign of sanity
The mad are sane.

The poem flows continuously without any pauses, reflecting the poet's intense concern, as if pausing might cause him to lose his train of thought. The absence of commas in the poem explains this urgency. The absence of commas in the poem also foregrounds the poet's mood of anger about the current situation in his society. In other words, the poet is unhappy about the sudden negative turn of events and therefore expresses his opinion on such absurdity in an angry manner.

The tense of the poem plays a crucial role in shaping its overall impact. The verbs in the poem are in the present tense, which influences how the reader interprets and appreciates the poem. The verbs *have become* and *are* lend a timeless quality to the poem, allowing for a broader interpretation that extends beyond specific contexts to various aspects of life, including our contemporary experiences. These deviations contribute to the poem's distinctiveness, enhancing the reader's ability to appreciate and interpret its meaning on multiple levels.

Findings

The analysis revealed that Kwesi Brew's "The Mad Are Sane" contains certain stylistic characteristics which contribute to the overall message of the poem. First, the poem features syntactic deviation, which revealed that the poem is made up of a complex sentence. The first part of the sentence functions as a subordinate clause and the second part as an independent clause that summarises the subordinate clause. Secondly, there are lexical deviations,

which revealed that the poet used words in an unconventional way, diverging from their ordinary usage to impart the deeper meaning of the poem.

In addition, the poem contains a phonological deviation, which revealed the repetition of the voiceless alveolar fricative sound, /s/, in words “sanity” and “sane”. This reflects the persona's surprising mood about the increasing occurrence of absurdities in the society and the society's continuous low level of advocacy against these undesirable happenings.

The findings again revealed the use of semantic deviation in the poem by juxtaposing words which fall into the semantic categories of synonyms and antonyms. This enables the poet to comment on the mental or psychological state of individuals in recent times.

Finally, grammatical deviation is identified in the poem. Here, the poet intentionally disregards conventional rules of sentence structure. This involves deliberate omission of punctuation marks (i.e., commas) within the sentence or manipulating tense to influence the interpretation of the poem.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the nature of the poem has offered an approach to understanding its significance. The choice of Brew's "The Mad Are Sane" highlights the stylistic elements that distinguish his work from others. Stylistics helps identify the components of a literary text and document their functions, drawing on the terminology and methods of disciplines focused on real-world language use. The stylistic tools, particularly deviations and their types, enable a more accurate interpretation of the poem, even without prior knowledge of the literary work. It is essential to remember that words serve as keys to unlocking the meaning and interpretation of any literary genre.

Implications

The findings of this study on “The Mad are Sane” by Kwesi Brew have significant implications for literary scholarship, education, and African poetic analysis.

1. By identifying the stylistic features in Brew's poem, this study deepens the understanding of how language, structure, and literary devices shape meaning, enriching the appreciation of African poetry.
2. The research reinforces the relevance of stylistic analysis as a tool for interpreting poetry, highlighting its role in bridging linguistic and literary perspectives.
3. Brew's thematic exploration of sanity and madness reflects deeper African philosophical and sociocultural concerns. This study provides a framework for examining how African poets use style to critique and reflect societal realities.

4. Educators can use the study's findings to teach poetry analysis more effectively, equipping students with the tools to engage critically with poetic texts.
5. This study sets the groundwork for comparative analyses with other poets and themes, encouraging further exploration of stylistic trends in African literature.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, which examined the stylistic features in Kwesi Brew's poem "*The Mad are Sane*," the following recommendations are proposed:

1. Researchers should extend stylistic analysis to other works by Kwesi Brew and other African poets to uncover recurring linguistic and literary patterns that define African poetry.
2. Educators and curriculum developers should incorporate stylistic analysis in literature courses to enhance students' appreciation of poetic language, themes, and techniques.
3. Future studies could compare Brew's portrayal of madness with that of other poets from different cultures to explore universal and culture-specific perspectives on the theme.
4. Researchers could employ digital tools and corpus linguistics to analyse poetic language patterns, providing new insights into style and meaning.

Ethical Statement

This study involved non-human participants. The primary data for this study was the poem, "The Mad are Sane" written by Kwesi Brew. The poem was retrieved from <https://home.koranteng.com/writings/kwesi-brew.html>

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Conflict of Interest

The authors confirm that they have no conflicts of interest concerning the publication of this article.

Authorship Contribution Statement

Adukpo: Developing the research idea, formulating research questions, drafting the manuscript. Kumi: Formulation of research design, data collection and analysis. Gaaku: Review of relevant literature and developed the theoretical framework. Wumbei: Editing, proofreading, formatting, citations, and compliance with ethical research standards.

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Status and Placement Options: The Dilemma of Librarians in the Colleges of Education in Ghana

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Abstract

Academic libraries continue to play critical roles in institutions of higher learning. The objectives of the study were to identify the different types of libraries that constitute academic libraries; explore the qualifications, status, and role of the librarians in the colleges of education; and establish the career options of the academic librarians in institutions of higher learning. The research approach was qualitative and employed a phenomenological research design with a purposive sampling approach. Data collection was by telephone interviews and document analysis using content analysis. 38 out of 46 college librarians were interviewed. The documents analysed included the harmonised statutes, scheme of service, and policy statements and letters from the Ghana tertiary Education Commission. The study found that college libraries, polytechnic libraries, university libraries, and research libraries attached to institutions of higher learning constitute academic libraries. The study also found that the qualifications of librarians in the academic space are similar to those at the faculties and other librarians of the technical and traditional universities. The study revealed that, while the role of a college librarian seemed the same across the colleges, the recognition and status of the librarian varies from college to college. The conclusion of the study is that the qualification, status, role, and career options of academic librarians should be the same across all higher institutions to ensure parity and minimise brain drain.

It is recommended that academic librarians should be fairly and equitably treated across all tertiary institutions to curb librarian turnover from the colleges of education to the traditional and technical universities.

Keywords: *College Librarian, Statutes, Qualifications, Staff Turnover, University*

Introduction

In recent decades, librarianship training and practice has undergone considerable evolution to include other domains like Information, Communication and Technology (ICT), Journalism, and Management. This has largely been driven by a series of political, economic, social and technological forces (Cox, 2020). The new social and technological environments have created conditions for widening the form and scope of library operations, particularly in the institutions of higher learning. Hence, academic librarians continually work to serve students and faculty in meaningful and responsive ways (Hess, 2019).

Academic librarians' play the role of overseers of repositories of valuable and relevant knowledge that aligns with academic institutions' educational programmes (Gabbay & Shoham, 2017; Plockey & Pwadura, 2018). They play both administrative and academic roles and are dedicated to serving all sorts of people by helping them access timely and accurate information. Librarians acquire, organise, and disseminate knowledge in a variety of formats. According to Adams (2024), the role of the librarian in the formal education system has been conspicuously visible in the overall knowledge engagements of colleges, polytechnics, and universities in the present dispensation. This has been done through the demonstration of certain qualities like management and leadership skills, competency, research and contribution towards the profession and information communication and technology skills (Abban & Saah, 2021). It is obvious that the work of the academic librarian is the fulcrum on which both faculty and students undertake their learning and research activities.

Despite the overwhelming acceptance of the academic librarian in the overall knowledge transfer chain, the recognition, treatment, and career opportunities of academic librarians continue to suffer unjustifiable variations. Veles, Graham, and Ovaska (2023) support this situation by arguing that institutional spaces and boundaries, as well as professional identities, are profoundly contextual and constructed, enacted and interpreted in multiple ways. Though this could be true, it defeats the principle of equality and equitability for people within the same industry, same qualifications and performing the same job functions. For example, whereas Ghana Tertiary Education Commission

(GTEC) recognises academic librarians as academic staff, the treatment and recognition of these professionals have remained varied. The academic librarians of colleges of education continue to be labelled and treated as non-academic staff despite the many correspondences from Ghana Tertiary Education Commission clarifying and restating the positions of academic librarians in all higher institutions of learning as academic staff. These discrepancies in treatment, even though, academic librarians across institutions of higher learning have similar qualifications and job descriptions, according to Abban and Saah (2021), is as a result of the lack of understanding and appreciation of the work of librarians, particularly, those at the colleges of education. The differences in the status and recognition of academic librarians at the colleges of education to their counterparts in the other analogous tertiary institutions may also be as a result of the long-held perception that, the colleges, just like the polytechnics, now technical universities, were seen as second option to the traditional public universities, leading to low enrolment and resources (Akanpaadgi & Mumuni, 2021).

The departments and specialisations within libraries represent the librarians' dedication in locating and organising materials that are beneficial to users within the academic space to enhance scholarly activities (Eckwright & Bolin, 2001). However, unlike the teaching departments, heads of departments or units within the library domain do not get the same status recognition, career development opportunities, and remuneration. The lack of parity in remunerations among academic heads and the librarians of other tertiary institutions like the universities, and the college librarians, and the absence of opportunities for career advancement to professorial ranks, have compelled many college librarians are to consider moving to traditional and technical universities. These challenges could be because of the absence of a harmonised scheme of service for all tertiary institutions. For example, whereas the librarians at the University of Ghana and Cape Coast could rise to associate and full professorial status after satisfactory service and satisfying other requirements including publication of scholarly works at the senior assistant librarian grade, the same cannot be said of the colleges of education and some other universities, even though, they mostly possess the same qualifications.

Available research indicates that most people, particularly in the African context, know very little about librarianship and do not consider it to be a viable career path. According to Kanyika (2022), most students, even after studying information management and related courses only choose to become librarians after being turned down for positions in other fields. It seems that many people view librarianship as a means of achieving their goals. As a

result, many librarians now lack the glitz, respect, and status that people in other professions seem to love and appreciate (Kanyika, 2022).

The status of academic librarians has received some level of upgrade and appreciation in Ghana and beyond. For example, academic librarians at certain universities still face several difficulties despite the profession's increasing stature, prominence, and influence in higher education. In comparison to their counterparts in other tertiary institutions, academic librarians generally do not receive the same level of appreciation and value. This could be the result of numerous systemic institutional failures brought by the inconsistent higher education statutes and the negative attitudes of institutional managers toward librarians stemming from their ignorance of the nature and importance of librarianship in colleges of education. An interest in examining these issues has been sparked by college librarians' predicament regarding their credentials, status, and career options in Ghana's educational system. In view of this, the study seeks to answer three research questions:

1. What are the different types of libraries that constitute academic libraries?
2. What are the qualifications, status, and role of the librarians in the colleges of education?
3. What are the career options of academic librarians in institutions of higher learning?

Literature Review

Overview of academic libraries

Academic libraries are those associated with postsecondary educational institutions, such as colleges, universities, and polytechnics (Bawack, 2019). Sanker and Sanker (2022) classify these libraries as school, college, and university libraries because they are in learning environments. These libraries are a part of a larger academic institution and are purposefully designed to meet specific goals and user needs (Gabbay & Shoham, 2017).

According to Arthur, Brafi and Kuranchie (2013), the subject coverage of other libraries like a public library may be more diversified than that of an academic library. This is because, academic libraries' general goals are to meet the needs of the academic community, offer reference materials at the proper levels, give users study spaces, offer a lending service suitable for the various user types and offer an active information service that might reach out beyond the institution to the community's business and industry. Their primary goals are to preserve and make resources accessible, in addition to supporting the parent organisation's educational and research activities (Bawack, 2019). According to Bawack (2019), academic libraries have enormous responsibilities that go along with their privileged status within the academic

setting. By giving customers access to need-based information resources, they are expected to support the research projects that their parent universities or colleges are conducting and to contribute to the push for information that will advance scholarly activities (Bawack, 2019). Within the parameters of their parent institutions, they carry out their duties by facilitating the academic community's access to information from distant or nearby locations (Plockey & Pwadura, 2018).

However, according to Hotsonyame (2023), it is impossible to satisfactorily explain, though, why academic libraries are still relevant in the twenty-first century due to the notable modifications that are still occurring in higher institutions of learning. In the dynamic academic space, academic libraries face the challenge of proving their worth and significance to funders, governing boards, and institutional stakeholders to justify ongoing funding. With an emphasis on the abilities and responsibilities involved in producing and disseminating digital content, libraries are playing a significant role in fostering digital literacy among students outside the physical spaces (Cox, 2020). Academic libraries have shifted away from their traditional roles as bookstores and are now expected to do more with less. According to Cox (2020), beyond physical locations, libraries are playing a significant role in fostering digital literacy among students, with a focus on the abilities and responsibilities associated with producing and disseminating digital content. Academic libraries are now under pressure to expand their operations and abandon their conventional responsibilities as book storage facilities.

Libraries are becoming more widely recognised because of the significant changes to their primary functions over the past few decades. Since sharing resources or systems administration is essential to their operations, it is the most sensible approach for disseminating data assets among academic libraries in the twenty-first century (Hotsonyame, 2023). A very dramatic shift from manual to computerised libraries has occurred in academic libraries as they have all moved toward the robotisation of information frameworks. As such, they do more than just provide the traditional services of the past; for example, they provide professional advice on copyright issues. Moreover, they manage institutional outputs in the form of institutional repositories, address metadata issues, and act as technology specialists to facilitate access to electronic resources (Plockey & Pwadura, 2018).

Choosing a career as an academic librarian

Choosing a career is a difficult process that is impacted by several variables. It requires careful consideration because it determines a person's aptitude, values, and level of success in the future. Given a variety of factors, including ignorance, peer pressure, advice from friends and parents, and—perhaps most

importantly—the stigma attached to particular occupations in the absence of appropriate occupational assistance and counselling, many people in developing nations end up choosing careers for which they are only partially or entirely unsuitable. In the same vein, a lack of knowledge about potential career paths, particularly in the field of libraries, influences the decisions made by many individuals in developing nations.

A career in libraries has many facets. Depending on what area of library work they specialise in, librarians at different types of libraries go by different titles (Chimah, Uhegbu, & Nwokocha, 2012). Those employed in the library industry were thought of as little more than bookkeepers who sat and kept an eye on documents. Many people have been discouraged from choosing academic librarianship as their career path by this misconception. Chimah, Uhegbu, and Nwokocha (2012) observe that people have frequently chosen this job because they enjoy reading books and helping people, while others who have chosen careers as librarians in educational institutions have done so because they require a secure job, opportunity for intellectual growth, room for career advancement, and flexibility in their work schedules.

According to Abban and Saah (2021), librarianship is the mother of all professions, protecting culture and advancing scholarship. This claim is based on the intricate, significant, and varied services that librarians provide as well as the position of librarianship in relation to other professions. Most library science professionals are employed in academic, public, and school libraries today, but job opportunities for information specialists are expanding most rapidly in corporate, consulting, and information broker settings as well as in environments involving Internet-based information. Pre-tertiary institutions employ school librarians, central or public libraries employ public librarians, and hospitals, law firms, and special agencies employ librarians of special libraries or information centres (Chimah, Uhegbu, & Nwokocha, 2012).

It goes without saying that individuals who aspire to become academic librarians must obtain postgraduate degrees in library and information science in addition to work experience. Programmes for master's and doctoral degrees are typically created to give highly qualified and driven individuals in a professional education in preparation for careers as librarians, information specialists, library educators, or researchers. One can pursue a career as an academic librarian in the field of librarianship by working in a college or a university (Chimah, Uhegbu, & Nwokocha, 2012). However, the concept of academic librarianship encompasses the method and processes used in the acquisition, organisation, preservation and dissemination of intellectual resources within the academic space. In contrast to professions like medicine, law, and accounting, academic librarianship, like other librarianships, still

faces challenges in becoming well-known because of public perception (Abban & Saah, 2021).

Although academic librarianship is a respectable profession, it is important to note that academic librarians have not adequately positioned themselves within the academic community. Cox (2020) claims that the research that is currently available sheds light on the variety of tasks vying for their time, such as publication, teaching, research, and administration. Despite the uncertainty and disagreement regarding the classification of librarians at universities and colleges of education as professional or academic staff members, this could be because of the academic environment's recent changes in pace (Cox, 2020). As a result, all employees' roles, responsibilities, spheres of influence, and professional identities are constantly evolving; sometimes, they keep up with these global changes, and other times, they fall behind them (Veles, Graham & Ovaska 2023).

Many working librarians concentrate on the daily running of their libraries or library systems rather than making contributions to the field of library and information studies scholarship. These individuals are frequently referred to as members of the professional class of librarians. Although the term "professional staff" has not consistently been applied in the tertiary education sector worldwide, it refers to a broad community of university staff members who carry out administrative, student services, financial, technical, and numerous other roles essential to institutional operations (Veles, Graham, & Ovaska 2023). However, some practising librarians—especially those in academic libraries—conduct original, scholarly research in the field of library and information studies and support the academic end of the profession (Chimah, Uhegbu, & Nwokocha, 2012). These professionals (librarians) are called academic librarians (Ifijeh, Yusuf & Owolabi, 2021).

Hess (2019) noted that academic libraries are always striving to provide faculty and students with meaningful, responsive services in the context of the evolving higher education system. Academic librarians began teaching information literacy because of the growing diversity of sources and new formats for information resources. As a result, the duties of an academic librarian extend beyond those of a traditional librarian, who is responsible for gathering, organising, preserving, and sharing information resources. According to Ifijeh, Yusuf, and Owolabi (2021), it comprises fundamental academic pursuits like research, scholarly publishing, and involvement in academic discourses and presentations at conferences, seminars, and workshops.

Despite the advancements and changes, the field of academic librarianship has endured and still endures mistreatment and malignment. As a result,

individuals who selected the profession did so because it was their only remaining option (Ifijeh, Yusuf & Owolabi, 2021). Others, however, passed on other career options and went into librarianship. In addition, those who chose to pursue the profession did so with regret in some cases. Some choose to stay in the field because they want to help clients by providing solutions (Fasae & Nwaifo, 2024).

In any organisation, including libraries, employee productivity is increased by motivation, whether it comes from internal or external sources. Consequently, an optimistic and demanding attitude would result from the academic librarian's general work environment, including the status and recognition of his office (Fasae & Nwaifo, 2024). Conversely, research indicates that highly motivated academic librarians can create teacher identities that impact their professional identities and enable them to support information literacy instructors and instruction more successfully (Hess, 2019). Similarly, it is widely accepted that librarians' motivation for their job could affect how productive their research is.

Abban and Saah's (2021) study aimed to determine the respondents' interest in pursuing a career in librarianship. The majority of 278 (85.3%) respondents who had their interest in becoming librarians after school said they would not consider pursuing this career path, according to data analysis. Just 48 (14.7%) people would consider becoming librarians as a career. Students cited a lack of knowledge and comprehension of the library profession as one of the main causes. Their comments also demonstrated a lack of regard for the profession, which might be related to the state of the school libraries.

Qualifications and status of academic librarians

Even though academic librarians play a critical role in the research community, their contributions seem to go unappreciated in the so-called information age, and they continue to lack the glamour and prestige of other professions (Abban & Saah, 2021). To stop this, there have been differing views expressed regarding the necessity of doctoral degrees for academic librarians to hold specific positions in both developed and developing nations (Ifijeh, Yusuf, & Owolabi, 2021).

According to Veles, Graham, and Ovaska (2021), there is still terminological inconsistency in relation to titles, which is evident in the diversity and organisational complexity of universities across different nations. It is therefore critical for academic librarians to develop professional practices that help staff members make sense of their identities, as this has an impact on their work and career trajectories, given the constant creation of new professional identities and the restructuring of old ones (Veles, Graham & Ovaska, 2021).

Academic librarians at academic libraries are said to have the same academic standing as their classroom counterparts for a considerable amount of time. In literature, the term "academic staff" has been defined in a variety of ways (Ifijeh, Yusuf & Owolabi, 2021). In certain countries, it is synonymous with "faculty" and "teaching staff," but these terms may have different meanings. It is evident from the definition given above that the term "academic staff" refers to more than just the role of a teacher. Service and research are crucial elements of the idea and academic. According to Ifijeh, Yusuf, and Owolabi (2021), librarians have long maintained that one of their primary responsibilities is to support teaching, learning, and research through the provision of academic resources and services.

Cursory observation, however, reveals that librarians employed by academic libraries only have a lite academic status because they are not eligible for some benefits associated with faculty membership. Teaching employees and students how to use library resources effectively and efficiently is a responsibility of librarians. Additionally, it has been proven that librarians are acknowledged as members of the Technical University Teachers Association and the University Teachers Association of Ghana, and that they are promoted based on the same standards as academic staff. Despite this, there are still certain differences in terms of titles, statuses, and acknowledgment.

With some inconsistencies, it is assumed that policymakers in the education sector have had a significant impact on the standing and recognition of librarians in Ghana's higher education institutions. This is mostly because of the government's increased accountability and its covert meddling in higher education, which has led to political sentiment on many campuses (Cox 2020). Additionally, it seems that Ghana's higher education administrators have concluded that librarians are not qualified for certain academic roles, such as Associate Professor, which is comparable to Deputy Librarian and requires a doctorate and publications. Although there are numerous known university statutes that specify that a doctorate and professorial status are prerequisites for appointment, colleges of education do not demand doctorate qualifications to fill library vacancies. However, with the pending migration of staff of the Colleges of Education into the salary structure of their affiliate universities, it appears that the colleges are also going in the same direction, noting that doctoral degree would be a requirement or added advantage for individuals applying as heads of libraries. There is however no clear directive in this regard from the Ghana Tertiary Education Commission.

As was previously mentioned, librarians received full academic status and recognition at several universities in Ghana, including University of Mines and Technology, University of Cape Coast, and Accra Technical University.

This is the case because in Ghana, promotion to teaching class grades equivalent to their own requires that the academic librarians possess the same qualifications as the faculty and fulfil all additional requirements. Academic librarians are ranked on level 25L of the single spine salary structure, the same as professors. For instance, University of Cape Coast recognises that full professors and university librarians must meet the same standards for academic staff to be promoted (University of Cape Coast Criteria for appointment and promotions of senior members, 2021). In contrast to University of Ghana, where the university librarian usually holds a professorial position, University of Cape Coast maintains the use of the library staff's professional ranks, even though they are all regarded as academic staff. This substantiates the claims made by Ifijeh, Yusuf, & Owolabi (2021), that even though university librarians have been officially granted academic status, there are still marked differences in their working environments, duties, and benefits.

In a confusing move that resembled what happened in Nigeria in 1975 regarding the removal of the academic/faculty status of librarians, which was later reversed in 1993, the Ghana Tertiary Education Commission attempted to change the status of academic librarians in Ghana in a letter dated June 12, 2024, with reference no; KA16/7/0/KAP/1/01 and likened them to the staff members of audit and finance. This letter aimed to reclassify academic librarians as professional staff. Consequently, the Technical University Teachers Association and the University Teachers Association of Ghana were strongly against this. At the end, the Ghana Tertiary Education Commission had to confirm in another letter dated on July 12, 2024, with reference number HK42/1/01 that all librarians in higher education institutions are academic staff members. This was an unfortunate turn of events. However, some faculty members and principals of the colleges of education continue to be opposed to librarians having full academic standing because of their ignorance and lack of appreciation of the responsibilities of college librarians. Ifijeh, Yusuf, and Owolabi (2021) contend that if it weren't for the inconsistent actions of governmental entities, such as the Ghana Tertiary Education Commission, there would never have been a discussion regarding the academic standing of librarians. The issue may also stem from variations in university statutes and principals' selective implementation of the harmonised statutes of college of education.

Ifijeh, Yusuf, and Owolabi (2021) state that there are several ramifications when academic status is granted to librarians. The most important of these is the requirement for a legitimate explanation because particularly in privately owned institutions, the status is frequently threatened by faculty, administration, and governing councils. Additionally, the necessity for

academic librarians to publish scholarly works or face extermination as a prerequisite for advancement has complicated their work because it calls for juggling research with the librarian's regular responsibilities, which include collection development, cataloguing, information literacy, and reference services. Furthermore, there is a lack of clarity on the placement of academic librarians after the end of their tenure, compared to the other principal officers, such as the Vice Chancellor who remain professors and return to classroom after their tenures.

A thorough analysis of 54 publications by Veles, Graham, and Ovaska (2023) from the first two decades of the twenty-first century, covering both the Global North and Global South, on the evolving identities and roles of professional staff members as well as the spaces where they interact with others within the university community. The study discovered that professional staff members were constructing their professional identities differently, feeling more empowered, and collaborating with academic staff members. Similar findings were made by Rawayau (2019), who examined the impact of employers' and users' unfavourable perceptions of librarianship on the job performance of Nigerian graduates. He discovered that one of the things discouraging most of the staff is the lack of recognition of the profession is discouraging fresh graduates from seeking librarianship related roles and even those employed in the field are seeking opportunities elsewhere.

Methods

Purposive sampling was used as sampling technique and a phenomenological research design was also used in this research. The study also adopted a qualitative research approach. Telephone interviews and document analysis were used to gather data. Interviews were conducted with thirty-eight out of the forty-six college librarians. Participants were conveniently selected. The choice of the convenient sampling technique was to enable the researcher to select participants based on their accessibility and availability for the telephone interview due to time constraints. Primary data was gathered directly from the respondents on the field through telephone interviews. Secondary data were acquired from Ghana Tertiary Education Commission's policy documents and letters, statutes of the University of Cape Coast, harmonised statutes of the colleges of education and journal articles. The researcher assured the participants of his strict adherence to all ethical standards in research, including anonymity and confidentiality. The data were analysed using the relational content analysis.

Findings and Discussion

Demographic distribution

Although demographic characteristics of participants have no direct relationship to any of the study objectives, the researcher deemed it necessary to establish the relationship between gender and career choices as librarians. The findings of the study indicated that out of thirty-eight participants, the majority were male (75% percent) followed by female (25%). The result of this study is dissimilar to the study by Yousaf et al. (2013). They reported that librarianship is considered a decent job for women, with the number of females joining this profession increasing every year.

College libraries as academic libraries

The study sought to establish whether libraries of colleges of education constitute academic libraries. All the participant of the study indicated that academic libraries include those found in colleges of education and universities. It is possible to conclude from the results that colleges of education libraries are widely acknowledged and accepted as academic libraries. Nevertheless, there is no explicit reference to the libraries as academic departments or units in the colleges of education in the documents that were examined, including the colleges of education statutes and the scheme of work. There is also no mention of the college library as professional or non-academic staff. College librarians have frequently been referred to as professional staff in official correspondence from the Ghana Tertiary Education Commission. However, their most recent letter clarified the commissions stand on the recognition of libraries in the universities and colleges of education as academic staff.

P13 had this to say; "...from my training as a librarian, I have always known that libraries of universities, polytechnics, and colleges are classified as academic libraries."

"In theory, yes, college libraries are academic libraries ..." [P15].

"yes, ... College libraries are part of the classification of academic libraries" [P20]

Librarians as academic staff or professional staff

Also, the study sought to establish the recognition and status of college librarian in the colleges of education. The findings indicate that most of the participants (twenty-eight, representing seventy-four percent) did not have the recognition and status of academic staff. However, ten (10) of the participants indicated that they are recognised as academic staff, and this was evidenced from their Book and research allowances computation and payments. Most of

the participants were aware of GTEC's letter of June 12, 2024, with reference no; KA16/7/0/KAP/1/01/ affirming the status of college and university Librarians as academic staff. However, most of the participants believe that such status recognition of college librarians as academic staff would remain on paper and would not be felt or seen in reality. Based on the findings, one could argue that there are variations and disparities in status and recognition among librarians in the colleges of education, despite all colleges of education using the same harmonised statutes, conditions and scheme of services.

Some of the participants had this to say:

"...I am an academic staff member, and a member of the colleges of education Teachers Association, Ghana" - [P13].

I am a non-academic staff. All correspondence from GTEC has always placed the library under the professional staff category and so, I had no reason to think that I am an academic staff... [P10] "I was a tutor before my conversion to the library and so, my status has not change. I still attend all meetings and programmes for the teaching staff, even though, my college, an affiliate of university for development studies (UDS) does not offer information literacy and so, I do not teach"[P5].

"... I am an academic staff even though nobody has told me that I am an academic staff, I know I am. I get my book and research allowance, and I am a member of the academic board of my college." [P20]

"... I am not treated as an academic staff, and so, I supposed I am not. I only take book allowance just like the college secretary, Finance and College Auditor". I know that in some universities and Colleges, librarians are treated as academic staff and enjoy the full privileges like their colleague lecturers and Tutors". [P18]

The role of the Librarians in the Colleges of Education.

The study also examined the role of librarians in the colleges of education. Aside from their information management activities, they also perform a variety of functions. All the participants indicated that they have been actively involved in the institutional and programmes accreditation and re-accreditation. Results of the study indicate that college librarians curate collections, develop education programs, manage databases, and oversee library staff.

[P 30] *"... we organise the intellectual resources (external or internal) for the use of the college and its stakeholders".*

"We are the custodians of the academic resources of the college. We assist both students and staff to locate and access resources" [P5]

“As a college librarian, I undertake reprographic activities, referencing, indexing, abstract preparation, and general research assistance services...”. [P1].

“... I manage the library staff, manage the resources of the library, and teach information literacy as one of the general courses in my college.” [P15]

Education and qualifications of Librarians in the Colleges of Education

Education and training are the processes of imbibing technical knowledge and skills in persons to perform their functions (Adams, 2024). They encompass the systematic processes through which individuals acquire knowledge and expertise, ultimately leading to enhanced organisational success (Akcer & Ozer2014). Most of the participants (36, representing 99%) held postgraduate qualifications (MA, MSc, and MPhil) in librarianship. This is not different from those of the technical and traditional universities. it is important to indicate that, there are few institutions like University of Cape Coast and University of Ghana that require individuals to possess doctoral degrees before appointment as substantive librarians.

some of the responses of the participants are as follows:

“I have an MPhil in information studies from the University of Ghana...” [P15]

“I have a background in communication and information studies. I hold an MA in communication studies, and an MPhil information studies...” [P5]

“... and I hold an MSc and PhD in information science from the Mahatma Gandhi university and University of South Africa.” [P1].

“... my highest qualification is a Master of Arts (MA) in information studies from the university of Ghana and currently pursuing an MPhil in information studies at the University of Cape Coast” [P18].

Career options for the academic Librarians in institutions of higher learning

Furthermore, the study sought to establish the career options available to librarians of the colleges of education. The findings show that most of the participants (85%) are aware of other career options, such as teaching and research fellowship roles, and are willing to take them if the treatment they receive does not improve. 19 (50%) participants saw teaching (lectureship) as an option they wish to pursue, 5 (13%) participants expressed interest in becoming research fellows, 10 (representing 26%) expressed their readiness to remain in the librarianship profession, and 4 (11%) not sharing an opinion.

Motivation, a multifaceted construct, served as the impetus for specific courses of action among individuals or groups.

[P 1], *"... I intend to convert from librarian into a lecturer. I aspire to become a professor in the very near future but that does not look possible, giving that, library staff with UDS and its affiliate colleges do not progress like the teaching staff."*

"... even though I teach information literacy, I don't intend to move from the library domain to full lectureship because, my progression is like the teaching staff. This is because, the analogous grade of Deputy librarian at UCC and its affiliates is Associate Professor (Level 24) with the same requirement and salary level. Once I can climb to the Professorial status, I don't intend to change my profession" [P13]

"... with my qualification and experience, I can work as an information officer at the ministry, embassies, and financial institutions. It is my hope to secure such jobs outside the educational sector..." [P20]

Conclusion and Recommendations

Based on the findings, the study concludes that, there was a dominance of males over females. The majority (24 participants, representing 55%) of the participants do not enjoy status and recognition as non-academic staff and would prefer a career as lecturers or research fellows. It was also found that while the qualifications and role of college librarians seemed the same across the colleges, the recognition and status of the librarian vary from college to college. Whilst some colleges saw and treated college librarians as non-academic staff, others were recognised as academic. The study found that some (26 participants, equivalent to 66%) librarians are willing to drift into teaching after being denied recognition as their counterparts, the teaching staff. They primarily wish to be fully recognised as academic staff, and to have the opportunity to progress to professorship, just like the lecturers and research fellows at the University of Ghana, Legon and University of Cape Coast. The study recommends that the qualification, status, role, and career options of academic librarians should be the same across all higher institutions to ensure parity and minimise brain drain. It is recommended that academic librarians be treated fairly and equitably across all tertiary institutions to curb librarian turnover from the colleges of education to the traditional and technical universities. Finally, the study recommends the conferment of Associate professors and professors on deputy librarians and librarians across all academic librarians.

Ethical Statement

The researcher sought the consent of all participants by signing the consent form designed by the researchers. The researcher conducted their research in strict compliance with other ethical standards such as anonymity, voluntariness, integrity of research, and respect for persons.

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A Cognitive Stylistic Analysis of Robert Frost’s ‘The Kitchen Chimney’

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Abstract

This analysis examines the use of metaphors in ‘the Kitchen Chimney’ by Robert Frost, by focusing on the usage of metaphors in conveying various themes. The analysis aims to uncover how the poet uses metaphors to convey deeper meanings and emotions associated with domestic life and the passage of time. By exploring the metaphorical language surrounding the kitchen chimney, the study reveals how Frost employs this everyday object to symbolise broader themes such as safety, tradition, and the challenges of maintaining stability in a changing world. The application of conceptual metaphors theory, the analysis displays how metaphors create resonance with the reader, forming a connection between the physical space of the home and the psychological experiences of characters within it. The paper reveals the key abstract-concrete transfers that have been employed for easy understanding of concepts, which include imagery, metaphors, pun and personification. It also contributes to the understanding of poetry through Frost’s usage of metaphors in enhancing the poem’s thematic richness and the reflection of the broader cultural attitudes towards home and family. By identifying and interpreting the key metaphors in the poem, the analyses reveal the choices we make in life. This paper also reveals how metaphors evoke emotional responses from readers, reinforcing the poem’s impact as a literary work.

Keywords: *Cognitive Stylistics, Conceptual Metaphors, Conceptual Mapping, Imagery, Kitchen Chimney*

Introduction

Stylistic analysis of poetry can be done from various perspectives depending on the goals of the analysts. Often in stylistic analysis of poems, primacy is placed on the linguistic choices writers make in order to project their objectives for the study.

However, these linguistic choices of writers reflect their individual styles and linguistic choices made (Stockwell, 2008, p.48; Sharma, 2018, p.1444). These choices made in language may range from the graphological level to the semantic level where the figurative use of language can be appropriately situated (Leech, 1969). At the figurative level, attention is placed on how various linguistic choices contribute to the metaphorical meaning of language in a literary work. And in the discussion of style and achieving excellent figurative sense in a text, language plays a pivotal role (Birch, 2005).

Most stylistic studies on poems adopted the formalist approach to analysing texts where focus was placed on the formal elements (Bhatti & Shah, 2016; Jaafar, 2014), ranging from the graphological level to the semantic level. Others also adopted theories such as the Systemic Functional Grammar (Ibraheem, 2014) and psychoanalysis (Rasse & Citron, 2020). In this study, however, although I acknowledged the role linguistic engagements with the text, attention was also paid to other forms of engagement readers have with texts for a deeper understanding.

These engagements include applying their cognitive abilities in addition to the reader's own background knowledge about the objects being referred to (Djik & Kinch, 1983). The works of Frost have been explored in previous studies from different perspectives. From an ecofeminist perspective, Muhammad & Isah (2023) explored the attitudes of both women and nature where he explored the connections between the earth and its entire form through ecofeminist theory. Other studies on his poems include Aidalabeeh & Alam (2017) which also explored political insights and nationalism through insight into various figurative usage of language; and Frost's creative adaptations in poetry (Rick, 1982). While these studies largely rely on the figurative use of language to advance their views on Frost's works, they fail to address the ontology of all figurative languages.

Metaphors are very important in literary texts; they enrich the language of the text and enable the reader to critically engage with texts in order to arrive at their own understanding using contextual clues. They are linguistic elements that require special cognition from readers in order to understand and interpret texts (Steen, 2012). Metaphors take various forms but are named differently, it is only through analysis that one can discover that various figurative languages are all pointing to the metaphorical use of language. Exploring conceptual metaphors makes it possible for a deeper understanding of texts, especially because it enables readers to explore the process of producing and understanding meaning (Gibbs, 1994). This process of making a discovery of the nature of figurative language is what studies such as this explore.

This study agrees with the views of Wales (2014) that style goes beyond the formal features of a text but also delves into the interpretation of the text through the mental processes of cognition. The various applications of figurative language in earlier studies give a clear justification for the current study. The aim of this study is to discuss stylistic devices used in the poem and investigate how these devices contribute meaning to the poem “the kitchen chimney”. The study focuses on analysis from the semantic level of analysis. Consequently, stylistic devices that are semantically skewed are analysed using the conceptual metaphor framework of cognitive stylistics.

Theoretical Framework

The study employs the cognitive stylistics theory to analyse the stylistic devices in the poem “the kitchen chimney”. Cognitive stylistics sprung from the works of Fowler (1977) titled “mind style” to explain how linguistic patterns influence the way readers perceive and make sense of the textual world. Other works such as that of Lakoff (1987) also appreciate the role of “unconscious metaphoric correspondences” in understanding figurative language. According to Lakoff’s (1987) writings, human thinking is embodied, imaginative, and possesses gestalt properties. It also has an ecological framework, a conceptual structure, is classified, meaningful, and rational.

Cognitive stylistics combines linguistics and cognitive analysis to illustrate how readers respond to texts (Garvin & Steen, 2003; Semino & Culpeper, 2002). This hypothesis explains the structural difficulties in a text by utilising concepts from cognitive science (Stockwell, 2002). It reveals the cognitive processes readers follow in interpreting a text. It also examines how discourses trigger mental processes to reveal a sense of realisation and relatability thereby impacting readers’ perception and comprehension. Since cognitive stylistics acknowledges the connection between psychology and texts, text interpretation is seen as the result of thinking or mental processes that link texts to readers’ physical and sociocultural environments (Freeman, 2005, p.253).

According to Fowler (1996), Cognitive stylistics views human beings as social entities with various connections to the world that can be traced to their store of experiences. These experiences, also known as schema, enable readers to explore their world in interpreting texts. In understanding the stylistic devices, the linguistics of language alone do not contribute to meaning, but other aspects such as the reader’s own experiences and his ability to map concepts onto their relevant others. This is the reason why Semino & Culpepper (2002, 95) proposed that the theories of cognition should be the appropriate approach to the study of such figurative language.

The cognitive stylistics also draws from cognitive grammar by Ronald Langacker which emphasises the cognition processes involved in language use such as perception, categorisation, and conceptualisation. It recognises the role that learners' language experience and other worlds that the readers have encountered tend to influence how a reader understands texts.

In cognitive stylistics, reader's entire process of cognition is linked to the store of experiences they have. In respect to this, Stockwell (2002, 15) confirms that cognitive validates humans as cognitive beings who rely on their background knowledge and experiences to understand literary texts. In previous studies of Frost's poetry (Muhammad & Isah, 2023; Aidalabeeh & Alam, 2017; Rick, 1982) concepts have been explored from the scholar's schematic perspectives of Frost's usage of language. These studies would have made more impacts if they had been explored from a cognitive linguistic perspective to unpack the complex form of language used in his poems.

The cognitive linguistic framework exposes readers to how they can enhance their understanding of texts by leading them in an explorative activity of connecting their environmental schema and all other related schemas. By this, readers build a conceptual understanding of texts by engaging in metaphorical mappings of concepts from concrete to abstract domains. They are able to pair forms of language to meanings based on their existing schemas, either linguistically, physically, or experientially. Cognitive stylistics examines the use of language in conveying cognitive processes which includes perception, memory, reasoning and emotion. It focuses on how linguistic features contribute to the construction and mental representation in processing of information by readers.

Recent studies in cognitive stylistics focuses on unearthing aspects of language that shapes the understanding of language. Petho (2024) explored enhancing meaning of literary texts by unpacking the various linguistic structures that form integral part of textual meaning in his study of naming and irony. Others include the study of semantic deviation as a foregrounding device in capturing attention through puns, metaphors and paradoxes (Zakirova, 2024). Some studies also applied cognitive stylistics to the study of songs to demonstrate the various cognitive process that are applied in the understanding of songs (Avevor & Polley, 2023; Simanjuntak et al., 2023)

In this paper, the conceptual metaphor theory was used in analysing stylistic devices in the poem "The Chimney," even though stylistic analysts have other frameworks to choose from, including formalism, cognitive poetics, conceptual metaphors, cognitive grammar, schema theory, and narrative theory.

Conceptual metaphors

Conceptual metaphors stem from the seminal works of Lakoff and Johnson (1980), “Metaphors We Live By”. Their work revolutionised how language is understood by relating one’s experiences to the surrounding world. According to these scholars, metaphors relate to a cognitive system which define how the world is understood and is reflected in how everyday language is used by adopting a wide variety of linguistic element (Lakoff & Johnson, 2003, p. 4). According to Lakoff and Johnson (2003), metaphor is confined to the perceptual realm and serves as a way of organising the way the world is perceived in relation to other objects. By projecting abstract ideas onto more tangible, experienced worlds, conceptual metaphors, influence how we interpret abstract ideas (Lakoff, 1987).

According to Lakoff & Johnson (1980), in human communication, elements are described by borrowing from existing objects in order to understand abstract concepts, and how we describe realities also affect the way we understand the things around us. These metaphors may stem from the special relationship we create between abstract and concrete elements (orientational), the coherence between the abstract and concrete elements (structural), imagined characteristics of physical and abstract elements (ontological), and the relationship between the two entities based on whether one forms part of the other or not. This has been precisely put by Lakoff & Johnson (2003, p.10) as “The speaker puts ideas (objects) into words (containers) and sends them (along a conduit) to a hearer who takes the idea/objects out of the word/containers”. All these preconditioned relationships are greatly influenced by the culture of the people. In appreciating this concept, Lakoff & Johnson (2003) explain that linguistic expressions may have meaning in themselves but in the case of metaphors, linguistic expressions only serve as the carriers through which other meanings could be derived.

In analysing conceptual metaphors, certain processes are involved. These processes include the following:

Mapping

Structures are mapped from source domains onto target domains. One interesting discovery about mapping is that source domains are usually concrete or familiar sources; and target domains are abstract and intangible. “Metaphorical mappings preserve the cognitive typology of source domain in a way that is consistent with the inherent structure of the target domain” (Lakoff, 1993 p.215; Gibbs & Steen, 1997). In establishing metaphors, change in meaning veers towards the socio- physical and the emotional or psychological which are connected by metaphors (Sweetser, 1990). She pointed out that the vocabulary of physical perception is the source domain for

perceptual verbs, while the vocabulary of the external self and experience is the target domain. One entity is mapped onto another when they are made to correlate to each other through stimulus-based distribution.

Structural correspondence

Elements that are mapped from the source domains to the target domains must correspond with the target domain it has been mapped out structurally. This is what Lakoff (1987) referred to as prototypes because they call up the best examples in the minds of people when mentioned. It involves classifying what a linguistic item calls up in one's mind as a "kind of something". Corresponding one entity to the other structurally may occur naturally or comes naturally; it is unconscious.

Structural correspondence again has been referred to as cultural coherence in Lakoff and Johnson's (2003) "metaphors we live by". This means that metaphors must correspond or cohere with the cultural values of the people. In one way or the other, metaphors are embedded with the cultural values of the people to arrive at the maximum comprehension. In situations where metaphors have been used outside the culture of the readers, without the reader forming a schema of this anywhere else, the metaphors are largely misunderstood. This is aggregated by the words of Lakoff and Johnson (2003, p.23) as "our values are not independent but must form a coherent system with the metaphorical concepts we live by". In order to resolve this conflict of metaphors embedded in certain cultures, Lakoff & Johnson (2003, p.24) suggested that 'we find different priorities given to these values and metaphors associated with them by the subcultures that use them.

Systematicity

The best way of looking at what systematicity means to metaphor is by metaphorising "systematicity". It can be defined as the process by which ideas are put into containers and forwarded to the hearer through a conduit so they can be emptied' (Lakoff & Johnson, 2003, p. 10). Conceptual metaphors are systematic but not arbitrary in mapping one concept unto the other. The two domains (source and target) must share certain structural similarities to qualify for mapping. This facilitates the process of conceptualisation for the readers. What we conceive of a particular idea influences the kind of language we use in talking about such an idea. For example, when using the expression "envy is a canker", the listener has to explore from a system, a group of vocabulary items that are related to envy, which are bitterness, uneasiness, high blood pressure, and all the negative things that can destroy the individual. Then he can visualise how destructive envy is just as a canker. Therefore, when we use these expressions to discuss the concepts we allude to, it is not by coincidence

that they have the meanings that they do. (Lakoff & Johnson, 2003, p. 8). The way we systematise metaphors influence our way of understanding concepts.

Embodiment

Lakoff and Johnson proposed that conceptual metaphors are embodied in tangible interactions with objects in the physical world. They argue that readers' understanding of metaphors is shaped by their experience with the physical world and their interactions with concrete objects encoded in the metaphors. "Thought fundamentally grows out of embodiment" (Lakoff, 1987). This assertion gives a special place to experience when conceptualising an idea. In stylistic analysis, linguistic elements may call for the conceptualisation of the reader. The reader then would have to form a mental picture the words refer to in real life. Making this possible means that the reader actually has an experience about the object being referred to, and that object in real life is the embodiment of the linguistic item.

Embodiment has been categorised by Lakoff (1987) as conceptual embodiment and functional embodiment. Conceptual embodiment relates to the mere conception of the idea that some categories are results of nature and the fact that they really function in life as such. The concept of functional embodiment holds that concepts cannot be categorised solely based on their conception; rather, they must be used instinctively and without conscious thought. Conceptual metaphors are essential in language use because they shape our thoughts, culture, language, and even influence how people conceptualise the world around them. They are used in everyday language to enhance discourse and enable readers to understand and make interpretations into texts, by connecting them to realities. Conceptual metaphors are again useful because they help in revealing deep layers of meaning, ideology, and cognitive processes underlying texts.

Overall, cognitive stylistics offers a framework for understanding how language functions as a cognitive tool, shaping thought processes and influencing mental representations in communication and literary expression.

Methods

In view of Carter's (1996) assertion that stylistics scrutinises texts from different perspectives or methods, this study adopted a cognitive stylistic approach to Frost's poem "The Kitchen Chimney" through the framework of conceptual metaphors. I read the poem thoroughly to get the understanding, which helped me to summarise the poem. I then read it again, with focus on the stylistic devices. Although there is no specific methodology for identifying metaphors (Kovecess, 2008), I used Lakoff & Johnson's (1987) examples to discover four stylistic devices which are imagery, metaphor, pun, and personification. Borrowing from Blasko (1999) on the identification of

metaphors, each line of the poem was first of all subjected to “a literal compositional analysis”.

Also, the researcher’s schematic exposure to some of the figurative expressions was also harnessed, which was authenticated by other colleagues in the same field of research. I studied how certain concepts (often abstract) are represented by others (concrete). In identifying the stylistic devices, I highlighted the lines that contain the literary devices by using different highlighters for each stylistic device. The devices that create mental pictures are categorised as imageries, those that use a word for another to create special effect were categorised as puns, and those that compare one thing to the other are categorised as metaphors. After the identification, I then analysed the stylistic devices using the conceptual metaphor framework of cognitive stylistics. I chose the conceptual metaphor theory because I found it the most appropriate when studying the conceptual structure of foregrounding on the semantic level (Semino, 2002; Lakoff & Johnson, 2003; Lakoff, 1987).

Using the models of Lakoff & Johnson (2003) and Lakoff (1987), I began the analysis by identifying the stylistic devices used in the poem and determining their source and target domains. In addition, I examined the structural correspondence between the elements and their source domains and projected the metaphors onto their target domains. In order to establish a relationship between the metaphors employed and the meanings they provide to the poetry, I finally interpreted the metaphors by paying a close attention to their context of use. In identifying the metaphors used in the poem, I considered both the ontological and orientational ways by which the persona refers to objects or ideas.

The Kitchen Chimney- Robert Frost

Builder, in the little house,
In every way you may please yourself,
But please, please me in the kitchen chimney:
Don’t build me a chimney upon a shelf.
However far you may go for bricks.
Whatever they may cost a-piece or a pound,
Buy me enough for a full length chimney
And build the chimney clear from the ground.

It's not that I am greatly afraid of fire,
 But I never heard of a house that throve
 (And I know of one that I didn't thrive)
 Where the chimney started above the stove.

And I dread the ominous stain of tar
 That there always is on the papered walls,
 And the smell of fire drowned in rain
 That there always is when the chimney's false.

A shelf s for a clock or vase or picture.
 But I don't see why it should have to bear
 A chimney that only would serve to remind me
 Of castles I used to build in the air.

Summary of the poem

"The Kitchen Chimney" by Robert Frost reveals a request of a persona to an addressee. In the poem, the persona seems to be an occupant of a house, and the addressee has been presented as a builder. In his speech to the builder, the persona seems to have only one request of all the arrangements that should be made in the house. This request is that "the kitchen chimney" should be built in full, but not one that is built on a shelf. His preference for the chimney is one that should be built with enough bricks and sand because of its height and size. The persona makes a plea to the addressee that he knows that the kind of kitchen chimney he wants will be costly, but the addressee should consider his plea because of some past experiences he had had with chimneys built on shelves. He added that chimneys built on shelves stain the walls of the shelves and they don't usually last. The persona concludes his request by revealing his actual reason for preferring a full kitchen chimney over those built on shelves. His reason is that chimneys built on shelves do not look real to him but rather remind him of the unrealistic goals he used to set.

Discussion of Findings

In agreement with one of the relevance of conceptual metaphors that it examines how metaphors, similes, and other forms of figurative language

shape perception and understanding of texts by mapping abstract concepts onto concrete ones, the study analysed how some of these stylistic devices were mapped onto real-world concrete objects in the poem thereby depicting the style of the writer and contributing to foregrounding in the poem. The poem for the analysis is “The Kitchen Chimney” and it has been carefully studied to reveal the use of stylistic devices through the lenses of conceptual metaphor framework. Some of the stylistic devices analysed in the poem are discussed below.

Imagery

Imagination forms a major part of metaphors; and metaphors also contribute greatly to the process of imagination (Johnson, 1987, p.172; Gibbs & Steen, 1997). Imagery is necessary for the formation and comprehension of conceptual metaphors. Conceptual metaphors aim to explain one field of knowledge in terms of another. Imagination aids in bringing these abstract concepts to life by offering sensory-rich representations that make it easier to understand and communicate the metaphorical mappings in the poem.

Imagery is embodied in concrete-sensory experiences which include visual, auditory, tactile, olfactory and gustatory sensations. In the poem “The Kitchen Chimney”, some linguistic elements evoke sensory experiences to the readers. In line 1, the expression, ‘Builder, in the little house,’ evokes a visual sensation to the reader such that he can visualise the house the persona is referring to as one that is not big in size, but small. This brings to light Lakoff & Johnson’s (1987) view that of conceptual mapping, where non-tactile experiences are mapped onto tactile and mentally visible ones for easy conceptualisation. In conceptual metaphor theory, this process of visualisation of an object that a linguistic item is referred to aligns with ‘categorisation’ (Lakoff, 1987). The reader then gets to understand the expression better by translating what has been said onto a concrete frame by embodying the little house as a small house which possibly might refer to the chimney the persona is talking about. This sensory connection between a house and a chimney helps to illustrate the metaphorical relationship between a chimney and a little house, confirming Lakoff & Johnson’s (1987) conclusion that metaphors are fundamental in structuring conceptual knowledge; and Blasko’s (1999) finding that metaphors which evoke vivid mental imageries may be understood and remembered than better.

The sensory connection made by the reader between a “little house” and a chimney is a process of embodiment of ‘littleness’ of the house to a concrete frame which paints a picture of the resemblance of a “kitchen chimney” to a house and the difference between a house and a ‘kitchen chimney’ which is its littleness. This mapping and concretisation and intellectual association helps

to understand the poem better and project a cultural schema that all members in countries that experience extreme coldness in the weather and have to use a chimney to warm their rooms share in common.

Other expressions such as “Don’t build me a chimney upon a shelf”; “And build the chimney clear from the ground”; “Where the chimney started above the stove/ And I dread the ominous stain of tar/ That there always is on the papered walls” also evoke another visual sensations which enables the reader to again map the linguistics of “a chimney on a shelf”; chimney being built from the ground to the top, and smoke from chimneys staining walls that have been covered with paper, have been mapped from the abstract to their concrete forms which is the mental pictures formed in the minds of the readers when they hear such expressions. This also allows the reader to engage the process of conceptualising what has been heard and embodying it in a real-life context thereby enhancing their understanding of the poem.

Apart from the visual imageries identified in the poem, the poem also engages the olfactory sensory experience through the expression “And the smell of fire drowned in rain”. By this expression, the reader has to conceptualise the smell of fire when ‘drowned in rain’ by mapping the smell of fire when it is raining to an experience they have had before concerning the particular smell the linguistic expression is evoking in the text. Then again, the reader needs to transfer that abstract concept of smell onto a concrete smell in real life to enable him to understand the meaning of the expression.

From the analysis of imagery in the poem, it is evident that imagery is a potent tool that has been used to illustrate the emotions of the poem and as a stylistic tool that Frost used to enable his readers to visualise the various objects referred to in the poem. It also helps to embolden the understanding of conceptual metaphors in the poem because it gives abstract concepts a concrete, embodied, and culturally meaningful representation. This implies that readers should pay attention to such elements that insight mental engagement with the various senses in order to appreciate how they contribute to the understanding of the poem, which also contributes to the study of cognitive stylistics. By appealing to the senses and drawing from common experiences, imagery enhances metaphorical mappings and promotes interpersonal communication and understanding.

Metaphors

Although all other stylistic devices identified in the text contribute to building metaphorical concepts to the readers, there are some expressions that are overt metaphors employed in the poem. Metaphors depict a special form of emotional engagements (Kovecses, 2015) that has been invested into the construction of a text which the reader is also expected to engage with in order

to understand it. Finding the underlying conceptual mappings between source and target domains is the goal of various processes in the analysis of metaphors under the conceptual metaphors framework. Using conceptual metaphors, the following have been identified as metaphors employed in 'The Kitchen Chimney'.

The linguistic expression "Of castles I used to build in the air" is an expression which means "setting unrealistic goals". In order to understand this metaphorical expression used in the poem, it is ideal to for the reader to identify specific linguistic forms in the text and form a mental representation of the idea expressed in the metaphorical expression. Next, the reader has to determine the domain from which the source is borrowed and the target domain to which the metaphorical language is applied. In this case 'air' is the source domain and 'castles' is the target domain'. These two linguistic elements "castles" and "air" has been categorised as belonging to one kind or having a structural correspondence because they both refer to the class of 'the unreachable or the unattainable'. This process of categorisation gives the reader the best example to consider in a specific domain. In "The Kitchen Chimney", both "air" and "castles" call up the prototype of the domains to the reader, which is "unreality".

When these are done, the reader now has to discover the mapping between the source and target domains. It will be discovered that "castles", which is associated with ambitious intentions has been systematically mapped onto "air" which is also associated unreachable or unrealistic ventures. This highlights the relationship between "castles" and "air" which is one that can never reach. In exploring conceptual metaphors in this expression, it can be concluded that the kind of metaphor employed in this expression is that of orientational. This means that the relationship existing between the two concepts is a spatial one, while one (castles) is earthly, the other (air) is cosmic.

This understanding is also shaped by the cultural experiences readers have about such conceptual domains. Culturally, readers may have the schema (either cultural or linguistic) of a castle which is 'a large and fortified house where kings and noblemen live'. So, with this background, the reader can easily map "air" to a "castle" which can help shape the understanding of the expression 'building castles in the air'. The reader can then make the interpretation of the expression that "to build castle in the air" to mean "to have an unrealistic ambition". By going through the process of uncovering meaning using the conceptual metaphors to analyse metaphors, the reader is able to gain a deeper understanding of the metaphor. The reader's language also gets shaped by engaging in exploring conceptual metaphor.

Pun

Puns can also be discussed within the framework of conceptual metaphors by exploring how they exploit similarities or incongruities between conceptual domains using the conceptual metaphor framework. Puns thrive in linguistic ambiguity where words or phrases can have multiple interpretations. They exploit the polysemy of words and flexibility of language to create ambiguities. In the poem, the expression ‘But please, please me in the kitchen chimney’ the use of the word “please” and “please” closely together contribute to multiple meanings or interpretations in each of the usage. The polysemous nature of the word ‘please has been capitalised on in order to create a sense of surprise to the listener. The word “please” in the first instance can be mapped onto the conceptual domain of showing politeness or pleading with someone, and to satisfy someone. The syntactic arrangement of the two words creates an overlapping meaning between the two words. This creates an incongruity or unexpected connection between the two conceptual domains resulting in humorous interpretations. These interpretations are easily arrived at as a result of cultural and contextual clues provided in the text. This provides insight into how humour can be generated through linguistic play, conceptual manipulation, and the exploitation of cognitive and linguistic processes.

Personification

In agreement with Colston (2023, p.1) that transferring objects from the abstract to the concrete domain is the result of engaging a higher level of cognition, personification involves conceptualising a domain that is an embodiment of another domain. Lakoff and Johnson (2003, 32) identified personification as the most obvious ontological metaphors because “the physical object is further specified as being a person”.

Personification occurs when meaning is presented through conceptual metaphors by attributing human qualities to an inanimate object. In the conceptual metaphor framework, abstract concepts or non-human entities such as emotions, intentions, or behaviours are made relatable and accessible, thereby enhancing understanding of texts. In the poem, ‘But I never heard of a house that thrive’ concretise the abstract idea of thriving to a concrete idea of a house which helps readers to understand that for a house to be “successful”, it must not have a chimney built in a shelf. By attributing “thriving”, which is a quality of humans being successful to a non-human entity, ‘a house, the reader’s emotions are engaged on a deeper level with unexpected reactions. So, in the example above, a house has been presented as “something that is a failure” (of human), and “something that is none progressing (of human)”. These make extensions of ontological metaphors and that they allow us to make sense of phenomena in the world in human terms

through which motivations, goals, actions and characteristics are understood (Lakoff & Johnson, 2003).

Again, personification was employed in “A chimney that only would serve to remind me” to paint a concrete picture of “a chimney” by personifying it through assigning of a human attribute to it. In the poem, the abstract idea “remind” has been concretised by mapping the abstract world of remind to an active entity in the world which is a human being. With this a relational balance has been created by balancing what is culturally known to the reader in terms of “reminding” and what an inanimate object has been assigned to do (Bruner, 1990, p.50).

The effect of personification in the poem “The Kitchen Chimney” is enormous. First, it allows readers to comprehend a wide variety of experiences with nonhuman entities in terms of human motivations, characteristics, and activities. As evident in the poem “The Kitchen Chimney”, personified images help in “creating vivid and personified images” in speech (Enders, 1994, p.237).

Personification therefore enriches language and adds expressiveness to conceptual metaphors. It also evokes imagination and sensory experiences to the readers through memorable and impactful experiences that resonates with human’s innate tendency to humanise all other entities around them.

Conclusion

From the analysis of “The Kitchen Chimney”, it is realised that exploring conceptual metaphors in the poem helps promote understanding by inviting readers to draw a relationship from the abstract world to a concrete world. It also creates the opportunity for readers to explore their cultural schema of the various linguistic expressions in order to have a tangible experience in a more relatable manner. Through the exploration of metaphors in the poem, this paper contributes to the in-depth understanding of cognitive processes that poets utilise in crafting their creative piece. It offers knowledge in the area of conceptual metaphors and literary studies, providing a nuanced perspective that can improve the analysis of poetry. Again, the study highlights the importance of familiarity with vocabulary and the importance of cultural knowledge in processing of metaphors. By employing those stylistic devices, readers’ emotions are evoked and their cognition shaped through the linguistic choices made by the writer. Overall, these stylistic devices helped create a foregrounding effect through the choices of linguistic elements that create deviation. These therefore helps to call the attention of readers so they can think about what these expressions mean.

Recommendations

Although the study has revealed insights into the application of conceptual metaphor theory in the understanding of metaphors in Frost's poem "The Kitchen Chimney", methodological issues in identifying what is metaphorical in cultures still lingers. Future studies in the area of conceptual metaphors might seek to provide a uniform system of identification by engaging a corpus of items that may be admitted into the category of metaphors. Also, a clear definition of the cultural context would put the study in a better perspective for easy conceptualisation. Finally, future explorations of conceptual metaphors in literary studies should consider an interdisciplinary approach which would better explain why a persona would say or prefer one thing over the other. These would enhance the appreciation of poetry and make literary study meaning and enjoyable.

Ethical Statement

This study was conducted with considerations for research ethics. All documents consulted and used in the research process have been duly cited.

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Conflict of Interest: I wish to state that there is no conflict of interest regarding this research.

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Generative AI Statement

In writing this paper, generative AI has been used minimally, mostly in summarising which has been reviewed subsequently before the final paper.

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The abstract should be written using the format below:

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3. Key words

The key words should be from three (3) to five (5). They should be separated from each other using comma, written in initial caps and in italics.

4. Introduction

The introduction should be clearly written with the background, problem statement indicating clearly the gaps the research aims at addressing, justification/relevance. The introduction should end with the main objective or the hypothesis that the research seeks to achieve. Take note that the introduction should be written in paragraphs, not in sections.

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This section should highlight the research approach, design, study area (if applicable), sample and sampling techniques, method of data collection and analysis.

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Present and discuss the results of the study based on the research objectives and or hypothesis. The results discussed should highlight the main findings supported with relevant literature and or theory.

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Outline the conclusion of the study, indicating the recommendations / implications of the key findings.

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