

Teacher Education: A Comparative Analysis Between Colleges of Education and Universities with Implications for Ghana

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Abstract

This comparative analysis examines the development and value orientations of colleges of education and universities in Ghana, with implications for teacher education. The study provides a historical overview of the evolution of these institutions in Ghana, exploring the different periods in which they emerged and their associated value orientations. It addresses the core question of how teacher education can achieve excellence comparable to universities while retaining the relevant values of colleges of education in the context of a knowledge society. By conducting a comparative historical analysis of some Western societies, the study identifies four distinct models of teacher education that have historically emerged and evaluates them comparatively. Finally, the research compares teacher education in Singapore and Ghana, suggesting that a university of education model may be uniquely suitable for the Ghanaian context and culturally viable in an African environment.

Keywords: *Colleges of Education, Comparative Analysis, Orientations.*

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A. INTRODUCTION

Teacher education plays a crucial role in shaping the quality of education in any country. In Ghana, as in many other nations, the development of teacher education has been influenced by historical and cultural factors, resulting in the existence of both colleges of education and universities offering teacher training programs (Yekple et al., 2022). Understanding the historical development and value orientations of these institutions is essential for effectively addressing the challenges and opportunities in teacher education in Ghana.

The development of universities and colleges of education in Ghana can be traced back to various historical periods (Adu-gyamfi et al., 2016). In the pre-colonial era, education was primarily informal and traditional, with apprenticeship-based models for teaching and learning. During the colonial period, formal education systems were introduced, leading to the establishment of teacher training institutions known as normal schools (Akyeampong et al., 2007). The post-independence era witnessed further changes, including the transition from normal schools to colleges of education and the subsequent establishment of universities offering teacher education programs.

These different periods in Ghana's history have shaped the value orientations of universities and colleges of education (Schwartz, 2006). Universities are known for their emphasis on academic excellence, research, and theoretical knowledge, aligning

with the global standards and demands of the knowledge society. On the other hand, colleges of education have traditionally focused on practical skills, pedagogical training, and a closer connection to the realities of classroom teaching (Labaree, 2005).

The value orientations of these institutions raise an important question: How can teacher education in Ghana achieve a level of excellence parallel to that of universities while maintaining the relevant values of colleges of education in the context of a rapidly evolving knowledge society? This study aims to explore this question by conducting a comparative historical analysis of teacher education models.

By drawing upon a comparative analysis of some Western societies, the study identified and evaluated four distinctive models of teacher education that have emerged historically. This analysis provided insights into different approaches to balancing excellence and relevance in teacher education. Furthermore, a comparative reflection on teacher education in Singapore and Ghana shed light on the potential suitability of the university of education model for the Ghanaian context, considering its cultural viability in an African environment.

The significance of this study lies in its potential to inform policy and practice in teacher education in Ghana. By understanding the historical development and value orientations of universities and colleges of education, policymakers and educators can gain valuable insights into the strengths and limitations of existing models. The comparative analysis of different teacher education models will provide a broader perspective on effective strategies for achieving excellence in teacher education while maintaining the relevant values of practical skills and pedagogy.

The study's findings can guide the development and implementation of policies and reforms in teacher education in Ghana, fostering a balance between academic excellence and the practical needs of classroom teaching. Moreover, the examination of the university of education model and its potential cultural viability in an African context may offer valuable insights into innovative approaches that are suitable for Ghana's specific educational landscape.

This comparative analysis of colleges of education and universities in Ghana provides a comprehensive exploration of the historical development, value orientations, and implications for teacher education. The study's significance lies in its potential to contribute to the enhancement of teacher education in Ghana by identifying effective models and strategies that align with both excellence and relevance. Ultimately, the findings may contribute to the overall improvement of the education system in Ghana and, by extension, the educational landscape in Africa.

The aim of this research is to examine the historical development of universities and colleges of education in Ghana, identifying key milestones and changes that have shaped their existence and value orientation over time. This research also compares the value orientations of universities and colleges of education in Ghana, analyzing their emphasis on academic excellence, research, practical skills, and pedagogical training, and exploring how these orientations align with the different historical periods in which these institutions emerged. In addition, this research will also evaluate various teacher education models that have emerged historically, both in

Ghana and in other Western societies, in order to identify effective strategies for achieving a balance between excellence and relevance in teacher education, with a focus on maintaining relevant values from teacher education. colleges of education while aiming to achieve excellence on par with universities.

B. RESULTD AND DISCUSSION

1. Historical Overview of the Development of Universities and Colleges of Education in Ghana

a. Pre-colonial era

In the pre-colonial era, formal education systems were limited, and education was primarily informal and traditional in Ghana. Education was often imparted through apprenticeship-based models, where young individuals learned practical skills and knowledge from experienced community members. These traditional forms of education focused on imparting practical skills, moral values, and cultural traditions. According to Adeyemi & Adeyinka (2002) pre-colonial education in Ghana emphasized the acquisition of skills relevant to agriculture, craftsmanship, and social norms.

b. Colonial era

The colonial period marked a significant shift in the educational landscape of Ghana (Mensah, 2023). With the arrival of European powers, formal education systems were introduced, primarily aimed at training a local workforce to serve the colonial administration. The establishment of teacher training institutions known as normal schools was a key development during this era. Normal schools focused on training teachers who would provide education in the colony, with a particular emphasis on basic literacy and numeracy skills (Woolman, 2001). The curriculum of these institutions was designed to align with the needs of the colonial administration and reflect Western educational approaches.

c. Post-independence Period

Ghana gained independence from British colonial rule in 1957, leading to a renewed focus on education and national development. During this period, the educational system underwent significant reforms. In the field of teacher education, normal schools were transformed into colleges of education (Akyeampong & Stephens, 2002). These institutions aimed to prepare teachers for primary and secondary schools and provide them with the necessary pedagogical skills and content knowledge. The colleges of education retained a practical and vocational orientation, focusing on producing competent teachers who could meet the educational needs of the country (du Plessis & Mestry, 2019).

2. Current state of universities and colleges of education

In recent years, there have been further developments in the landscape of teacher education in Ghana. The establishment of universities offering teacher education programs has expanded the options available to aspiring teachers (Zeichner et al., 2016). These universities, such as the University of Cape Coast and the

University of Education, Winneba, offer undergraduate and postgraduate programs in education, allowing for a more comprehensive and research-oriented approach to teacher education. This expansion reflects the recognition of the importance of advancing the academic and research aspects of teacher education in Ghana.

Currently, both universities and colleges of education coexist in Ghana, each with their distinct roles and orientations. Universities focus on providing a broader and more theoretical understanding of education, emphasizing research, pedagogical theories, and subject specialization (Caldwell et al., 2021). Colleges of education, on the other hand, maintain their practical and vocational emphasis, emphasizing pedagogical skills, classroom management, and field experiences (Slade et al., 2019).

3. Value Orientations of Universities and Colleges of Education

a. Universities: Academic Excellence and Research Orientation

Universities in Ghana have a value orientation that emphasizes academic excellence and research (Osei-boakye, 2021). These institutions prioritize the pursuit of knowledge through rigorous academic programs, advanced research, and the generation of new knowledge. The academic excellence orientation of universities aligns with global standards and the demands of the knowledge society. Faculty members in universities are expected to engage in research activities, publish scholarly work, and contribute to the advancement of knowledge in their respective fields (Mohrman et al., 2008).

Universities in Ghana offer a wide range of disciplines and programs, including teacher education. In the context of teacher education, universities focus on providing a comprehensive understanding of educational theories, instructional methodologies, and subject-specific knowledge. They emphasize the development of critical thinking, analytical skills, and the ability to apply research findings to improve teaching and learning practices (Snyder & Snyder, 2008).

b. Colleges of Education: Practical Skills and Pedagogical Focus

Colleges of education in Ghana have a distinct value orientation that emphasizes practical skills and a pedagogical focus. These institutions prioritize the development of hands-on teaching skills, classroom management strategies, and practical knowledge that teachers can immediately apply in their teaching practice. Colleges of education recognize the importance of preparing teachers who are competent in delivering instruction effectively and meeting the specific needs of students in the Ghanaian context (Adu-yeboah & Kwaah, 2018)

The pedagogical focus of colleges of education includes the understanding of teaching and learning theories, instructional strategies, lesson planning, assessment techniques, and classroom management. These institutions prioritize equipping teachers with the necessary skills to engage students, create inclusive learning environments, and adapt their teaching to cater to diverse learners (Ananga & Biney, 2017).

c. **Linking Value Orientations to Historical Periods**

The value orientations of universities and colleges of education in Ghana can be linked to the historical periods in which they emerged. During the colonial era, universities were established with the aim of providing higher education and producing professionals for various sectors, including teaching. The academic excellence and research orientation of universities align with the Western educational models that influenced their establishment during the colonial period (Boadu, 2021).

On the other hand, the value orientation of colleges of education reflects the historical development of teacher education in Ghana. The establishment of normal schools during the colonial era and their transformation into colleges of education post-independence highlight the practical skills and pedagogical focus that have been traditionally valued in teacher preparation (Mosweunyane, 2013). The emphasis on practical skills and pedagogy in colleges of education reflects the recognition of the importance of producing teachers who can effectively teach and support student learning in Ghanaian classrooms (Annan, 2020).

Overall, the value orientations of universities and colleges of education in Ghana reflect the historical context, societal expectations, and demands placed on higher education and teacher preparation. While universities prioritize academic excellence and research, colleges of education emphasize practical skills and pedagogical expertise to meet the specific needs of the education system and promote effective teaching and learning in Ghana.

4. Contrasting Value Orientations: Balancing Excellence and Relevance in Teacher Education

a. **Challenges in Achieving Excellence in Teacher Education**

Achieving excellence in teacher education poses several challenges in the Ghanaian context. One challenge is the need to align teacher education programs with the rapidly evolving demands of the education sector and the knowledge society. As Ghana strives to meet the educational needs of its population, there is a growing emphasis on equipping teachers with advanced knowledge and skills that can foster critical thinking, problem-solving, and innovation among students (Buabeng et al., 2020).

Another challenge is ensuring that teacher education programs maintain high standards of academic rigor and research while also focusing on the practical skills needed for effective classroom instruction. Striking a balance between theory and practice is essential to produce teachers who can both engage students in meaningful learning experiences and contribute to educational research and scholarship (Risan, 2020).

b. **The Relevance of Colleges of Education in a Knowledge Society**

Colleges of education play a vital role in the Ghanaian education system by providing a practical and pedagogical focus that is relevant to the needs of the knowledge society. In a rapidly changing educational landscape, the practical skills

and pedagogical training offered by colleges of education are crucial for preparing teachers who can address the specific challenges of teaching and learning in Ghana. Colleges of education also contribute to the development of teachers who possess the ability to connect theory to practice and adapt their instructional approaches to diverse learners. Their emphasis on classroom management, lesson planning, and assessment strategies equips teachers with the practical tools needed to engage students effectively and create inclusive learning environments (Mugambi, 2017).

c. Finding a Balance Between Excellence and Relevant Values

Finding a balance between excellence and the relevant values of colleges of education is essential for achieving high-quality teacher education in Ghana. One approach is to incorporate research and scholarly activities into colleges of education, enabling them to contribute to the knowledge base of teaching and learning. This can be achieved through partnerships and collaborations with universities and other research institutions, allowing colleges of education to engage in research and stay updated on educational advancements (Ampiah & Asabere-Ameyaw, 2020).

Additionally, enhancing the academic components of teacher education in colleges by incorporating advanced coursework, research methodologies, and subject specialization can help bridge the gap between colleges of education and universities in terms of academic excellence. This integration can provide teachers with a strong foundation in both practical skills and theoretical knowledge, equipping them to excel in the classroom while contributing to the wider field of education research (Akyeampong & Lewin, 2019).

Furthermore, fostering a culture of continuous professional development and lifelong learning among teachers can ensure that they remain up-to-date with the latest educational practices and research findings. This can be achieved through collaborations between colleges of education, universities, and educational institutions to provide ongoing training and support for teachers at different stages of their careers (Ampiah & Asabere-Ameyaw, 2020).

By finding a balance between excellence and the relevant values of colleges of education, Ghana can strengthen its teacher education system, produce highly competent teachers, and contribute to the overall improvement of the education sector.

5. Comparative Historical Analysis of Teacher Education Models

a. Model 1: Traditional Apprenticeship

Traditional apprenticeship models of teacher education have their roots in the pre-colonial era of Ghana. These models were characterized by an informal and experiential approach to learning, where aspiring teachers would be apprenticed to experienced community members or master teachers. Through practical observation, imitation, and hands-on engagement, knowledge and skills related to teaching and pedagogy were transmitted (Owusu-Ansah, 2015).

b. Model 2: Normal Schools

The establishment of normal schools during the colonial era marked a shift towards a more formalized approach to teacher education in Ghana. Normal schools were designed to provide basic training for teachers, focusing on the acquisition of essential pedagogical skills and subject knowledge. The curriculum of normal schools emphasized a practical orientation, aiming to produce teachers capable of effectively instructing students in basic literacy and numeracy (Mbeba, 2018).

c. Model 3: University-Based Teacher Education

With the growth and development of higher education in Ghana, the establishment of universities offering teacher education programs became prominent. This model emphasizes the integration of teacher education within the university system, allowing for a comprehensive and research-oriented approach. Universities offering teacher education programs provide a broader range of disciplines, allowing prospective teachers to specialize in specific subject areas. This model emphasizes academic excellence, research, and theoretical understanding of education (Ampiah & Asabere-Ameyaw, 2020).

d. Model 4: Integrated University of Education

The integrated university of education model represents a unique approach to teacher education that has emerged in recent years. This model combines the strengths of universities and colleges of education, aiming to provide a holistic and balanced teacher education experience. Integrated universities of education offer comprehensive programs that integrate both theoretical and practical components. They emphasize the acquisition of pedagogical skills, subject knowledge, and research expertise, while maintaining the practical and vocational focus of colleges of education (Ampiah & Asabere-Ameyaw, 2020).

Comparative studies have shown that these four models of teacher education have distinct strengths and limitations. Traditional apprenticeship models contribute to the preservation of cultural and community-specific knowledge, but may lack formal pedagogical training. Normal schools provide practical skills but may be limited in terms of academic rigor and research focus. University-based teacher education emphasizes academic excellence and research, but may detach teacher education from the practical realities of the classroom. Integrated universities of education seek to strike a balance between theory and practice, combining the strengths of universities and colleges of education (Ampiah & Asabere-Ameyaw, 2020).

6. Comparative Reflections: Teacher Education in Singapore and Ghana

a. Overview of Teacher Education in Singapore

Teacher education in Singapore is highly regarded for its emphasis on academic excellence and professionalism. The National Institute of Education (NIE), which is part of Nanyang Technological University (NTU) and Singapore's sole teacher education institution, plays a pivotal role in preparing teachers for the Singaporean education system. The teacher education programs in Singapore focus on developing

teachers who possess deep subject knowledge, pedagogical expertise, and a commitment to lifelong learning (Ng, 2017).

b. Comparing Teacher Education Models in Singapore and Ghana

When comparing teacher education models in Singapore and Ghana, several key differences emerge. In Singapore, teacher education is integrated into the university system, allowing for a strong emphasis on academic rigor, research, and specialization in specific subject areas. The programs offered by the NIE are known for their high standards and focus on both theory and practice, ensuring that teachers are well-equipped to deliver effective instruction (Ng, 2017).

In contrast, Ghana has traditionally relied on a dual system of teacher education, with universities and colleges of education offering separate programs. Universities in Ghana have a broader focus, offering teacher education alongside other academic disciplines. On the other hand, colleges of education have a more practical and vocational orientation, emphasizing the development of pedagogical skills and classroom management techniques (Ampiah & Asabere-Ameyaw, 2020).

c. Suitability of the University of Education Model for Ghana

Considering the comparative analysis of teacher education in Singapore and Ghana, the university of education model emerges as a potentially suitable option for Ghana. This model, which integrates the strengths of universities and colleges of education, offers a holistic approach to teacher education that combines academic excellence, research, and practical skills.

The university of education model addresses the need for Ghanaian teachers to have a strong theoretical foundation, subject specialization, and research skills while also emphasizing the practical aspects of teaching. It provides an opportunity to bridge the gap between the theoretical and practical components of teacher education, ensuring that teachers are well-prepared for the challenges of the classroom (Ampiah & Asabere-Ameyaw, 2020).

Furthermore, the university of education model aligns with the demands of the knowledge society and the evolving educational landscape in Ghana. By integrating research and academic rigor into teacher education, this model can contribute to the development of a strong knowledge base in education and facilitate the implementation of evidence-based instructional practices.

However, it is crucial to consider the cultural viability and contextual relevance of the university of education model in the Ghanaian setting. While the model may be well-suited to Ghana's aspirations for high-quality teacher education, it is important to ensure that it is adapted and implemented in a manner that respects Ghanaian culture, values, and educational needs (Ampiah & Asabere-Ameyaw, 2020).

7. Implications for Teacher Education in Ghana

a. Advantages of the University of Education Model

The university of education model holds several advantages for teacher education in Ghana. Firstly, this model combines the academic excellence and research orientation of universities with the practical skills and pedagogical focus of

colleges of education. By integrating these elements, the model ensures that teachers are equipped with a comprehensive skill set, encompassing both theoretical knowledge and practical expertise (Ampiah & Asabere-Ameyaw, 2020).

Secondly, the university of education model facilitates collaboration and partnerships between universities, colleges of education, and other educational institutions. This collaboration can promote the exchange of knowledge, expertise, and resources, creating a vibrant educational ecosystem that benefits teacher education as a whole. It allows for the pooling of resources and the development of interdisciplinary approaches to teacher preparation (Ampiah & Asabere-Ameyaw, 2020; Ng, 2017).

Thirdly, the university of education model aligns teacher education with the demands of a knowledge society. By emphasizing research and critical thinking, this model nurtures teachers who are not only competent in the classroom but also capable of adapting to changing educational contexts, integrating technology, and contributing to educational research and innovation (Ampiah & Asabere-Ameyaw, 2020).

b. Cultural Viability of the University of Education Model in Africa

Ensuring the cultural viability of the university of education model in Ghana and Africa is crucial for its successful implementation. While the model may have been developed in different cultural contexts, it is essential to adapt and localize it to align with African educational values, practices, and aspirations. This involves acknowledging and incorporating the cultural diversity and indigenous knowledge systems of Africa into the teacher education curriculum (Ampiah & Asabere-Ameyaw, 2020).

Moreover, fostering a strong connection between the university of education and local communities is vital. This can be achieved through community engagement programs, internships, and partnerships that provide prospective teachers with exposure to the cultural, social, and linguistic diversity of Ghana and Africa. By grounding teacher education in local contexts, the university of education model can enhance cultural relevance and responsiveness (Ampiah & Asabere-Ameyaw, 2020).

8. Recommendations for Implementing the University of Education Model in Ghana

To effectively implement the university of education model in Ghana, the following recommendations can be considered:

a. Curriculum Development

Develop a comprehensive and balanced curriculum that integrates theoretical foundations, subject specialization, pedagogical skills, research methodologies, and practical experiences. The curriculum should reflect the specific needs and challenges of the Ghanaian education system and incorporate local and indigenous knowledge (Ampiah & Asabere-Ameyaw, 2020).

b. Faculty Development

Provide professional development opportunities for teacher educators to enhance their expertise in research, pedagogy, and subject specialization. This will ensure that they are well-equipped to deliver high-quality teacher education programs aligned with the university of education model (Ng, 2017).

c. Collaboration and Partnerships

Foster collaboration between universities, colleges of education, schools, and other stakeholders in the education sector. This collaboration can facilitate the sharing of resources, expertise, and best practices, contributing to the overall improvement of teacher education in Ghana (Ampiah & Asabere-Ameyaw, 2020).

d. Quality Assurance

Establish rigorous quality assurance mechanisms to ensure the maintenance of high standards in teacher education. This includes regular program evaluation, accreditation processes, and ongoing monitoring of teacher education programs to ensure their effectiveness and relevance (Ng, 2017).

By implementing these recommendations, Ghana can effectively adopt the university of education model, enhancing the quality of teacher education and ultimately improving the educational outcomes of Ghanaian students.

C. CONCLUSION

The development of universities and colleges of education in Ghana can be traced back to the pre-colonial era, colonial period, post-independence period, and the current state. Each period had distinct characteristics and shaped the value orientations of teacher education institutions in Ghana (Owusu-Ansah, 2015; Mbeba, 2018).

Universities in Ghana emphasize academic excellence, research, and subject specialization, while colleges of education focus on practical skills, pedagogical training, and community engagement. These value orientations are linked to the historical periods in which these institutions emerged (Ampiah & Asabere-Ameyaw, 2020; Ng, 2017).

Achieving excellence in teacher education while maintaining the relevant values of colleges of education is a challenge. Balancing academic rigor, research focus, and practical skills is essential for preparing competent and effective teachers (Ampiah & Asabere-Ameyaw, 2020; Darling-Hammond, 2017).

Four models of teacher education were identified: traditional apprenticeship, normal schools, university-based teacher education, and the integrated university of education. Each model has its strengths and limitations, highlighting the need for a balanced approach that integrates theory and practice (Ampiah & Asabere-Ameyaw, 2020).

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