

# Examining Support Systems of Dual Mode Colleges of Education in Ghana

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## Abstract

The lack of facilities, administrative structures and staffing to support the distance learning programmes has raised concerns regarding the effectiveness of distance learning program. The general aim of the study was to examine the availability of facilities, administrative structures and staffing that exist for running the distance teacher training programme within dual mode teacher training colleges, examine challenges that exist and also to make recommendations in order to improve upon the quality of the distance teacher training programme. A sequential exploratory mixed design strategy was adapted for the study. The population of the study included 38 colleges of education across 10 regions of Ghana. Primary data was collected using a questionnaire from Principals of thirty (30) colleges and via semi-structured interviews from thirty (30) teachers from thirty randomly selected colleges of education. Data obtained during survey was coded and entered into a SPSS statistical software and subsequently analysed using both descriptive and inferential methods. Results from the study revealed that both principal and teachers were of the view that, although, there were available of resources put in place within dual mode colleges of education to facilitate the running of the distance teacher training, there were still some challenges which needed urgent attention so as to improve upon the quality of teacher training in colleges. Recommendations were made based on the findings of the study.

## 1. Introduction

Educators have raised concerns over the lack of amenities, administrative structures and staffing to support the distance teacher training programmes. Teacher education, according to Allen (1940), refers to the policies and procedures designed to equip prospective teachers with the knowledge, attitudes, behaviours and skills they require to perform their tasks effectively in the classroom, school and wider community. The essence of teacher training is to produce professionally qualified and competent teachers who would be effective eventually in the classroom. It is well known that the quality and extent of learner achievement are determined primarily by teacher competence, teacher sensitivity and teacher motivation.

Distance education has been recognized worldwide as one of the most efficient and cost effective ways of training teachers. The teachers who are trained by distance education remain on the job and undergo their studies, and the knowledge and skills they acquire are readily applied in the classroom. Distance education addresses the fundamental issues of access, retention and quality education to improve human resource in the teaching service. The need to employ distance education to train teachers is also highlighted in the basic teacher education policy (Directions for Basic Teacher Education, Vol. 1, 2000).

Many conventional universities and other higher educational institutions around the world have introduced distance education, to run parallel with the conventional programme in the same institution giving rise to dual mode institutions and this has been adopted in the Ghanaian educational institutions specifically at the tertiary level. Many teachers in the basic and second cycle institutions have embraced this style and enrolled to improve upon themselves (Baiden, 2007; Henaku & Pobbi, 2016). Although distance education serves as a means of producing the much needed competent human capacity, it has attracted the attention of policy-makers, educationist, researchers and planners who remain skeptical about the legitimacy and quality of open and distance learning in recent years (Bates, 2005; Henaku & Pobbi, 2016) and this has largely been attributed to the lack of facilities, administrative processes and staff to run the distance and open learning programmes.

Adentwi (2002) and Agbofa (2012) have affirmed this point by stating that distance learners in Ghana face a number of problems that which include isolation, the lack of time, and financial pressure. Studies have also shown that most teachers prefer conventional education to distance education because distance learners are usually denied privileges and faculty support and this, they believe, affects the quality of the distance teacher training programme. Nsiah (2011) in his study on 'Case studies' in U.S. Distance Education, however argued that it is not one single issue that determines the success of a programme, but rather a multitude of issues including program development, attention to technology, hiring and retaining qualified staff, implementing sound assessment, and securing initial and continuing funding. As part of his recommendation for institutions offering distance education programmes he indicated that administrators must endeavour to provide all the necessary resources and support needed to run effective distance education program.

According to Marden and Oakley (1990) evaluation is critical in terms of ensuring that any project or programme is moving towards and accomplishing its intended objective. Evaluation helps to maintain standards, resolve challenges, unearth competencies. To improve the quality of practices of the distance education

programme, evaluation of facilities, staffing and support systems as addressed in this study is necessary. The study was sought to draw attention to challenges that may exist in the colleges of education previously known as teacher training colleges of training and provide recommendation on how to address them.

## 2. Statement of the Problem

In recent times, tertiary institutions have introduced different modes of education such as sandwich and distance programmes as well evening and weekend programmes to run alongside the traditional yearlong structure. Within the education sector of Ghana the qualification of teachers was revised upward requiring teachers to acquire diploma and degree in order to attain the Millennium Development Goals and also to achieve its vision 2020. Teachers are therefore making all the needed effort to up - grade or acquire the minimum qualification to teach. Again regard for tertiary education for employment purpose has brought along an increased demand for tertiary education. The Colleges of Education just like other tertiary institutions, in their effort to utilize time and space efficiently run dual mode programmes.

Although significant enrolments have been made in distance learning program across the country, policy-makers, educationist, researchers and planners remain skeptical (Bates, 2005; Henaku & Pobbi, 2017). This is because studies elsewhere have found that the Distance Learning programmes are usually replete with challenges. Black (1992) added that there is ample evidence to show that lack of teacher/faculty support for distance education has been largely due to the question of quality. A study conducted by Bosea-Gyinantwi (2006) in Ghana on student teachers acceptability of Distance education, revealed that many teachers preferred conventional education to distance education because to them the conventional students are given privileges denied distance students.

For quality teaching and learning, a number of factors must be considered and there should be equity in the provision of education for both conventional and distance learners. The greatest challenge to distance education as posited by Perraton (2001), is to put in place effective arrangements to support students and in particular to support their classroom practice. The effective running of a distance learning programmes may depend on factors. As noted by According to Nsiah (2011) these may include the retention of qualified staff, implementing sound assessment, program development and attention to technology.

It can be inferred from Marden and Oakley (1990) studies that an evaluation of the distance teacher training programme will be critical in ensuring maintenance and improvement in quality of the programme. Although some studies have been conducted to examine challenges of teacher education in tertiary, none have examined the situation with colleges of education in the country. It is against this background that the present study seeks to examine support systems available in the Colleges, challenges experienced by teachers and make recommendations on how to improve the quality of the distance teachers training programme.

## 3. Research Objective

The general objective of the research is to contribute to the general body of knowledge and research work towards improving on the quality of teacher education. This investigation was intended to create a better understanding of structure and conditions that exist within dual mode teacher training institutions.

More specifically, the study seeks to:

- Assess the available infrastructure that support the distance teacher education.
- Assess the administrative structure that exist within dual mode colleges of education.
- Assess the services available to learners within dual mode colleges of education.
- Examine the challenges that may exist in the dual mode of training.
- Examine possible measures that can be put in place to improve on distance teacher training programmes.

## 4. Review of Relevant Literature

In distance education, support systems are put in place to monitor the progress of learners and allow some face-to-face interaction with tutors. Distance education is a system that requires proper methods of communication, structured planning, well-designed courses and administrative arrangements. Effective management is central to all good distance education practices, principally because the activities involved in developing and teaching distance education programmes differ in key respect from conventional education (Braithwaite, 2003).

Perraton (2001) summarized that putting in place effective arrangements to support students and in particular to support their classroom practice is the greatest challenge distance education programmes could face. As explained by Mattson (2006) these effective arrangements can be very costly and may result in the programme only approximating those of conventional delivery. Peterson (2001) earlier suggested that the distance training program is second to the conventional training method. Rumble and Latchman (2004) also mentioned that dual mode institutions in theory offer courses of exactly the same standards for conventional and distance learners, but in practice have to overcome many difficulties to do so.

Binns and Wrighton (2006) stated that, for distance education to be successful it must provide materials of the highest quality, be cost effective, should use local resources, ... and added that it must have excellent formal and informal student support mechanisms. Nsiah (2011) in his study on 'Case studies' in U.S. Distance Education, argued that it is not one single issue that determines the success of a programme, but rather a multitude of issues including program development, attention to technology, hiring and retaining qualified staff, implementing sound assessment, and securing initial and continuing funding. As part of his recommendation for institutions offering distance education programmes he indicated that administrators must endeavour to provide all the necessary resources and support needed to run effective distance education program.

Anamuah-Mensah (2002) and Agbofa (2012) point out that distance learners face a number of problems that include; isolation, lack of motivation, lack of time, financial pressure, lack of resources to study and of study skills. Östlund (2005) and Galusha (2004) also indicated some barriers to effective distance education which include such obstacles as domestic distractions and unreliable technology as well as students programmes costs, adequate contact with teachers and support services and need for more experience. Carr et al. (2002) commenting on the issue of lack of teacher support indicated that however well produced the self-instructional materials are, students must have someone to turn to when facing difficulties in their studies for a variety of reasons.

## 5. Research Methods and Design

A mixed design approach was adapted for the study. The Population of study consist of all thirty eight (38) colleges of education. Thirty (30) colleges of education were randomly selected for the purpose of this study. The quantitative phase of the study involved collection of Primary data using a survey questionnaire was administered to thirty (30) Principals of colleges of education. The qualitative phase involved semi-structured interviews with thirty (30) teachers who were still learners at the distance colleges of education. The Thirty (30) teachers, for clarity are referred to as learners, consisted of a teacher selected from the thirty colleges of education. The reliability and validity of survey questionnaire and interview guide were ensured by the researcher through the following processes. First, items of the initial questionnaire were selected based on the information gathered from literature including items from literature. The initial questionnaire was given to colleagues who were also experts to comment on the representativeness and suitability of the questionnaire. The step was taken to establish both face validity and content validity and also help researcher to make necessary amendments before the pilot study. Corrections were made after the pilot study to obtain the final survey questionnaire. Quantitative data obtained during study was coded and entered into a SPSS version 21. Data was screened for missing responses, normality and subsequently analyses conducted. Thematic Analysis of qualitative data was conducted. The Kruskal-Wallis Analysis of variance and the Mann-Whitney U Tests were the main analytical tools, employed in the study. Three grand hypotheses were tested. These were:

H<sub>01</sub>: The distribution of the available infrastructure to support the distance teacher education is homogeneous across regions.

H<sub>02</sub>: The distribution of administrative structure that exist within dual mode colleges of education is homogeneous across regions.

H<sub>03</sub>: The distribution of services available to learners within dual mode colleges of education is homogeneous across regions.

## 6. Findings and Discussions

### 6.1 Sample Demographics

This section presents an overview of the demographics of participants during the survey. The distribution of responses to various items are summarized in Table 1.

Results in table 1 suggest that most participants (21) selected during the study were males. This figure represented 70% of the Principals sampled during the study. The results also suggest that a half of Principals who worked in a given college had been working there for twenty one years or more, although quite a substantial percentage (43.3%) of Principals had been at their current colleges for at most five years. The distribution also reveals that most Principals had enormous years of experience. This was evident in the fact that a cumulative percentage of about Ninety three percent of Principals had at least 16 years of experience as teachers. This finding suggests that most Principals themselves may have a great scope of knowledge regarding issues and challenges pertaining to the dual mode of training. Generally the above results is also indicative of a good level of retention of experienced Principals within dual mode colleges of education. Finally regarding the educational qualification of Principals of colleges of education, the distribution of responses suggests that all head teachers had a minimum master qualification, with about 93.3% having a masters and the remaining 6.7% with a PhD.

**Table 1: Sample Demographics during the survey**

		Count	Column N %
Age	31 – 40	0	0.0%
	41 – 50	2	6.7%
	51 and above	28	93.3%
Gender	Male	21	70.0%
	Female	9	30.0%
Educational Qualification	First Degree	0	0.0%
	Masters	28	93.3%
	PhD	2	6.7%
	Other	0	0.0%
Teaching Experience	1 - 5 years	0	0.0%
	6 - 10 years	2	6.7%
	11 - 15 years	0	0.0%
	16 - 20 years	4	13.3%
	21 - 25 years	6	20.0%
	Above 26 years	18	60.0%
Working experience in the College	1 - 5 years	13	43.3%
	6 - 10 years	0	0.0%
	11 - 15 years	2	6.7%
	16 - 20 years	0	0.0%
	21 years and above	15	50.0%

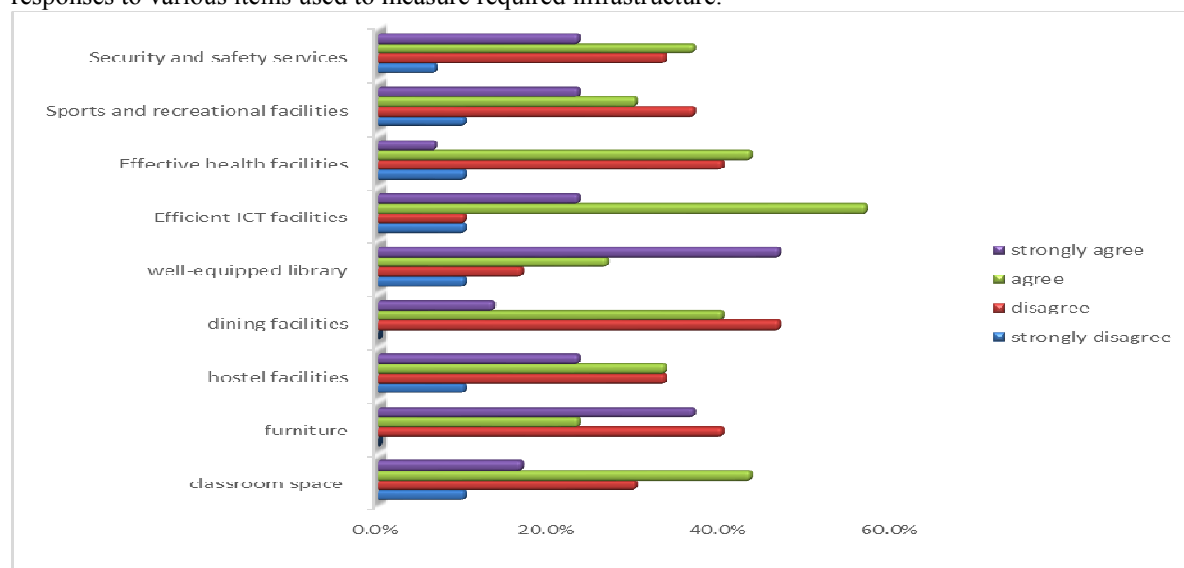
**Source: Author**

## 6.2 Quantitative Analysis

This section presents results from descriptive and inferential analysis of primary data obtained from Principals of colleges of education during the survey. Discussion of finding is reported in line with the research objectives 1 to 3.

### Infrastructure and Social Facilities

One of the major concerns highlighted in literature as accounting for the perceived compromise of the effectiveness of delivery and quality of teachers produced by dual mode institution on their distance teacher training programme is the lack of necessary facilities to run distance education programme (Braumoh, 2010; Lockwood and Latchman, 2004). The study thus sought to appraise the Infrastructure available within dual mode institution for running the distance learning programme. Figure 1 presents a summary of the distribution of responses to various items used to measure required infrastructure.



**Figure 1: Principal responses on the availability of facilities in colleges**

Generally average distribution suggest that Principals strongly agreed that their institutions had adequate facilities for running the dual mode teacher training programme. This is evident in the fact that on the average 47% of all respondents selected strongly agree. In contrast to this view there however were substantial number of Principals who disagreed or strongly disagreed on the availability of some facilities in their institution. Some of



these items include the availability of hostel facilities (30%), dining facilities (40%) Effective health facilities (30%) Sports and recreational facilities (30%) and Security and safety services (30%). The finding suggest that although some teacher training colleges did have in adequacy the requisite facilities for running dual mode programme there were also some shortfalls. Specifically, Principals' responses indicated that some colleges lacked adequate dinning, health, sport and recreational facilities, furniture and classroom space.

Inferential Analysis using the Kruskal-Wallis anova was carried out to determine if there are significant differences in the mean rates all nine (9) items across regions as categories. The analytical tool was employed to test the grand hypothesis  $H_{01}$ : The distribution of the available infrastructure to support the distance teacher education is homogeneous across regions. The results of the Kruskal-Wallis Anova on all nine items are presented in Table 1.

Results from analysis in Table 1 shows that no significant differences exists across regions for nine items. These were: *hostel facilities* ( $P$ -value=0.139), *well-equipped library* ( $P$ -value=0.312), *Efficient ICT facilities* ( $P$ -value=0.177), *Effective health facilities* ( $P$ -value=0.391), *Sports and recreational facilities* ( $P$ -value=0.366). These results imply that among all sampled colleges, Principals agreed that the following facilities: hostel facilities, well-equipped library, Efficient ICT facilities, Effective health facilities, Sports and recreational facilities are available for use within their institution.

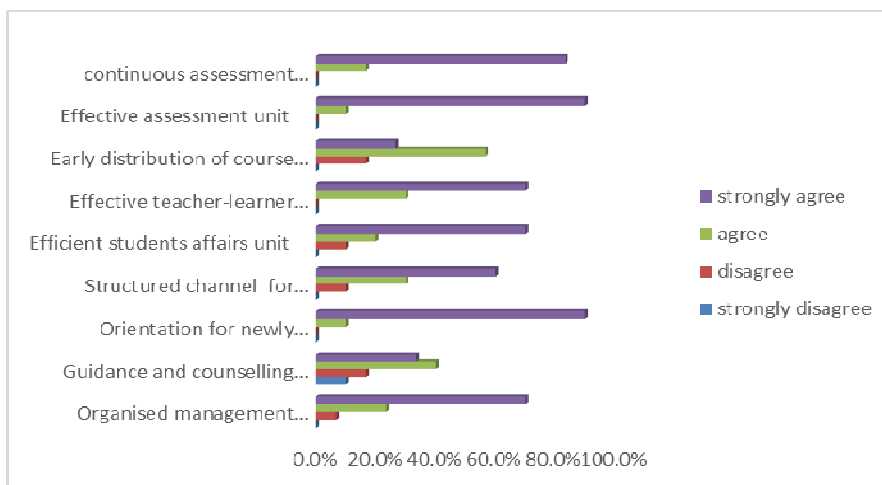
**Table 1: Kruskal-Wallis Analysis Results on Available Infrastructure within Regions**

	Null Hypothesis	Test	Sig.	Decision
1	The distribution of Adequate classroom space available for the dual mode is the same across categories of Region.	Independent-Samples Kruskal-Wallis Test	.016	Reject the null hypothesis.
2	The distribution of Adequate classroom furniture for all learners is the same across categories of Region.	Independent-Samples Kruskal-Wallis Test	.056	Reject the null hypothesis.
3	The distribution of Adequate hostel facilities for learners who need them is the same across categories of Region.	Independent-Samples Kruskal-Wallis Test	.139	Retain the null hypothesis.
4	The distribution of Adequate dining facilities to promote healthy stay and learning is the same across categories of Region.	Independent-Samples Kruskal-Wallis Test	.058	Reject the null hypothesis.
5	The distribution of A well-equipped library available for dual mode is the same across categories of Region.	Independent-Samples Kruskal-Wallis Test	.312	Retain the null hypothesis.
6	The distribution of Efficient ICT facilities available is the same across categories of Region.	Independent-Samples Kruskal-Wallis Test	.177	Retain the null hypothesis.
7	The distribution of Effective health facilities available is the same across categories of Region.	Independent-Samples Kruskal-Wallis Test	.391	Retain the null hypothesis.
8	The distribution of Sports and recreational facilities available is the same across categories of Region.	Independent-Samples Kruskal-Wallis Test	.115	Retain the null hypothesis.
9	The distribution of Efficient security and safety services available for the dual mode is the same across categories of Region.	Independent-Samples Kruskal-Wallis Test	.366	Retain the null hypothesis.

At a 10% significance level, significant differences were however observed for three items namely: *classroom space* ( $P$ -value=0.016), *furniture* ( $P$ -value=0.056), *dining facilities* ( $P$ -value=0.058). It is worth noting that *availability of classroom space* was significant at a significance level of 5%. A follow-up analysis using the Mann-Whitney U Tests between regions reveal that significant difference exist between Ashanti, Northern and all other regions. The result suggest that college in some regions especially in Ashanti and Northern region lack classroom space, adequate furniture and dining facilities. It can also be inferred from these results that there are evidence of overcrowding of learners within teacher training colleges.

#### Administrative Structures

Principals also responded to questions relating to the administrative structures for running the distance learning programme. The scale of measure was a four point Likerth scale ranging from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (4). A summary of the rating in presented in figure 2.



**Figure 2: A multiple bar chart of Principals' responses to administrative structure for distance teacher training programme**

Principals' responses on issues relating to the administrative services available to learners generally suggest that almost all (92.9%) Principals strongly agreed or agreed on all items. Notwithstanding the observed trend there were still contrasting views worth noting. A substantial percentage of principal either disagreed (16.7%) or strongly disagreed (10.0%) on the issue *Guidance and counselling service are available for the dual mode*

Inferential Analysis using the Kruskal-Wallis anova was carried out to determine if there are significant differences in the mean rates all nine (9) items of across regions as categories. The analytical tool was employed to test the grand hypothesis:  $H_{02}$ : The distribution of administrative structure that exist within dual mode teacher training colleges is homogeneous across regions. The results of the Kruskal-Wallis Anova on all nine items are presented in Table 2.

Results from analysis in table 2 shows that at a 5% significance level no statistical significant differences exists across regions for nine items. These were: *organised management structure* ( $P$ -value=0.280), *guidance and counselling service* ( $P$ -value = 0.565), *structured channel for information dissemination* ( $P$ -value=0.469), *efficient students affairs unit* ( $P$ -value = 0.336), *effective teacher-learner interaction* ( $P$ -value = 0.198), *early distribution of course materials* ( $P$ -value = 0.184), *continuous assessment marks are published in time* ( $P$ -value = 0.138), These results imply that among all sampled colleges, Principals agreed that the above administrative issues were available within their institution. The finding contradicts that of Agyemang (2014) who mentioned some that tertiary institutions lacked inadequate administrative procedures.

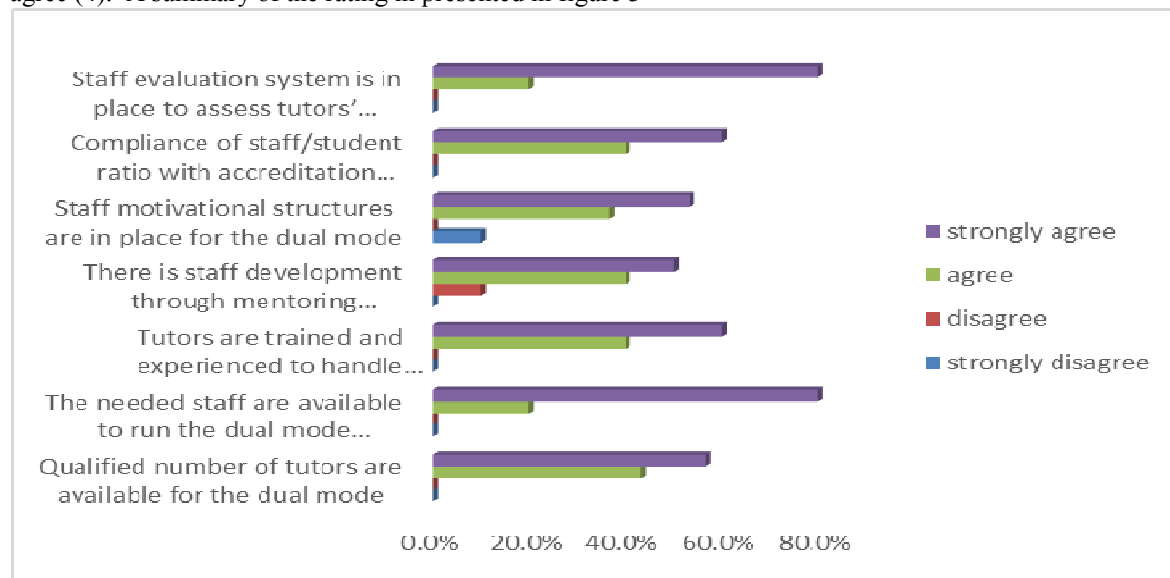
**Table 2: Kruskal-Wallis Analysis Results on Administrative Structures within Regions**

	Null Hypothesis	Test	Sig.	Decision
1	The distribution of Organised management structure in place to provide support for the dual mode is the same across categories of Region.	Independent-Samples Kruskal-Wallis Test	.280	Retain the null hypothesis.
2	The distribution of Guidance and counselling service are available for the dual mode is the same across categories of Region.	Independent-Samples Kruskal-Wallis Test	.565	Retain the null hypothesis.
3	The distribution of Orientation for newly enrolled students are often organised in my institution is the same across categories of Region.	Independent-Samples Kruskal-Wallis Test	.013	Reject the null hypothesis.
4	The distribution of Structured channel of communication for information dissemination are adhered to is the same across categories of Region.	Independent-Samples Kruskal-Wallis Test	.469	Retain the null hypothesis.
5	The distribution of Efficient students affairs unit to address learners issues is the same across categories of Region.	Independent-Samples Kruskal-Wallis Test	.336	Retain the null hypothesis.
6	The distribution of Effective interaction between teacher and learner are in place is the same across categories of Region.	Independent-Samples Kruskal-Wallis Test	.198	Retain the null hypothesis.
7	The distribution of Early distribution of course materials are guaranteed is the same across categories of Region.	Independent-Samples Kruskal-Wallis Test	.184	Retain the null hypothesis.
8	The distribution of Effective assessment unit to handle continuous assessment of learners are in place is the same across categories of Region.	Independent-Samples Kruskal-Wallis Test	.013	Reject the null hypothesis.
9	The distribution of Learners continuous assessment marks are published prior to the semester examination is the same across categories of Region.	Independent-Samples Kruskal-Wallis Test	.138	Retain the null hypothesis.

Significant difference were however observed for two administrative items namely: *Orientation for newly enrolled students* ( $P$ -value=0.013), *Effective assessment unit* ( $P$ -value=0.013). A follow-up analysis using the Mann-Whitney U Tests between regions reveal that significant difference exist between Ashanti and all other regions. The result suggest that college in some regions especially in Ashanti and Brong Ahafo had challenges with the *orientation for newly enrolled students* ( $P$ -value=0.013) and on *Effective assessment unit*.

### Staffing

Data was solicited on availability of qualified staffing for the distance learning programme. Principals also rated questions relating to the staffing using a four point Likert scale ranging from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (4). A summary of the rating in presented in figure 3



**Figure 3: A multiple bar chart of Principals' responses to quality staffing for distance teacher training programme**

With regards to the quality of tutors available for the dual mode programme general response suggest that almost all (97.2%) Principals strongly agreed or agreed on all items regarding the availability of quality tutors for the programme. The highest observed response (80%) was in favour of "strongly agree" for the measured items *the needed staff are available to run the dual mode programme* and for *Staff evaluation system is in place to assess tutors' performance*.

Inferential Analysis using the Kruskal-Wallis Anova was carried out to determine if there are significant differences in the mean rates all nine (9) items of across regions as categories. The analytical tool was employed to test the grand hypothesis:  $H_{03}$ : The distribution of services available to learners within dual mode teacher training colleges is homogeneous across regions. The results of the Kruskal-Wallis Anova on all nine items are presented in Table 3.

Results from analysis in Table 3 shows that no statistical significant differences exists across regions for six items. These were: *Qualified number of tutors* ( $P$ -value=0.432), *The needed staff are available* ( $P$ -value=0.479), *Tutors are trained and experienced to handle distance education mode* ( $P$ -value=0.110), *There is staff development through mentoring programmes* ( $P$ -value=0.337), *Staff motivational structures* ( $P$ -value=0.741), *Compliance of staff/student ratio with accreditation norms are followed* ( $P$ -value=0.390), *Staff evaluation system is in place to assess tutors' performance* ( $P$ -value=0.119).

**Table 3: Kruskal-Wallis Analysis Results on Available Staff within Regions**

	Null Hypothesis	Test	Sig.	Decision
1	The distribution of Qualified number of tutors are available for the dual mode is the same across categories of Region.	Independent-Samples Kruskal-Wallis Test	.432	Retain the null hypothesis.
2	The distribution of The needed staff are available to run the dual mode programme is the same across categories of Region.	Independent-Samples Kruskal-Wallis Test	.479	Retain the null hypothesis.
3	The distribution of Tutors are trained and experienced to handle distance education mode is the same across categories of Region.	Independent-Samples Kruskal-Wallis Test	.110	Retain the null hypothesis.
4	The distribution of There is staff development through mentoring programmes is the same across categories of Region.	Independent-Samples Kruskal-Wallis Test	.337	Retain the null hypothesis.
5	The distribution of Staff motivation structures are in place for the dual mode is the same across categories of Region.	Independent-Samples Kruskal-Wallis Test	.741	Retain the null hypothesis.
6	The distribution of Compliance of staff/student ratio with accreditation norms are followed is the same across categories of Region.	Independent-Samples Kruskal-Wallis Test	.390	Retain the null hypothesis.
7	The distribution of Staff evaluation system is in place to assess tutors' performance is the same across categories of Region.	Independent-Samples Kruskal-Wallis Test	.119	Retain the null hypothesis.

These results imply that among all sampled colleges, Principals agreed that there were adequate staffing available within their institution. Hence, according to Principals, availability of teaching staff was not a problem within teacher training institutions.

### 6.3 Qualitative Analysis

The qualitative phase of study involved semi-structured interviews with 30 learners randomly selected from all institutions under study. Data was collected from by means of a reliable interview guided questionnaire. The main purpose of this phase was to further explore the challenges encountered by learners involved in the distance teacher training programmes and to examine how the quality of the distance learning program can be improved. Discussion of results from data garnered is presented thematically.

#### Learners' views of facilities, administrative processes and teaching

Analysis of responses provided during the interview reveal that, most challenges encountered by learners were dominantly infrastructural and administrative. However, some learners also commented on the subject of teaching.

Regarding infrastructure available for running the distance learning programme, analysis of the distribution of responses provided suggest that among key infrastructural challenges of teacher during training were: the lack of adequate classroom space and the lack of adequate hostel facilities. This was evident in a proportion of 50% of responded of similar view.

*Some comments provided regarding the lack of hostel facilities are provided a below:*

*"Halls of residence were overcrowded with older men and women forced to sleep on top of bunk beds." (Ashanti, Western Region, Brong Ahafo )*

*"Due to our large numbers at the halls of residence we always had to queue to use the washroom and bath facilities" (Brong Ahafo)*

*Colleges should admit number of students within the limits of available facilities to avoid overcrowding." (Ashanti)*

*The library is too small for the number of students. " (Western, Ashanti)*

The finding from learners corroborated and explained the observed results from analysis of school Principals responses as Principals responses suggested that there were overcrowding of learners to some extent within some institutions.

All learners admitted that they experienced some administrative challenges in their institutions. A common issue which almost all participants stressed on was the lack of time for personal studies, which the participants explained was largely due to the intensity of the course structure. Another issue raised was the delay in the release of study modules to assist in learning.

Some responses provided by some participants were as follows;

*Structure too intensive – No time during the day. " (All participants)*



*No time to search and add on so I use only the modules” (All participant).*  
*Instructional time 7am – 5pm is too long for our old age. ” (All participants)*  
*There was no time to visit the library during the day because we had classes throughout and I had to use the prep time for my homework and learning from modules. ” (All participants)*  
*Programme structure is too intensive. The number of courses should be reduced. ” (All participants)*  
*Modules should be given early enough before face-to-face sessions. Because we do not have anything to learn before we come to school. ” (Participant, Ashanti)*  
*Although there are tutors to offer counselling services we did not have time to meet with them. ” (Participant, Ashanti)*  
*Although library are available, there was no time to visit the library during the day because we had classes throughout and I used prep time for my homework and learning from modules. ” (All Participants)*  
*Although there are tutors to offer counselling services we did not have time to meet with them due to the time we closed*

Learners’ views supports Principals’ responses during the quantitative phase who suggested that administrative structures were generally available. However the main concern learners’ had was the lack of time to access these structures. For example teacher mentioned that they did not have time for guidance and counselling service provided by the institutions since they closed late from lectures. The results from the current study are in line with Adentwi (2002) and Agbofa’s (2012) findings who both posited that that distance learners in Ghana face a number of problems including the lack of time, and facilities.

With regard to teaching some learners noted (40% of participants) reported that they had no issues with the quality of tutors and staffs per say, but with the pace at which some teacher teach. Some learners noted:

*“The course content is too general and broad, it should be made a specialist course”.*  
*“Some tutors did rush through the teaching as a result of the course content and do not consider our age at all.”*

The finding confirms Principals’ responses which generally agreed that quality staff were available for tuition. However teacher comments also suggest the need to review the course structure to prevent lectures from rushing through in class.

#### **Learners’ recommendation on how to improve quality of the distance learning programme**

The final stage of the interviews with learners sought to solicit views on how to improve on the quality of the distance teacher training programme.

Some of the common suggestions made in order to improve on the distance teacher training programme included: (i) the need for the institutions to revise the course content, since they were too general and (ii) the need to reduce the duration of lectures to enable learner have enough time for their personal studies.

Other suggestions made by learners included:

*“Colleges should admit number of students within the limits of available facilities to avoid overcrowding.”*  
*“The course fee is expensive and I recommend that teacher association should support student learners financially.”*  
*“The course content is too general and I suggest it should be made a specialist course for kindergarten level, primary level or junior high school level of your choice.”*  
*“Programme structure is too intensive. The number of courses should be reduced. ”*  
*“Instructional hours should not go beyond six hours in a day. This will allow students some time to rest before learning again in the evening. ”*  
*“Modules should be given early enough before face-to-face sessions. Because we do not have anything to learn before we come to school.”*  
*“Government should support Distance students with loans.”*

#### **7. Recommendations**

Based on the finding for the present study the following recommendations are suggested:

- That the training institutions could expand the facilities to help provide the needed support for the different modes. Special among these, should be improved information and communication technology.
- There should be a distance learning policy that would spell out the needed facilities which are core for the running of the programmes. This should be made available to both staff and students and shared with all stakeholders.
- Quality assurance units in the institutions should be strengthened, by providing them with the needed resources they need for assessment and evaluation not only for human resource but all other resources for teaching and learning.

- Tutor or lecturers who will teach distance education students must be trained for that purpose.
- Special awards for hardworking staff who display seriousness in handling these two modes should be encouraged in the institutions as a motivating tool towards improved performance.
- It is also recommended that orientation for fresh students should be very comprehensive to help students feel belonged in the institution.
- Again there should be stronger opportunities for tutor/student relationship. This will help students find solutions to their problems and enjoy better counselling opportunities.
- School Principals and for that matter teacher training colleges put measure in place for learners to evaluate performances of lecturers.

## 8. Conclusion

Although Administrative structures, quality tutors and facilities are available within teacher training colleges in Ghana for running the distance teacher training programme, there are a number of some challenges identified by both learners and Principals which learners face. Key among such challenges are the lack of time to access services, lack of adequate classroom space and hostel facilities and the delay in distribution of relevant materials for studies. Measures will therefore have to be put in place by the ministry of educational and other stake holding bodies to improve on available facilities and more importantly review content of courses so as to ensure parity with the conventional mode of teacher training within these institutions

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