

Financial Challenges in the Administration of Teacher Training Colleges in the Volta Region of Ghana

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Abstract

Poor performance of candidates are generally blamed on teachers. When results of candidates are good, the public associates it to the hard learning by students. Teacher training institutions feel uncomfortable when such blames are apportioned to teachers. Thus, every teacher training institution would always try to provide the best teacher education. However, challenges bedevil institutions in their quest to improving conditions and among these challenges is financial factor. Without adequate financial resources, institutions cannot run well and produce much needed results. This research therefore was carried out in 2008 to unveil such details of financial challenges as relating to the colleges studied under challenges in the administration of teacher training colleges in the Volta Region of Ghana. Homogenous purposive sampling was used to select 132 participants from 4 selected colleges. Open-ended and close-ended questionnaire were used to collect data. The findings revealed that the colleges did not have enough funds and government was the main financier of the public training college education because the colleges did not generate enough internal funds. It was recommended that cost-sharing system of financing the teacher training education should be adopted and colleges should also engage in more activities aimed at generating internal funds.

Background to the study

Education is the bedrock of national development and prosperity. It is through education that nationals become informed. Thus, education produces literate populace in every country and the growth of any nation depends largely upon the level of literacy in that country. Education capacitates beneficiaries with the ability to understand customs and practices of the society and serves as a life engine in the site of productivity, hence prevents poverty through utilization of skills and knowledge beneficiaries gain. Educands are illuminated on issues of diseases and prevention in maintenance of general physical health as well as social health as they use their knowledge of diversity in promoting peace and coexistence (Tozer & Carver, 2002). Thus the relationship between good education and productivity of educated population is highly co relational, making developed countries and other economies devoting large public expenditures on education of their citizenry (Fagerlind & Saha, 1997). In confirming the relevance of education to the people, Antwi (1992) states that there is a high correlation between the investment people and nations make in education and the level of economic development and the standard of living which the people enjoy in life.

Educational institutions that serve as the main vehicles through which education is given cannot operate sufficiently without needed economic resources. Every engagement from procurement of teaching and learning resources, administrative hosting of personnel to assessment of learning depend largely on availability of funds and the related resources. It is widely known that the process of hiring appropriate personnel to mount relevant offices are also dependent on financial resource of which when absent, the institution cannot make its right impact in the lives of educands. Teacher training colleges like any other educational institutions also go through similar experiences in the usage of financial resources. The Government of Ghana has devoted parts of its resources in recruiting staff for the colleges and also pays monthly stipends in the form of allowances to the teacher trainees throughout their training in the three year Diploma in Basic Education programme. The teacher training colleges run strict boarding system where all students compulsorily stay in the residence of the colleges and are fed breakfast, lunch and supper every day of their stay at college. This behooves on the management of the colleges to manage their financial resources very well to be able to maintain students' health and ensure incident free catering services throughout the period of students stay at college. Students pay a merger amount of about Gh¢4.50 as feeding fee to the administration in 2008. The teacher training colleges have undergone many reforms according to the changing needs of the Ghanaian society.

In the year of this research, 2008, the colleges were running 3-Year Diploma in Basic Education under a curriculum that caters for three core areas of training-content knowledge, pedagogy, and teaching practice where the first year was used for gathering of enough subject knowledge in trainee's areas of specialization and core subjects to consolidate secondary school knowledge, the pedagogy session devoted to getting trainees develop the skill for teaching and the teaching practice component purposely designed to make trainees practice the skill acquired under pedagogical training. The design of the programme at the time was IN-IN-OUT where trainees stayed on campus the first two years of their training and go out into the schools of the catchment areas of the college to do the teaching practice. The teaching practice unit of the colleges did the posting of trainees to these schools for the attachment for practice. Whilst on attachment, tutors appointed to serve as link between the students and the college visited or run errands between the college and the attachment stations to make sure that there was continuous monitoring of trainees on how they cope and live in the communities outside the colleges. General tutor group were also assigned to supervise from time to time and ascertain through assessment of lessons, how trainees fared in their practice of teaching skills. Trainees as mentees in practice serve directly under expert teachers, mentors, in the attachment schools and these mentors were also supervised by lead mentors who were head teachers of the attachment schools. Thus, the supervision of the trainees in practice were collaboratively done by the respective colleges and the staff of the Ghana Education Service including even the chiefs and the traditional authorities of the various attachments environment. All these engagements of the curriculum needs relatively adequate resources to be implemented effectively to maintain high quality of teacher education. A sure way of ascertaining the effectiveness of training for quality at the colleges is to find out the challenges they face and how such challenges affect their work. This financial challenges are no exception, hence the essence of this research.

Statement of the Problem

Poor performance of candidates are generally blamed on teachers. When results of candidates are good, the public associate it to hard learning by students and the vice versa happens when teachers are dumped in the site of non-performance in the eye of the citizenry. For instance 50% of the 320,225 junior secondary school students who sat for the BECE final examination in 2008 failed and the general public put much blame on teacher factor as the cause. Teacher training institutions feel uncomfortable when such blames are apportioned to teachers. Thus, every college and teacher training institution would always try to provide the best teacher education. However, challenges bedevil institutions in their quest to improving conditions and among these challenges is financial factor. Without adequate financial resources, institutions cannot run well and produce much needed results. This research therefore was designed to unveil such details of financial challenges as relating to the colleges studied.

Research Questions

The following are the areas of concern that the research is seeking to answer:

1. What challenges are in the financial administration in the colleges?
2. How could such challenges relating to financing administration be managed?

Some Related Literature on Financial Administration in Education

In the administration of schools, resources are utilized to achieve goals of education. These resources apart from human beings can be quantified and budgeted for. According to Cotton (1994), school administration must design various processes for financial administration. These include the budget, procedures for handling funds, payroll procedures, purchasing procedures, records, accounts, reports, audits and other safeguards. Sisimayi (1998), states that education is part of public economy hence economic resources like money are committed to it. Some sources of funds to the school as identified by the Williams (1993) include government grants, donation from philanthropists, private organizations, religious bodies, voluntary agencies, internally generated funds, and community support. Upon knowing the financial state of the institutions, heads should ensure budgeting following laid down financial principles to serve as watch dogs over expenditures, overseeing the enforcement of state laws and board of education directives pertaining to budgeting and spending (Fagerlind&Saha, 1997; Mankoe, 2002). (1997) put it that the challenge in financial administration is the skill required in planning expected revenue and proposed expenditure (budgeting). Campbell, Bridges and Nystrand (1982) say that the school budget is the translation of the school programmes into fiscal (monetary) terms. They continue that the head must be able to draw the budget and incorporate all the school programmes, the expenditures necessary to support the programmes and the anticipated revenues to cover such expenditures. Williams (1993) states that without the necessary skills, many heads are overwhelmed by the task of budgeting.

The head should identify school assets and liabilities, be able to give financial statement, and the school Balance Sheet (Len Le 1993:p. 46)

Oversight responsibilities on financial matters by principals under GES included being responsible through the board of governors to the minister of education for the financial business of that institution; exercise supervision over the work of the bursar and other accounting officers, see that proper accounts, books of account and record are kept; see that proper quarterly and annual accounts are prepared, see that all audit reports and queries are promptly considered and replied to; see that proper provision is made for the safe custody, banking and investment of cash, and the safe custody of value books, property and stores; see that the annual estimates are prepared; see that income is being collected in accordance with the approved estimates; see that rate of expenditure is not proceeding faster than provided in the approved estimates; see that expenditure is incurred in accordance with the approved estimates as varied by approved provision; consider contracts and make recommendations to the board of governors; investigate losses and make recommendations to the board of governors; deal with any financial matters referred to him by the board of governors; see that debts owed by the institution are promptly paid and that debts owed to the institution are promptly collected; and to see that the ensuring instructions are implemented (Ghana Education Service, 2006)

Another concern raised concerning financial administration in educational institutions is inadequacy of resources. Ghana National Association of Teachers (2007) identifies that the insufficient supply of grants and equipment to schools hinders the progress of schools. Fagerlind and Saha (1997) add that government is the main financier of public education and any delay in arrival of the government grants could cripple administrative work of the school. To them, government grants are usually insufficient to cater for all the needs of the school. Musaaazi (1982) concludes that the challenge to heads in times of insufficient resources reaching the school is the ability of the head to manage the school with the limited resources supplied and making sure all activities go on uninterrupted.

Looking for feasible ways of managing financial matters, Musaaazi (1982) suggests that there should be a sufficient training for heads of institutions. This is to equip them with the requisite skills in handling financial matters of their institutions. He also states that heads should spend wisely and make sure monthly returns of expenditure are submitted in time and that all the items of expenditure are properly entered. Ozigi (1990) supports that heads should be vigilant in financial operations with their institutional accountant to avoid over-invoicing. His vigilance could be used in monitoring all expenditure and resources. Ozigi continues that the heads must sign cheques only when it is necessary and must keep counterfoil properly for reference purpose.

Addressing the issue of inadequacy of resources, Rebores (2007) advises that whenever a head executes the budget and realizes that certain allocations are insufficient, he/she should prepare and present to the appropriate authority a good case for an increase in the allocation. Mankoe (2002) adds his view to the above authors when he stated that the institutional heads could lead the school in generating income internally through various ways. Musaaazi (1982) suggests the school could farm and sell farm produce, renting of school buildings to churches if the request comes, raising money from the drama troop, running of the school's own communication centres, allowing technical and vocational students to offer technical services to sister schools/community members for a fee, sale of art and craft work produced by students, printing of envelop with school crest and logo for fund raising and collection of tolls from sellers on the school compound. Ozigi (1990) attests that when it comes to the worse, heads could put up appeal to donor agencies, and PTA for assistance/financial aid. Tozer and Carver (2002) support this idea and add that in the area of construction, heads could incorporate community members in labour force by appealing to their chiefs and elders to cut down on cost of such projects.

Methodology

These section present details on the research design, population, sample and sampling methods used, instrument, data collection procedure and data analysis plan.

Research design

Descriptive survey was the design adopted for this research. It is the design that investigates a phenomenon with the interest of describing into detail situations on hands as they occur naturally (Amedahe, 2002). It had been chosen because the study of financial challenges in educational administration occurs naturally without being fabricated as the principal tries solving issues relating to the use of funds. For instance, in the acquisition of teaching and learning resources, the head can only order for purchase of items that have funds available and allocated to them, hence, a study to reveal such much about such financial engagement could easily have data produced by all the beneficiaries of the goods and services which needed being procured to satisfy their needs. Once such purchases are done sufficiently / not sufficiently and have a relationship on the feeling of the beneficiaries including their performances, a research into such a phenomenon could easily and clearly establish facts relating to dependent and independent variables in their relationship in the study theme.

Population

Principals, Vice Principals, Heads of Departments, Teaching Practice Coordinators, Senior Housemaster/Mistresses, Housemasters, Housemistresses, Guidance & Counselling Coordinators, Accountants, Domestic Bursars, and Assessment Officers, members of community leaders and Students Representative Council constituted the population of the study.

These groups were put into four groups as heads included Principals, Vice Principals; heads of departments / unit which comprises Teaching Practice Coordinators, Assessment Officers, Accountants, Domestic Bursars, Senior Housemasters, Senior Housemistresses, and Housemasters/ Mistresses; community leaders composed of Chiefs and Elders; and Students Representative Council which had SRC Presidents, Secretaries, Financial Secretaries and Treasurers of four colleges used.

Sample

One hundred and thirty-two (132) was the sample size consisting of twenty-eight (28) people of heads of institution group, sixty-eight (68) from heads of departments / unit group, twenty (20) from community leaders group, and sixteen (16) Students Representative Council group members.

Sampling Procedure

Fish bowl method of simple random sampling was used in selecting four Teacher Training Colleges out of the seven colleges for the study. Homogenous purposive method was implored to pick principals, vice principals, teaching and non-teaching staffs in administrative positions. A similar trend was observed in selection of the Students Representative membership (SRC) as well as Chiefs and Elders from the communities of the four colleges. This sampling gave the researcher opportunity to sample people of characteristics that had primary information in the domain of the research theme. In all four Principals, eight Vice Principals, four members each from the Board of Governors group, four Teaching Practice Coordinators, three Senior Housemasters, four Senior House Mistresses, eight Housemasters, nine Housemistresses, four Guidance & Counselling Coordinators, twenty-four Heads of Department, four Assessment Officers, four Accountants, four Domestic Bursars, four College Presidents, four College Vice Presidents, four SRC Secretaries, four SRC Treasurers, and twenty community Leaders.

Instrument

Open and close ended blended questionnaire were used in gathering data from all participants in the study. It was put in three sections for each group of respondents. Section A was on biodata; B on challenges and C on recommendations. One open-ended item and one close-ended item constituted the Section A whilst Section B had five close-ended. The section C contained only open-ended question for the respondent groups. The introductory portion of the questionnaire explained the purpose of the study and assured respondents of confidentiality of their responses.

Data Collection Procedure

Data was collected within one week. The procedures involved seeking permission from the various college authorities, seeking consent of the selected population, and distribution of the questionnaire to them with needed explanations. An agreement was reached with every respondent on the date of retrieval of the questionnaire from them. The researcher therefore went back personally to collect the filled instrument and also used the opportunity to express her heartfelt appreciation to the respondents for their effective participation.

Data Analysis Procedure

Data analysis were done quantitatively and qualitatively based on respondent groups. Tables, simple bar charts, component bar charts, and multiple bar charts were adopted in presenting the results for easy understanding.

Results and discussion

Financial Administration in the Colleges

This section deals with the sources of funding for the colleges, adequacy of the funds, reasons for inadequacy of the fund and the challenges in the management of the funds. Table 1 gives the sources of funding for the colleges.

Table 1: Sources of funding for the colleges

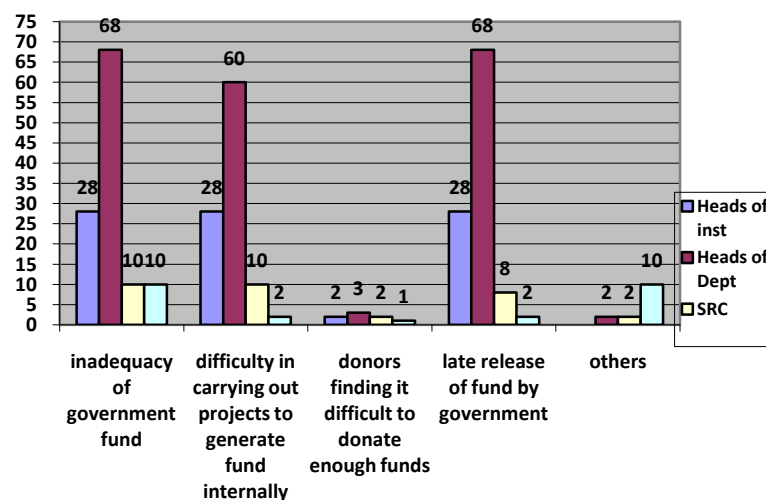
Sources of Funds	Heads of Ins.		Heads of Dept.		SRC		Com. Lead.	
	N=28	%	N=68	%	N=16	%	N=20	%
Government	28	100	68	100	16	100	20	100
Students fees	2	7	22	32	16	100	20	100
Community donations	1	1	3	4	0	0	6	30
Past students Association	2	7	12	18	1	6	4	20
Philanthropist	0	0	3	4	1	6	0	0
Development Partners	0	0	2	3	0	0	0	0
NGO's	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Staff	0	0	2	3	0	0	0	0
Board of Governors	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Internally generated funds	1	4	3	4	1	6	1	5
Others	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

From Table 1, government grants, students' fees and past students association were the major sources of funding for the colleges identified. Government funding was listed by 100% of all respondents groups whilst students' fees was identified by 7% of heads of institution, 32% of heads of department, 100% of students, and 100% of community members, and past students association was mentioned by 7% of heads. The disparity in the responses concerning students' fees might be due to some respondents' thought that students normally expend from the allowance government pays them. Hence, only a peanut of their expenditure in college is likely to come from their family coffers and that is why they might not consider it as a separate source of funding for the college. On the other hand, other respondents might be considering it that the allowance paid to students by the government is a financial resource for the students and therefore expending some on college education is a kind of contribution students are making. In the area of Past Student Association, it was realised that some colleges had vibrant alumni association whilst others did not have. Therefore, their contributions varied from college to college. Table 2 depicts the adequacy of funds in the colleges.

Table 2: Adequacy of funds for running the colleges

Response	Head of Inst.		Heads of Dept.		SRC		Comm. Lead.	
	N=28	%	N=68	%	N=16	%	N=20	%
Adequate	0	0	4	6	0	0	0	0
Not adequate	28	100	64	94	16	100	20	100

Table2 shows clearly that funds were inadequate in the colleges. Apart from 6% of teachers who stated that there was adequate fund for running the college, 100% of all the rest of the respondents reported the inadequacy of funds in the colleges. The reasons given for the inadequacy are shown in the multiple bar charts in Figure 1.



Figures 1: Reasons for inadequacy of funds for running the colleges

The multiple bar charts above indicate inadequacy of government grant, and late release of the grant from government to the colleges as the greatest challenges. These responses were given by 28 (100%) of heads of institution and 68 (100%) of heads of department. 10 (63%) of students and 10 (50%) of community leaders also pointed out the inadequacy of government grant. The next pertinent challenge identified was difficulty in carrying out projects to generate fund internally. This was stated by 28 (100%) of heads of institution, and 60 (88%) heads of department and 10 (63%) of students. This finding is in line with King and Mathers (1997) who noted that government grants are usually insufficient to cater for all needs of the school. The bar charts in Figure 2 give a clear picture on whether there are difficulties in managing the fund.

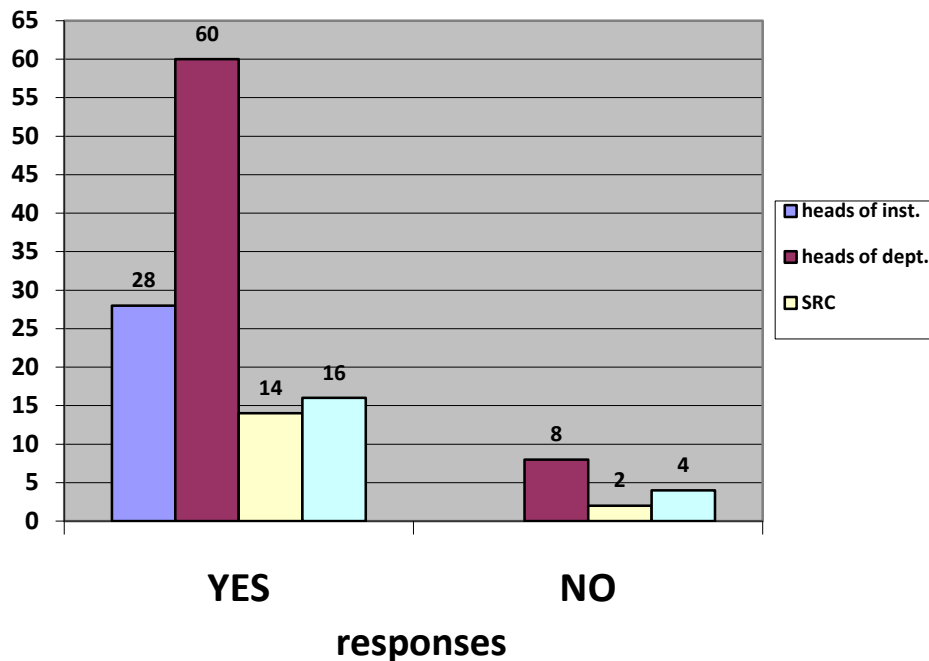


Figure 2: Responses on whether there are difficulties in the management of the school fund

From the bar charts in Figure 2, 28 (100%) of heads of institution stated that there were difficulties in managing the colleges' fund. This response was supported by 60 (88%) of heads of department, 14 (88%) of students and 16 (88%) of community leaders. Respondents who indicated that there were no difficulties include, 8 (12%) of heads of department, 2 (13%) of students and 4 (12%) of community leaders. These respondents might not have been aware of the real situations when it comes to the execution of the school budget, or could be due to lack of information from the central administration to the school public, or due to lack of commitment to duty on the part of those respondents. Shown in Figure 3 are the reasons for difficulties in managing the funds.

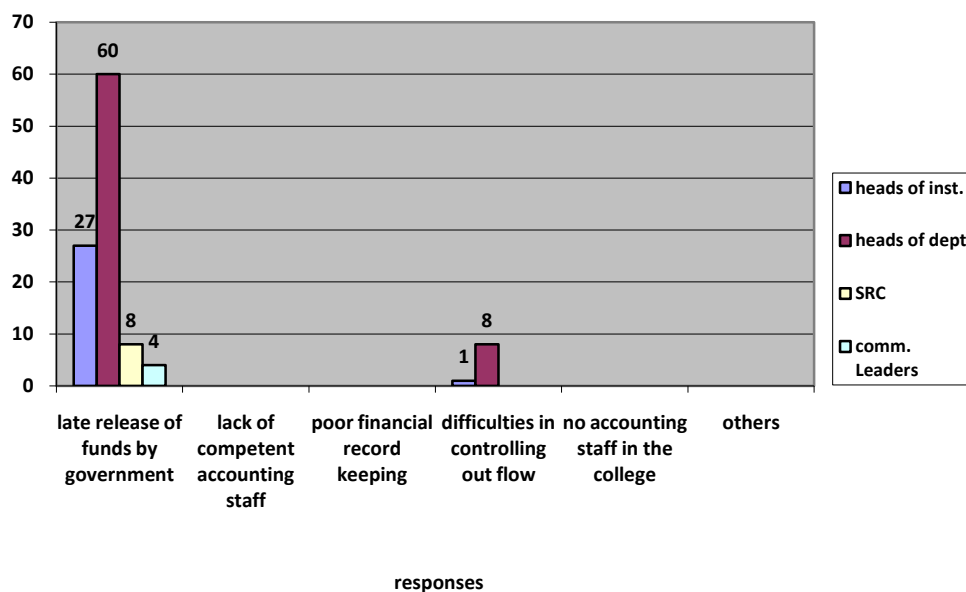


Figure 3: Causes of difficulties in managing the school fund

In the bar charts in Figure 3, 27 (96%) of heads of institutions attributed the difficulty in managing the school fund to its late release from government. This was also stated by 60 (88%) of heads of departments, 8 (50%) of students and 4 (20%) of community leaders. One head of institution indicated that he sometimes found it difficult to cut down expenditure on feeding of students because suppliers' prices kept escalating resulting in budget complexity (constraints). This head was supported by 8 accounting staff who also gave the same reason. In citing an instance, one head of institution stated that the feeding grant allocated per student in the 2008/2009 academic year was GH¢ 0.82 per day and this could not supply three meals for a student a day. Hence, the heads of institutions met students leadership and appealed to their conscience for financial support from the students' body in supplementing the government's budgetary allocation on feeding, which the students agreed to and have since been paying.

Summary of main findings

1. Government was the main financier of students' education in the teacher training colleges.
2. Government grant was not adequate to cater for all needs in colleges.
3. There was delay in release of the grant from government to the colleges.

Recommendations

1. Cost-sharing system of financing education is adopted at the teacher training colleges just as practised in the Ghanaian public universities. In this system, students could be made to pay academic facility user fees just as being practised in the Ghanaian public universities. This would supplement government grants to the colleges.
3. College administrations should aim at attracting additional support from other stakeholders of education by:
 - a. establishing strong alumni associations as being done in the universities as a way of linking past students to their alma mater. This association could be used to entice past students to the general and infrastructural development in their various colleges and
 - b. publishing their strategic development plans in the form of proposals at their websites to attract internal and external well-wishers of the colleges to donate in kind and cash to the colleges. They could also appeal to donor agencies to support in infrastructural development in the colleges.

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