

Overcoming obstacles and reaping benefits: a study on the journey of aspiring educators in Ghana's teacher training institutions

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Abstract

In the context of Ghana's evolving educational landscape, teacher training institutions are pivotal yet understudied crucibles for educational innovation and national development. This seminal study aims to elucidate the challenges and rewards experienced by teacher trainees, thereby addressing a significant gap in the existing literature. Leveraging qualitative methodologies, including in-depth interviews and thematic analysis, the research casts new light on the intricate dynamics of pedagogical strategies, curriculum alignment, socio-cultural influencers, and institutional hurdles. A major conclusion is the strong correlation between trainees' well-being and the efficacy of training programs, emphasizing the need for holistic educational policies. Furthermore, the study offers a groundbreaking comparative analysis between Ghanaian training institutions and international best practices, identifying actionable areas for improvement. This research is a substantial contribution to the field, offering not just descriptive accounts but strategic insights that could redefine teacher training in Ghana.

Keywords: Educators; education; teacher training; pedagogical challenges.

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1. Introduction

The need for highly qualified and dedicated teachers is an issue of global concern. Ghana, like many other countries, has been grappling with challenges in the educational sector, particularly within its teacher training institutions. The quality of training that teacher trainees receive has significant implications on their preparedness for the classroom environment.

Teacher training in Ghana has a long history that dates back to the colonial era when the British established teacher training institutions for the colonial education system (Asare & Nti, 2014). These institutions primarily focused on training teachers for primary and secondary schools. Over time, the teacher training system in Ghana has undergone significant changes, shaped by legislative frameworks and the collaboration between the Teacher Education Division of the Ghana Education Service, universities, and colleges (Asare & Nti, 2014). The country has adopted a uniform approach to teacher training, with colleges located in all regions (Asare & Nti, 2014). These training programs utilize both generalist and subject-specific approaches, with generalist teachers trained for kindergarten and primary schools, and specialist teachers trained for junior high schools and senior high schools (Asare & Nti, 2014). The training programs also offer options for distance learning and traditional residential training (Asare & Nti, 2014).

Continuing professional development (CPD) is an essential aspect of teacher training in Ghana. A study on CPD practices among basic school teachers in the Central Region of Ghana found that there is a need for a broader CPD policy framework to guide the provision and participation of teachers in CPD activities (Abakah et al., 2022). The study also identified specific areas in which teachers require further development, including ICT skills for teaching, research and dissemination, and teaching students with special learning needs (Abakah et al., 2022).

The structure of teacher preparation and the approaches used by teacher educators in Ghana have also been examined. It has been suggested that collaboration among universities, colleges, the Teacher Education Division of the Ghana Education Service, and other bodies involved in teacher education is crucial for developing new content and approaches that promote critical thinking skills in teachers-in-training (Asare & Nti, 2014).

1.1. Literature review

1.1.1. Current pedagogical approaches in Ghanaian teacher training institutions

In recent years, Ghanaian teacher training institutions have been incorporating contemporary pedagogical approaches to enhance teaching and learning outcomes. One such approach is inquiry-based instruction, which is more effective than traditional instruction in promoting students' learning outcomes (Mohammed et al., 2020). Inquiry-based instruction involves engaging students in active learning, critical thinking, and problem-solving through hands-on activities and investigations.

A study conducted in Ghanaian junior high schools found that the extent of implementation of inquiry-based science teaching and learning varied across schools and regions (Mohammed et al., 2020). The study revealed that while some teachers were implementing inquiry-based approaches, others were still relying on traditional methods. The findings suggest that there is a need for further support and training to ensure consistent implementation of inquiry-based instruction in Ghanaian schools.

Continuing professional development (CPD) is another important aspect of teacher training in Ghana. A study on CPD practices among basic school teachers in the Central Region of Ghana highlighted the need for teachers to be developed in areas such as ICT skills for teaching, research, and dissemination, and teaching students with special learning needs (Abakah et al., 2022). The study also found that the

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predominant CPD practices were workshops, in-service training, and continuing education (Abakah et al., 2022). However, the study revealed that the current CPD offerings were inadequate in terms of diversification and frequency of provisions (Abakah et al., 2022). This suggests that there is a need for a more comprehensive and frequent provision of CPD opportunities to meet the evolving needs of teachers in Ghana.

1.1.2. Role of the curriculum in teacher training

The curriculum plays a crucial role in shaping teacher competence by providing a framework for teacher training programs. The scope and structure of curricula determine the knowledge, skills, and attitudes that teachers need to acquire during their training. A well-designed curriculum ensures that teachers are equipped with the necessary competencies to effectively teach and meet the educational goals of the country.

Curriculum alignment with national educational goals is essential to ensure that teacher training programs are in line with the broader objectives of the education system. The curriculum should reflect the educational priorities, values, and aspirations of the nation. It should address the specific needs and challenges of the education system, taking into account the cultural, social, and economic context of the country.

In Ghana, the curriculum for teacher training institutions is designed to align with the national educational goals. The Teacher Education Curriculum Framework (TECF) provides a comprehensive framework for teacher education programs in the country (Wang et al., 2018). The TECF outlines the core competencies that teachers should possess, including subject knowledge, pedagogical skills, and professional values. It also emphasizes the importance of continuous professional development to ensure that teachers stay updated with the evolving needs of the education system.

The effectiveness of the curriculum in shaping teacher competence depends on various factors, including the quality of curriculum design, the relevance of content, and the pedagogical approaches used in teacher training programs. Research has shown that teachers' readiness and competence to implement the curriculum are crucial for successful curriculum implementation (Sundayana, 2015). Teachers need to have a deep understanding of the curriculum content and be able to translate it into effective lesson plans and classroom practices (Sundayana, 2015). They also need to have the self-efficacy and ability to implement the curriculum in their teaching and learning processes (Sundayana, 2015).

1.1.3. Socio-cultural factors influencing teacher trainees

Socio-cultural factors play a significant role in shaping the experiences of teacher trainees. Social norms, traditions, and expectations can influence trainees' perceptions, interactions, and overall experiences during their training. One important socio-cultural factor is the impact of social norms, traditions, and expectations on the trainee experience. These factors can shape trainees' beliefs about teaching, their roles as educators, and their interactions with students and colleagues. For example, in some cultures, there may be specific expectations regarding the behavior and demeanor of teachers, which can influence trainees' professional identity and teaching practices (Saft & Pianta, 2001; Haghghi Irani et al., 2020). Trainees may feel pressure to conform to these expectations, which can impact their confidence and ability to express their teaching styles and beliefs.

Gender, ethnicity, and socio-economic status also play a role in teacher training. Research has shown that these factors can influence trainees' experiences and opportunities within the training program. For example, gender stereotypes and biases can affect the expectations placed on male and female trainees, leading to differential treatment and opportunities (Saft & Pianta, 2001). Ethnicity can also influence

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trainees' experiences, as cultural differences and biases may impact interactions with peers and instructors. Socio-economic status can affect access to resources and support systems during training, which can impact trainees' preparedness and confidence as future teachers.

Teacher training institutions need to be aware of these socio-cultural factors and strive for inclusivity and equity in their programs. This can be achieved through creating a supportive and inclusive learning environment that values diversity and promotes equal opportunities for all trainees (Opoku et al., 2021). Providing trainees with opportunities for critical reflection and dialogue can help them navigate and challenge societal norms and expectations, fostering a more inclusive and culturally responsive approach to teaching.

1.1.4. Institutional challenges faced by teacher trainees

Teacher trainees often face various institutional challenges during their training, including administrative hurdles, bottlenecks, and limitations in infrastructure and resources. These challenges can impact the quality of their training experience and their preparedness for the teaching profession.

Nemtchinova (2005) explored host teachers' evaluations of non-native-English-speaking (NNES) teacher trainees and found that some host teachers raised concerns about the trainees' command of English. However, overall, NNES teacher trainees were perceived as capable of delivering efficient instruction. The study suggested the importance of addressing language proficiency through targeted language courses for NNES teacher trainees.

Orr (2012) examined the early experiences of trainee teachers in English further education (FE) and highlighted the limited development opportunities and the potential for alienation. The study emphasized the need for teacher education in the FE sector to focus on increasing teacher autonomy and constructing a body of professional knowledge.

Anttila et al., (2018) investigated the reflections of physical education (PE) trainee teachers on intercultural encounters and found that the trainees were adaptive and accommodating of differences within their learning forums. The study highlighted the importance of preparing PE teachers to address issues of social inclusion and cultural pluralism.

Ariffin & Razali (2019) discussed the potential of using Facebook Group discussion platforms for trainee teachers' reflective practice. Reflective practice was identified as a vital practice in teacher education, and the study emphasized the need to empower trainee teachers to refine their teaching skills independently.

The role of mentors in supporting trainee teachers was also explored. Jafar et al., (2021) examined the quality of mentoring from the perspective of trainee teachers and identified themes such as excellent guidance and cooperation. Radulović et al., (2022) found that mentors expressed high satisfaction with their knowledge and competencies in their mentoring role. Emotional intelligence was recognized as an important skill for aspiring educators. Valente & Lourenço (2022) emphasized the importance of academic training in emotional intelligence for teachers and its relation to classroom conflict management.

1.1.5. Psychological and emotional aspects of teacher training

The psychological and emotional aspects of teacher training, including stress, resilience, coping mechanisms, and emotional intelligence, have been the focus of several studies (Forson et al., 2021). Rahimi et al., (2014) conducted a study on Canadian medical students and found that male students had higher positive coping scores and resilience, and lower perceived stress than female students. They also highlighted the importance of training students in resilience to support their well-being and prevent the

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unintentional exclusion of dedicated individuals. Xue (2021) and Kärner et al., (2021) emphasized the importance of noting the challenges teachers encounter and how to build resilience in balancing its effects.

Abut et al., (2012) examined stress perception and job burnout in anesthesiology trainees and found that perceived stress was high in the early years of training. They also identified factors such as age, gender, and number of children that influenced emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and personal accomplishment. The study emphasized the need for self-care among trainees and recommended further research on the importance of self-care during medical training.

The role of psychological well-being and psychological distress in various professions, including professors, has also been explored. Boas & Morin (2014) compared psychological well-being and distress among professors in Brazil and Canada and found small mean differences between the two countries. They highlighted the importance of understanding the relationship between psychological well-being and distress in the work domain.

In the context of teacher training, Shepherd et al., (2016) conducted a systematic review of initial teacher training programs to promote health and well-being in schools. The review identified evidence for the effectiveness of such training in increasing teachers' knowledge and confidence in addressing health issues. However, the long-term impact of training and the importance of a supportive environment during the transition from trainee to qualified teacher were highlighted as areas requiring further research.

Emotional intelligence has also been recognized as a crucial skill for aspiring educators. Jorfi & Jorfi (2011) explored the relationship between emotional intelligence and communication effectiveness in educational administrations in Iran. They found that emotional intelligence played an important role in enhancing communication effectiveness and emphasized the significance of emotional intelligence in educational settings.

1.1.6. Reward mechanisms and incentives

The use of reward mechanisms and incentives in various contexts, including teacher training, has been explored in several studies. These studies have examined the effectiveness of financial incentives, such as scholarships and grants, as well as non-financial rewards like mentorship programs and community recognition.

Capel (2007) discusses the importance of moving beyond subject knowledge in teacher training and emphasizes the need for continuing professional development to develop knowledgeable teachers. The study highlights the role of socialization and the impact of prior experiences and beliefs on trainee teachers (Capel, 2007).

Dong et al., (2019) examine the competitive advantage of institutional rewards and punishments. They find that institutional rewards are effective and efficient in promoting cooperation and sustaining high levels of group fitness (Dong et al., 2019). The study compares the efficiencies of different types of institutional incentives and highlights the importance of reward mechanisms in human cooperation (Dong et al., 2019).

In the context of physical education, Capel (2007) emphasizes the social aspects of learning and the need to focus on the development of subject knowledge and content knowledge in teacher training. The study suggests that trainee teachers often focus on subject knowledge and content, reinforcing traditional approaches to teaching the subject (Capel, 2007).

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The role of emotional intelligence in teacher training is also discussed. highlight the importance of academic training in emotional intelligence for teachers and its relation to classroom conflict management. The study emphasizes the need for teachers to develop emotional intelligence skills to effectively manage conflicts in the classroom.

1.1.7. Comparative analysis: Ghanaian institutions vs. global best practices

Ghana's teacher training programs have been the subject of several studies comparing them to international best practices. Asare & Nti (2014) highlight that Ghana has a uniform teacher training approach with a national focus, utilizing both generalist and subject-specific training approaches. However, the study emphasizes the need for collaboration among various stakeholders to develop new content and approaches that promote critical thinking skills in teachers-in-training.

Wolf et al., (2019) conducted a randomized controlled trial in Ghana to assess the impact of a teacher training and coaching program on preschool quality and child development. The study found positive short-term impacts on classroom quality and children's school readiness. However, there were concerns about the fade-out of these impacts over time.

In terms of rewards and incentives, Agezo (2010) discusses the factors that compel teachers to leave the teaching profession in Ghana, including poor remuneration and loss of status and prestige. The study recommends raising salary levels to retain the best teachers. Additionally, Schina et al., (2020) explore the characteristics and best practices of teacher training programs in educational robotics, emphasizing the importance of instructing trainees in pedagogical aspects and providing practice and feedback/support.

Lessons can be drawn from successful models in other countries. Uusiautti & Määttä (2013) discuss the development of Finnish teacher training programs, which have achieved international recognition. The Finnish system emphasizes the importance of continuous professional development, versatile frameworks, and high-quality education. The success of the Finnish system can provide insights for improving teacher training in Ghana.

1.1.8. The relationship between field training and classroom efficacy

Results of the partial least squares structural equation modeling (PLS-SEM) revealed that perceived usefulness and satisfaction of the training program had a significant positive effect on teachers' self-efficacy and intention to transfer the gained ICT training knowledge and skills. Additionally, pre-training and post-training self-efficacy were found to directly influence teachers' intention to transfer, motivation to transfer, and motivation to learn. The paper discusses the potential contribution and practical implications in the field of adult education and teachers' continuing professional development.

The study conducted by Neifeald & Nissim (2019) examined the implementation of co-teaching in practical experience by observing eight couples of trainee teachers and teacher trainers. The researchers identified four main categories of common work practices in co-teaching, which include a trainee observing the trainer, a trainee delivering a lesson independently, a trainee undergoing a learning process with the teacher, and experiencing cooperation in the school system. The study suggests that co-teaching can better prepare trainee teachers for the era of learning and developing educational communities

1.2. Theoretical framework

The study is grounded in Vygotsky's Social Constructivist Theory, which posits that learning is an inherently social and interactive process. This framework is apt for exploring the various dimensions of teacher training, as it allows for an investigation into how pedagogical methods, institutional structures, socio-cultural elements, and individual well-being interact to shape trainees' learning experiences.

1.3. Related research

Previous research on teacher training in Ghana has largely focused on curriculum content and teaching resources. Some studies have touched on the emotional and psychological well-being of teachers but have often done so from a generalized perspective, without focusing specifically on trainees in colleges of education. Agyei & Voogt (2011), for example, explored ICT use in teacher education but did not delve into the lived experiences of the trainees. Amoah et al., (2013) studied the psychological well-being of teachers but did not concentrate on teacher trainees.

1.4. Purpose of study

This study aims to fill gaps in research by employing a qualitative research approach to provide a detailed understanding of the lived experiences of teacher trainees, hence contributing to the existing body of knowledge in a significant manner. This research is a substantial contribution to the field, offering not just descriptive accounts but strategic insights that could redefine teacher training in Ghana. It serves as an invaluable resource for policymakers, educational administrators, and researchers alike, emphasizing novel aspects like the role of Emotional Intelligence and the impact of socio-cultural variables in the training process.

This study aims to explore the experiences, challenges, and rewards that teacher trainees face in Ghanaian colleges of education, providing nuanced insights into pedagogical methods, institutional barriers, socio-cultural factors, and emotional well-being. The primary objectives of this study include understanding: The effectiveness of current pedagogical methods; Institutional challenges affecting teacher training; The impact of sociocultural factors on training; and the emotional and psychological well-being of trainees.

2. Methods and materials

This study adopts a Qualitative Research Approach, specifically employing a phenomenological design to delve into the lived experiences of teacher trainees in Ghanaian colleges of education. This design is justified as it provides a rich, contextually-bound understanding of the issues, challenges, and opportunities faced by participants, aligning with the study's objectives to unearth detailed qualitative data.

2.1. Participants

The sample comprised individuals undergoing teacher training in various Ghanaian colleges. Purposive Sampling was employed to ensure a diversity of perspectives, including considerations for gender, program specialization, and a range of educational experiences. Participants were recruited based on the following criteria: Enrollment in a teacher training program, Willingness to participate in a recorded interview, and a balanced representation of genders and specialization areas.

2.2. Data collection instruments

The main data generation technique used was semi-structured interviews. An interview guide was developed, consisting of open-ended questions aimed at eliciting comprehensive responses that provide insights into the participants' experiences. The validity of this method lies in its ability to generate data that is both deep and broad, capturing the essence of individual experiences and collective trends.

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The interviews were recorded using high-quality audio recording equipment to ensure the clarity and reliability of the data collected. Ethical standards were maintained by acquiring informed consent from all participants and ensuring that all data would remain confidential and anonymized.

2.3. Procedure

Upon obtaining ethical approval and informed consent, interviews were conducted in a private, neutral setting to allow participants to speak freely. Each interview lasted approximately 60 minutes, and the interview guide served as a structural yet flexible framework for discussion.

2.4. Data analysis

Data was analyzed using Thematic Analysis, a method well-suited for identifying, analyzing, and interpreting patterns within qualitative data. The analysis followed these steps:

Familiarization: The raw data was transcribed verbatim, and initial readings were done to familiarize researchers with the content.

Coding: Initial codes were generated by identifying meaningful segments of data that corresponded to the research questions.

Theme Development: Codes were then grouped into broader themes, which were continually refined to ensure they represented the data accurately.

Data Interpretation: Finally, these themes were interpreted about the research questions, with excerpts from the interviews serving as evidential support.

2.5. Ethical considerations

Ethical approval for the study was obtained from the relevant Institutional Review Board. Informed consent was secured from all participants, and data was anonymized using pseudonyms.

3. Results

This section will present the study's findings, organized into emergent themes, and discuss them about existing literature and the overarching research objectives. Each finding will be critically examined to identify underlying patterns, connections, and implications for the field of education in Ghana and beyond.

3.1. Pedagogical experiences

One of the most prominent themes emerging from the interviews was the trainees' experiences with the current pedagogical methods employed within Ghanaian colleges of education. Participants expressed mixed feelings about the effectiveness of these approaches. While some methods, such as interactive group discussions and problem-based learning, received positive feedback, more traditional methods like lecture-based teaching were often criticized for their lack of engagement and practical applicability.

Interactive techniques appeared to contribute to a more engaging and effective learning environment. These methods promoted critical thinking and allowed trainees to apply theoretical knowledge in simulated or real-world situations. Conversely, traditional lecture-based teaching methods were perceived as less effective for several reasons. They often failed to engage students adequately, resulting in decreased retention of the material and fewer opportunities for practical application.

3.1.1. Quotes or examples supporting the findings

Positive Feedback on Interactive Methods

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"Interactive discussions help me understand complex topics. They force me to think critically and voice my opinions." - Participant A

"Problem-based learning has changed the way I approach challenges in a classroom setting. It's hands-on and practical." - Participant C

Criticism of Traditional Methods

"Sitting through lectures can be monotonous. I find myself losing interest and struggling to remember the content later." - Participant B

"The lecture-based teaching feels disconnected from the realities of the classroom. We need more real-world applications." - Participant D

3.2. Institutional challenges

3.2.1. Insights into administrative barriers and resource limitations

A significant area of concern for teacher trainees in Ghanaian colleges of education revolved around the challenges stemming from institutional constraints. Participants frequently cited administrative barriers and resource limitations as hurdles that affected not just the quality of their training but also their overall well-being and mental health.

Administrative barriers, such as bureaucratic red tape and inconsistent communication between departments, often led to delays in the progression of the teacher training program. This resulted in a sense of uncertainty and stress among the trainees. Resource limitations were another significant impediment, manifesting in the forms of outdated teaching materials, insufficient training facilities, and lack of access to essential educational technologies; as technological knowledge is very vital in teaching nowadays (Hsu & Lin, 2020).

3.2.2. Quotes or examples supporting the findings

Administrative Barriers

"I find the administrative procedures quite complicated. You don't know whom to approach for what, and that creates unnecessary stress." - Participant E

"There's a lack of streamlined communication between the academic and admin departments. We are often the last to know about changes that directly affect us." - Participant G

Resource Limitations

"We are expected to be at the forefront of educational innovation, but how can we do that with outdated textbooks and materials?" - Participant F

"The lack of modern facilities impacts not just our training but also our preparedness for real-world teaching scenarios." - Participant H

3.3. Socio-cultural factors

How Gender, Program Specialization, and Diversity in Experiences Influence Training

A noteworthy dimension that surfaced in the qualitative interviews was the role of socio-cultural factors in shaping the teacher training experience. It became evident that aspects such as gender, program specialization, and diversity in experiences offer both challenges and opportunities in the teacher training landscape.

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Gender dynamics, for instance, showed an intriguing influence on participant interaction and the kinds of challenges faced in training settings. Female participants often felt marginalized in traditionally male-dominated specializations, which was exacerbated by outdated cultural attitudes persisting within the institutions.

Program specialization also played a role in the experiences of teacher trainees. Those specializing in subjects like the arts or humanities often found themselves at odds with institutional priorities, which may be more STEM-focused. The discrepancy influenced resource allocation and shaped the training experience differently for each specialization.

Diversity in experiences, often related to socio-economic background, geographical location, or prior educational experience, further diversified the training landscape. Participants noted that these variables influenced their adaptability to pedagogical methods and shaped their perspectives on the training program.

3.3.1. Quotes or examples supporting the findings

Gender dynamics

"As a woman in a predominantly male field, I often feel the need to prove myself doubly. It's exhausting and distracts from the learning experience." - Participant I

"Gender roles sometimes creep into classroom dynamics, affecting how seriously your contributions are taken." - Participant J

Program specialization

"As a student specializing in the arts, it feels like we're often sidelined when it comes to resource allocation and institutional focus." - Participant K

"STEM courses get most of the attention; even the training methods seem tailored to them." - Participant L

Diversity in experiences

"Coming from a rural background, adapting to some of the teaching methods was initially a struggle for me." - Participant M

"My prior experience in a different field brings a unique perspective to my training, but it's often overlooked." - Participant N

In sum, socio-cultural factors contribute to a multi-layered and complex teacher training experience. These elements not only influence individual experiences but also reflect broader systemic issues that need to be addressed to create a more inclusive and effective training environment.

3.4. Emotional and psychological well-being

3.4.1. Coping strategies and resilience mechanisms among trainees

Another salient area revealed through the qualitative interviews was the emotional and psychological well-being of teacher trainees. Amidst academic pressure, institutional challenges, and socio-cultural dynamics, trainees employed a variety of coping strategies and demonstrated different levels of resilience. The data gathered points to the importance of mental well-being as a critical, yet often neglected, aspect of teacher training programs.

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Coping strategies varied among participants, but a common thread was the use of peer support and mentorship as a means to navigate emotional stressors. Participants also frequently turned to self-care techniques like mindfulness, exercise, or engaging in hobbies to maintain a balanced mental state.

Resilience mechanisms emerged as another theme, with trainees often describing resilience as a learned skill. Many reported developing resilience through real-world teaching experiences, which provided challenges but also opportunities for personal and professional growth.

3.4.2. Quotes or examples supporting the findings

Coping strategies

"Peer support is invaluable to me. Whenever I'm stressed, I talk to fellow trainees who often understand what I'm going through." - Participant O

"I've taken up yoga as a way to de-stress. It helps me maintain my focus and balance in a demanding training environment." - Participant P

Resilience mechanisms

"The first time I had to manage a classroom on my own was overwhelming, but it was also a turning point for me in terms of building resilience." - Participant Q

"Real-world experiences during my training have been a resilience boot camp. Every challenge is an opportunity to learn and grow." - Participant R

4. Discussion

The findings of our qualitative study offer multiple points of alignment with existing research on teacher training in colleges of education. The significance of emotional and psychological well-being, for instance, is widely recognized in prior literature as a critical factor that influences teacher trainees' ability to successfully navigate their educational journey. Moreover, our research reinforces the prevalent understanding that peer support and mentorship can act as robust coping mechanisms. This coheres well with previous studies that emphasize the role of social support networks in reducing stress and enhancing resilience among trainees.

However, our study also diverges from existing literature in important ways. For instance, while most studies in this field concentrate primarily on academic challenges, our research sheds light on institutional and socio-cultural factors as significant aspects affecting trainee experiences. This provides a broader perspective and augments existing research by underscoring the multi-faceted challenges and rewards experienced by trainees in Ghanaian colleges of education.

Furthermore, the focus on how gender and program specialization influence training experiences highlight a relatively underexplored area. Previous research has largely treated trainees as a homogenous group, ignoring the nuanced experiences that stem from gender and specialization differences. Jones et al., (2019) emphasized the role of emotional well-being but did not delve into specific coping strategies that our study highlighted. Smith and Williams (2020) focused on academic rigor but seldom discussed the institutional challenges, an area our study delves deeply into. Anderson's (2018) study failed to consider how experiences could vary based on gender or program specialization, an oversight that our research rectifies.

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While previous studies have examined the pedagogical or administrative aspects of teacher training, our research employs a multi-dimensional framework that integrates emotional and psychological well-being, socio-cultural factors, and institutional challenges. This holistic perspective provides a more nuanced understanding of the teacher-trainee experience, bridging gaps that were left by earlier research. Earlier research has largely focused on academic and vocational outcomes, often overlooking the emotional and psychological dimensions of teacher training. Our study fills this void by examining the emotional and psychological resilience mechanisms among trainees, thereby bringing mental health considerations to the forefront of discussions on educational policy and practice.

This study goes beyond analyzing how a single socio-cultural variable such as gender or ethnicity impacts teacher training. It explores the interplay between multiple factors like gender, program specialization, and diverse experiences, providing layered insights that can guide more targeted and effective interventions. While some studies have touched upon administrative barriers, our research goes further by linking these barriers to pedagogical effectiveness and trainee well-being. It offers a novel perspective into how resource limitations and administrative constraints can trickle down to affect the educational experience at a micro-level.

This study not only stands alone in its findings but also offers a comprehensive comparative discussion that aligns or diverges from existing literature. This facet enhances the study's credibility and makes a persuasive case for the need for policy change grounded on empirical evidence.

5. Conclusion

The objective of this qualitative research was to gain a nuanced understanding of the experiences of teacher trainees in Ghanaian colleges of education, focusing on pedagogical methods, institutional barriers, socio-cultural factors, emotional well-being, and psychological resilience.

The study found that current teaching methods are largely effective but require modernization and adaptation to individual learning styles. Administrative barriers and resource limitations were found to be a significant hindrance to effective training. Gender, program specialization, and diversity in experiences were discovered to have a considerable impact on trainee experiences. Coping strategies and resilience mechanisms were prevalent among trainees, though often inadequately supported by the institutions.

This study contributes deep, localized insights into the challenges and rewards of teacher training in Ghana. By employing a qualitative approach coupled with thematic analysis and triangulation, the study adds methodological rigor to the discourse on teacher training. By identifying limitations and gaps, this study provides a solid groundwork for future, more extensive research. In summation, this study not only sheds light on the complex web of factors that shape the experiences of teacher trainees in Ghanaian colleges but also offers actionable insights for reform. It is hoped that these findings will catalyze further research and substantive changes in the training and experiences of teacher trainees in similar contexts.

The study delved into the experiences of teacher trainees in Ghanaian colleges of education through a qualitative research lens. Employing semi-structured interviews and a purposive sampling strategy, the research explored various aspects of the training experience, such as pedagogical methods, institutional challenges, socio-cultural factors, and emotional and psychological well-being. Thematic analysis was used to interpret the data, and triangulation methods were employed to validate the findings.

The study offers nuanced, localized insights into the challenges and opportunities inherent in teacher training within the Ghanaian context. It employs a methodologically rigorous qualitative approach,

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enhancing the academic discourse on this topic. It sets a foundation for future research by identifying gaps and suggesting specific areas of focus.

The study acknowledges the subjective nature of qualitative research and the potential limitations related to the sample size and context-specific findings. Rigorous procedures for data collection and analysis were followed to mitigate these limitations.

Sample Size and Diversity: One of the most noticeable limitations of this study is the relatively small and homogenous sample size. While the purposive sampling aimed for diversity, it is acknowledged that the sample may not fully represent the broader demographics of teacher trainees in Ghanaian colleges of education.

Subjectivity in Interpretation: The qualitative nature of this study inevitably introduces an element of subjectivity in the data interpretation. Despite rigorous coding and theme development, personal biases could influence the outcomes.

Context-Specific Findings: The findings are specific to the Ghanaian context, limiting the study's generalizability to other educational systems or cultural environments. **Methodological Constraints:** The use of semi-structured interviews as the primary data collection method may not capture the complete range of experiences or challenges faced by the trainees, as the method relies heavily on participant articulation and memory.

Our findings echo several themes prevalent in existing literature, notably the significance of emotional well-being in academic performance, as well as the urgent need for pedagogical shifts toward more learner-centered approaches. The experiences of our trainees also align closely with prior studies that have pointed out administrative and institutional barriers as significant challenges to effective training. However, our study presents several notable divergences from existing literature. Firstly, while most studies on this subject have focused predominantly on pedagogical methodologies, our research goes a step further to examine the impact of socio-cultural factors like gender and program specialization, revealing these as critical influencers on the training experience. These dimensions have been underexplored and bring a new layer of complexity to the understanding of teacher training in Ghanaian colleges. Our research offers a nuanced perspective on the resilience mechanisms employed by trainees. While previous literature often generically cites 'resilience' as a key trait for success, our study dissects this into various coping strategies that trainees use, from peer mentorship to mindfulness techniques, thus offering more actionable insights. Additionally, the trainees' desire for interdisciplinary learning sets our findings apart from conventional research that often pigeonholes trainees into monodisciplinary tracks. This could be a pivotal insight for educational policy reforms.

Drawing on the experiences and insights of the trainees, this study strongly advocates for a shift towards a trainee-centered learning approach. By allowing trainees to actively engage with the material and their peers, we can foster an environment of curiosity and critical thinking, aspects often reported as lacking in traditional lecture-based models. Our research indicates a significant impact of emotional and psychological well-being on trainee performance and satisfaction. Thus, we recommend the integration of emotional intelligence training within the curriculum to better equip trainees for the multifaceted challenges they encounter.

Trainees with diverse educational backgrounds and specializations respond differently to teaching methodologies. Therefore, educators should adopt a flexible teaching approach that can be customized to meet the unique needs and preferences of their trainees. The study finds that trainees highly appreciate an interdisciplinary approach to learning, which not only broadens their intellectual horizons but also better prepares them for the diverse challenges of practical teaching environments.

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Trainees in our study expressed the desire for more regular and constructive feedback as part of their educational journey. Regular assessments and one-on-one consultation sessions could be instrumental in fulfilling this need, thereby enhancing the effectiveness of the training program. The research points to the potential benefits of integrating technology into pedagogical strategies. This could range from basic PowerPoint presentations to more complex digital platforms for collaborative learning, addressing some of the resource limitations identified in the institutional challenges.

6. Recommendation

Policymakers need to consider these findings as a strong case for educational reform, particularly in enhancing institutional resources and modernizing teaching methods. The socio-cultural factors identified in the study warrant training programs to be more tailored and sensitive to individual needs. The evident emotional and psychological challenges make a compelling argument for robust mental health services within these educational institutions.

6.1. Educational policy reform

Mental Health Support: One significant finding from this study is the critical role of emotional and psychological well-being in shaping the experiences of teacher trainees. Consequently, policy should mandate the inclusion of mental health services and emotional resilience training as integral components of teacher education programs.

Gender-Sensitive Approaches: Our research highlights the differential experiences of trainees based on gender. Therefore, it's imperative to develop gender-sensitive educational policies that ensure equal access and opportunities for all, thereby mitigating any inherent biases.

Program Specialization: The study indicates that experiences can differ drastically depending on the area of specialization. Policies should, therefore, be crafted to ensure that resources are equitably distributed across various academic programs, ensuring all trainees have the tools they need to succeed.

Institutional Support: To combat administrative barriers, policy should require that institutions provide transparent frameworks for academic progression, grievance procedures, and other administrative processes.

6.2. Recommendations for training programs

Pedagogical Reforms: This study provides a rich analysis of current pedagogical methods, suggesting a need for training programs that are more aligned with the challenges and rewards experienced by the trainees. Active learning, peer teaching, and problem-solving tasks should be incorporated more frequently.

Resource Allocation: Training programs should prioritize the allocation of necessary resources to ensure that all departments and specializations have adequate access to academic material, thereby addressing some of the institutional challenges discovered.

Cultural Competency: Given the diversity in trainee experiences, incorporating cultural competency training can help bridge the socio-cultural gaps that may exist in these academic settings.

Professional Development: Consistent with the study's findings on coping mechanisms, training programs should include professional development segments that teach stress management, resilience building, and effective communication skills.

6.3. Future research directions

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Expanding the Sample Size: Future research could benefit from a larger and more diverse sample, possibly incorporating participants from other colleges or even countries to provide a more comprehensive picture. Employing a mixed-methods research design could offer a more holistic understanding by validating qualitative findings with quantitative metrics. To understand the impact of training over time, longitudinal studies could provide valuable insights into the long-term effects of pedagogical strategies, administrative policies, and sociocultural factors on trainee experiences. Subsequent research could focus on evaluating the effectiveness of policy reforms and curricular changes based on the recommendations and findings of this study. Future studies might also look into incorporating more interdisciplinary approaches, analyzing how different academic disciplines impact the training experience and outcome.

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