Influence of programme of study on the adjustment challenges faced by Colleges of Education students in Eastern Region, Ghana

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Abstract

The purpose of the study was to explore the influence of the programme of study on the adjustment challenges faced by colleges of education students in the Eastern Region of Ghana. Using the descriptive research survey design, data were collected from 320 students through an online questionnaire. The Validity of the research instrument was ascertained through a pilot study carried out at Foso College of Education. The reliability coefficient for the questionnaire, estimated through Cronbach's alpha coefficient, was 0.872. The collected data were analysed using ANOVA. The study found that the programme of study had a significant influence on the adjustment challenges faced by colleges of education students in Eastern Region of Ghana. The B.Ed. JHS programme respondents' adjustment challenges differed significantly from those of the other two programmes (B.Ed. Primary and B.Ed. Early Childhood). The researchers suggested that college counsellors/administrators assess the frequency and intensity of adjustment problems among students, JHS major students especially, so as to assist relevant bodies at colleges of education in Eastern Region in designing appropriate orientation programmes and peer mentoring programmes.

Key Words: adjustment challenges, colleges of education, programme of study, coping methods.

Introduction

Studying in higher education exposes students to a variety of new challenges including academic demands, autonomy toward their

needs and activities, and becoming more independent in their learning than the case was at the previous levels of education (Credé & Niehorster, 2012). For many students, college life can be both challenging and exciting. Students are placed into rigorous academic curriculum while at the same time trying to establish who they are socially, mentally, financially and often geographically (Lynch, Gander, Kohls, Kudielka, & Walach, 2011). "Transition from high school is a 'culture shock' involving significant social and psychological relearning in the face of encounters with new ideas, new teachers and friends with quite varied values and beliefs, new freedoms new opportunities, and new academic, personal and social demands" (Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991, pp. 58–59).

Moving from high school to college is a big event in the lives of students. School settings that make the students feel warmly welcome are able to influence students to perform better in their academic work. The adjustment required is the one characterised by psychological process of adapting to, coping with, and managing the problems, challenges, and demands of everyday life. Adjustment is not easy and it involves several dimensional processes. In addition, it demands a lot of skills and ability to help an individual to acclimatise with his or her environment.

Furthermore, because adjustment also involves (a) the quality and quantity of studies, and (b) the accommodation with new teachers and classmates, it may lead to psychological, social and academic problems. However, if students get adjusted properly, it will improve their quality of living. Hence, adjusting to college life is one of the main indicators of success in tertiary institutions of learning. Through achieving adjustment with college life, students are able to form good relationship with others in the college leading them to enhance their academic achievement.

The stage of tertiary education is an important part of the students' life as they move from total dependence on the teacher, family and curriculum into complete independence. Moreover, many students move away from their cities into new places causing a change in their cultural, social and psychological environments. This may affect their adjustment with the tertiary life (Al-shinawi & Abdurrahman, 1994). Essentially, students' ability to set goals and achieve a balance between academic and social activities plays a critical role in their success during the first year, and eventually towards their chances of graduating

successfully from the college (Secuban, 2012). It is known that tertiary life has its own demands and challenges, and failure in meeting those demands and challenges causes academic, psychological and social problems for the student who is affected by those problems (Baker, & Siryk, 1986). Therefore, it is important to guide students to achieve adjustment in order to avoid those problems and achieve their goals.

The domains of college adjustment challenges that usually engage the attention of researchers include, but not limited to the following: academic adjustment challenges, social adjustment challenges, personal-social adjustment challenges, and goal commitment and institutional attachment challenges (Rienties, Beausaert, Rohnert, Niemantsverdriet, & Kommers, 2012; Tinto, 2006). Programmes offered in the Colleges of Education in Ghana are; B.Ed. Early Childhood Education; B.Ed. Primary Education and B.Ed. JHS Education. Course content for each programme is different even though there are general courses, selection of programme is by choice but the fact that students do not know what it entails as they are all coming from the senior high schools may pose a challenge to the new academic environment.

Statement of the problem

Every year, hordes of colleges of education students in Ghana are withdrawn from their colleges nation-wide. This phenomenon leaves a negative mark on the colleges which results in some tutors and continuing students putting fear in fresh students' minds. This situation puts heavier task on their adjustment and coping abilities. (Ghanaweb, September, 2019). The Eastern Region of Ghana, having seven colleges of education automatically has a preponderantly high number of students being withdrawn. It has been widely acknowledged that the factors that influence student dropout are not fully understood (Coley & Coley as cited Bailey & Phillips, 2016; Tinto, 2006), and that there is rarely a case where only one issue is the reason why a student does not complete a course (Crosling, Heagney, & Thomas, 2009). Tinto (2006) has therefore, suggested that "a broad array of forces, cultural, economic, social, and institutional shape students' retention" (p. 3). According to Jones (2008), these include poor preparation for higher education, weak institutional and/or course match, unsatisfactory academic experience, lack of social integration, financial issues and personal circumstances.

Arising from the foregoing, it is apparent that various programmes of study and their influence on adjustment challenges need to be investigated with a view to addressing them. If this is done, it is hoped that it will help relevant bodies in the colleges of education in Eastern Region of Ghana to design more appropriate programmes that would be geared towards mitigating the negative impacts of adjustment challenges that colleges of education students in the region face. In Ghana, there has not been much research work on how college students adjust to their new environments after senior high schools, (Edjah, Domey & Ankomah, 2019; Esia-Donkoh, 2011; Kwaah & Essilfie, 2017). This gap, arising from a dearth of knowledge in this important area of research, is what this study sought to fill.

Research Question

The study sought to answer this research question: *"What are the adjustment challenges that students in colleges of education in Eastern Region of Ghana face?"*

Research Hypothesis

The null hypothesis formulated to guide the conduct of the study was:

There is no statistically significant difference in the adjustment challenges of students in colleges of education in Eastern Region of Ghana based on programme of study.

Research Methods
Research Design

Descriptive survey was used in soliciting for the responses from students concerning adjustment challenges. The descriptive research design was deemed best for the study because, according to Cohen, Morrison and Manion (2007), in descriptive survey design, researchers are able to gather data at a particular point in time with the intention of describing the nature of existing conditions or identifying standards against which existing conditions can be compared.

Sample and sampling procedure

The population for this study, which comprised all students in the seven colleges of education in Eastern Region of Ghana, was 8,395. The target population was 5,550 made up of all the first- and second-

year students in the seven colleges of education in Eastern Region of Ghana. The total accessible population for the study was 1,896 from the seven colleges of education sampled. According to Krejcie and Morgan (1970), accessible population of 1,896 will require a sample size of 320, which was the sample size used for this study. Multi-stage sampling technique comprising census, internet-based survey, proportionate sampling and systematic sampling were used to select the sample. The multistage sampling procedure adopted was chosen due to the fact that the students were from various colleges, studying different courses and located throughout the region (Table 1). Respondents were reached via internet survey where questionnaire were sent into their mails and WhatsApp platforms.

Table 1: *Distribution of Respondents by College*

College	Frequency	Percent
Abetifi Presby College (Kwahu East)	51	15.9
Kibi College of Education (East Akim)	38	11.9
Mount Mary's College (Yilo Krobo)	51	15.9
Oda Methodist College of Education (Birim South)	45	14.2
Presbyterian College of Education (Akuapim North)	32	10.0
Presbyterian Women's College of Education (Akuapim North)	58	18.1
Seventh Day Adventist College (New Juabeng)	45	14.0
Total	320	100.0

Instrumentation

A 32-item questionnaire was adapted from Baker and Siryk's (1999) Student Adaptation to College Questionnaire (SACQ) by the researchers for collecting the necessary data.

Psychometric properties of the instrument

Kimberlin and Winterstein (2008) reported that Cronbach's alpha, which was used in estimating the internal consistency of the instrument, is used for summated   scales or Likert-type items. The Cronbach's alpha was deemed the best method to estimate the reliability of the instrument. The Cronbach's alpha has a correlation coefficient ranging in value from 0 to 1. The closer a reliability

coefficient value is to 1, the more reliable the test, while the closer the reliability coefficient value is to 0, the less reliable the test (Gay, Mills & Airasian 2012). Face or content validity was established for the instrument. According to Amedahe (2001), it is the soundness of the interpretations given to the assessment scores that are validated, not the instrument. If the instrument measures what it intends to measure and the results are used for the intended purpose, then the instrument can be said to be valid. The overall Cronbach alpha value of the questionnaire was 0.872 which was deemed sufficiently high because, according to Nunnaly and Bernstein (1994) the minimum alpha value for a standardised questionnaire should be 0.7.

The section of the questionnaire that elicited respondents' demographic data was scored using frequency counts and percentages. However, items that sought answers on adjustment challenges of Colleges of Education students, had a cut-off point. Adjustment challenges comprised 27-items which answered the research question. The five-point, Likert-type scale format with Strongly Agree as 5, Agree as 4, Undecided as 3, Disagree as 2, and Strongly Disagree as 1 were used to measure adjustment challenges. All items on the five-point, Likert-type scale were analysed using mean and standard deviation of the individual items. Since it is a five-point, Likert-type Scale, the highest mean of an item was 5 whereas the lowest mean was 1. The midpoint of an item on five-point, Likert-type Scale was 3.00. Therefore, any item with a mean of 3.00 or above was considered as high mean, whereas items with the mean below 3.00 was considered as low mean.

Ethical Considerations

The respondents were made aware that their participation was voluntary. They were made aware that they were free to decline or accept to be part of the research. In addition, anonymity of the respondents was taken into consideration in the study. Oliver (2010) pointed out that anonymity is a vital issue in research ethics because it gives the respondents the opportunity to have their identity concealed. Neither names nor any identifiable information from respondents were taken as a way of ensuring the ethical principle of anonymity. This was to prevent possible victimization of respondents where certain responses may be viewed as unpalatable to other stakeholders.

On the issue of confidentiality, efforts were made to maintain confidentiality of the responses. Respondents were told that their responses would be kept confidential and that no one known to them would have access to the information provided and none of the respondents' names was recorded in the study. Respondents were given sufficient time to decide if they wanted to share the information with the researchers, without any much inducement.

Results

The data gathered were analysed and presented in Table 2.

Table 2 - *Adjustment Challenges of Respondents*   N= 320

Adjustment Challenges	Mean	SD	Rank
Worry about finances	3.59	1.42	1st
Intellectually demanding colleges than high school	3.47	1.33	2nd
Difficulty being responsible	3.02	1.42	3rd
Unsatisfied with academic performance	2.76	1.44	4th
Difficulty coping with the stresses	2.59	1.32	5th
Finding academic work at college difficult	2.47	1.27	6th
Self-learning is a difficult task for me in college	2.42	1.40	7th
Problem with sleep at College	2.41	1.30	8th
Insufficient motivation for studying in college.	2.37	1.33	9th
The general environment of the college does not facilitate teaching and learning	2.35	1.37	10th
Difficulty to be involved in extra-curricular activities in college	2.30	1.28	11th
More tense or nervous in college	2.27	1.25	12th
Indecision about programme of study	2.14	1.21	13th
Adaptation difficulty to new approaches to teaching and learning at college	2.06	1.10	14th
I am not confident that I will be able to deal in a satisfactory manner with future challenges here at college.	2.037	1.08	15th
I could not get adequate academic preparation before coming to this college	2.03	1.18	16th
I get angry too easily at college	2.01	1.18	17th
I haven't been able to control my emotions very well in college.	2.01	1.19	17th
Making new friends is a difficulty for me in college	2.00	1.20	19th
It was difficult for me to move away from my family to college	1.99	1.22	20th
I have difficulty mixing with other students in the college	1.93	1.10	21st
I usually feel lonely at college	1.93	1.15	21st
Separation from my families has affected my adjustment in college	1.85	1.08	23rd

I sometimes think about dropping out of this college	1.82	1.19	24th
I face discrimination in this college	1.80	1.02	25th
Our teachers seem not to be properly trained to facilitate teaching and learning	1.78	1.21	26th
I feel like deferring my programme in college for a while	1.71	1.07	27th

From Table 2, it can be seen that students do have many adjustment challenges. The three highest adjustment challenges that affected college students were "worry about finances" (M= 3.59, SD=1.42), "intellectually demanding at college than high school" (M=3.47, SD=1.33) and "difficulty being responsible at college" (M=3.02, SD=1.42).

Hypothesis: H0: There is no significant difference in the adjustment challenges of students in colleges of education in Eastern Region of Ghana based on programme of study.

The hypothesis was tested using the one-way between groups analysis of variance (ANOVA) statistical procedure. Prior to embarking on the use of ANOVA, the researchers ensured that its use was justified. For instance, the dependent variable (adjustment challenges) was determined using a continuous scale – the five-point, Likert-type scale. Also, a random sample of the population of colleges of education students in the Eastern Region of Ghana was selected for participation in the study. Furthermore, the independence of observations requirement was achieved through the use of an online questionnaire to reach participants individually, not as a group assembled in one place. The population from which the sample was selected was normally distributed, and the variability of scores for each of the groups was similar when Levene's test for equality of variances was performed. Lastly, the sample size of 320 was much larger than the 30 recommended by Pallant (2010, p. 206) as the minimum required in order not to violate the normal distribution assumption.

The Hypothesis was tested using analysis of variance ANOVA statistical method (Tables 3 & 4).

Table 3 – ANOVA

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	2340.806	2	1170.403	3.882*	.022
Within Groups	81110.661	269	301.527		
Total	83451.467	271			

*Significant, p< .05

One-way Analysis of Variance was used to determine significant difference in the adjustment challenges of students in colleges of education in Eastern Region of Ghana based on programme of study. The analysis showed significant differences among the three programmes of study [F (2, 269) =3.882, p< 0.05)]. Hence, the hypothesis that states, "there is no significant difference in the adjustment challenges of students in Colleges of Education in Eastern Region of Ghana based on programme of study" was not supported.

The significant difference in adjustment challenges found among students from the three programmes called for the use of a post-hoc test to discover which of the programmes was the source of the difference.

Table 4 - Scheffe Test

(I) Programme of study	(J) Programme of study	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.	95% Confidence Interval	
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound
B.Ed. JHS programme	B.Ed. Primary programme	1.85430	2.30939	.725	-3.8301	7.5387
	B.Ed. Early Childhood Education	9.92051*	3.56569	.022	1.1438	18.6972
B.Ed. Primary programme	B.Ed. JHS programme	-1.85430	2.30939	.725	-7.5387	3.8301
	B.Ed. Early Childhood Education	8.06621	3.76255	.102	-1.1951	17.3275
	B.Ed. JHS programme	-9.92051*	3.56569	.022	-18.6972	-1.1438

| B.Ed. Early Childhood Education | B.Ed. Primary programme | -8.06621 | 3.76255 | .102 | - 17.3275 | 1.1951 |

*. The mean difference is significant at the 0.05 level.

This was done through the use of Scheffe test which showed that B.Ed. JHS programme differed significantly from the other programmes of study, but the difference between B.Ed. Early Childhood Education and B.Ed. Primary programme was not statistically significant. The size of the effect is quite small: the programme of study predicts only 2.8% of the variability in adjustment challenges of college students. It can be concluded that, there is significant difference among the three programmes of study and it was the B.Ed JHS programme that differed from the rest because they do experience more of adjustment challenges. This affirms Lu, Lv, and Deng's (2014) study that over one-third students cannot adapt to college's teaching and learning mode, and a large portion of students are short of reading motivation the student's adaptability to teaching and learning in college, the reason of course election and the concentration in class are significant positive factors affecting student's adjustment challenges.

Again, it could be that the JHS major students face more adjustment challenges because of the uniqueness of their course content – JHS students are far above primary students as such, being prepared to teach at that level may require extra preparation. This is in line with Kokemuller's (2020) view that students face a number of academic challenges in college, including finding time to study, understanding course content and maintaining a high degree of motivation.

Conclusion and Recommendations

From the findings of the study, adjustment challenges found to be affecting students in the seven colleges of education in the Eastern Region were financial worry, high intellectual demand at college and difficulty to be responsible. The implication of this finding was that the students may need more prior knowledge about the choice of programmes. Some may not complete their education because of difficulty adjusting in the new academic environment. Thinking independently might be a new experience for some students who are

accustomed to relying on the teacher as the ultimate authority on the course subject.

It is therefore, recommended that much attention should be given to the B.Ed JHS programme by school authorities (tutors) in order to help students in this programme adjust better. This could take the form of tutors being well-prepared in their respective subject areas and orientation service incorporating programmes of study and their contents.

Family members should also support their wards financially in colleges to ameliorate the worries students go through as a result of finances.

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