

Obtaining Tertiary Education in Colleges of Education: The Issues of Choice, Prospects and Challenges

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Abstract

Introduction: Recent development in admission into tertiary institutions has revealed that more prospective candidates are opting for admission into colleges of education. **Objective:** This study explored the issues of choice, prospects and challenges of accessing tertiary education in the colleges of education. **Methodology:** The study was conducted in five randomly selected colleges of education in Ghana. The subjects were the two year cohort of preservice teachers admitted into the colleges of education between the periods 2018 and 2019. Data was collected from 420 pre-service teachers using structured questionnaires. Data gathered was analysed using descriptive statistics, Chi-square test and One-Sampled t-test. **Results:** The results of the study revealed that the major factors influencing students' choice of obtaining higher education in the colleges of education are largely related to the availability of excellent career opportunities ($t = 77.877$, $p < 0.000$); students allowances ($t = 67.328$, $p < 0.000$); good career services which are linked with employment ($t = 59.764$, $p < 0.000$); and affordable accommodation ($t = 50.771$, $p < 0.000$). The challenges students face in accessing higher education in the colleges as revealed by the study included too many programs offered in the colleges ($t = 57.770$, $p < 0.000$); poor financing of colleges of education programmes by government ($t = 54.179$, $p < 0.000$); and increasing pressure on college utilities ($t = 54.047$, $p < 0.000$). The study also revealed that the key prospects of students obtaining higher education in the colleges of education were improved academic achievements by basic school graduates ($t = 62.898$, $p < 0.000$), adequate qualified teachers for basic schools ($t = 68.271$, $p < 0.000$) and training of qualified teachers to meet the needs of governments ($t = 66.641$, $p < 0.000$). **Recommendation:** The study recommends that teaching profession must be made more attractive to prospective students and programmes run in the colleges must be reduced. Further, there is the need for more organised students' engagement in order to reduce the challenges they encounter in the course of accessing higher education in the colleges of education.

Keywords: Tertiary Education, Colleges of Education, Choice, Prospects and Challenges.

1. Introduction

Today a large proportion of the young generation continues to enroll in tertiary institutions as higher education has become relevant in modern societies and the job markets. The functions of tertiary education lies in providing education and training within a structure which combines research and teaching. They provide professional training—preparing students for professions such as medicine, teaching and law. Additionally, they also serve as research institutions, responsible for carrying out research in a broad range of disciplines, including the increasing amount of interdisciplinary work. Linked to this is training a constant supply of qualified people for all fields of employment. Furthermore, tertiary education has not only a part to play in regional development and also in developing international contacts but it also has a social function in fostering the intellectual and social development of society.

All over the world, frantic efforts have made to change the landscape of educational institutions of higher learning to avoid the tendency of spending all or part of one's working life in the tertiary institutions for study and research. The efforts have not only changed tertiary institutions into more democratic and widely accessible institutions but also brought about qualitative change. These changes have been in response to the demands of modern society.

To keep pace with the diversity of the demands of modern society the institutions of higher education have likewise been forced to diversify and new institutions have emerged. The manifestation of these diversities could be observed in our Polytechnic Universities and Colleges of Education in Ghana. All these tertiary institutions prepare individuals for employment in both private and public sectors. Many areas of these public and private sector services—health care, the education system, the law, public administration—require many, though obviously not only, academically well-qualified men and women. These manpower or human resource needs are trained by our tertiary institutions. Clearly, the courses that are ran have an important influence on these sectors.

One special area of the labour market and of employment is the academic world itself, where there is a growing need for specialists of every kind in the many and varied tertiary institutions. Teacher education focuses on the professional and personal development of teachers' abilities and communication skills. These abilities and skills make teachers capable enough to perform their duties effectively in already existing job markets.

Recent development in the quest for tertiary education has shown increasing trend in demands for tertiary education in the colleges of education compared to a decade ago. The dramatic increase in students' enrollment in the colleges of education has not been matched by public funding. Effectively, the public expenditure per student has declined considerably, and this has inevitably led to deterioration in quality. The daunting challenges facing Ghana's higher education involve the ongoing increase in student numbers, limited funding and quality assurance which is relatively new phenomenon in colleges of education in Ghana. Previous studies failed to address these emerging phenomena and their associated challenges. This study explored the issues of choice, prospects and challenges of accessing tertiary education in the colleges of education in Ghana and recommends pragmatic measures to address them succinctly.

2. Literature Review

Globally, prospective students' admission into public tertiary institutions has remained highly competitive for a growing number of qualified young adult students. This challenge has resulted from inadequate number of academic facilities and resources. It has compelled tertiary institutions to charge high tuition fees that students from middle and low-income families could hardly afford (Osei-Owusu & Awunyo-Vitor, 2012). The choices made by students, the need to meet their requirements and expectations have become one of the most important issues for the tertiary institutions (Esteban, et al. 2002; Jurkowitsch, 2006). A key function of every tertiary institutions generally are to assist in the achievement of the nation's development goals. Unfortunately tertiary institutions face a number of challenges in their attempt to perform their core mandate. Such challenges include over population, administration, problems of finance, and challenges of management of government institutions (Lassa 1996, Ogunsanmi 2014). According to Abdul Kareem (2016), the challenges of tertiary institution have increased in areas such as management and administration, quality staffing, and costs of living.

Academic overpopulated programmes have been jeopardised in that there are part-time in various degrees where the programmes and students in this tertiary institutions are not monitored and manage to produce or yield a good result. From observations, it is evident that shortage of funds both in the area of salary of staff, wellbeing and infrastructural amenities of the tertiary institutions have been inadequate (Ivowi, 2000), and these have raised concerns about the ineffectiveness of tertiary institutions. According to Ivowi (2000), tertiary education in Nigeria is more of schooling rather than education. He explained that what is happening is a system of schooling which enables only a few to control the surplus product and amass vast wealth to the detriment of those producing it. The Federal Government budget that is supposed to make education to be better is suffering from short of funds. This has a negative effect on the students and the staff. The various management strategies, policies and programmes embarked on which include students

empowerment schemes, curriculum review at all levels of the tertiary institutions are affected (Ezenyilimba 2015).

In Ghanaian context, tertiary education is greatly affected by poor funding of the various institutions of higher learning by both private owners and the government. Privatisation programme in Ghana has encouraged private individuals to invest in the running of institutions of higher learning. Most of these individuals invest in this area simply to optimise profit at the expense of quality academic programme. In the same manner, most public institutions are nothing short of glorified institutions and this has invariably affected the growth of management in the tertiary institutions including the colleges of education which are currently undergoing a period of higher educational reforms. These reforms, in most cases affect students' adjustment to college life and academic achievements. A study conducted by Tinto (Tinto, 1996) showed that 40% of all students in America who started out in a four year college failed to earn a degree; and nearly 57% of all dropouts left before the start of their second year. The study showed that this failure was caused by adjustment challenges (Tinto, 1993). According to Smith and Renk (2007), the combination of many life stressors such as planning for the future, struggling with exams and assignments, coping with demands and challenging teachers, deciding on financial and emotional independence, students encounter in higher institutions can be an overwhelming experience for many of them. Hence, almost all new students go through an adjustment phase upon entry into a higher institutions of learning and this varies according to individual own pace of development (Blimling and Miltenberger, cited in Dyson, & Renk, 2006).

Previous studies (Martin Jr. Swartz, & Madson, 1999), have also reported that adjustment challenges are found to be the most common challenges among first year students who are going through an active adjustment phase in universities. Some recent studies (Aldwin & Revenson, 1987), pointed to four aspects of adjustment to college life. These are; academic adjustment (dealing with various educational demands of the college), social adjustment (interacting and forming relationships with peers and staff), personal, emotional adjustment (sense of psychological and physiological wellbeing, feeling of calm and stable) and institutional attachment (feeling about the institution and satisfaction with the institution). All these aspects require changes in roles, relationships, academic and social demands (Baker & Siryk, 1999).

Another challenge student's face as they pursue their studies in the colleges of education is low academic engagement. Academic engagement challenges are not uncommon in the colleges of education in Ghana. Teacher trainees from these colleges pass through same challenges during their early college life. Yusuf and Abdi (1998) assert that students continuing higher education experience different kinds of challenges including economic, psychosocial, educational, and health. In general, research findings in the area of students' academic adjustment process and challenges show that if students are unable to adapt to the challenges they face in college, there is greater chance to refrain from their studies (Jibril & Jemal, 2012).

Furthermore, students may experience additional problems due to cultural differences and diversities as well as language barriers in multicultural environment in colleges of education. A college is a new environment that triggers different reactions among first year students. Thus, life at college for the first year can be exciting and challenging (Leong, Bonz, & Zachar (1997). On the other hand, the student has to reconstruct his or her personal relations in a new environment and this often causes mental and physical distress (Tao, 2000). The college terrain is drastically different from that of the Senior High School in which students studied before they joined the college environment. Students get anxious as they adjust to academic, social, personal and lifestyle challenges that the university presents (Maria Chong & Abdullah, 2009). It is not surprising that today, it is widely recognised that Senior High School graduation is not sufficient to prepare students for academic and social independence at college. This is a cause of concern as adjustment to the college environment is regarded as an important factor in predicting college learning outcomes and the students' academic performance amidst their college life (Petersen, 2009).

Literature reviewed indicates that more prospective candidates are opting for admission into colleges of education as observed a decade ago, but failed to indicate reasons to support these trends.

For example, in Presbyterian Women's College of Education 317 qualified candidates from Senior High Schools applied for admission in 2018. This figure increased to 328 in 2019 (PWCE Admission Committee, 2019).

This study explored the issues of choice (factors influencing students choice of obtaining higher education in the colleges), prospects (benefits students gain in receiving higher education in the colleges) and challenges (problems students and colleges face in terms of increasing students population) of accessing tertiary education in the colleges of education.

3. Materials and Methods

The study was a college-based cross-sectional survey which sought to investigate the issues of choice, prospects and challenges students encounter in obtaining tertiary education in the colleges of education in Ghana. Both quantitative and qualitative research designs were employed. The quantitative design was used because it offers rich descriptive reports of participants' perceptions, attitudes, beliefs, views and feelings as well as the meanings and interpretations of the issue under investigation (Creswell, 2012).

Conducting quantitative and qualitative study could potentially provide information for determining what intervention components could be found most helpful to employ to assist students in the choice of tertiary institution as well as dealing with the challenges involved. New intervention strategies could also be discovered that will be specifically tailored to college students' motivation towards issues of choice, prospects and challenges.

Therefore, the current study was conducted using qualitative and quantitative research design. Using the mixed method could potentially provide adequate information for determining the factors influencing issues of choice, prospects and challenges encountered by students and also to fish out what intervention components students find most helpful for seeking tertiary education in the colleges of education.

Self-reported data on issues of choice, prospects and challenges were collected from 420 randomly selected students comprising 218 females and 202 males from five randomly selected colleges of education. The sample size was calculated from the population frame of 1,328 college students aged between 18-40 years (mean age = 2.667; SD = 0.76955; range =5.0 and variance = 0.592). Structured questionnaire (SQ) and interviews (I) were employed to collect data. The items on the SQ were adapted from semantic 5-point Likert-type response format developed by Taylor & Todd, 1995; Ajzen and Fishbein, 1980. These anchored at (5 = *strongly disagree*; 4 = *disagree*; 3 = *don't know*; 2 = *agree*; and 1 = *strongly agree*).

Twenty-five measures on the SQ were used to capture the various latent constructs on issues of choice. Also, five measures on the SQ guide were used to capture latent constructs on challenges of colleges of education with increasing students' enrolments. Again, four constructs on the SQ guide were used to measure the prospects of increasing students in the colleges of education to access higher education. Latent constructs on the interview guide were captured using one measure. In addition, respondents were asked to respond to some descriptive questions including sex, age, education level and marital status. The instruments were validated after initial development through extensive literature review and discussions with educational experts and colleague tutors. Finally, we included the items in a questionnaire in no defined order. Construct analysis of the results guided final revisions of constructs on the instruments.

The instruments reliability and validity were tested after initial development through extensive literature review, discussions with experts and colleague tutors, as well as test-retest method.

The interview was conducted with 60 college students comprising 40 females and 20 males to explore their opinions and views on factors that influence them to access higher education in the colleges of education. Each interview session lasted between 20-30 minutes and was audiotaped. The study participants were encouraged to provide detailed answers to the research questions. This design allows the researchers to create a rich, thick description of the data, and this consequently enhances better understanding of the main research question. The interview sections were audiotaped and latter transcribed for analysis. Ethical issues such as consent for photographing, audio recording of participants' voices and opportunity to opt out of the survey, was strictly adhered to throughout the data collection periods.

4. Data Analysis

From statistical perspective, test items reliability and internal consistency were determined using Cronbach's alpha statistics (Cronbach, & Richard, 2004). Descriptive statistics was used to determine the percentage distribution, mean and standards deviation of participants' demographic characteristics and views on issues of choice, prospects and challenges in accessing tertiary education in colleges of education. Chi-

square test was conducted to determine the association between self-reported data on factors influencing issues of choice, prospects and challenges of choice of tertiary institutions. Finally, 38 hypotheses were tested using One-Sample Chi-Square Test.

Further, student's one sample t-test was used to ascertain if there are statistically significant differences in students' reasons for accessing tertiary education in the colleges of education in terms of age, education and sex. The analysis was conducted at 0.05 significance level (95% CI). The results of the quantitative data analyses was presented using appropriate tables and figures to ensure easy interpretation by audience.

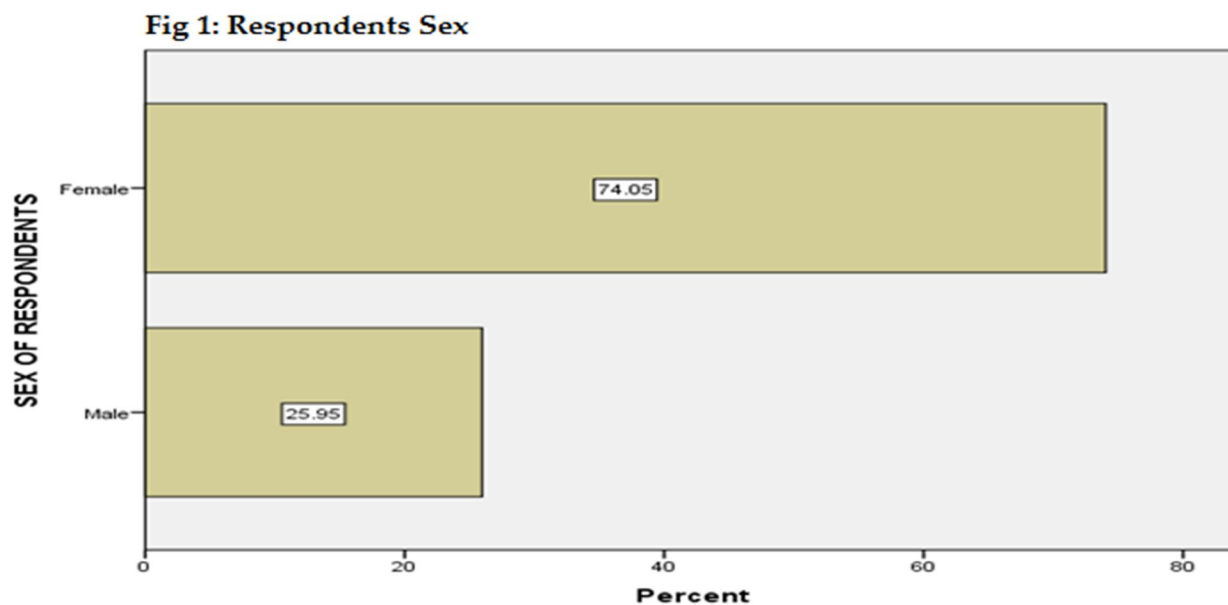
The qualitative data obtained from interview was analysed using thematic content analysis procedures. The data were first transcribed verbatim into Microsoft words and then analysed against thematic content. Relevant illustrative quotes that reflected group opinions and views were identified and used to support the detailed descriptive analyses of the final themes.

5. Results

The calculated values of Cronbach's alpha for test reliability and internal consistencies were 77; grand mean 3.010, all indicating that items on the instruments have sufficient internal consistency (Pallant, 2011; Cronbach & Richard, 2004). This alpha value obtained for all the 38 items used was good. The results of the analyses are presented below using appropriate tables and figures.

Figure 1: Respondents Demographic Characteristics

The demographic profiles of study participants is presented in Figure 1, 2 and 3 below.



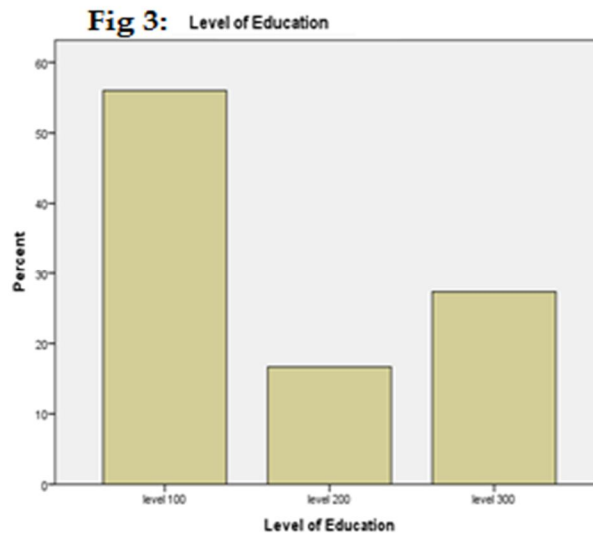
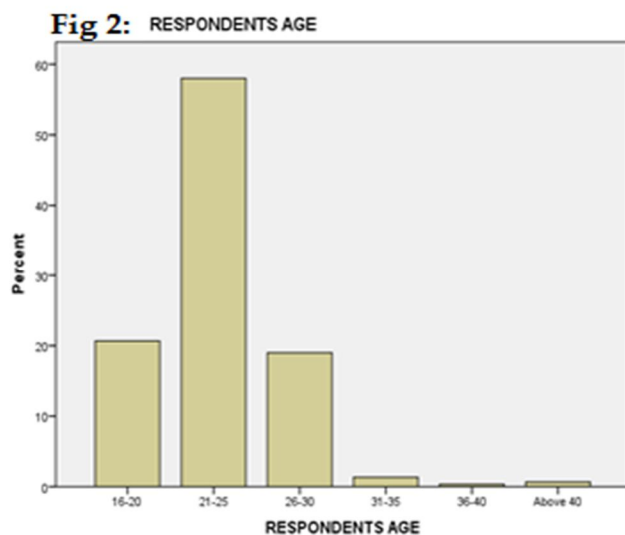


Table 1: Descriptive Statistics and One-Sample Chi-Square Test: Hypotheses Test Summary

| Factors Influencing Students Choice of Obtaining Higher Education in Colleges of Education | N = 420 | | | |
|--|------------------------|---------------|---|----------------------|
| | Descriptive Statistics | | One-Sample Chi-Square Test: Hypotheses Results Summary (Reject Null Hypothesis) | |
| | Mean | Std Deviation | p-values | Association Decision |
| ▪ I will be gainfully employed after the course. | 1.7452 | .44705 | 0.000 | Supported |
| ▪ Full-time employment opportunity. | 2.0667 | .76955 | 0.000 | Supported |
| ▪ I will benefit from the allowance. | 1.7095 | .82410 | 0.000 | Supported |
| ▪ Graduate unemployment associated with the university. | 1.9952 | .09759 | 0.000 | Supported |
| ▪ Availability of excellent career opportunities. | 3.7857 | 1.31515 | 0.000 | Supported |
| ▪ I will be awarded professional certificate. | 3.7738 | 1.22378 | 0.003 | Supported |
| ▪ My parents cannot afford the university fees. | 3.8048 | 1.15813 | 0.000 | Supported |
| ▪ My parents are professional teachers and I must also be a teacher. | 3.4452 | 1.34656 | 0.000 | Supported |
| ▪ There is free accommodation in the colleges. | 3.9714 | 1.04511 | 0.000 | Supported |
| ▪ Admission is less competitive compare to universities. | 4.1714 | 1.81459 | 0.000 | Supported |
| ▪ Students do not pay for feeding fees. | 2.9048 | 1.39569 | 0.000 | Supported |
| ▪ Less tuition fees in the colleges compare to universities. | 2.1238 | 1.26789 | 0.000 | Supported |
| ▪ Friends who attended colleges of education advise me to go. | 2.7905 | 2.09873 | 0.000 | Supported |
| ▪ My children will get better education when I am a teacher. | 2.9714 | 1.44604 | 0.000 | Rejected |
| ▪ My parents cannot afford my hostel fees in the university. | 2.4929 | 1.52856 | 0.000 | Supported |
| ▪ All my siblings attended colleges of education and are teachers. | 2.9595 | 1.48255 | 0.000 | Supported |
| ▪ It will give me the opportunity to make friends with people. | 2.2500 | 1.33522 | 0.000 | Supported |
| ▪ Graduate employment rate is high in the Universities. | 3.1881 | 1.52051 | 0.000 | Supported |

| | | | | |
|--|--------|---------|-------|-----------|
| ▪ Colleges are recommended to me. | 2.9024 | 1.40999 | 0.000 | Supported |
| ▪ There is affordable accommodation. | 2.4881 | 1.40999 | 0.000 | Supported |
| ▪ There is good career services which are linked with employment. | 2.4024 | 1.33590 | 0.000 | Supported |
| ▪ It will offer me the opportunity to learn essential life skills. | 3.0738 | 1.24673 | 0.000 | Supported |
| ▪ Colleges are near my homes-home proximity. | 2.2095 | 1.31639 | 0.000 | Supported |
| ▪ Study offered fits to personal interests. | 2.9310 | 1.28658 | 0.000 | Supported |
| ▪ Better cost of living compare to universities. | 3.3095 | 1.35385 | 0.000 | Supported |
| Challenges of Colleges of Education with Increasing Students Enrolments | | | | |
| ▪ Too many courses offered in the colleges. | 3.9024 | 1.38436 | 0.000 | Supported |
| ▪ Poor financing of colleges of education programs by government. | 3.6262 | 1.37165 | 0.000 | Supported |
| ▪ There will be increasing pressure on existing library resources. | 3.2262 | 1.34636 | 0.000 | Supported |
| ▪ There will be increasing challenge with getting qualified staff for all courses offered by the colleges. | 3.3762 | 1.37534 | 0.000 | Supported |
| ▪ There will be increasing pressure on college utility services. | 3.9024 | 1.38436 | 0.000 | Supported |
| Prospects of Increasing Students Choice of Colleges of Education for Higher Learning | | | | |
| ▪ There will be improved career prospects. | 3.6310 | 1.32805 | 0.000 | Supported |
| ▪ Adequate qualified teachers for basic schools. | 3.8929 | 1.26245 | 0.000 | Supported |
| ▪ Improved academic achievements by students. | 3.7595 | 1.22495 | 0.000 | Supported |
| ▪ Training of qualified teachers to meet the needs of governments. | 3.9048 | 1.20083 | 0.000 | Supported |

Mean and SD- significant at 0.05(95% CI)

Table 2: ANOVA Test Results of Factors Influencing Students Choice of Obtaining Higher Education in Colleges of Education

| Factors Influencing Students Choice of Obtaining Higher Education in Colleges of Education | | Mean Square | F | p-value |
|--|----------------|-------------|---------|---------|
| • Full-time employment opportunity | Between Groups | 57.873 | 42.467 | .000 |
| • Graduate unemployment associated with the university. | Between Groups | 25.615 | 14.585 | .000 |
| • I will be awarded professional certificate. | Between Groups | 7.196 | 6.259 | .013 |
| • My parents are professional teachers and I must also be a teacher. | Between Groups | 31.603 | 20.578 | .000 |
| • Admission is less competitive compare to universities. | Between Groups | 43.296 | 19.003 | .000 |
| • Students do not pay for feeding fees. | Between Groups | 21.111 | 9.785 | .002 |
| • Less tuition fees in the colleges compare to universities. | Between Groups | 29.038 | 12.978 | .000 |
| • My parents cannot afford my hostel fees in the university. | Between Groups | 69.026 | 31.707 | .000 |
| • All my siblings attended colleges of education and are teachers. | Between Groups | 221.799 | 132.608 | .000 |
| • Graduate employment rate is high in the Universities. | Between Groups | 46.034 | 20.855 | .000 |
| • Colleges are recommended to me. | Between Groups | 42.439 | 22.439 | .000 |
| • There is affordable accommodation. | Between Groups | 14.544 | 8.291 | .004 |
| • Colleges are near my homes-home proximity. | Between Groups | 16.813 | 10.385 | .001 |
| • Study offered fits to personal interests. | Between Groups | 13.450 | 7.451 | .007 |
| • Better cost of living compare to universities. | Between Groups | 22.724 | 11.845 | .001 |

F-values: significant at 0.05(95% CI);

Table 3: One-Sample T-Test Results: Effects of Factors on Students Choice Of Obtaining Higher Education In Colleges Of Education

| Construct/Variables | Test Value = 420 | | | | | |
|--|------------------|-----|----------|-----------------|---|--------|
| | t | df | p-values | Mean Difference | 95% Confidence Interval of the Difference | |
| | | | | | Lower | Upper |
| Students Demographic Characteristics | | | | | | |
| • Sex of Respondents | 80.005 | 419 | .000 | 1.74524 | 1.7024 | 1.7881 |
| • Respondents Age | 55.038 | 419 | .000 | 2.06667 | 1.9929 | 2.1405 |
| • Level of Education | 42.513 | 419 | .000 | 1.70952 | 1.6305 | 1.7886 |
| • Marital Status | 419.000 | 419 | .000 | 1.99524 | 1.9859 | 2.0046 |
| Factors Influencing Students Choice Of Obtaining Higher Education In Colleges Of Education | | | | | | |
| • I will be gainfully employed after the course. | 58.992 | 419 | .000 | 3.78571 | 3.6596 | 3.9119 |
| • Full-time employment opportunity | 63.198 | 419 | .000 | 3.77381 | 3.6564 | 3.8912 |
| • I will benefit from the allowance. | 67.328 | 419 | .000 | 3.80476 | 3.6937 | 3.9158 |
| • Graduate unemployment associated with the university. | 52.435 | 419 | .000 | 3.44524 | 3.3161 | 3.5744 |
| • Availability of excellent career opportunities. | 77.877 | 419 | .000 | 3.97143 | 3.8712 | 4.0717 |
| • I will be awarded professional certificate. | 47.112 | 419 | .000 | 4.17143 | 3.9974 | 4.3455 |
| • My parents cannot afford the university fees. | 42.653 | 419 | .000 | 2.90476 | 2.7709 | 3.0386 |
| • My parents are professional teachers and I must also be a teacher. | 34.329 | 419 | .000 | 2.12381 | 2.0022 | 2.2454 |
| • There is free accommodation in the colleges. | 27.249 | 419 | .000 | 2.79048 | 2.5892 | 2.9918 |
| • Admission is less competitive compare to universities. | 39.504 | 419 | .000 | 2.97143 | 2.8236 | 3.1193 |
| • Students do not pay for feeding fees. | 34.422 | 419 | .000 | 2.49286 | 2.3505 | 2.6352 |
| • Less tuition fees in the colleges compare to universities. | 39.980 | 419 | .000 | 2.95952 | 2.8140 | 3.1050 |
| • Friends who attended colleges of education advise me to go. | 34.680 | 419 | .000 | 2.25000 | 2.1225 | 2.3775 |
| • My children will get better education when I am a teacher. | 45.183 | 419 | .000 | 3.18810 | 3.0494 | 3.3268 |
| • My parents cannot afford my hostel fees in the university. | 38.913 | 419 | .000 | 2.90238 | 2.7558 | 3.0490 |
| • All my siblings attended colleges of education and are teachers. | 34.394 | 419 | .000 | 2.48810 | 2.3459 | 2.6303 |
| • It will give me the opportunity to make friends with people. | 36.873 | 419 | .000 | 2.40238 | 2.2743 | 2.5304 |
| • Graduate employment rate is high in the Universities. | 41.430 | 419 | .000 | 3.07381 | 2.9280 | 3.2196 |
| • Colleges are recommended to me. | 42.601 | 419 | .000 | 2.93095 | 2.7957 | 3.0662 |
| • There is affordable accommodation. | 50.771 | 419 | .000 | 3.30952 | 3.1814 | 3.4377 |
| • There is good career services which are linked with employment. | 59.764 | 419 | .000 | 3.63571 | 3.5161 | 3.7553 |
| • It will offer me the opportunity to learn essential life skills. | 55.786 | 419 | .000 | 3.58333 | 3.4571 | 3.7096 |
| • Colleges are near my homes-home proximity. | 35.196 | 419 | .000 | 2.20952 | 2.0861 | 2.3329 |
| • Study offered fits to personal interests. | 47.503 | 419 | .000 | 3.13810 | 3.0082 | 3.2679 |
| • Better cost of living compare to universities. | 47.200 | 419 | .000 | 3.23095 | 3.0964 | 3.3655 |
| Challenges Of Colleges Of Education With Increasing Students Enrolment | | | | | | |
| • Too many courses offered in the colleges. | 57.770 | 419 | .000 | 3.90238 | 3.7696 | 4.0352 |
| • Poor financing of colleges of education programs by government. | 54.179 | 419 | .000 | 3.62619 | 3.4946 | 3.7577 |
| • There will be increasing challenge with getting qualified staff for all courses offered by the colleges. | 49.108 | 419 | .000 | 3.22619 | 3.0971 | 3.3553 |
| • There will be increasing challenge with getting qualified staff for all courses offered by the colleges. | 50.309 | 419 | .000 | 3.37619 | 3.2443 | 3.5081 |
| • There will be increasing pressure on college utility services. | 54.047 | 419 | .000 | 3.50238 | 3.3750 | 3.6298 |
| Prospects Of Increasing Students Choice Of Obtaining Higher Education In Colleges Of Education | | | | | | |
| • There will be improved career prospects. | 58.943 | 419 | .000 | 3.63095 | 3.5099 | 3.7520 |
| • Adequate qualified teachers for basic schools. | 68.271 | 419 | .000 | 3.89286 | 3.7808 | 4.0049 |
| • Improved academic achievements by students. | 62.898 | 419 | .000 | 3.75952 | 3.6420 | 3.8770 |
| • Training of qualified teachers to meet the needs of governments. | 66.641 | 419 | .000 | 3.90476 | 3.7896 | 4.0199 |

t-values and mean square- significant at 0.05(95% CI).

Table 4: Chi-square Test Results of Influence of Demographic Characteristics on Students Choice of Colleges of Education for Higher Education

| Constructs | Students Demographic Characteristics | | | | | |
|--|--------------------------------------|---------|--------|---------|-----------|---------|
| | Sex | | Age | | Education | |
| | χ | p-value | χ | p-value | χ | p-value |
| Factors Influencing Students Choice Of Obtaining Higher Education In Colleges Of Education | | | | | | |
| • I will be gainfully employed after the course. | 32.730 | 0.000 | 42.415 | 16.925 | 24.015 | 0.002 |
| • Full-time employment opportunity | 73.856 | 0.000 | 38.524 | 0.008 | 38.524 | 0.008 |
| • I will benefit from the allowance. | 13.724 | 0.008 | 17.032 | 0.651 | 36.784 | 0.004 |
| • Graduate unemployment associated with the university. | 18.764 | 0.001 | 22.436 | x | 6.595 | x |
| • Availability of excellent career opportunities. | 6.402 | x | 42.415 | 0.002 | 9.9 26 | x |
| • I will be awarded professional certificate. | 13.667 | 0.008 | 19.361 | x | 11.587 | x |
| • My parents cannot afford the university fees. | 22.043 | 0.000 | 17.811 | x | 12.748 | x |
| • My parents are professional teachers and I must also be a teacher. | 50.916 | 0.000 | 33.149 | 0.032 | 5.784 | x |
| • There is free accommodation in the colleges. | 32.208 | 0.000 | 25.014 | x | 27.518 | 0.007 |
| • Admission is less competitive compare to universities. | 28.472 | 0.000 | x | x | 12.318 | x |
| • Students do not pay for feeding fees. | 25.803 | 0.000 | 13.021 | x | 15.518 | 0.50 |
| • Less tuition fees in the colleges compare to universities. | 23.868 | 0.000 | 19.775 | x | 21.607 | 0.017 |
| • Friends who attended colleges of education advise me to go. | 16.737 | 0.002 | 16.324 | x | 8.447 | x |
| • My children will get better education when I am a teacher. | 16.937 | 0.002 | 16.254 | x | 9.946 | x |
| • My parents cannot afford my hostel fees in the university. | 39.711 | 0.000 | 20.194 | x | 9.714 | x |
| • All my siblings attended colleges of education and are teachers. | 117.542 | 0.000 | 46.087 | 0.001 | 15.915 | 0.044 |
| • It will give me the opportunity to make friends with people. | 9.118 | 0.058 | 15.734 | x | 15.478 | 0.50 |
| • Graduate employment rate is high in the Universities. | 31.546 | 0.000 | 20.311 | x | 19.586 | 0.012 |
| • Colleges are recommended to me. | 37.998 | 0.000 | 17.780 | x | 9.568 | x |
| • There is affordable accommodation. | 12.765 | 0.012 | 21.583 | x | 14.288 | x |
| • There is good career services which are linked with employment. | 16.488 | 0.002 | 14.932 | x | 7.318 | x |
| • It will offer me the opportunity to learn essential life skills. | 5.726 | 0.221 | 18.300 | x | 10.930 | x |
| • Colleges are near my homes-home proximity. | 22.120 | 0.000 | 20.264 | x | 33.054 | 0.000 |
| • Study offered fits to personal interests. | 19.323 | 0.001 | 21.947 | x | 5.026 | x |
| • Better cost of living compare to universities. | 16.955 | 0.002 | 24.404 | x | 5.603 | x |
| Challenges Of Colleges Of Education With Increasing Students Enrolment | | | | | | |
| • Too many courses offered in the colleges. | 5.746 | x | 20.604 | x | 18.543 | 0.018 |
| • Poor financing of colleges of education programs by government. | 12.04 | 0.017 | 17.209 | x | 8.652 | x |
| • There will be increasing challenge with getting qualified staff for all courses offered by the colleges. | 6.980 | x | 27.146 | x | 24.191 | 0.002 |
| • There will be increasing challenge with getting qualified staff for all courses offered by the colleges. | 8.698 | x | 27.146 | x | 11.825 | x |
| • There will be increasing pressure on college utility services. | 3.909 | x | 24.191 | x | 25.623 | 0.001 |
| Prospects Of Increasing Students Choice Of Obtaining Higher Education In Colleges Of Education | | | | | | |
| • There will be improved career prospects. | 6.589 | x | 24.493 | x | 14.781 | x |
| • Adequate qualified teachers for basic schools. | 7.203 | x | 26.792 | x | 10.659 | x |
| • Improved academic achievements by students. | 13.115 | 0.011 | 20.116 | x | 11.548 | x |
| • Training of qualified teachers to meet the needs of governments. | 9.855 | 0.043 | 25.499 | x | 16.047 | 0.042 |

χ- significant at 0.05(95% CI). x= shows no statistically significant association to report.

Table 1 presented above shows results from the Descriptive Statistics and One-Sample Chi-Square Test Hypotheses results on factors influencing students’ choice of obtaining higher education in colleges of education. These data suggest that the major factors influencing students’ choice of obtaining higher education in the colleges of education included less competitive admission in the colleges of education compare to universities (mean = 4.171, SD = 1.815, p<0.00; t = 39.504, p<0.000); availability of affordable accommodation (mean = 3.971, SD = 1.045, p<0.000; t =50.771, p<0.000); availability of excellent career opportunities (mean = 3.786, SD = 1.315, p<0.000; t = 77.877, p<0.000); obtaining professional certificates (mean = 3.774, SD = 1.224, p<0.003; t = 47.112, p<0.000); graduate unemployment associated with universities (mean = 3.188, 0.976, p<0.000; t = 52.435, p<0.000); opportunity to learn essential skills (mean = 3.074, SD = 1.247, p<0.000; t = 55.786, p<0.000); students allowances (mean = 1.710, SD = 0.824, t =

67.328, $p < 0.000$); good career services which are linked with employment (mean = 2.402, SD = 1.336, $p < 0.000$; $t = 59.764$, $p < 0.000$). Of these nine factors, less competitive admission in the colleges compare to universities scored the highest mean (4.171, SD = 1.815) whilst good career services which are linked with employment scored the lowest mean (2.402, SD = 1.336).

Based on the χ test hypothesis results, there was sufficient evidence to conclude that association exists between factors and students choice of colleges of education for higher learning.

Table 2 presented above shows results from the ANOVA test for factors influencing students' choice of obtaining higher education in colleges of education. Based on the F -test values, there was sufficient evidence to indicate that the factors influencing students' choice of colleges of education for higher learning differ significantly across the sample population. Given this sample, it appeared that there were statistically significant differences between the students when comparing them in terms of factors influencing them for choice of obtaining higher education in the colleges of education. Other factors, however, produced no significant difference to report.

Data in Table 3 highlights results from One-Sample t-test for effects of factors on students' choice of obtaining higher education in colleges of education. Based on the t-test results, there was sufficient evidence to conclude that all the factors have statistically significant influence on students' choice of obtaining higher education in the colleges of education. Among the factors, availability of excellent career opportunities was found to be contributing to the highest effect on students' choice of colleges of education for higher learning ($t = 77.877$, $p < 0.000$).

The data in Table 3 also suggested that the major challenges students encountered in accessing higher education in the colleges of education included too many courses offered in the colleges (mean = 3.902, $p < 0.000$, $t = 57.770$, $p < 0.000$); poor financing of colleges of education programmes by government (mean = 3.626, SD = 1.384, $p < 0.000$; $t = 54.179$, $p < 0.000$); and increasing pressure on college utilities (mean 3.226, SD = 1.346; $t = 54.047$, $p < 0.000$). Of these three factors, too many programmes offered in the colleges scored the highest mean (mean = 3.902, $p < 0.000$) whilst increasing pressure on college utilities scored the lowest mean (mean = 3.226) indicating a challenge students encounter as they seek higher education in the colleges of education.

Table 4 shows results from Chi-square test for factors influencing students' choice of colleges of education for higher learning in terms of sex, age and level of education. The results indicated that the following factors were more likely to have greater association with choice of colleges of education for higher learning in terms of age, sex and level of education: *all my siblings attended colleges of education and are teachers* (role model) (sex: $\chi = 117.542$, $p < 0.000$); age: $\chi = 46.087$, $p < 0.001$ 42.415, $p < 0.002$); *full-time employment* opportunities (age: $\chi = 73.856$, $p < 0.000$); education ($\chi = 38.524$, $p < 0.008$) and *availability of excellent career opportunities*. (Age: $\chi = 42.415$, $p < 0.002$).

Results of in-depth Interview Conducted

Respondents were asked to indicate the reasons for *choice* of colleges of education for higher education, *prospects* and *challenges* they encounter in accessing tertiary education in the colleges of education. From the interview, the major themes related to issues of choice, prospects and challenges identified included the following:

Major themes that related to issues of choice and prospects of obtaining higher education in colleges of education:

- (i) Job availability, (ii) Government supports.

Narratives that relate to Job availability:

Students' reasons for choice of obtaining tertiary education in the colleges of education were expressed in the following quotes:

- "To obtain professional certificates for life.*
- "To gain life-long profession."*
- "...admission is less competitive compared to universities."*
- "...it will better my life and that of others."*
- "It is a universal foundation for other professions."*

Narratives that relate to government's supports:

- "It will offer me the opportunity to finance my education with the allowance."*
- "I will benefit from the feeding grants government provides to colleges."*
- "Students are provided with accommodation."*

Major themes that related to challenges of obtaining higher education in colleges of education:

- (i) Course contents (ii) Lack of personal freedom.

Narratives that relate to Course Contents:

Students' challenges encountered in obtaining higher education in colleges of education were expressed in the following quotes:

- "The courses run in the colleges are too much and demanding."*
- "Keeping portfolio on every activity encountered is very stressful and time consuming"*

Narratives that relate to lack of personal freedom:

- "Learning is very stressful as courses are too many and new."*
- "...low influence of bad companies."*
- "Freedom of movement is restricted."*

6. Discussions

In contrast to the previous studies, this study explored the issues of *choice, prospects* and *challenges* students encounter when accessing tertiary education in the colleges of education. The discussions of the findings have been presented in terms of students' demographic characteristics; factors influencing students choice of obtaining higher education in colleges of education; challenges of colleges of education with increasing students enrolments; and prospects of increasing students choice of obtaining higher education in colleges of education.

Students Demographic Characteristics

The results of the study presented in Fig 1 and 2 showed that females formed the majority of the respondents constituting 218 (51.9%) and the remaining 202 (48.1%) were males. Greater proportion of the respondents were aged between 21-25 years with mean age of 2.667; SD = 0.76955. In terms of education, level 100 students formed the largest proportion of the respondents, followed by levels 300 and 200 in that sequence. The study also found significant association between factors influencing students' choice of colleges of education for higher learning and sex, age and level of education. The study further discovered that some of the factors considered in this study have greater association with choice of colleges of education for higher learning in terms of age, sex and level of education. These factors included role model, *full-time employment* opportunities and *availability of excellent career opportunities*. The influence of demographic characteristics on individual intention regarding environmental behaviour has been identified as a significant issue in the behavioural literature

(Ajzen & Fishbein, 1980; Venkatesh *et al.*, 2003). For example, a study by Venkatesh *et al.*, (2003) found that there are differences between males and females in their environmental behaviour-related variables such as choice. They demonstrated that sex and age, for example significantly moderate the influence of the determinants on behaviour intention.

6.1 Factors Influencing Students Choice of Obtaining Higher Education in Colleges of Education

The study also found that the major factors influencing students' choice of obtaining higher education in the colleges of education included less competitive admission in the colleges of education compare to universities; availability of affordable accommodation; availability of excellent career opportunities; obtaining professional certificates; graduate unemployment associated with universities; opportunity to learn essential skills; students allowances; and good career services which are linked with employment. Of these eight factors, less competitive admission in the colleges compare to universities was found to be the most significant factors influencing students' choice of obtaining higher education in the colleges of education.

The results of the interview supported these factors. For instance, the interview results suggested that students seek higher education in the colleges of education in order to *obtain professional certificates for life, gain life-long profession, and to do away with stress associated with competitive admission in the universities.* Previous studies showed that the choices made by students, the need to meet their requirements and expectations have become one of the most important issues for the tertiary institutions (Esteban, et al. 2002; Jurkowitsch, 2006).

6.2 Challenges of Colleges of Education with Increasing Students Enrolments

The challenges students encountered in accessing higher education in the colleges of education, as revealed by the study, included too many courses offered in the colleges; poor financing of colleges of education programmes by government; and increasing pressure on college utilities. Of these three factors, too many courses (programmes) offered in the colleges constitutes the highest key challenge students encounter as they seek higher education in the colleges of education. The interview results also supported this finding. From the interview it was evident that students faced number of challenges in seeking higher education in the colleges of education and these included learning under stress, studying too many courses, and lack of personal freedom.

Previous studies (Astin, 1975; Bean, 1983; Braxton, Hirschy, & McClendon, 2004; Sparkman, Maulding, & Roberts, 2012; Styron, 2010; Tinto, 2010) have demonstrated that several factors contribute to students' persistence in higher institutions, including students' characteristics, academic preparedness, psychological factors, socioeconomic status, financial stress, social and academic integration, and institutional factors.

6.3 Prospects of Increasing Students Choice of Obtaining Higher Education in Colleges of Education

The study also revealed that the key prospects of students obtaining higher education in the colleges of education included adequate qualified teachers for basic schools (mean = 3.893, SD = 1.262; $t = 68.271$, $p < 0.000$) and training of qualified teachers to meet the needs of governments (mean = 3.905, SD = 1.200; $t = 66.641$, $p < 0.000$). Contrasting the prospects of these two factors, training of qualified teachers to meet the needs of governments and the nation recorded the highest mean (M) and least standards deviation (SD) (M = 3.905, SD = 1.200).

The challenges facing undergraduates in tertiary institutions include academic stress, social and emotional adjustment. Majority who have such crisis find it difficult to cope academically (Akinyemi 2016). According to Abdul Kareem (2008), the challenges of tertiary institution have increased in areas such as management and administration, quality staffing, and costs of living.

Again, Smith and Renk (2007), have indicated that the combination of many life stressors such as planning for the future, struggling with course work (e.g. examinations and assignments), and coping with demands and challenging teachers, deciding on a major financial and emotional independence,

students encounter in higher institutions can be an overwhelming experience for many of them. All these influence students' cognitive and reasoning abilities, critical thinking and problem solving skills.

7. Conclusion

The study has provided strong theory-based evidence on factors influencing students' choice of obtaining higher education in the colleges of education, the key challenges they encounter, and the prospects associated with the phenomenon. These choice factors included less competitive admission in the colleges of education, availability of affordable accommodation, availability of excellent career opportunities, obtaining professional certificates, graduate unemployment associated with universities, opportunity to learn essential skills, students' allowances, and good career services which are linked with employment. The challenges students face in accessing higher education in the colleges of education included too many programmes offered in the colleges; poor financing of colleges of education programmes by government; and increasing pressure on college utilities. Finally, the key prospects associated with obtaining higher education in the colleges of education included improved academic achievements in the basic schools; adequate qualified teachers for basic schools and training of qualified teachers to meet the needs of governments. The contributions of these factors therefore provided holistic understanding of the subject of increasing students' choice of obtaining higher education in the colleges of education and upon which some useful recommendations have been made.

8. Recommendation

For purposes of practical implication which might show areas of intervention to improve student support, the study recommends that teaching profession must be made more attractive to prospective students and courses run in the colleges of education must be re-designed or reduced to meet students' interests and intellectual development. Further, there is the need for more organised students' engagement in order to reduce the challenges they encounter in the course of accessing higher education in the colleges of education. Finally, students learning adjustment support services must be increased to provide them with optimal learning opportunities to cope with college life.

Declaration of Conflicting Interests

The authors declared no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship, and publication of this article.

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