




European Journal of Educational Management


Volume 8, Issue 2, 75 - 90.

ISSN: 2642-2344

<https://www.eujem.com/>

Strategic Management of Change for Development of Dambai College of Education

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Received: November 11, 2024 • Revised: February 27, 2025 • Accepted: May 26, 2025

Abstract: The transitioning of Teacher Training Colleges into Colleges of Education as tertiary institutions by Act 847 is significant for ensuring strategic management change. This research investigated the strategic management of Dambai College of Education in the transitional change. The study adapted the methodological framework of the “Theory of Organisational Change” to ascertain leadership strategies that worked well in contributing to rapid positive transformation and their impact and those potential strategies to further improve the College. The study was qualitative with an interpretive paradigm and nominalist ontological and epistemological stance with participatory inquiry design. Homogeneous purposive sampling was used to select 15 participants for data collection. Data was collected through an open-ended questionnaire. Thematic analyses were done. Findings under strategies that worked include effective governance, recruitment, continuous professional development, Internally Generated Funds (IGF), merit-based remuneration of staff, and enhancement of physical infrastructure. The impact made includes boosting the morale of staff, students, traditional authorities, and other stakeholders; ownership of responsibility; improved learning outcomes; more spaces and equipment for effective work; and the College's improved outlook. Strategies to adopt include more stakeholder engagement and integration of technology. The research concluded that the college has transformed positively and needs to further improve its developmental agenda by adopting hybrid change models.

Keywords: *Change, development, strategic management, Dambai College of Education.*

To cite this article: Atiku, B. A., & Erebakere, J. (2025). Strategic management of change for development of Dambai college of education. *European Journal of Educational Management*, 8(2), 75-90. <https://doi.org/10.12973/eujem.8.2.75>

Introduction

Change comes as a permanent feature of all institutions. However, educational institutions tend to experience changes more frequently. The reasons include the fact that they produce graduates yearly while bringing on board new sets of intakes as freshmen and women.

Administratively and in terms of institutional management, the workforce also experiences and undergoes changes as some go on retirement and transfers while others come as new recruits or appointees.


Another very important area of notable changes and reviews has to do with accredited programs, all in a bid to satisfy the needs and aspirations of society. It should be emphasised here that these are informed and guided by laws governing the institutions, and often regulated by unique institutional mandates which may prescribe expanded or narrowed mandates as may be required but still guided by the institutional mandate. In principle and practice therefore, educational institutions such as the Dambai College of Education is not immune to changes.

These are evident in the transition of Teacher Training Colleges into Colleges of Education since 2012 within the scope and framework of Act 847. As Atiku (2017, 2013) notes, the Colleges of Education in Ghana have undergone tremendous changes in scope and curricular. The change in programmes according to Atiku (2017, 2013) span across eight phases, from Two-Year Post-Middle Teacher's Certificate B to the current Four-Year Bachelor of Education (B. Ed).

Coming along the implementation of the new curriculum was a new mentorship arrangement in the 2019/2020 academic year for the Colleges of Education in Ghana, where colleges have been affiliated with the five traditional

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teaching universities in Ghana (Atiku & Atiku, 2022). It is worth noting that before this dispensation, all the Colleges of Education were mentored by the University of Cape Coast (Buabeng et al., 2020; Newman, 2013). The Colleges existed as non-tertiary post-secondary institutions before the passage of Act 847 on 27th June 2012. The Government-owned Colleges have also increased from 38 to 46, with eight new ones added (Ghana Tertiary Education Commission [GTEC], 2015).

Dambai College of Education founded in 1974 (originally founded as Dambai Teacher Training College), had also undergone all the reforms aforementioned in serving the purpose of teacher education consistent with the mandates specified in the national Acts for education. The College, governed by a well-informed and visionary Council, is poised to soar high in academia and physical infrastructural development. The College has six (6) academic departments, including education studies, mathematics/ICT, arts and social sciences, language studies, VOTEC, and science education; and other units, including security, ICT, catering, guidance and counselling, chaplaincy, quality assurance, students' affairs, assessment, research and publication, and alumni.

In every change, uniquely identified strategies must be adopted to harness the opportunity for growth. The Government of Ghana instituted the Transforming Teacher Education and Learning (T-TEL) project in 2014 to help the colleges manage and strengthen their new status as tertiary institutions. At the institutional level, colleges must identify what works best for them with respect to the characteristics of their constituents and satisfy national mandates. This research, therefore, delved into such matters as relating to strategic management of change in effectively developing the College.

Generally, the literature on strategic institutional management in higher education has focused on universities and well-resourced institutions in developed contexts (Ogunode & Ibrahim, 2024; Salim, 2020; Siddique et al., 2011). There exists a critical gap in understanding how Colleges of Education in Ghana that are resources navigate the complexities of institutional transitions, currently into tertiary intuitions and the recent acute global crisis such as the COVID-19 pandemic. Prior research within the Ghanaian context has overlooked the unique challenges colleges of education encounter in their mandate to ensure pedagogical rigor while adapting to several systemic shifts and other external factors. Also, the literature lacks empirical insights on context-specific institutional management strategies that foster resilience despite limited infrastructural or financial buffers. This research addresses these gaps by advancing a novel framework for educational management, which demonstrates how colleges of education maintain sustenance in this unending institutional transformation and unsolicited global crisis. The research also adds theoretical perspectives by highlighting how systemic change models are adapted to the management of higher education institutions that are low-resourced and provide replicable strategies to enable balance with operational agility and pedagogical integrity. Therefore, by focusing on the strategic management experiences of Dambai College of Education, the research presents empirical insights on educational institutional management, offering actionable knowledge for policy and practice in analogous settings to strengthen resilience, equity, and stakeholder-driven growth.

The College suffered several setbacks ranging from infrastructural deficits to human resource-related challenges, as revealed by National Accreditation Board's Report in 2017/2018, leading to its failure to obtain instant reaccreditation. However, the College re-strategized in the 2019/2020 academic year and underwent reassessment successfully with the National Accreditation Board (NAB). The College is still undergoing changes to strengthen it as a tertiary institution just like other Colleges of Education. This research, therefore, sought to ascertain from constituents what worked contextually in improving the College drastically in the latter half of 2019 and how best to forge ahead in the further development of the College to that standard which could be seen as excellent.

This research is vital within the context of Dambai College of Education and other analogous Colleges of Education in Ghana as it delved into how the College's strategic management framework was adopted during the COVID-19 pandemic, a crisis that exposed the vulnerabilities in global educational institutions. Upon analysis of the College's response management strategies (stakeholder collaboration, digital transition, resources mobilization, etc.) during the pandemic, the research directly revealed the ongoing developmental agenda of the College and addressed gaps in staff readiness, infrastructure, and equity. Globally, this research contributes to under-researched contexts of educational management during the crisis, especially how teacher education institutions that are resource-constrained navigate and maintain balance in pedagogical mandates and operational resilience amidst global disruptions.

The study was to help college management source information from stakeholders on strategies that have worked well in developing the college with their impact and to identify strategies that could be identified to harness the developmental opportunities of the College. The objectives of the study are to:

- 1) Identify strategies that worked for the rapid positive transformation of the College.
- 2) Describe the impact of the strategies that worked for the rapid positive transformation of the College and
- 3) Discover more strategies that can harness the opportunity for further rapid growth of the College in the current and future years.

Theoretical Review

The theoretical assumptions that align with the concepts of institutional change and development are reviewed in this section. Three theories are used to establish the theoretical antecedence of strategies for change at Dambai College of Education. The study is underpinned by Kurt Lewin's change theory, Lippitt's phases of change theory, and the Prochaska and DiClemente change theory.

(i) Kurt Lewin's Change Theory

One prominent personality of such social psychologists was Kurt Lewin (1890-1947) (Burnes, 2019, 2021). He came up with his most influential theory on the change process in human systems. Kurt Lewin theorised a three-stage model of change that is known as the unfreezing-change-freeze model (Burnes, 2019, 2021; Kritsonis, 2005; Lippitt et al., 1958).

Figure 1 shows the three-stage change model of Kurt Lewin.

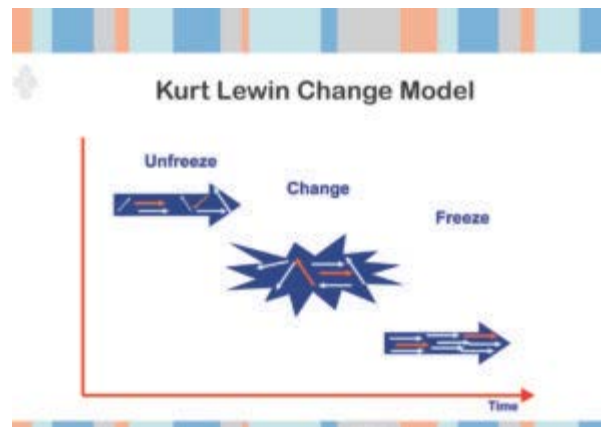


Figure 1. Kurt Lewin Three-Step Change Theory Model

Source: Adopted from (Lippitt et al., 1958)

Based on Kurt Lewin's disposition, behaviour is a dynamic balance of forces working in opposing directions. In the paradigm, Lewin identified that there are driving forces, restraining forces, and the concept of equilibrium in human behaviour (Cummings et al., 2015). The three stages of the model are discussed below relative to the context of this study.

Stage 1: Unfreeze

The 'Unfreeze' stage is described as the 'ready to change' stage. During the 2019/2020 academic year of Dambai College of Education, stakeholders and management were poised to transform and change the status quo of the institution. Hence, innovative research, such as this paper, was conducted to ascertain sustainable management strategies and identify approaches to be harnessed for change and developments.

Step 2: Change

This step is referred to as the 'implementation stage.' It involves a movement away from theory into practice through practical movement to put planned change activities into reality to establish the newly cherished level of equilibrium. Kritsonis (2005) prescribed three actions that could assist in the implementation or movement step of the change process persuading employees to agree that the status quo is not beneficial to them and encouraging them to view the problem from a fresh perspective, working together on a quest for new, relevant information; and connecting the views of the group to well-respected, powerful leaders that also support the change.

Step 3: Freeze

The third step of Lewin's model emphasise on making the change stick over time, so it does not become a one-day wonder. It is the stage where practical steps are taken to actualize the integration of new values into institutional existing communal values and traditions for the purpose of stabilizing the new equilibrium resulting from the change.

(ii) Lippitt phases of change theory

Lewin's Three-Step Change Theory was extended by Lippitt et al. (1958) and further adapted by Cummings et al. (2015) and Kritsonis (2005). These writers created a seven-step theory with a focus on the role and responsibility of

the change agent rather than attention to the evolution of the change itself. Emphasis is on information exchange throughout the seven-model process. The seven steps in this model include:

1. Diagnosing the problem;
2. Assessing the motivation and capacity for change;
3. Assessing the resources and motivation of the change agent by analysing the change agent's commitment to change, power, and stamina;
4. Choosing progressive change objects by developing action plans;
5. Selecting the role of the change agents;
6. Maintaining the change by engaging in constant communication in feedback provision to relevant groups and effective coordination among stakeholders to keep up the candle of the change process; and finally
7. Terminating the helping relationship gradually so that personnel could withdraw from their past role and lifestyles over time without much notice of how it happens.

(iii) Prochaska and DiClemente Change Theory

Prochaska and DiClemente were conscious of the stages a patient should go through in a journey to change certain health habits that might not be ideal for promoting good health. The tenets of the theory established that people go through many stages when change occurs. Prochaska and DiClemente identified five cyclical stages in their change theory:

1. Pre-contemplation, 2. Contemplation, 3. Preparation, 4. Action, and 5. Maintenance (Cummings et al., 2015; Kritsonis, 2005).

Prochaska and DiClemente considered the pre-contemplation stage as existing when an individual is unaware or just fails to acknowledge the problems and, thus, does not engage in any change process activities around the problem, though the problem exists (Kritsonis, 2005). The contemplation stage is when the manager becomes conscious of the issue of change and therefore begins to make awareness to personnel about it, though personnel may not be willing to change the status quo and hence may not be committed to the change process at this stage. The preparation stage deals with the situation when personnel are ready to change existing behavioral patterns and plan for that change within the next couple of weeks. The change stage comes when it can be clearly observed and attested that there are changes in the operational pattern, lifestyles, and related activities in the organization or in the personal life of the personnel. The maintenance stage describes a situation of identification and application of actions to reinforce the change that has taken place.

Comparatively, Lewin's change theory (unfreeze-change-refreeze) and Lippitt's phases of change both relate to the structure and phased approaches to institutional change, which aligns with Dambai College's post-Act 847 transition and its crisis management during COVID-19. Lewin's model, which reflects destabilizing old systems (unfreezing) and institutionalizing new work principles (freezing), mirrors Dambai College's shift from a teacher training college (non-tertiary) to a College of Education (tertiary) which necessitated systemic restructure. For example, Lee (2006) applied Lewin's theory to facilitate the adoption of a personal digital assistant system in nursing practices. The study revealed that personnel were resistant to using the digital system (unfreezing), then later came around to using it (change), and finally adapted to using it in their daily practices (refreeze). Also, Lippitt's seven-phased model stresses leadership roles and stakeholder engagements, which relates to this research approach of focused leadership and staff engagements in driving transformational strategies such as Internally Generated Funds (IGF) and infrastructure development. Lewin and Lippitt's frameworks highlight the need for deliberate planning and incremental progress, as exhibited by the College in terms of the adoption of digital tools and stakeholder collaboration during the COVID-19 pandemic. An application of Lippitt's model in educational contexts provides guidance on how to implement new curricula or methodologies by stressing the need for planning, communication, and effective prompt feedback (Kritsonis, 2005). Finally, Prochaska and DiClemente's model, although originally designed for individual behavioral change, complements Lewin and Lippitt's models by guiding how the readiness of stakeholders (e.g., staff adoption of online teaching) and cyclical nature of the change (e.g., resource mobilization) were assessed. The transtheoretical model, as noted by Littell and Girvin (2002), determines the behavioral change of players of organizations during interventions.

In synthesizing the three theories of change towards analyzing the strategic management of the College during COVID-19, the analyses began with diagnosing Lewin's unfreezing process, Lippitt's motivation, and contemplation, where leadership was tasked to identify systemic inefficiencies and assess stakeholder engagements. In applying Lewin's change, Lippitt's role allocation, and DiClemente's action/maintenance, adaptations such as the provision of digital infrastructure, professional development training, and maintenance of professional attitude were executed using delegated leadership roles. In the end, Lewin's refreezing and institutionalization, Lippitt's evaluation, and

DiClemente's relapse prevention offered formal protocols for managing crises and assessing outcomes to avoid regression. The merged framework in this research presents a balance of structured leadership (Lewin/Lippitt) with individual readiness (Prochaska and DiClemente), which offers a replicable model to guide institutional development, as exemplified in the College's strategic management for development.

Methodology

Research Paradigm

The study belongs to the interpretive/constructivist paradigm, which stresses the source of knowledge as interpretations people give to experiences, they undergo in their interactions with the environment (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Leedy & Ormrod, 2014). In this study, the observed knowledge construction practices, as revealed in the responses of the research participants, are recorded and interpreted to ascertain both driving and restraining forces of the College's workforce, and participants to enable the research to establish approaches to change the status quo (unfreeze and change) for robust endemic growth path (freeze) (Cummings et al., 2015; Kritsonis, 2005).

Ontological and Epistemological Stances

The ontological assumption of this study belongs to the nominalist school of thought that believes that knowledge does not exist in an external world so that man can discover and objectively access it (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Leedy & Ormrod, 2014). Instead, the meaning people conceive for things is because of their thinking and perception about those things in the social environment. The epistemological stance is that organisms get knowledge by constructing meaning subjectively out of their experiences in the social environment (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Leedy & Ormrod, 2014). The study adopted these ontological and epistemological positions because the research participants could best define strategies adopted by the college and what, in their subjective thinking, could work best in developing the college contextually.

Research Approach

This research adopts a qualitative approach in describing the phenomenon of change and the strategies for the development of Dambai College of Education. This research has chosen the qualitative approach because participants have their selective definition of what is meant by development, have their own definitions of the strategies of developing educational institutions and have their own view of what could be subjectively adopted as ways of improving institutional chances of development (Levitt et al., 2018).

Design of the Study

The design adopted for this research is participatory action research (PAR) of qualitative approach. Creswell et al. (2007) asserted that PAR has a major feature as its efficacy to produce social change towards improving the quality of life of the researched. This design has been chosen for this study because the researched society is still undergoing change and growth as a social unit, and the research's aim is to explore what had worked in developing the institution and strategies to further adopt in getting the institution to develop better. Again, the research participants are also contributors to the positive change for improvement in the institution; they are engaged in the actions together with the researcher.

Sample and Sampling Techniques

The sample size of the study is 15 participants. The Head of Department (HoD) of each of the six academic departments was purposively selected to represent the department in this research (HoDs coded P1 - P6). Also, each of the Head of Unit of the five non-academic units was sampled as a participant (coded P11 - P15). The College staff are categorized into two unions (academic and non-academic); thus, the union leader of each was purposively selected as a participant (coded P9, P10). From the students' leadership, the Students Representative Council (SRC) president and the secretary purposively participated in the research (coded P7, P8). Thus, a homogeneous purposive sampling was adopted in coming up with the sample of 15 participants (Heads of Departments-academic and non-academic, union leaders, SRC executives) who have shared in-depth knowledge and experiences of the College's managerial procedures. By emphasizing homogeneity, thematic saturation, and relevance were achieved, and peripheral data was excluded, thereby sharpening the data analysis on systemic institutional management issues. The procedure of homogeneous purposive sample, though appropriate for obtaining in-depth information and achieving thematic saturation within specific contexts, fundamentally limits the generalizability of findings due to the small sample size (N=15). Focusing on narrowly defined groups, the research prioritized context-specific findings over statistical representativeness, even though this approach risks overlooking divergent perspectives, potentially narrowing information on educational institutional management. In mitigating this, the research leveraged thematic saturation, where recurring patterns of participants were used, and triangulation to ensure the credibility of outputs. While the findings of this research are not generalizable to all colleges of education, they offer transferable insights for institutions in comparable contexts

because this research value lies in contextual specificity, which provides a unique framework for similar institutions rather than universal claims.

Research Instrument

The main instrument used for data collection was an open-ended questionnaire. An open-ended questionnaire was used to help participants describe their experiences without any borders or restrictions under the various themes. The open-ended questionnaire contained items that sought information on the strategies adopted during the period under review, their impact, and strategies being advocated for further engagement of the college community in the development of the college. The choice to use an open-ended questionnaire prioritized anonymity, which reduced social desirability bias when discussing sensitive institutional issues that participants might hesitate to reveal in an interview or focus group setting (Wutich et al., 2010). The open-ended questionnaire gathered rich reflective narratives through written responses and provided room for participants to elaborate on their views. While interviews or focus groups could have added depth, the nominalist ontological stance of this research emphasizes individual and context-specific realities over collective consensus. Limitations of using only open-ended questionnaires is acknowledged. Triangulating data between the two different researchers compensated for the inability to probe responses in real time, and the use of a homogeneous sample ensured thematic depth despite the method's limitations.

Data Collection Procedure

Participants' consent was sought with a consent-seeking form, which they ticked individually to affirm their interest in their involvement. Afterward, the open-ended questionnaire was distributed to them. The filled questionnaire was retrieved after three weeks duration.

Data Analyses

Thematic analyses were carried out on all the open-ended questionnaire data collected. Manual transcription followed the formation of codes. To develop categories and themes, the data was iteratively read for familiarity and to identify similar or different comments. The data was summarised into smaller texts based on emerging similar ideas with respect to each research objective. The categorized similar comments under each objective were then named themes. Triangulation and peer debriefing were adapted to ensure the trustworthiness of the results. Thus, the two researchers each used the same transcribed data to develop individual themes. The analyses were compared until a consensus was reached for the final themes for each research objective. The researchers are members of College Management, making them insider participant researchers and superordinate of the participants. Using the open-ended questionnaire, which had no participant's direct identity, protected the participants from fear, intimidation, and subjectivity and hence made them confident in providing their responses objectively. Thus, the responses provided are deemed to be reliable and void of biases. Since the researchers are members of the College Management, limitations such as biases in analyses were mediated by peer debriefing and triangulation, where each researcher conducted individual analyses, the results were compared, and a consensus arrived.

Findings

The study was structured to determine managerial approaches that worked well in ensuring rapid transformational development of Dambai College of Education and to delve into strategies to adopt to enhance the development of the institution. The results are presented in the proceeding sections based on the themes generated under each research question.

Strategies That Worked for Rapid Transformation of Dambai College of Education

Themes generated from responses as strategies that were employed by the College leadership to ensure development are reported in this section.

Effective Governance

The leadership approaches reported by various participants include democratic, inclusive decision-making, cooperative and collaborative stakeholder engagement, delegation, adequate supervision, regular meetings, the non-discriminatory offer of equal opportunity, division of labour, the conduct of follow-ups, assertiveness, information sharing, adherence to colleges of education administrative working documents to set up administrative structures and committees, and foster of unity among staff and students. Anecdotes from some participants (11 out of 15) in buttressing their claims are below:

P5: "...the new leadership and their style which leaned towards democracy and aimed at involving ideas from all stakeholders of the College appeared to help them with good developmental ideas"

P11: "...the all-inclusive and open administration the current leadership has adopted what drives all the support they are getting. People and stakeholders now trust the system, and many are ready to help"

P8: "I can see that it is the collaborative leadership strategy of the leaders that encouraged members of various sectors or units to be ready to work together in achieving the College's goals"

P1: "...the mixed leadership style that learns/tilts itself towards democracy; aimed at bringing on board ideas from all stakeholders of the College"

P3: "...open and inclusive leadership created a sense of unity and 'we feeling'"

P7: ...there is currently just-in-time delivery of service and products from administration

P13: ...roles are delegated to units and departments promoting teamwork, creative problem solving through channel of communication

The responses in the quotes indicate clearly that the practice of open, democratic, collaborative, and inclusive administration was fundamental to effective governance and motivation within the institution.

Recruitment of Staff and Continuous Professional Development

All 15 participants mentioned the strategy of new staffing and capacity-building programs as a model that significantly helped to develop the human resource capacity of the College. All participants maintained that the recruitment of new staff augmented the existing members, and the weekly college-based professional development programs provided faculty members the opportunity to discuss academic issues, share best professional practices, and plan for continuous development. The initiative increased staff strength and reduced workload on the former existing few, thereby improving quality and effectiveness across the sectors of the College. Comments from some participants in this theme are below:

P9: "The regular professional development (PD) sessions have helped lecturers discover new teaching techniques, especially in the online teaching-learning space. If not for the PD meetings instituted by leadership, many academic staff would not have been able to teach, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic."

P14: "... and the recruitment of new academic and services support staff brought fresh capacity, talent and expertise to the college, benefiting both students and the institution at large"

P4: "recruitment of more staff helped to ease the workload on individual lecturers. This promoted efficiency and effectiveness."

P7: "Frequent insecurity issues on the campus have reduced. Recruiting a chief security and other able officers have contributed to an improved security system which was initially a threat to the college members. Leadership also recruited new kitchen staff, which resolved delays in making students' food ready at the right time, which usually affected lessons and reduced the stress on the kitchen staff."

The continuous professional development and recruitment of new staff were vital initiatives for maintaining high academic standards and providing students with quality education.

Generation of Internal Funds for Financial Self-Reliance

Financial strategies identified in the responses include strict budgeting for the use of financial resources and ensuring value for money in all financial transactions; staff mutual understanding of being remitted lesser amounts for committee sitting allowances than the statutory approved rates to save money towards capital-intensive projects; staff paying for accommodation within the college campus; renting college facilities for conferences; and faculty winning research grants. Some quotes from respondents (9 out of 15) are:

P1: "The strategy of leadership to explore other means of increasing the internally generated funds by venturing into rental of facilities to augment government's support was noted for enhancing the development of the college."

P4: "The College gained financial strength when the leadership introduced the strategy of internally generated funds, where all staff staying on campus were engaged to pay a reasonable amount as rent."

These reports indicate clearly that the College leadership employed internal measures to save money for the College and did not wait for external funding alone for its resources, though it is a government-established institution. Thus, diversified resource mobilisation is helpful in grooming and sustenance.

Merit-Based Remuneration of Staff

The participants (11 out of 15) stated that a merit-based reward system was a necessity that motivated and enhanced the work output of staff members. The rewards given to staff ranged from sitting allowances as agreed upon, cash prizes, and public praises and recognitions through citations. Also, staff members with delayed promotions and delayed responsibility allowances were appropriately processed and paid accordingly. Some participants' comments were:

P5: *"Many senior staff were overdue for promotion and were all on a backlog until this new leadership took over and promoted all of them. The excitement and money benefits it came with made members very serious with the work, unlike the years before".*

P3: *"...some degree of motivation given to staff members through this leadership has motivated members to give out their best"*

P13: *"Giving recognition to hardworking staff members by this leadership has contributed to the productivity of staff members"*

The above narrations indicate that a positive working attitude was developed by the staff out of various remunerations and recognition gave them and such led to the advancement of the College as all put their hands together at their various units in the offering of their technical services.

Establishment and Enhancement of Physical Resources

Some 80% of the participants reported that the construction of new halls of residence, renovation of the dilapidated science lab into a glass house, student halls of residence, lecture block and creation of conference hall / ICT lab, creation of Council Chamber, Senior Staff Chamber, Heads of Departments Chamber, Finance Office, Secretariat, Secretary's Office, Internal Auditor's Office, and other needful offices; construction of bath houses; and installation of water pumps were crucial projects from IGF that gave the College a facelift.

Some excerpts of the participants are below:

P2: *"... leadership-maintained commitment and followed up on contractors whose contracts were at different incomplete stages in the college. Leadership ensured the termination and re-awarding of some contracts to facilitate the completion process."*

P11: *"The construction of new halls of residence eased the accommodation pressure, which positively impacted student enrolment"*

P4: *"In the area of infrastructure, amidst limited resources, management was able to add additional structures to supplement the existing ones"*

P15: *"The construction of bathhouses and the installation of pressure pumps improved water availability and accessibility, enhancing the quality of life for both students and staff"*

P7: *"Shower facilities for the students have relieved them of fetching water from outside campus / carrying water with gallons from town to college."*

These comments on infrastructural development indicate clearly that it is a key driver of the college growth. The facilities contribute to the overall quality of the learning environment, enhance aesthetics, ensure the safety and functionality of college buildings, and demonstrate the commitment of leadership to the well-being of the college community.

What Impact Was Made by the Strategies?

Participants identified the impact made through the various strategies.

To them, the all-inclusive decision-making through the frequent meetings in a democratic style brought about the creation of ownership of roles and responsibilities among the staff and students. Some participants also maintained that the professional development of faculty and strengthening of academic staff are strategies that collectively contributed to a dynamic and high-quality academic environment within the College. A participant identified that English and Mathematics results were very poor in the immediate past, with a lot of students writing referrals. However, the addition of new tutors and the continuous weekly engagement in professional development changed the poor story into improved learning outcomes (more than 80%) within the 2020/2021 academic year.

It was also stated that the enhanced physical infrastructural development of the College was a strategy that led to increased student enrolment into the College, gave a facelift to the College, and boosted the morale of the staff, students, and other stakeholders such as the Council and the Traditional Area Chiefs. Specifically, the construction of bath houses for students and the installation of showers and water pressure pumps in bungalows were reported to have improved water accessibility on campus, which reduced the burden and improved the quality of life for both students and staff.

The commitment of faculty to general and unit-level meetings, submission of required reports, taking responsibility for teaching and learning and extracurricular activities, and volunteering attitudes were noted to be impressive and contributed to the growth of the College and enhanced students' learning outcomes where referrals reduced drastically with more than 80% improvement.

Appropriate motivation is noted to be a significant drive of high job performance; thus, the remuneration of faculty members was a strategy that contributed to high work output and, hence, the general development of the institution. For example, participant P15 reported, saying, *"We became sluggish and nonchalant because we felt our welfare was neglected. But when people were recognized and rewarded for the sacrifices made for the institution by the new leadership, we became motivated, and that brought a lot of improvement, especially to the teaching-learning activities in the classrooms". Therefore, the merit-based reward system that was adopted by leadership appeared to have impacted the productivity level of the faculty members and consequently contributed to the development of DACE, especially in academic-related activities of the institution.*

Some other impacts reported include improved quality of services due to effectiveness as additional staff were recruited to augment the existing few. All the above indicate that if a consistent effort is made in the administrative running of educational institutions, much improvement and impact could be made in contributing to the learning outcome of all learners.

Which Strategies Could be Further Adopted to Develop Dambai College of Education?

The core mandate of higher education institution leaders is to realize progress in the respective dimensions of the institutions, such as the promotion of effective teaching and learning, research and publication, and extension services. Institutional development goals are attained through effective strategies and policies adopted by leadership. Participants' responses are below.

Financial Sustainability

Participants suggested that management adopt sustainable financial strategies. Participants proposed diversified revenue streams as a crucial and sustainable approach toward long-term and viable financial independence. Comments of the participants (74%) on institutional financial sustainability are quoted as follows.

P1: "Explore the means of increasing IGF. Expand already profitable ventures"

P3: "Ensure prompt processing and release of students' results and certificates. It will attract more students for admission and thus contribute to the financial strength of the College."

P4: "Introduce a policy where students have to pay their fees to be eligible for course registration."

P11: "Expand the scope of the IGF by introducing new business-related programmes"

P13: "The introduction of new programmes structured on weekends and adopting the modular system will attract more professionals and thereby increase revenue."

P12: "Cultivation of food crops on the College land will reduce the cost of procurement of food and also provide jobs for the college community."

Participants emphasized the need for the College to diversify its sources of income, suggesting agricultural ventures and weekend courses as an alternative means to increase internally generated funds (IGF) for financial sustainability. Participants reported the hypothetical impact of timely completion of students' academic processes and certifications on the college's financial health as it potentially attracts more students for admission into the institution.

Continuous Community Engagement and Support

Community engagement fosters a sense of belongingness and support. An average of 60% of the participants made comments relative to the need for community engagements. Participants' comments on this theme are quoted below.

P2: "A cultural committee comprising staff and students should be formed to engage the community towards building the College"

P5: "Community service such as clean-up exercises should be organized to strengthen the bond between the College and the community."

P8: "Engagement with traditional rulers and politicians in the Oti Region should be prioritized towards soliciting funds to support variant developments."

The Dambai College of Education is an inseparable element of the Dambai traditional area. The Traditional Council and the community at large are and can continually be significant contributors to the development of the College, as indicated by the participants. Participants reported the need for the College to form college-community clubs and engage in community services as an approach to strengthening ties between the college and the community.

Continuous Empowerment

Participants' comments that relate to approaches of empowering the college workforce to realise developments are stated below. A frequency of 8 out of the 15 participants stated strategies to adapt to ensure continuous empowerment of the college workforce.

P4: "Creating opportunities for staff development will empower them to work more efficiently"

P9: "The use of inclusive committees will provide staff members the opportunities to learn human relations and group dynamism"

P10: "Heads of departments and other unit heads should be empowered through leadership programs to help them discharge their duties with less supervision"

P11: "Human resource capacity building and encouragement of staff should be emphasized to enable progress in their academics and non-academic pursuits"

P13: "Decision makings will be enhanced if roles are delegated to staff members through department boards and unit heads"

The proposed strategies, empowering heads of departments and units through leadership pieces of training, delegation of responsibilities to staff, continuous involvement of all staff in decision-making processes, and general participatory management approach in fostering a sense of ownership and shared responsibility among the staff were advocated for by participants, which have high tendencies of improving stakeholder engagement in the College for a positive workplace culture that can contributing to employee satisfaction and retention.

Infrastructure and Human Resource Development

Generally, the development of an institution is hinged on human resource development as well as its physical or infrastructural development. Reports of the participants (10 participants) as strategies to use for enhancing the human resources and physical development of the institution are quoted below.

P2: "The College should partner with construction companies and politicians/businessmen to provide advanced support while the college pays later in instalments"

P3: "Management is entreated to explore and engage staff in opportunities of professional development"

P5: "Career development and efficient working seminars for both staff and students can improve working capacity"

P11: "Through infrastructural development proposals, the College can write to government agencies such as the Ghana Tertiary Education Commission"

P13: "Appeals should be given to the College SRC to prioritize their projects by identifying and undertaking need-based projects"

Participants emphasized strategies for both infrastructural and human resource development. This includes internally generated funds and avenues for soliciting funds from companies and the larger community. The institution should focus on both academic and physical infrastructure to provide an optimal learning environment for students and staff. Balancing internal funding sources with external partnerships as a strategy could ensure sustainable growth and the creation of a well-equipped educational institution.

Student Motivation and Involvement

The development of educational institutions is significantly linked to the academic success of students. The participants indicated that if students are more encouraged, motivated, and involved in institutional decision-making, it can essentially contribute to a vibrant academic community. A frequency of 74% of participants made comments relative to motivating students, as quoted below.

P12: "Adopt multiple engagement strategies to prevent students from focusing more on their social lives at the neglect of academics"

P7: "Academic counselors should be entreated to strengthen their counseling services to guide and encourage students to come out with their best"

P4: "The introduction of a regularised awards scheme in each academic program for deserving students will motivate the other students to put in their best"

Students' academic success and the development of professional skills for lifelong application in industry are the core mandates of higher educational institutions. Participants proposed implementing a simple awards scheme to motivate students as a social incentive could foster a positive academic atmosphere and create a culture of excellence to strive for success.

Technology Integration

Ten (10) participants suggested leveraging appropriate technological tools and using platforms such as social handles/media to visibility the College and foster effective learning. Some participants' comments are quoted below.

P4: "There should be non-interrupted internet connectivity on campus to enhance academic work"

P8: "Appropriate media houses and social media platforms can be used to sell the College"

P13: "ICT week celebrations can be introduced to serve as a platform for introducing both staff and students to contemporary ways of integrating technology into teaching and learning and for other personal engagements"

Technology has become an undeniable asset to be leveraged for development in society and higher educational institutions in particular. The integration and application of technology in educational administration and in the professional practices of academic staff and students is an effective strategy that enhances institutional management and improves the teaching and learning experiences of teachers and students.

Discussion

The discussion of the research findings is presented in three themes: the strategies that worked for the transformation of the College, the impact of the approach adopted, and new strategies that could be further adapted to enhance the development of the College of Education.

Strategies That Worked for Rapid Transformation of Dambai College of Education

Variables that inform what strategies to adopt for institutional development and sustenance are contextually sensitive. Participants reported unique variables as determiners of the progressive development of Dambai College of Education. The major strategies that were adopted by leadership resulting in the unfreezing, change, and freezing of the institution, as reported by the participants, were focused leadership and effective governance, recruitment of staff and continuous professional development, generation of internal funds for financial self-reliance, merit-based remuneration of staff, and establishment and enhancement of physical resources.

The contemporary leadership skills reported that birthed the transformation of the institution were democratic and inclusive decision-making, collaborative stakeholder engagement, delegation, adequate supervision, adherence to administrative policies, and fostering unity among staff and students. These leadership approaches enhance institutional effectiveness, empower stakeholders for continuous improvement, and support governance frameworks that promote adaptability and professional growth. Adeniyi et al. (2024) and Jamali et al. (2022) agreed that while changing organizational culture is challenging, skilled leadership can navigate contextual demands and boost employee confidence, driving institutional development. While democratic governance is praised for driving institutional transformation, critics highlight context-dependent limitations such as excessive exclusivity leading to decisional paralysis (Bolden, 2016), while collaborative processes risk diffusing accountability (Jamali et al., 2022). Although Adeniyi et al. (2024) and Jamali et al. (2022) underscored leadership's role in organizational cultural change, critics argue these strategies require balancing with contextual pragmatism (Northouse, 2021).

The pragmatic step by college management in identifying and leading to address the developmental needs of the college directly relates to existing theories, where a problem is identified, assessed, and solutions formulated towards mitigating the gap (Albers et al., 2024; Cummings et al., 2015; Kritsonis, 2005). The positive attitude and increased motivation by staff towards work stemmed from management-induced elements of motivation such as inclusivity, send-off packages, timely processing of documents, trust building, delegation, payment of allowances due to staff, promoting a neat environment, building positive relationships, and approving and implementing workable policies. Albers et al. (2024) established that such strategies change poor perceptions and attitudes toward work and enable players to respond positively to motivated environments for increased productivity in a systemic, sustained manner.

Enhancing staff capacity and faculty professional development significantly contributed to institutional transformation. Initiatives to increase staff strength and reduce workload improved work quality and service standards. Jamali et al. (2022) highlight that professional development training in higher education enhances faculty leadership skills and thereby improves educational quality. Similarly, Salim (2020) found that such training positively impacts staff performance and fosters creativity in institutional administration.

Internally generated fund (IGF) was a reported self-reliant financial strategy that significantly contributed to the physical development of the College, which revealed leadership's usage of internal mechanisms to foster change without overreliance on governmental subventions. Leadership approaches grounded in Lewin's change theory principles, such as unfreezing by altering traditional high-expenditure practices, have proven effective (Burnes, 2021). Merit-based faculty remuneration and timely promotions fostered positive work attitudes and environments. Kissoonduth et al. (2019) affirm that fair remuneration is a strategic enabler of high performance in higher education, while Sardjana et al. (2018) emphasized that investing in academic staff well-being is crucial for sustained institutional development.

The results also indicated that leadership reportedly demonstrated commitment to realizing the physical development of the College based on the noted infrastructural developmental projects completed and others at significant stages of completion. Literature has consistently highlighted the significance of infrastructural development in fostering institutional growth and contributing to the overall quality of the learning environment (Cuesta et al., 2016; Ogunode & Ibrahim, 2024). The literature agrees that the establishment and maintenance of necessary physical facilities demonstrated leadership's strategic priority of fostering sustained institutional development and their commitment to the development of the College, which led to institutional competitiveness and enhanced global standards (Ogunode & Ibrahim, 2024).

Impact Made by Strategies That Were Adopted by Leadership

The findings revealed multifaceted strategies employed by the college management for institutional development, highlighting dynamic, inclusive decision-making approaches, professional development and enhancement of faculty strength, and adopting a self-reliant financial strategy to revamp the physical infrastructural capacity of the college. The transformational and democratic leadership style adopted by the College management, according to literature, fostered ownership and accountability among academic staff and students, which is in tandem with theories of participatory governance, which emphasizes the sense of shared responsibilities for organizational advancement (Khan, 2016). The noted academic improvement of students could be associated with the increased academic staff strength and subject-based professional development programs that were instituted. Faculty availability and professional training significantly influence students' academic performance (Erick & Kwaba, 2024; Faisal et al., 2012; Garwe, 2014). Similarly, Amoako et al. (2023) highlight that improved infrastructure enhances public perception, student interest, enrolment, and stakeholder engagement. Day et al. (2016) and Sultana et al. (2024) emphasize that these strategies reflect institutional leadership's commitment and the potential to convert investments in physical and human resources into positive academic outcomes and institutional benefits.

When the College leadership engaged faculty members through decision-making, meetings, submission of regular reports, voluntary activities, and strategic remuneration of deserving members, literature suggests the effect of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation was underscored (Erick & Kwaba, 2024). Sultana et al. (2024) found that addressing capacity gaps through new recruitment promotes adequate resource allocation for institutional growth. The observed operational efficiency and improved learning outcomes highlight the effectiveness of the College's transformative leadership. These impacts suggest that educational leaders should adopt comprehensive approaches to management, focusing on stakeholder engagement, resource optimization, and professional development.

Strategies That Could be Further Adopted to Develop Dambai College of Education

The development of higher educational institutions requires a multifaceted approach to addressing their administrative and academic needs. To further ascertain and accelerate the progress of the College, additional strategies that align with contemporary educational demands were explored. The participants enumerated financial sustainability, continuous community engagement and support, continuous empowerment, infrastructure and human resource development, students' motivation and involvement, and technology integration as key strategies.

Participants emphasized the critical need for financial sustainability by employing diversified income avenues. For example, ventures such as agriculture, weekend academic courses, and prudent fiscal practices were recommended as alternative avenues to increase internal financial sustainability. Higher education institutions that adopt diverse internally generated fund (IGF) initiatives are better equipped for financial sustainability (Adenugba & Ogechi, 2013; Aggrey, 2023). Similarly, Idris (2024) found that strategic fund generation enhances financial stability. This highlights the importance of integrated approaches, combining income diversification and efficient fiscal practices, to establish a sustainable financial foundation for long-term institutional growth.

Community engagement was noted as an approach to maintaining collaboration between the College community and the traditional community. This explained the interdependent nature of the College from its surrounding communities, where participants emphasized the need to maintain such culture through community services and clubs. Collaboration with traditional councils strengthens cultural alignment, builds community trust, and incorporates service-learning into institutional missions, fostering sustainable, long-term partnerships (Mohale, 2023; Nkoana & Dichaba, 2017).

The proposed strategies to ensure the development of the institution can better be sustained through effective resources management and effective personnel empowerment. A reported approach was to empower heads of departments and unit heads through leadership training, delegation of responsibilities, and involvement of staff in decision-making processes to reflect a participatory management approach that fosters a sense of ownership and shared responsibility among the staff. Empowering institutional leaders enhances their attitudes, commitment, and effectiveness, driving focus on improvement initiatives (Kilag et al., 2023). Similarly, Abiodun-Oyebanji (2019) found that empowered leaders excel in advancing higher education institutions.

Recognizing and rewarding student achievements were reported as a social incentive that could foster a positive academic atmosphere. It was emphasized that involving students in decision-making fosters a vibrant learning culture,

instills pride and belonging, and enhances learning outcomes. Imbrisca and Toma (2020) similarly highlight that student engagement contributes to the sustainability of higher education institutions and promotes institutional recognition and success.

Integrating modern communication tools and technology into education fosters a dynamic, forward-thinking learning environment. Participants emphasized that using technology in administration and professional practices enhances institutional management and teaching experiences. This aligns with Kurniawan et al. (2024), who found that technological integration creates a more inclusive, flexible, and responsive educational ecosystem.

Conclusion

It has become clear that the College has transformed positively in many spheres: academic performance, human resource recruitment and development, and physical infrastructure. This research has underscored the significant role of adaptive, context-sensitive leadership in driving institutional resilience, which offers broader implications for educational management in resource-constrained settings. The transformation of Dambai College of Education shows that systemic change in teacher education institutions is achievable through strategies that harmonize structural reforms (e.g., IGF mobilization) with socio-cultural inclusivity (e.g., engaging traditional authorities), which challenges the notion that resource limitations preclude innovations. The findings of the research advocate for a unique application of change theories, where leadership balances decision-making with participatory governance to navigate the complexities of institutional transitions without sacrificing equity or pedagogical integrity. This research adds to the field of educational management by establishing that teacher education institutions that are relatively resource-constrained can successfully navigate the complexities of institutional development through adaptive leadership and systemic resilience. It is worth noting that this research uniquely identified cultural and contextualized strategies that are critical drivers of sustainable transformation and development in a teacher education institution. The research has also offered a replicable framework and advanced theoretical discourse by demonstrating how systemic change theories can be pragmatically adapted to engage stakeholders and provide actionable insights for institutional change and development.

Recommendations

The following recommendations are given to improve the growth of the College.

1. It is recommended that analogous colleges of education reimagine traditional Western change theories by adapting contextually sensitive hybrid models and incorporating global south institutional logic by leveraging informal networks and frugal innovations.
2. The continuous implementation of the College Strategic Development Plan (2021-2025) should include a facility audit, staff recruitment and training need audit, technology integration audit, staff and students' motivation audit, stakeholder engagement and decision-making audit to create a positive change in all the thematic areas.
3. Advancement of internationalization of the College to accept worldwide innovations and expertise. Thus, the College Strategic Development Plan (2021-2025) could be audited for its suitability in promoting the internationalization agenda of the College. If gaps are noticed, an addendum could be developed and approved by the Council.

Limitations

The enablers of institutional development reported in this study are responses drawn from participants at only the Dambai College of Education. Even though the institutional structure of Colleges of Education in Ghana has similar operational structures, it is not primarily the same in other higher education institutions across and beyond Ghana. The generalisability of the findings, therefore, is limited to similar contextually sensitive institutions. The findings are also drawn from an open-ended questionnaire (only qualitative) using selected leaders of the College. A more robust finding could be obtained through a mixed-methods approach where the quantitative instrument could reach larger higher education leaders across Ghana to re-confirm the leadership strategies that can yield the reported institutional development.

Ethics Statements

The study, which involved human participants, was reviewed and approved by the Council of the Dambai College of Education. The participants provided their written informed consent to participate in this study.

Acknowledgment

The authors appreciate the immense contribution of the College leadership who served as participants and provided credible information that has resulted in this paper.

Conflict of Interest

The authors affirm that there is no conflict of interest with regard to the publication of this article.

Funding

No funding in the form of a grant was received from any agency or institution in the public, commercial, or not-for-profit sectors.

Generative AI Statement

As the authors of this work, we minimally used the AI tool (ChatGPT) for the purpose of summarising. After using this AI tool, we reviewed and verified the final version of our work. We, as the authors, take full responsibility for the content of our published work.

Authorship Contribution Statement

Atiku: Concept and design, data acquisition, critical revision of manuscript, supervision and final approval. Erebakere: Data analysis / interpretation, and drafting manuscript.

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