

See discussions, stats, and author profiles for this publication at: <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/328225542>

# Rethinking stakeholder engagement in higher education reforms: The case of Colleges of Education in Ghana

Article · October 2018

CITATIONS

0

READS

63

1 author:



[Francis Ansah](#)

University of Cape Coast

14 PUBLICATIONS 26 CITATIONS

SEE PROFILE

Some of the authors of this publication are also working on these related projects:



Balancing the focus of quality assurance in African higher education institutions - A case study from Ghana [View project](#)

# *Rethinking Stakeholder Engagement in Higher Education Reforms: The Case of Colleges of Education in Ghana*

FRANCIS ANSAH, HOPE PIUS NUDZOR & SAMUEL AWUKU

## **Abstract**

*Educational reforms have become a key global feature of contemporary higher education. Majority of these reform initiatives in developing nations appear to be characterised by the importation of success stories from developed nations, either through adoption or adaptation. However, whether reform initiatives are adopted or adapted, it is undeniable that their effective implementation and ownership responsibility for sustainability depend largely on the effectiveness of stakeholder engagement in the process of change. Using a 'push' and 'pull' engagement framework with qualitative research methods, in particular individual and focus group interviews, this article examines the perspectives of College of Education Leadership on the usefulness of their engagement in the implementation and ownership responsibility for the sustainability of the Ghana Government's flagship programme 'Transforming Teacher Education and Learning' (T-TEL) in the Colleges of Education. The findings indicate a fair level of engagement of college leadership with the T-TEL project activities using integrated 'push' and 'pull' engagement platforms. However, the level of engagement appeared asymmetrical such that the push engagement information was over concentrated on College Principals. The study concludes that this has led to minimal ownership responsibility for sustainability of the reform initiatives within the Colleges. In light of this, it is recommended that extended engagement with the College of Education leadership should be pursued by the Government with a particular focus on the pull engagement platforms, and with the aim of achieving ownership and the lasting impact of the programme's objectives.*

## **Introduction**

Educational reforms have become a key feature of contemporary higher education globally. In Sub-Saharan Africa and Ghana in particular, higher education, including teacher education, has undergone several reform initiatives. According to Akyeampong (2017) in order to address the problem of not providing enough opportunities for pre-service teachers to learn teaching in the context of real classrooms, Ghana has been implementing teacher education reforms since 2004, while the idea of

such reform has been attracting attention since the 1990s. In 1995, the teacher education curriculum in Ghana was reformed to move away from a highly teacher-centred approach to a student-centred one (Akyeampong, 2017). Another major reform also occurred in 2004 with a focus on teaching practicum to enable pre-service teachers to gain better classroom experience prior to actual professional practice. This reform was intended to reduce the time pre-service teachers spend in residential teacher education and devote more time to teaching practicum.

In developing nations, particularly Sub-Saharan Africa, the majority of reform initiatives in higher education appear to be characterised by importations of success stories from the developed world, either through adoption or adaptation. Whichever of these two methods reform initiatives are introduced by, it is undeniable that their effective implementation and ownership responsibility for sustainability depend largely on the degree of attention given to the specific 'cultural context' from which the successful initiatives are taken (Harris, cited in Nudzor & Ansah, 2017) as well as the effectiveness of stakeholder engagement in the processes of change.

These two variables (the cultural context from which reform initiatives are replicated vis-à-vis effective stakeholder engagement in reform processes) certainly qualify as suitable candidates for academic investigation. However, for the purposes of this article, the focus is on the latter. Using a 'push' and 'pull' engagement framework with qualitative research methods, particularly individual and focus group interviews, this article examines the perspectives of College of Education (CoE) Leadership on the usefulness of their engagement in the implementation and ownership responsibility for sustainability of the Ghana Government's flagship programme 'Transforming Teacher Education and Learning (T-TEL)'. The rationale of this article is to facilitate a rethink of the models of stakeholder engagement in higher (including tertiary) education reform in all its facets.

The next section of the article outlines the research context. This is followed by the study approach and methods. Thereafter, the findings are presented and discussed before finally the conclusions are given.

### Research Context

There has been a growing debate in recent times on the need to promote

stakeholder engagement in higher education on several fronts, including students, faculty and management in institutional reforms (Kadlec, 2016). Student Affairs Professionals have also argued for the need to rethink student engagement in higher education in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century (Coates, 2005; Kahu, 2013; Quaye & Harper, 2014). Similarly, the need to rethink participant engagement in research, especially community-based research, has also been highlighted forcefully in recent contemporary higher education literature (Strand, Cutforth, Stoecker, Marullo & Donohue, 2003; Walker, 2014; Zhao & Kuh, 2004).

Reforms are part of any effective global educational system (O'Meara, 2011). They have become more profound in higher education, where cost-sharing, strengthened accountability and quality outcomes have become issues at the forefront of contemporary higher education. For these reasons, strengthening stakeholder engagement in higher education reforms is an issue which cannot be relegated to the background. Higher education has stakeholders with different perspectives on issues which requires negotiations and settlements (Ansah, 2015). Effective stakeholder engagement in higher education reforms reduces risks associated with reform implementation and increases the potential of reform sustainability (Grad, 2015; Kadlec, 2016). There is therefore the need for continuous negotiations and settlements through effective engagements of stakeholders to promote ownership responsibility among stakeholders for reform sustainability. Given that the environment of contemporary higher education is dynamic, resulting in regular reforms through innovation and best practice, effective stakeholder engagement, especially implementers of reforms, should be a regular practice in higher education. Engagement is a dynamic relationship where individuals participate in, and are more involved with, particular activities of higher education (Oblinger, 2014). It is considered a critical success factor for higher education and its many stakeholders (Oblinger, 2014).

Calls for teacher education reform abound and have, for more than 40 years, existed alongside the development of research in teacher education (Blanton, Pugach, & Boveda). Ghanaian teacher education is currently experiencing major reforms. In respect to the CoEs in Ghana, they were elevated to tertiary education status in 2012 by an Act of Parliament that enabled them to offer tertiary programmes in teacher education. Their new status required reforms to their operations in

order to be effective and efficient as tertiary institutions producing high quality teachers for the pre-tertiary education subsector in Ghana. The elevation of the CoEs from pre-tertiary to tertiary status brought about the need to re-engineer their operations to be aligned with practices of tertiary education institutions and also to improve the quality of training of pre-service teachers, in order to address poor learning outcomes in pre-tertiary education (Transforming Teacher Education and Learning, 2017).

In line with these expectations, the Government of Ghana, with funding from the Department for International Development (UK), introduced a four-year programme known as Transforming Teacher Education and Learning (T-TEL) with an implementation period from 2014 to 2018. Essentially, the T-TEL project aims to support pre-service teacher professional development and management in order to strengthen pre-service teacher education, to produce professionally effective and efficient teachers for the country's pre-tertiary education. To achieve this aim, the T-TEL's programme of activities focuses on change agenda in the following core areas of teacher education:

1. Training and coaching for CoE tutors in Mathematics, English and Science, and eventually generic materials for all tutors;
2. Support for the management of CoEs and training of its leaders;
3. Support to reform the pre-service curriculum;
4. Support to develop more effective student practicums;
5. Working with the Ministry of Education (MoE) and regulatory bodies on the implementation of existing policies for teacher education;
6. Institution of a Challenge Fund to which CoEs and their partner districts and schools will be able to apply to carry out innovative initiatives;
7. A set of incentives for each CoE to improve their management and training delivery (Transforming Teacher Education and Learning, 2017).

In collaboration with MoE and the Ghana Education Service (GES) together with national-level institutions such as the National Teaching Council (NTC), National Council for Tertiary Education (NCTE), National Accreditation Board (NAB), National Inspectorate

Board (NIB), Universities of Cape Coast (UCC) and Winneba (UEW) and CoEs, several intervention activities have been implemented by T-TEL with a majority of the interventions implemented directly in the CoEs.

Barring any extension, the programme is expected to wind up in 2018. However, the nature of stakeholder engagements with CoE leaders intended to facilitate ownership responsibility and sustainability of the reform initiatives is yet to receive rigorous academic interrogation. Thus, it is important to examine the nature of engagements of CoE leaders with T-TEL's programme of activities, to understand their perspectives on the usefulness and eventual sustainability of the gains from the programme. This is particularly imperative because reform sustainability in higher educational institutions requires genuine ownership responsibility from institutional leadership (Kadlec, 2016). Therefore, in line with this thinking, the study on which this article reports sought to examine the perspectives of CoE leaders on how the nature of engagement with T-TEL's programme of activities has facilitated ownership responsibility for implementation of the programme interventions, and sustainability of gains made by the Programme in the CoEs across the country. In particular, the study examines the nature of the platforms of engagement for college leaders and how these platforms of engagement have promoted college leadership ownership responsibility of interventions for the sustainability of gains made by the T-TEL programme, in order to inform future stakeholder engagement strategies in higher education reforms in Ghana and other developing countries in Africa. This examination is performed against the backdrop that identifying stakeholder engagement concerns is a useful method of helping to identify opportunities, benefits and barriers to sustainability strategies.

The research questions that guided the study are as follows:

1. What have been the platforms for the engagement of CoE leaders in the implementation of the T-TEL programme reforms in the CoEs?
2. How has the engagement facilitated college leaders' ownership responsibility for implementation of the T-TEL activities for sustainability in the CoEs?

Thus, the choice of college leadership as a focus of the study is grounded in the fact that effective implementation and sustainability of reforms in higher education is based on genuine ownership responsibility of institutional leadership (Kadlec, 2016). In addition, it is argued that leadership is cause; everything else is effect (Adei, 2004). Thus, the mobilisation of human and material resources for the implementation and sustainability of reforms initiatives in the colleges is essentially the responsibility of the college leadership.

### Study Approach and Methods

Here, we outline the analytical framework and the methodological approach adopted for the study to set the findings in the context of the evidence gathered.

#### *Analytical framework*

The study uses Wilcox's (2017) engagement framework for a holistic, comprehensive and dynamic integrated platform for student advising. Even though it was designed as a critical component of the curriculum to be used for advising students, it is a logical framework that could be applied in the context of stakeholder engagement generally. It conceptualises effective engagement as integrating *push* and *pull* platforms of communication for stakeholder engagement.

*The Push* engagement platform does an excellent job of 'telling' and 'showing' by *pushing out information* on resources such as necessary requirements, rules and regulations. Its tools are used to address the most critical informational needs, such as describing requirements, clarifying policy, providing instructions, alerting college leaders to approaching deadlines, informing college leaders of new opportunities, inviting college leaders to events, and even in some cases helping to orient stakeholders on already implemented programmes of activities in institutions (Wilcox, 2017). Social media tools such as webinars, podcasts, websites and email are excellent examples of *push* platform engagement tools. They remind stakeholders of deadlines (WhatsApp and SMS), describe requirements (webinar and podcasts), clarify policy (website) and inform stakeholders of new opportunities (email). If these push platform tools are coordinated and used

consistently, they perform a critical role in delivering basic content and free the in-person interaction for deeper exchange (Wilcox, 2017). Although *push* platform engagement makes the recipient stakeholder of information passive in the engagement process, it is useful for enhancing stakeholder understanding of programme content. Therefore, it stands to reason that the push platform could be part of the engagement processes of CoE leaders regarding T-TEL interventions in their colleges.

The *Pull* engagement platform, on the other hand, is useful as it provides customised attention by allowing the stakeholder to be engaged in the active seat for dialogue, reflection and community building. It achieves this through in-person individual appointments, group workshops, institution-based coaching and interactive social media, in support of the deeper work of taking ownership responsibility of programme implementation in higher education institutions (Wilcox, 2017).

It is claimed that for effective stakeholder engagement to be achieved, there is a need to integrate the *push* and *pull* platforms in a well-coordinated manner (Wilcox, 2017). It is plausible to argue, therefore, that by engaging CoEs leaders effectively using well-coordinated *push* and *pull* platforms in the study, genuine ownership responsibility for the implementation and sustainability of T-TEL interventions in the Colleges has been guaranteed.

#### *Methodological approach*

This study was underpinned by a qualitative research design using individual and focus group interviews. The qualitative design was considered appropriate to explore the perspectives of the leadership of CoE in Ghana because it creates a platform for in-depth discussions to generate deeper insights regarding the effectiveness of their engagements in the implementation and ownership responsibility for the sustainability of the T-TEL programme interventions.

Focus group interviews were conducted at workshop situations to elicit the views of CoE leaders on the usefulness of their engagements, and implementation and sustainability of the T-TEL programme interventions in their colleges. In all, eighteen (18) public CoEs from Northern, Eastern/Greater Accra and Volta zones were involved in the

study. Each of the Colleges presented six (6) participants who were considered college leaders because they were carefully selected to represent the key decision making bodies in the Colleges, such as the Governing Council and Management team. In all, one hundred and eight (108) participants took part in the study. These comprised 18 Governing Council Members, 18 Principals, 18 Vice Principals, 18 College Secretaries, 18 Quality Assurance Officers and 18 Heads of Department. Workshops were used to discuss the implementation of T-TEL programme interventions in the colleges and ownership responsibility for the sustainability of the reform initiative. The workshop facilitators were from the NTC, NAB and Leadership Consultants from the Institute of Educational Planning and Administration (IEPA), University of Cape Coast, who for training and development purposes were designated as College Improvement Advisors (CIAs)<sup>1</sup> on the T-TEL project. The workshops were organised in clusters in order to encourage effective participation and discussion. In some instances, each college constituted a focus group. However, in instances where the views of the homogeneous group (e.g. Principals, Quality Assurance Officers, Governing Council Chairs, Secretaries of CoEs etc.) were necessary for specialised knowledge, the focus groups were reconstituted to form homogeneous groups. Activities such as paired discussions, college group discussions and role plays were used as instruments for data collection. To complement the other forms of data collected, in-depth individual interviews were also conducted with College Principals who are the Chief Executive officers of the Colleges.

The data generated from the interviews and focus group discussions were tape-recorded, transcribed and analysed manually. The procedure involved three main stages; namely, familiarising and organising, coding and reducing, interpreting and representing. The following are the processes employed in these three stages. First, the audio tapes were repeatedly played to ensure familiarisation with the issues the respondents raised. Thereafter, the data were transcribed and the transcripts were read several times to group the most important points. Second, the raw data were screened to extract repeated ideas, that is,

1. In the context of T-TEL project activities, CIAs are T-TEL consultants who produced leadership capacity-building resources and facilitated same at workshops, and provided coaching support to college leaders in the various CoEs.

phrases that appeared regularly in the transcripts. These repeated ideas were then developed and coded into categories/themes. The coding was done manually. Third, the transcripts were reviewed extensively to discover any un-coded data, and examined closely to discover any data which did not fit into any of the categories. The major themes that emerged were: the *push* platform of engagement, *pull* platform of engagement, effectiveness of interventions implementation in the colleges, ownership responsibility of college leaders and perceived challenges for sustainability. These are presented and discussed in the next section of the article, bearing in mind the necessity for brevity and precision of reportage.

### Findings and Discussion

In this section, the findings of the study are presented and discussed along the lines of the themes that emerged from the data analysis. When these themes are put together, they help address the key research questions that guided the study.

#### *Push engagement platform*

It emerged that several push engagement platform tools were employed to engage the leadership of the CoE but at different levels of leadership and varying degrees of engagement. The findings show that the dominant push engagement platform tools employed for college leadership engagement were emails, short messaging service (SMS) and the T-TEL Programme website. These tools were used for describing programme requirements, clarifying policy, providing instructions, alerting college leaders to approaching deadlines, informing college leaders of new opportunities, inviting college leaders to events and even in some cases helping to orient stakeholders on already implemented programme activities in the institutions. Respondents captured these in various ways. For example, a member in a focus group discussion put it this way:

*We are sometimes asked to go to the T-TEL website for instructions and guidelines on the Challenge Fund application. When a call is made for Challenge Fund application, they put it*

*on the website. We are also told to go to the website to download materials on professional development...*

The findings also indicate that email, as a push engagement tool, was used frequently to engage college leaders on T-TEL interventions in their colleges. However, in most of the reported cases, the emails were sent to the College Principals without copies to other members of the leadership team. One respondent explained it as follows:

*T-TEL office sends us regular information on programme activities through emails but to our Principal. They don't copy us in the email even if the information is for all staff. They forget that sometimes the Principals don't read their emails regularly.*

This claim was corroborated by many other respondents. In addition, it emerged that most often than not, the Principals were not using institutional emails and also were not regularly checking their emails to pass on information to the other members of the leadership team, which sometimes caused information asymmetry and thus delayed the implementation of T-TEL intervention activities within the Colleges. Another respondent put this rather bluntly:

*T-TEL office usually sends information to our Principal who does not check his email regularly so we sometimes get the information late. Last time, we were supposed to attend a leadership workshop in Kumasi and the invitation was emailed to our Principal who did not check his email on time so the workshop started before we were called and we missed the first day.*

These interview excerpts show that highly digitalised push engagement platform tools were employed in the stakeholder engagement processes in a context where technology uptake seems to be low. For instance, it is clear that some Principals were not checking their emails and T-TEL website regularly to warrant meaningful engagements through digital platforms. The irregular use of emails and other digitally-based tools could be attributed to a generational gap in technology use because

the majority of the Principals were nearing retiring age and would probably not be as used to technology compared to the much younger generation. Such Principals could have been effectively engaged if traditional push platform tools such as postal letters and faxes were employed. This implies that the college leadership were not effectively kept informed as expected in a push engagement platform (Estyn, 2016). To the claim that some Principals were not checking their emails to inform other college leaders on communication from T-TEL national office, leading to situations of ineffective push engagement, it is plausible to argue that T-TEL national office's mechanisms for monitoring push engagement tools were ineffective. If push engagement tools, which are basically used to inform, were effectively monitored by the T-TEL national office, then situations in which other members of the leadership team were not receiving information about impending activities could have been dealt with proactively (Estyn, 2016).

### ***Pull engagement platform***

The findings of the study indicate a fair use of pull engagement tools such as workshops, national stakeholder forums, college-based coaching and special meetings to discuss T-TEL Project interventions and build the leadership capacity of the CoEs. These were expressed variously by respondents:

*Once [in] a while, we hear of national stakeholder forums on the T-TEL Project, particularly on the Diploma in Basic Education curriculum reform, but usually it is the Principals who attend on behalf of the colleges and we hardly get any debriefing from these forums (Comment made by a member of a homogenous focus group).*

*We have so far attended about five leadership training workshops which we have used to build our capacity to revise our mission and vision statements, conduct college self-assessment and develop improvement plans for our college. With the leadership workshops, we have also been trained to develop management policies. So far, with the coaching support of our College Improvement Advisors, we have developed fourteen set of*

*management policies for our college* (Comments from one of the college groups).

*The Principals have had special meetings with the Minister and the National Council for Tertiary Education (NCTE) to discuss the T-TEL Project implementation and sustainability* (Comment made by a member from another homogeneous group).

Similar claims were made by other individuals and group respondents to indicate the use of *pull* engagement platform tools to engage the College Leaders. However, a critical examination of the responses indicates that *pull* engagement tools were used less frequently than the *push* engagement ones. Besides, our analyses show that the use of pull engagement tools was over-concentrated on the Principals, making other members of the leadership team feel less engaged. Undeniably, and as Wilcox (2017) also observes, the less frequent use of the pull engagement tools could have been due to the cost burden associated with the use of such tools. Nonetheless, the over-concentration of attention on the College Principals appeared to have affected leadership teamwork within the colleges somewhat because other members did not feel as engaged as the Principals. This indicates limited feedback for review from college leadership on the implementation of T-TEL activities because other members of the leadership team were constrained from providing effective feedback on activities due to minimal engagement (Estyn, 2016; Wilcox, 2017).

### ***College leaders' ownership responsibility for T-TEL activities implementation***

The findings under this theme show minimal ownership responsibility for T-TEL activities in the colleges by the college leadership, perhaps as a result of the overconcentration of attention on College Principals we flagged up earlier. This feeling of minimal ownership responsibility which frequently appears throughout the entire group discussion, focus group and individualised interview transcripts was expressed in a number of ways:

*Sometimes, T-TEL national office organises workshops in our college and does not involve us in the planning but just inform[s]*

*you of the event which does not permit us to take full charge of such workshops. When it happens like that we are not able to demonstrate to our staff members that the project belongs to us* (Comment by a member of one focus group).

*When they are coming to organise leadership training workshop in our zone, we are not even consulted in the choice venue for the programme let alone ask[ed] for our inputs for the programme of activities even though we are familiar and can negotiate for a better deal* (Comments from a member of another focus group).

*We convinced our staff members to work hard on the Payment by Results projects because when we receive the reward to be given by T-TEL, we will motivate them our own way. Then, when T-TEL brings the reward, it comes with a list of items that qualifies as eligible expenditure such that we cannot spend to motivate our staff our own anymore. How can we demonstrate to our staff that we own the T-TEL project?* (Comments from a College Principal).

*I am also a leader but I receive no training from those who attend the workshops and they do not brief anybody when they return to the College from the leadership training workshops. So how do you expect me to own the T-TEL interventions in the college?* (Comments from a College Leader).

Thus, these quotes, together with other findings reported under the theme of ownership responsibility for implementing T-TEL activities, generally indicate that the implementation of T-TEL interventions are, for the most part, centrally controlled from a national office which did not allow the college leaders to take full charge of the implementation processes in their colleges. It is plausible to argue that even though T-TEL interventions are intended to be owned by the colleges, the decision to centrally control most of the activities may perhaps be due to the donor funded nature of the T-TEL Project. In addition, one could also argue that the reporting requirements associated with internationally funded projects such as this one may be too demanding on the individual



colleges if the implementation of intervention activities is completely devolved to the college level. However, the issue the findings point to here concerns the general lack of deeper college-level engagement with CoE leadership, particularly by national agencies of higher education (such as NCTE and NAB) to instil in them the culture of ownership responsibility for implementing change initiatives in their respective institutions of higher learning (Kadlec, 2016).

### *Sustainability of the gains made by T-TEL in the CoEs*

It emerged that the leaders of the CoEs have observed visible changes in their operations as a result of the implementation of T-TEL interventions in their colleges, and that they are willing to work hard to sustain these changes provided working conditions are made more favourable. The leaders' appreciation of the gains made in the colleges by the T-TEL Project is, for example, discernible from the following quotes:

*The staff members who attended seminars and conferences on leadership and management training workshop have improved their managerial skills and competences in [the] management of human, financial and physical resources. All statutory and academic board committees have been put in place and functional. In addition, the incessant audit queries have ceased and the use of memo and requisition forms have been put in place. We hope that these improvements can continue (Comment from a college group).*

*Teaching and learning in the College has become more effective as a result of the Teaching and Learning policy and guidelines we have developed through T-TEL interventions, and we hope to sustain the improvement (Comment from one respondent of a focus group discussion).*

*There is more collaboration and teamwork in the college than it used to be. Our Principal does a lot of consultation since we started implementing the T-TEL Project. We hope it continues (Comments from one respondent group).*

Clearly, these responses point to the college leaders' observance of the usefulness of the T-TEL interventions in their colleges and their desire to ensure the continuity of the interventions. Interestingly, however, and as the interview/discussion excerpts show, participants predicated the sustainability of the gains on conditions such as availability of funds, devolution of staff appointment decision-making powers to the Governing Councils, mitigation of staff inertia, and reorientation of existing staff into tertiary education culture:

*We need funds to be able to continue to do what T-TEL has been doing in our college. At the moment, we are cash strapped. There are no funds to implement these kinds of interventions on our own (Comment from a College Principal).*

*For us to ensure sustainability of the T-TEL activities, the power of our Governing Council to hire and fire must be activated so that staff allegiance to the College could be complete. Sometimes some of them think they were posted and cannot be fired and this is affecting their commitment seriously (Comments from a respondent in a group discussion).*

*The T-TEL interventions have increased the workload on our staff and they feel overwhelmed with work. We need to find a way of reducing staff workload and push more of these improvement activities on them (Comments from a respondent).*

*Most staff are still carrying 'GES' mentality and do not realise that this is tertiary. So things must be done differently. They need to get used to the culture of tertiary education before we can sustain this T-TEL thing in our college (Comments from a respondent of a focus group discussion).*

Thus, the insights in this section clearly demonstrate that the college leaders seem to have a strong desire to sustain the T-TEL interventions in their respective colleges but feel constrained by factors they do not have full control over (Kadlec, 2016). This suggests that devolution appears to be an effective stakeholder engagement strategy in educational

reforms because it is said to contribute to institutional resilience and flexibility, learning and innovation, and ultimately to the improvement of sustainable performance (Account Ability, 2005).

## Conclusion

This article has examined the nature of engagements of CoE leaders with T-TEL's programme of activities to understand their perspectives on the usefulness and eventual sustainability of the gains from the programme. To achieve this, the study adopted a qualitative research approach using individual and focus group interviews/discussions as strategies for data collection. The findings indicate a fair level of engagement of college leadership with the T-TEL project activities using integrated 'push' and 'pull' engagement platforms. However, the level of engagement appears asymmetrical, such that the push engagement information was over concentrated on College Principals. This, the study argues, has led to minimal ownership responsibility for sustainability of the reform initiatives within the colleges.

Against this backdrop, it is safe to conclude that the level of engagement of the CoE leadership with T-TEL interventions could not produce sufficient ownership responsibility for the sustainability of the reform initiatives within the colleges. The findings demonstrate that the college leaders feel that implementation of T-TEL intervention activities, for the most part, is centrally controlled from a national office which does not allow them to take full charge of implementation of the programme activities in their colleges. Going forward, it is recommended that extended engagement with the CoE leadership should be pursued by the Government, with the focus particularly on the pull engagement platforms, with the aim of achieving ownership and the lasting impact of the programme objectives. It is also recommended that further studies on the individual college's capacity to effectively manage donor funded project at the institutional level need to be undertaken to inform the future implementation of donor funded projects.

## REFERENCES

Adei, S. (2004). *Leadership and nation building*. Ofori-Atta Lecture Series, Accra. AccountAbility. (2005). *AA1000SE Stakeholder Engagement Practitioner's Perspectives*. Australian Government. Canberra.

- Akyeampong, K. (2017). Teacher educators' practice and vision of good teaching in teacher education reform context in Ghana. *Educational Researcher*, 46(4), 194–203. doi: 10.3102/0013189X17711907
- Ansah, F. (2015). Conceptualising external and internal quality assurance in higher education—a pragmatist perspective. *International Journal of African Higher Education*, 2(1), 135–152.
- Blanton, L. P., Pugach, M. C. & Boveda, M. (2014). Teacher education reform initiatives and special education: Convergence, divergence, and missed opportunities (Document No. LS-3). Retrieved from University of Florida, Collaboration for Effective Educator, Development, Accountability, and Reform Center website: <http://ceedar.education.ufl.edu/tools/literature-syntheses/>
- Coates, H. (2005). The value of student engagement for higher education quality assurance. *Quality in Higher Education*, 11(1), 25–36.
- Estyn (2016). Stakeholder engagement strategy 2016–2019 (p.13). Cardiff: Her Majesty's Inspectorate for Education and Training in Wales.
- Grad, M. (2015). Successful stakeholder engagement—a key requirement for higher education. Retrieved from <http://standingpartnership.com/successful-stakeholder-engagement-a-key-requirement-for-higher-education/>
- Kadlec, A. (2016). The need for engagement in higher education. Retrieved from <https://www.publicagenda.org/blogs/the-need-for-engagement-in-higher-education>
- Kahu, E. R. (2013). Framing student engagement in higher education. *Studies in Higher Education*, 38(5), 758–773.
- Nudzor, H. P. & Ansah, F. (2017). Does resistance to change lead inevitably to negative implementation outcomes? *International Journal of Innovative Research and Development*, 6(8), 170–176.
- O'Meara, J. (2011). Australian teacher education reforms: Reinforcing the problem or providing a solution? *Journal of Education for Teaching*, 37(4), 423–431.
- Oblinger, D. G. (2014). Desinged to engage. *Educause Review*, 49(5).
- Quaye, S. J. & Harper, S. R. (2014). *Student engagement in higher education: Theoretical perspectives and practical approaches for diverse populations*: Routledge.
- Strand, K. J., Cutforth, N., Stoecker, R., Marullo, S., & Donohue, P. (2003). *Community-based research and higher education: Principles and practices*. Oxford: John Wiley & Sons.
- Transforming Teacher Education and Learning. (2017). What is T-TEL? Retrieved from <http://www.t-tel.org/about/about-us.html>
- Walker, K. (2014). Researching in communities. *College & Research Libraries News*, 75(9), 514–515.
- Wilcox, E. (2017). The technologist's advising curriculum. Retrieved from <http://er.educause.edu/blogs/2017/7/the-technologists-advising-curriculum>
- Zhao, C. M., & Kuh, G. D. (2004). Adding value: Learning communities and student engagement. *Research in higher education*, 45(2), 115–138.

**Acknowledgements**

We are indebted to the Government of Ghana and UK's DFID for funding assistance for the implementation of the project activities on which this article reports. We are equally grateful to all CoE leaders whose insights and experiences have helped us to tell this compelling story. Finally, we acknowledge the other members of our team, namely: Yaw Afari Ankomah, Rosemary Serwaa Bosu, Michael Amakye, Dora Baaba Aidoo, Marie Bakah, Alfred Ampah-Mensah, Edward Akomaning, Michael Boakye-Yiadom and Wisdom Agbevanu: who are not designated as authors of this article but whose contributions and commitment to the implementation of the T-TEL project activities we appreciate immensely.