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Contextualizing Quality in Education: Stakeholder Perspectives from Ghana's Colleges of Education

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Abstract

This study explored quality assurance practices in Ghanaian Colleges of Education, highlighting challenges and proposing solutions to improve teaching and learning. Using a phenomenological approach, data were collected from 15 participants across five Colleges of Education, including principals, quality assurance officers, and student leaders. Findings revealed that internal quality mechanisms, academic counseling, and staff workshops enhance teaching quality. However, issues such as delayed result releases, curriculum irrelevance, and outdated resources persist. Participants recommended updating curricula, improving infrastructure, and strengthening professional development. The study provides context-specific insights into educational quality enhancement in resource-limited settings.

Keywords: Academic counseling, curriculum relevance, Ghana colleges of education, quality assurance, teacher education

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Introduction

Quality assurance (QA) has become a central feature of higher education systems (HEIs) as institutions navigate increasing demands for accountability, relevance, and improved learning outcomes (Alabi et al., 2018; Crawford & Cifuentes-Faura, 2022). In many contexts, QA has shifted from inspection-driven routines to more participatory internal mechanisms designed to strengthen institutional planning, teaching effectiveness, and continuous improvement (Gulden et al., 2020; Gavu, 2025). In teacher education, QA is especially crucial because the effectiveness of training institutions is strongly linked to the quality of teachers prepared for the basic school system (Altbach & Knight, 2007; Jarvis, 2014).

Across several higher education systems, internal quality assurance (IQA) frameworks have supported improvements in professional standards, programme delivery, and student support structures (Foley, 2024; Arslan, 2025). However, IQA performance varies widely across countries and institutions, often reflecting differences in institutional culture, resource availability, and administrative capacity (Kalolo, 2025). These international experiences demonstrate that while external QA mechanisms establish national benchmarks, internal systems ultimately determine how effectively quality practices are embedded within institutions (Lyakurwa, 2025).

In Ghana, the transformation of Colleges of Education (CoEs) into tertiary institutions and the introduction of the Bachelor of Education (B.Ed) curriculum have heightened the need for robust IQA structures. CoEs are now expected to operate with higher academic standards while ensuring that teacher preparation aligns with national professional requirements (Addae-Kyeremeh & Boateng, 2024). Yet, recent assessments demonstrate persistent concerns regarding teacher competence and programme delivery (OECD, 2023; UNESCO, 2023; Sinsay-Villanueva et al., 2025). The Ministry of Education (2023) reports that only 68% of B.Ed graduates meet expected performance standards, and a Ghana Tertiary Education Commission (GTEC) audit in 2022 revealed that nearly 70% of CoEs lack fully functional IQA units (Gavu, 2025; Osei-Owusu, 2025). These capacity gaps limit effective monitoring of curriculum implementation, assessment practices, and staff development, which are the core functions required to sustain improvements in teacher education (Mpuangnan, 2024).

Although CoEs have introduced several internal quality mechanisms, such as professional development initiatives and academic support systems, national assessments and licensure examinations continue to reveal gaps in pedagogical content knowledge and instructional competence among newly trained teachers (World Bank, 2021; UNESCO, 2023). These outcomes suggest that while QA structures exist, their level of integration and operational effectiveness remains weak. Key challenges include limited financial resources, inadequate staffing of IQA offices, inconsistent monitoring routines, and insufficient engagement of internal stakeholders such as tutors, students, and sectional heads (Daoud, 2025). Similar challenges have been documented across African institutions, where IQA units often lack authority and institutional support to influence decision-making (Kahsay, 2012; Asamoah et al., 2025).

A notable gap in the Ghanaian QA literature is that most studies have focused on universities and private HEIs (Seniwoliba & Yakubu, 2015; Tsevi, 2015; Okae-Adjei, 2016; Badache et al., 2023), with very limited attention to CoEs. This oversight is a concern given that CoEs produce the majority of basic school teachers nationwide, and weaknesses in their quality processes directly affect classroom teaching and learning. Furthermore, existing QA studies in Ghana predominantly examine compliance-based external accreditation systems, offering limited insight into how internal mechanisms function within CoEs or how institutional actors experience and interpret IQA processes (Okae-Adjei, 2016). There is also a notable absence of multi-stakeholder or phenomenological studies that explore the lived realities of quality implementation from the perspectives of principals, IQA officers, lecturers, and students.

To guide the understanding of institutional quality practices, this study adopts Harvey and Green's (1993) quality framework, which conceptualizes quality through excellence, fitness-for-purpose, value-for-money, and transformation. Additionally, stakeholder theory provides a lens for examining how the interests, expectations, and influence of different actor's shape IQA processes within CoEs. Together, these frameworks help illuminate how CoEs interpret "quality," how they mobilize resources toward its achievement, and how internal systems respond to national standards and stakeholder demands (Arhin et al., 2024; Kokuro, 2024).

Given the limited empirical insights on IQA operations in Ghanaian CoEs, this study investigates how internal quality assurance systems are implemented, the challenges that constrain their effectiveness, and the strategies required to strengthen teacher preparation. The study's focus aligns with national education reforms and broader international commitments to inclusive and equitable quality education, particularly Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 4. By examining IQA practices from a multi-stakeholder perspective, the study contributes to ongoing debates on quality improvement in teacher education and offers practical recommendations to GTEC, CoEs leadership, and policymakers seeking to build sustainable quality cultures within teacher training institutions.

Literature Review

This subsequent explores QA measures in COEs, IQA systems in higher education, challenges, and solutions for enhancing teaching and learning.

Quality Assurance Measures in Colleges of Education

QA in higher education refers to systematic processes and mechanisms designed to assess, maintain, and improve the quality of teaching, learning, and administration (Harvey & Green, 1993). However, the notion of "*quality*" itself remains multi-dimensional and contested, variably interpreted as excellence, value for money, fitness for purpose, or transformative learning. Harvey and Green's (1993) framework thus provides a useful conceptual anchor, while stakeholder theory and neo-institutional theory highlight how diverse actors, students, faculty, managers, employers, and regulators shape institutional interpretations and enactment of quality. From a systemic perspective, QA mechanisms can be conceptualized through an input–process–output model.

Inputs include human resources (tutors' qualifications), infrastructure, student preparedness, and financing.

Processes emphasize instructional delivery, mentoring, supervision, internal reviews, continuous professional development (CPD), and curriculum implementation.

Outputs capture student achievement, teacher competency, licensure pass rates, and labour-market readiness.

This tripartite framework aligns QA with quality enhancement (QE), continuous institutional improvement, beyond mere compliance with standards.

In CoEs, QA activities historically stem from the mandate of the GTEC, emphasizing institutional self-assessment, peer review, external evaluation, and curriculum renewal (Addae-Kyeremeh & Boateng, 2024; Asamoah et al., 2025). Internal measures include supervisory systems, lesson observation, student feedback, structured mentoring, academic counselling, and staff development workshops (Shepherd, 2025). These practices echo global QA norms, especially the focus on learning outcomes, stakeholder involvement, performance indicators, and evidence-based improvement (UNESCO, 2016; OECD, 2023). Professional development has been central to enhancing instructional quality, with internal workshops, lesson study groups, and collaborative planning sessions improving tutors' pedagogical content knowledge and classroom practice (Darling-Hammond, 2021). Yet, empirical evaluations within Ghana show uneven implementation, influenced by institutional capacity, leadership support, and resource availability (Srivastava, 2022).

Internal Quality Assurance Systems in Higher Education

IQA refers to institutional policies, structures, processes, and practices that HIEs use to monitor, maintain, and improve the quality of programmes, teaching, research, and administration (Olatoun et al., 2025). UNESCO describes IQA as a set of internal arrangements, from governance and planning to programmed review and stakeholder engagement, that ensure institutional missions are translated into demonstrable learning and institutional outcomes (UNESCO, 2023). IQA systems are typically operationalized through a set of interconnected indicators that cut across institutional inputs, processes, and outputs. Within COE, these indicators commonly include curriculum design and relevance, pedagogy and learning processes, faculty competency and development, governance and leadership, student outcomes and graduate competence, resources and infrastructure, and stakeholder engagement and feedback.

Framing these indicators through an input–process–output lens helps institutions diagnose weaknesses and prioritize interventions (e.g., invest in faculty development when process indicators are weak despite strong inputs; Basheer et al., 2025). Quality enhancement approaches (improvement-oriented) outperform narrow compliance approaches in generating sustained improvement. Table 1 shows evidence from Sub-Saharan Africa that highlights mixed results:

Table 1

IQA Systems: Approaches, Successes, Challenges, and Frameworks

Dimension	Key Insights	Evidence / Success Factors	Common Failures / Root Causes	References
Quality Approaches	Improvement-oriented (enhancement) vs. compliance-driven	Enhancement approaches sustain improvement; compliance-only approaches are limited	Compliance cultures, fragmented QA units, and weak stakeholder engagement	Olatoun et al. (2025); Lyakurwa, (2025)
Institutional Practices	Practicum supervision and school partnerships	Improves graduate classroom readiness when implementation is consistent	Lack of authority, budget constraints	Olatoun et al. (2025)
	Peer review and CPD embedded in faculty workloads	Sustains instructional improvement with incentives and recognition	Limited student voice, minimal employer feedback	Olatoun et al. (2025)
	Locally adapted IQA indicators	Align with national teacher standards and resource realities; actionable	Imported templates may be less effective	Olatoun et al. (2025)
Root Causes of Failure	Resources	Funding, qualified staff, and ICT limitations	Reduces the capacity to collect and act on quality data	Lyakurwa (2025)
	Leadership	Lack of senior buy-in	Makes IQA peripheral rather than strategic	Lyakurwa (2025)
	Policy / Institutional factors	External model adoption without adaptation	Institutional isomorphism; QA forms mimic regulators rather than improving teaching	Lyakurwa (2025)

IQA Models / Frameworks	UNESCO QA frameworks	Standard indicators for learning outcomes, teaching quality, governance, and adaptability	N/A	UNESCO (2023)
	European / International benchmarks (Erasmus/ European University Association)	Emphasize compliance and enhancement loops; curriculum, teaching, assessment, and student support	N/A	UNESCO (2023)
	Empirical / Analytic approaches	Regression and quantitative methods link inputs to outcomes; validate IQA models empirically	N/A	Berg and Nyhus (2024)
	Conceptual 3-P model (People–Programme–Process)	Integrates human capital, programme design, and institutional processes; supports mixed-method evaluation	N/A	Krooi et al. (2024)
Global Evidence	Well-structured IQA systems	Correlates with improved programme quality and student outcomes when backed by authority, resources, and inclusive practices	N/A	Seniwoliba and Yakubu (2015); Gavu (2025)
	Robust internal review cycles and teaching-focused CPD	Produce graduates with higher classroom effectiveness	N/A	Olatoun et al. (2025)

Note(s). N/A - Not Applicable

Challenges to Achieving Quality Teaching and Learning

Despite these QA measures, CoEs in Ghana face persistent challenges that hinder the full realization of quality teaching and learning. Evidence from recent impact studies reveals that improvements in instructional delivery have not consistently translated into stronger

learner performance or classroom readiness among graduating teachers. Stakeholder satisfaction surveys frequently report concerns regarding inadequate supervision during practicum, limited feedback mechanisms, and inconsistent application of QA procedures across institutions. A key challenge is curriculum misalignment; Addai-Mununkum and Setordzi (2023) contend that many teacher training programs emphasize overly theoretical content and fail to adequately prepare teachers for the practical realities of the classroom. Students and tutors alike have criticized courses such as philosophy of education or semantics as being disconnected from practical classroom needs, especially in early childhood and basic education programmes.

Infrastructure constraints also impede teaching and learning. Inadequate lecture halls, poor internet connectivity, and outdated libraries limit access to quality educational experiences (Nwuke & Nwanguma, 2024). Osei-Owusu (2020) emphasizes that without modern and inclusive learning environments, institutions struggle to meet the demands of the B.Ed curriculum, which promotes active and learner-centered pedagogies.

Another pressing issue is delayed academic feedback, which undermines students' ability to improve. When examination results are not released on time, it affects academic planning and progression (Mensah et al., 2024). Additionally, student behavior, including rising levels of indiscipline, disrupts classroom management and contributes to teacher burnout (Gyebi, 2021).

Teaching quality is also compromised by a lack of diversity in pedagogical strategies. Some tutors rely on traditional lecture methods, which do not accommodate diverse learners or encourage critical thinking (Boateng, 2021). These limitations point to the need for continuous training in differentiated instruction and inclusive practices, particularly as classrooms become increasingly diverse.

Proposed Solutions for Enhancing Teaching and Learning

Scholars have recommended multifaceted approaches to improve teaching and learning in educational institutions. Curriculum reform is often emphasized as a central solution. According to Abdul-Rahaman et al. (2023), aligning the curriculum with professional field demands, particularly in practical components such as teaching practicum, classroom management, and subject-specific pedagogies, is essential to improving relevance and effectiveness.

Professional development remains a key pillar in enhancing instructional quality. Darling-Hammond (2021) notes that ongoing, collaborative, and practice-based CPD leads to measurable improvements in teacher performance. In the Ghanaian context, peer mentoring, lesson study, and internal capacity-building workshops have been effective in promoting reflective teaching practices (Gavu, 2025).

Resource availability must also be improved. Updated library materials, digital databases, and instructional technologies are necessary for 21st century teacher training (UNESCO, 2016). Addai-Mununkum and Setordzi (2023) advocate for public-private partnerships and donor-supported initiatives to modernize learning resources in CoEs.

Moreover, strengthening academic counseling systems and administrative processes can support both students and faculty (Luintel & Timsina, 2024). Osuoha (2024) found that effective counseling services reduce stress, enhance discipline, and contribute to academic success. Meanwhile, streamlined administrative systems, such as the timely release of results and simplified clearance procedures, enhance institutional efficiency and student satisfaction (Mensah et al., 2024).

Thus, improving teaching and learning quality in Ghanaian COEs requires a systemic approach that includes curriculum reform, capacity building, resource enhancement, and institutional accountability.

Research Methods

This study employed a qualitative research design grounded in hermeneutic phenomenology. Hermeneutic phenomenology, as articulated by Van Manen (2023), was selected because it emphasizes interpretation over mere description, making it well-suited for uncovering the meanings embedded in daily institutional practices. This approach aligns with the study's aim of understanding how quality assurance is interpreted, negotiated, and operationalized by those directly responsible for institutional quality. Data were collected between June and October 2024. The researcher acknowledges their prior professional involvement in higher education QA reforms. To mitigate interpretive bias, reflexive journaling and bracketing were employed throughout the research process to ensure transparency in meaning-making and interpretation.

Participants were drawn from three key stakeholder groups with direct involvement in internal QA processes:

- College principals,
- Quality assurance officers, and
- Student Representative Council (SRC) leaders.

Fifteen participants were purposively selected, five from each category from CoEs across Ghana. Selection was guided by information power, where participants' roles and familiarity with IQA processes ensured rich experiential accounts relevant to the research focus. These stakeholder groups were prioritized because they collectively shape institutional quality culture: principals provide strategic direction, QA officers oversee implementation and monitoring, and SRC leaders channel student experiences and feedback. Together, they offered complementary perspectives on how IQA is enacted and experienced.

Although CoEs vary in size and institutional culture, the participant group provided sufficient variation to support thematic saturation, reached when no new insights emerged during successive interviews.

Data were collected using semi-structured interviews to elicit participants' lived experiences with IQA design, implementation, and challenges, guided by an interview protocol informed by existing literature and expert review. The protocol was pilot-tested to refine question clarity and relevance. Interviews explored participants' experiences with IQA systems and were conducted face-to-face, each lasting approximately 50–60 minutes. To ensure rigor within a hermeneutic phenomenological orientation, trustworthiness was guided by the criteria of credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Credibility was enhanced through prolonged engagement, verbatim transcription, and member reflections, which enabled participants to clarify and affirm meanings emergent from interviews.

Given the interpretive stance of hermeneutic inquiry, the researchers engaged in reflexive journaling and bracketing to acknowledge and manage subjective assumptions during interpretation. Transcribed interviews were read iteratively to identify significant statements, generate meaning units, and develop themes that reflected how IQA processes are understood and enacted.

Coding and theme development progressed inductively, while continuously referencing field notes and reflexive memos to ensure interpretive depth. Themes were refined through cross-comparison across stakeholder groups to ensure analytical rigor and representation of diverse perspectives. Instead of inter-rater reliability, which is not consistent with phenomenological inquiry, credibility was enhanced through member checking, reflexive documentation, and maintaining an audit trail. All participants provided written informed consent, and the study adhered to ethical guidelines for human research.

Thematic content analysis was employed to identify, interpret, and organize patterns from the qualitative data gathered in this study. This approach provided a systematic means of capturing participants' lived experiences and representing them in a structured manner (Kiger & Varpio, 2020). In line with the exploratory focus and phenomenological orientation of this study, an inductive thematic analysis approach was used. This ensured that themes were generated directly from the data rather than imposed a priori, allowing participants' voices to guide interpretation and enabling context-specific insights to emerge naturally.

The analysis process was guided by a refined adaptation of Braun and Clarke's (2006) thematic analysis framework, as explained by Byrne (2022). This procedure involved six iterative steps: familiarize yourself with your data; generate initial codes; search for themes; review themes; define and name themes; and produce the report. Interview transcripts were first subjected to open coding, followed by axial coding to establish relationships among coded segments, and finally, selective coding leading to the emergence of core themes and sub-themes. Codes were generated inductively and compared across participant categories.

Results and Analysis

The following sections present a demographic profile of the respondents, three major themes, and their sub-themes.

Demographic Profile of Respondents

A total of fifteen individuals participated in the study, consisting of five principals (P1–P5), five QA officers (QA1–QA5), and five student leaders (SRC1–SRC5). Their demographic characteristics included gender, age, educational level, years of professional experience, and regional representation.

Table 2

Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

Pseudonym	Stakeholder Category	Gender	Age (years)	Years of Experience	Education Level	College/ Region
P1	Principal	Male	53	7	PhD	Ashanti
P2	Principal	Female	54	5	Master's	Greater Accra
P3	Principal	Female	57	5	PhD	Ashanti
P4	Principal	Male	50	6	PhD	Volta
P5	Principal	Male	56	3	Master's	Volta
QA1	QA Officer	Female	50	3	Master's	Ashanti
QA2	QA Officer	Male	48	6	PhD	Greater Accra
QA3	QA Officer	Male	49	4	Master's	Ashanti
QA4	QA Officer	Male	52	4	Master's	Volta
QA5	QA Officer	Male	45	2	Master's	Volta
SRC1	Student President	Male	28	2	Senior Secondary School certificate	Ashanti
SRC2	Student President	Male	27	1	Diploma	Greater Accra
SRC3	Student Financial Secretary	Female	26	1	Diploma	Ashanti
SRC4	Student Secretary	Female	22	2	Senior Secondary School certificate	Volta
SRC5	Student Secretary	Female	25	3	Senior Secondary School certificate	Volta

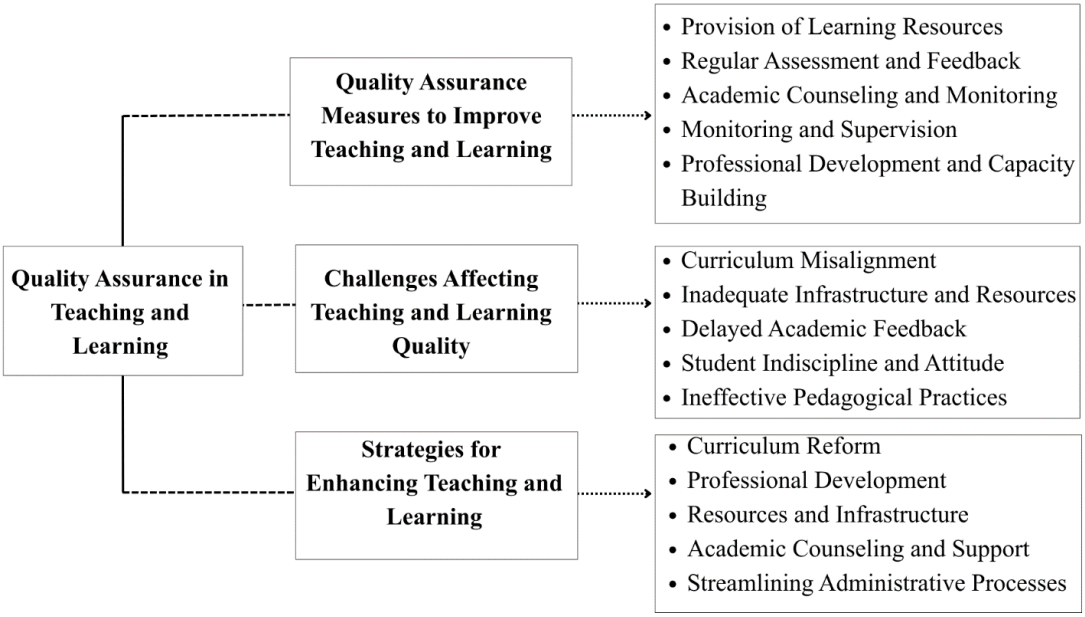
Note(s). Field Survey (2024)

Thematic Analysis

This section presents the findings of the study according to the three core research questions. The themes and sub-themes emerged from the thematic analysis of interviews with principals, quality assurance officers, and student representatives. The findings below integrate participants' voices and provide interpretive commentary to convey a comprehensive understanding of IQA practices, challenges, and solutions in Ghanaian CoEs. Figure 1 shows the thematic map for the main themes and their sub–themes. A rigorous thematic analysis approach was applied.

Figure 1

A Thematic Map Illustrating the Main Theme and Sub-themes



Theme 1. Quality Assurance Measures to Improve Teaching and Learning: The first major theme to emerge from the data pertained to the internal mechanisms and strategies employed by the CoEs to safeguard and enhance educational quality. This theme was synthesized from a range of participant descriptions of specific institutional activities and interventions. The analysis consistently identified multiple recurring codes related to *resource provision, monitoring, academic support, and instructional enhancement*. Frequent keywords such as "provide," "monitor," "guide," "support," "train," and "feedback" clustered into five distinct but interrelated sub-themes, reflecting the key areas of internal QA focus as reported by principals, quality assurance officers, and students. Across stakeholder groups, convergence was evident in the acknowledgment that learning resources, assessment practices, counseling, supervision, and professional development are central to improving teaching. However, variation arose in how these practices were implemented, with students reporting more inconsistency than administrators.

Sub–theme 1.1 Provision of Learning Resources: Participants emphasized that access to learning resources is foundational to ensuring teaching quality. According to one quality assurance officer, *"Students are provided with handouts, course outlines, and sometimes supplementary readings to help them follow lessons effectively"* (QA 3). Similarly, a principal remarked, *"We try to ensure that course materials are available before the semester begins so that students and tutors can plan effectively"* (P 2).

However, some student leaders noted inconsistency across departments: *"While some tutors give updated notes, others still use outdated materials, which makes learning difficult"* (SRC 1). This indicates that although learning resource provision is recognized as a key QA measure, its implementation varies among tutors, leading to uneven learning experiences.

All stakeholder groups viewed learning materials as central to quality teaching, though students noted inequity in access. This indicates that while policy exists, uneven implementation undermines intended outcomes.

Sub–theme 1.2: Regular Assessment and Feedback: Codes related to *quizzes, assignments, monitoring progress, and formative support* informed this sub-theme. Regular assessment emerged as another critical QA strategy. Participants reported that quizzes, assignments, and mid-semester tests are used to monitor academic progress and maintain standards. One QA officer explained, *"Assessments are conducted at least twice a semester, and the results are used to support students academically"* (QA 5).

Yet, some students expressed dissatisfaction with delayed feedback: *"We often write quizzes, but the results come late, so it doesn't help us know where we went wrong early enough"* (SRC 3). This suggests that while assessment practices are well-intentioned, the feedback cycle needs strengthening to serve its formative purpose effectively. Stakeholders generally agreed that assessments are frequent, but their learning value is weakened by slow feedback. The gap between policy (regular assessment) and practice (delayed results) highlights a procedural weakness, limiting its formative potential.

Sub–theme 1.3: Academic Counseling and Mentoring: This sub-theme emerged from codes relating to *guidance, emotional support, academic improvement,* and *mentorship*. Academic counseling was identified as a key intervention that supports student performance. Principals and QA officers stated that counseling sessions are conducted to address learning challenges. A principal shared, *"Our counseling unit works closely with tutors to identify students struggling academically and provide support before exams"* (P 4).

Students confirmed the usefulness of such initiatives: *"The counseling sessions help reduce anxiety during exams and make us feel supported"* (SRC 2). However, one student noted, *"Not all tutors engage in mentorship, and sometimes students have to find their own mentors informally"* (SRC 5). This shows the need for more structured mentoring mechanisms.

Stakeholder perspectives converged on counseling as beneficial, but diverged on the consistency of mentorship structures. This suggests that counseling is institutionally formalized, while mentoring remains unevenly embedded within departmental culture.

Sub–theme 1.4: Monitoring and Supervision: Codes associated with *lesson observation, teaching oversight,* and *instructional guidance* are clustered into this sub-theme. Monitoring and supervision play a central role in maintaining teaching standards. According to a QA officer, *"Heads of department and QA officers sit in classes periodically to observe teaching and provide feedback"* (QA 2). A principal added, *"These internal observations ensure that tutors cover the syllabus and apply appropriate methods"* (P 1).

Nevertheless, participants reported that such monitoring is inconsistent: *"Some departments do it regularly, but others only when there's an external visit"* (SRC 4). This inconsistency highlights the need for institutionalizing monitoring as a continuous internal culture rather than a compliance exercise. Monitoring is recognized institutionally but inconsistently executed. QA and principals emphasized its supportive intent; students perceived it as episodic rather than routine, suggesting that monitoring is not yet fully institutionalized as a continuous improvement culture.

Sub–theme 1.5: Professional Development and Capacity Building: This sub-theme was derived from codes mentioning *workshops, skill renewal, collaboration,* and *training*. Tutors engage in periodic workshops and peer-learning sessions to enhance pedagogical effectiveness. As one QA officer explained, *"Our College organizes in-service training and teaching innovation workshops to keep tutors updated"* (QA 1). A student leader corroborated, *"You can tell when tutors have attended workshops; their lessons become more engaging and interactive"* (SRC 2).

However, resource constraints often limit the frequency of these programs. A principal acknowledged, *"We would like to hold these trainings every semester, but funding remains a major obstacle"* (P 3). Professional development is widely regarded as the most impactful QA measure, but its sustainability depends heavily on funding. While stakeholders converge on its value, the tension between demand and financing limits its full potential.

Across sub-themes, internal QA practices reflect a multifaceted architecture integrating resource provision, instructional oversight, academic support, and staff development. Although generally aligned in intent, stakeholder perspectives reveal uneven implementation, particularly in material provision, supervision regularity, and mentorship practices. The unifying thread is that COEs possess structured internal QA mechanisms, but their effectiveness is moderated by variable departmental capacity and operational consistency. This theme, therefore, suggests that strengthening QA impact requires not only policy formulation but systematic institutionalization to ensure equitable and continuous application across departments.

Theme 2: Challenges Affecting Teaching and Learning Quality: This theme was developed through several coded keywords reflecting constraints in institutional functioning, instructional delivery, and student engagement. Codes clustered around frequently occurring expressions such as *"misaligned curriculum," "lack of infrastructure," "delayed feedback," "indiscipline,"* and *"ineffective teaching."* Theme 2 highlights the systemic and interconnected barriers that undermine the full realization of quality assurance intentions. The sub-themes illuminate not just *what the challenges are* but *how they emerge and with what consequences.*

Sub-theme 2.1: Curriculum Misalignment: It emerged from codes such as *"overly theoretical," "not applicable in the classroom," "irrelevant courses," "needs review,"* and *"outdated content."* A total of 42 coded references were connected to this sub-theme across stakeholder groups. These patterns consistently pointed to a perceived gap between teacher education curriculum content and practical classroom realities.

Stakeholders broadly agreed that the curriculum lacks adequate practical grounding. A student leader noted, *"Some of the courses, like semantics and philosophy, are not directly relevant to what we will teach in basic schools"* (SRC 1). Principal perspectives reinforced this concern, with one explaining that, *"We receive complaints that student teachers come back from practicum saying they struggled to apply what they learned here"* (P 2). QA officers supported this observation, emphasizing that the existing curriculum *"doesn't always match current educational demands"* (QA 4).

Across participants, convergence emerged around the belief that the curriculum requires restructuring to increase real-world relevance. However, divergence appeared in how stakeholders viewed the source of the problem. Students emphasized irrelevance at the course level, while principals attributed the challenge to limited collaboration between teacher training institutions and basic schools. QA officers, however, stressed that slow regulatory review and curriculum approval processes contributed significantly to misalignment. These insights reveal that misalignment is not simply a curricular content issue but reflects broader systemic gaps in curriculum design, feedback integration, and implementation. The convergence of views highlights shared recognition of the problem, while divergence points to varied understandings of its root causes, highlighting the need for stronger institutional, school collaboration and more dynamic curriculum review processes.

Sub–theme 2.2: Inadequate Infrastructure and Resources*:* A total of 37 coded references indicated persistent material constraints. Principals reported that enrollment growth has outpaced infrastructure expansion:

"Our infrastructure is not keeping pace with enrollment: lecture halls are overcrowded, and libraries are outdated" (P 5). Another QA officer added, *"The library lacks updated materials and computer facilities, making it difficult for students to access digital resources"* (QA 3).

Students echoed these sentiments: *"We often struggle for space during lectures, and internet access is poor"* (SRC 4). These infrastructural limitations directly impact teaching effectiveness and student engagement. The data indicate a resource-capacity mismatch, where increased enrollment targets are not accompanied by investment in physical or digital facilities. This affects instructional quality, reduces student engagement, and restricts active learning.

Students highlighted the day-to-day impacts of infrastructural constraints, while administrators attributed the issues to funding limitations and structural deficiencies. These constraints reduce engagement, limit access to learning materials, and hinder the integration of technology-enhanced instruction, reflecting a systemic underinvestment in academic support services.

Sub–theme 2.3: Delayed Academic Feedback: It reflects concerns regarding the timeliness of quiz and examination results. Students reported that delays prevent them from identifying academic weaknesses early: *"Sometimes we finish a semester without seeing our quiz results"* (SRC 2). Principals attributed this to workload and administrative bottlenecks: *"Delays happen because tutors mark manually without administrative assistance"* (P 3).

Delays in feedback reflect process inefficiencies, reliance on manual marking, and inadequate workflow support, indicating that QA mechanisms are not fully institutionalized. Principals describe the issue as a logistical bottleneck, while students experience it as reduced motivation and uncertainty about their progress. QA officers link the delays to weak internal monitoring and insufficient digital systems. Across all stakeholders, slow feedback diminishes the value of formative assessment, limits opportunities for remediation, and delays academic decision-making, highlighting a systemic gap in assessment management and quality control.

Sub–theme 2.4: Student Indiscipline and Attitude: This sub-theme captures rising levels of absenteeism, lateness, inattentiveness, and poor class engagement. Administrators attributed this to lax home–school value systems. A principal explained, *"Some students show a lack of seriousness and disrespect towards tutors, making classroom control difficult"* (P 1). A QA officer supported this, noting, *"Late attendance and use of phones during lectures disrupts lessons"* (QA 2).

Students, however, argued that inconsistent enforcement of rules contributes to this issue: *"Discipline policies differ from one tutor to another, confusing"* (SRC 5).

Indiscipline reflects role ambiguity and inconsistent institutional culture regarding norm enforcement. Weak behavioural policy implementation generates confusion and undermines classroom leadership. Over time, this translates into instructional disruption and deteriorating academic performance. Principals/QA officers blamed student attitudes; students attributed responsibility to tutors' inconsistent sanctioning. The perspectives partially diverge; administrators and QA officers attribute indiscipline to student attitudes, whereas students link behavior to weak system enforcement and inconsistent expectations. The analysis suggests a bidirectional relationship where unclear disciplinary frameworks contribute to student disengagement, which further undermines classroom management. This sub-theme highlights the need for harmonized student policies and a supportive learning culture.

Sub–theme 2.5: Ineffective Pedagogical Practices*:* Ineffective pedagogical practices from keywords such as *lecture-dominant methods, limited student engagement*, and the *need for modern approaches*. A recurring concern was the limited use of learner-centered methods. Students emphasized monotony and a lack of participation:

"Some tutors still rely only on lecture methods, which makes classes boring" (SRC 3).

QA officers stressed professional capacity gaps. QA officers emphasized the need for ongoing pedagogical innovation, with one stating, *"Tutors need regular refresher training on modern teaching strategies"* (QA 1). Principals acknowledged challenges but focused on workload and training needs.

This sub-theme reflects a convergence that teaching practices are insufficiently learner-centered. Divergence lies in perceived cause; students blame tutors' choices; QA officers and principals see limited training and institutional support as the root. Systemically, this indicates that while continuous professional development initiatives exist, they are irregular and under-resourced. Weak pedagogical innovation reinforces surface learning, limiting student engagement and skill acquisition.

Across all sub-themes, stakeholder views triangulate to show that systemic constraints, resource scarcity, curriculum weaknesses, and weak institutional processes interact with behavioral and pedagogical limitations to shape academic quality. Rather than isolated challenges, these patterns reveal a reinforcing dynamic:

Resource deficits → Pedagogical limitations → Student disengagement → Weak learning outcomes.

Thus, theme 2 reflects systemic, structural, and cultural dimensions that collectively hinder instructional quality.

Theme 3: Strategies for Enhancing Teaching and Learning: Theme 3 emerged from codes related to *solutions*, *improvement suggestions*, and *institutional strengthening*. Recurrent keywords such as "revise," "training," "support," "access," "streamline," and "modernize" clustered into five sub-themes reflecting stakeholders' proposals. All three groups offered perspectives, often converging on shared priorities while differing in emphasis.

Sub–theme 3.1: Curriculum Reform: Calls for curriculum revision were prominent across participants. Principals emphasized the need for practice-driven content, one noting that *"the early childhood program should include more practical classroom activities rather than abstract theories"* (P4). QA officers suggested that curriculum review processes incorporate practicing teachers to ensure professional alignment: *"Involving teachers in curriculum revision will make the content more realistic"* (QA5).

Student leaders echoed these concerns, asserting that greater exposure to real-classroom experiences would improve readiness. Participants agreed that curriculum reform should bridge the gap between theoretical knowledge and classroom realities. The emphasis on *practical relevance* reflects a desire for curricula that better prepare teacher trainees for competency-based and learner-centered education.

Sub–theme 3.2: Professional Development: Codes referencing *capacity building, workshops, refresher training,* and *skill renewal* are clustered into this sub-theme. QA officers stressed frequent training to enhance pedagogical innovation: *"Training helps tutors adopt new instructional methods"* (QA1). Students also observed positive change after workshops: *"After workshops, tutors are more interactive and confident"* (SRC3). Principals, however, cautioned that financial constraints sometimes limited frequency. Consistent across stakeholders was the view that professional development is central to teaching-quality improvement. While QA officers and students focused on pedagogical gains, principals foregrounded the implementation challenge of budget limits. This suggests that development efforts require both institutional commitment and sustained funding.

Sub–theme 3.3: Resource and Infrastructure Improvement: Participants referenced needs regarding *library upgrades, digital access, classroom capacity, and learning tools*. A principal stressed the need for technology-enabled instruction: *"Modern teaching needs technology; without it, we cannot deliver effectively"* (P2). QA officers added that limited digital resources hindered monitoring, while students linked poor internet and overcrowding to disengagement. All groups connected resource enhancement to instructional effectiveness. Stakeholders positioned resource improvement as foundational, an enabler of better pedagogy, assessment, and student engagement.

Sub–theme 3.4: Academic Counseling and Support: Codes related to *guidance, discipline support, motivation, and mental health* informed this sub-theme. QA officers linked counseling to academic focus: *"Counseling reduces anxiety and helps students remain focused"* (QA2). Students highlighted that counseling promotes discipline, motivation, and resilience by providing guidance, emotional support, and coping strategies, while principals emphasized its role in reducing dropout and enhancing engagement. All stakeholders recognized it as a multi-functional system critical for well-being, academic focus, and personal development.

Sub–theme 3.5: Streamlining Administrative Processes: It captures the codes related to *workload, result delays, clearance procedures,* and *workflow reorganization*. A QA officer recommended administrative staff recruitment to ease tutor workload: *"Recruiting administrative support can reduce tutors' workload and speed up result processing"* (QA3). Students emphasized the negative academic and emotional impact of delayed results, while principals highlighted outdated manual processes as constraints. All groups saw administrative restructuring as essential to improving institutional efficiency. Streamlined systems were viewed as a foundation for timely feedback, reduced stress, and better academic planning.

Across sub-themes, participants consistently connected quality improvement to three linked pillars:

- Structural enhancements: resources + administrative efficiency
- Pedagogical strengthening: curriculum relevance + staff development
- Student support: counseling + motivation

The strategies outlined are therefore not discrete actions but interdependent components of a broader institutional improvement ecosystem. They collectively envision a system where instructional quality is shaped by coherent alignment among curriculum, teacher capacity, institutional resources, and learner support. This systemic framing signals that sustainable quality enhancement requires integrated reform, balancing infrastructural investment, ongoing professional development, participatory curriculum review, and student guidance.

Discussions

This study examined IQA practices in CoEs in Ghana, the challenges that inhibit effective teaching and learning, and strategies proposed by stakeholders to strengthen institutional performance. The interpretation of findings draws on Stakeholder Theory (Freeman, 1984), Tinto's Model of Institutional Departure (1993), and phenomenological principles to reveal how institutional systems, actor relationships, and lived experiences interact to shape teaching and learning outcomes. By triangulating viewpoints from principals, QA officers, and students, the analysis demonstrates that institutional quality is not simply the outcome of formal structures, but of negotiated understandings shaped by power dynamics, resource constraints, and contextual priorities.

Internal Quality Assurance Measures and Stakeholder Engagement

Three stakeholder groups identified multiple internal QA mechanisms, resource provision, assessment, counseling, supervision, and professional development. All three groups generally agreed that these measures have the potential to enhance teaching quality; however, their experiences revealed variations in implementation and relevance. Principals tended to view QA as operational compliance, focused on resource allocation, scheduling, and monitoring. QA officers emphasized procedural consistency and documentation, expressing concerns about uneven standards across departments. Students evaluated QA practices based on their lived academic experiences, timeliness of feedback, lecturer preparedness, and mentorship access.

This triangulation highlights QA as a negotiated space with competing expectations. While similar measures have been reported by Addai-Mununkum and Setordzi (2023) in Ghana, the present study extends that work by showing that effectiveness depends not only on procedure but on whether QA practices are perceived as meaningful by multiple actors. These findings are consistent with Nelson et al. (2024), who reported that institutional-level QA mechanisms play a significant role in improving instructional quality and accountability in Nigerian teacher training institutions. Similarly, Addai-Mununkum and Setordzi (2023) observed that regular professional development workshops in Ghanaian CoEs enhance teaching competencies and align educators with curriculum reforms.

This supports Stakeholder Theory's position that institutional success emerges when diverse actors participate in decision-making (Freeman, 1984). By involving diverse participants in QA processes, institutions build a shared sense of ownership and responsibility. This participatory orientation is supported by Srivastava (2022), who argued that stakeholder inclusion fosters sustainable quality cultures in African higher education.

Moreover, participants emphasized academic counseling as a critical mechanism for sustaining student engagement. This is noteworthy because most QA studies in African teacher education emphasize curriculum oversight and academic audits (Mensah et al., 2024) while overlooking psychosocial support. The value students placed on academic guidance demonstrates that QA also functions emotionally to help students interpret academic expectations, illustrating

a phenomenological dimension, whereby quality is experienced affectively rather than bureaucratically. This study extends prior research by identifying the underexplored role of academic counseling and internal resource mobilization in improving learning outcomes. While Botha et al. (2024) stressed external capacity-building initiatives, the present findings highlight that localized, internally-driven measures, such as peer mentoring and academic guidance, can be equally impactful when tailored to contextual realities.

Challenges Affecting Teaching and Learning Quality

The challenges identified were curriculum misalignment, delayed results, poor infrastructure, and student indiscipline, which represent not isolated concerns but deeper system-level misalignments across governance, pedagogy, and academic support structures. Differences in stakeholder perspectives further illuminate these tensions. Principals attributed challenges to resource constraints and bureaucratic delays, QA officers emphasized inconsistent standards and weak monitoring systems, and students highlighted ineffective teaching methods and untimely feedback. These contrasting interpretations reflect Institutional Theory's view that performance shortfalls emerge when formal expectations diverge from actual operational realities. This aligns with Chimangeni-Mserembo (2022), who found that resource shortages and administrative inefficiencies undermine teacher education across sub-Saharan Africa, and with Gavu (2025), who reported that managerial bottlenecks and disciplinary issues disrupt effective teaching in Ghanaian secondary schools.

Curriculum misalignment emerged as an especially contextual finding. While Western systems often integrate theoretical and philosophical grounding to strengthen critical reasoning (Hobbs, 2024), participants in this study felt such content was disconnected from classroom realities in Ghana. This suggests that curriculum reform must respond to local capability needs rather than replicate external models, echoing the Capability Approach's emphasis on contextually meaningful competencies. The study also reflects Tinto's (1993) Model of Institutional Departure, which explains how institutional inefficiencies such as delayed feedback, limited learner support, and weak communication erode students' academic integration and persistence. Participants' emphasis on slow feedback and administrative lapses confirms that these gaps weaken engagement and hinder academic planning.

Infrastructure challenges mirror findings from Nigeria and Kenya (Nwuke & Nwanguma, 2024), yet this study reveals noteworthy stakeholder-specific interpretations: QA officers viewed inadequate libraries and poor internet access as accreditation risks, whereas students experienced them as barriers to academic identity, participation, and belonging. This divergence strengthens Tinto's argument that student persistence depends on meaningful institutional integration. These interpretations also support Shepherd (2025), who argued that sustainable QA systems require cultural transformation rather than compliance-driven policy enforcement.

However, the present study diverges from Mensah et al. (2024), who advocated a standardized teacher education curriculum across disciplines. Instead, the findings show that curriculum irrelevance, particularly in specialized areas such as Early Childhood Education, limits

graduates' classroom readiness. This highlights the need for context-specific curricular reforms, aligning with Abdul-Rahaman et al. (2023), who emphasized balancing theoretical foundations with localized practical competencies.

Proposed Solutions

The findings indicate that sustainable quality improvement in CoEs requires an integrated, tri-dimensional approach encompassing capability development, contextually relevant curriculum, and institutional responsiveness. While global teacher-education reforms often emphasize compliance and standardized capacity-building (Darling-Hammond, 2021), this study shows that locally grounded interventions such as professional development embedded in the academic calendar, curriculum revisions attuned to classroom realities, and streamlined administrative processes are more effective when aligned with stakeholder perceptions and institutional culture.

Professional development emerges as a vehicle for operationalizing the Capability Approach, enhancing lecturers' ability to respond to contextual teaching challenges rather than merely fulfilling accreditation requirements. Similarly, curriculum reform must balance theoretical grounding with applied competencies tailored to specialized programs, supporting graduates' classroom readiness without imposing universalized standards. This highlights that "curriculum adaptation" rather than "wholesale replacement" is conceptually and practically appropriate, reflecting the importance of locally meaningful knowledge in teacher preparation. These views differ from scholarship promoting universal standardization (Mensah et al., 2024) and instead support Abdul-Rahaman et al. (2023), who argue that teacher preparation must incorporate localized pedagogical demands.

Thus, reform in Ghanaian CoEs must align with national standards while also strengthening classroom-specific competencies. Institutional responsiveness, particularly regarding assessment timelines, administrative communication, and resource allocation, reinforces the tri-dimensional model by fostering student motivation, engagement, and a sense of academic belonging. Stakeholders also highlighted psychosocial support, like academic counseling, as central to sustaining learning outcomes, emphasizing that quality assurance is not solely procedural but relational and affective. This challenges conventional IQA frameworks in sub-Saharan Africa, which prioritize documentation and compliance over stakeholder legitimacy and student well-being (Nelson et al., 2024).

Conceptually, the study shifts QA discourse from compliance-focused models toward a capability-and-context paradigm, showing that effective quality emerges from the dynamic interplay of human, curricular, and structural dimensions. By foregrounding stakeholder legitimacy, contextualized professional development, and psychosocial support, the findings extend the Capability Approach to IQA in African teacher education, demonstrating that quality is co-constructed through context-sensitive practices rather than imposed as a checklist of standards.

Conclusion and Implications

This study explored the quality assurance measures in Ghanaian CoEs, the challenges impeding their effectiveness, and proposed solutions to address these barriers. The findings reveal that while CoEs have adopted several promising IQA mechanisms, such as academic

counseling, internal monitoring, and professional development, their impact is limited by deeper structural misalignments. These include resource shortages, delayed assessment processes, curriculum irrelevance, and student discipline issues, which collectively weaken teaching quality and student learning experiences.

A key insight from the study is that quality assurance in Ghanaian CoEs is not merely a technical exercise but a *meaning-making process* shaped by how students, lecturers, principals, and QA officers perceive the legitimacy and usefulness of institutional practices. The findings show that academic counseling, timely feedback, and relevant curricula function as both pedagogical and psychosocial supports, highlighting that quality in teacher education is experienced emotionally as much as procedurally. This provides important conceptual clarity: IQA systems are effective only when they resonate with the lived realities of stakeholders.

The study contributes theoretically by extending Tinto's Model of Institutional Departure and Stakeholder Theory to resource-constrained teacher education contexts. It demonstrates that student engagement and institutional effectiveness hinge on the coherence between administrative actions, pedagogical support, and students' felt sense of academic belonging. The evidence also challenges universal curriculum models by showing the importance of *context-specific adaptation,* especially for specialized tracks such as Early Childhood and Primary Education, rather than uniform national standards.

Practically, the findings highlight three core areas that must be strengthened for sustainable quality improvement:

- Capability development through consistent, contextually relevant professional development.
- Curricular relevance that aligns content with classroom realities and discipline-specific needs.
- Institutional responsiveness through efficient assessment processes, improved communication, and enhanced resource provision.

These insights carry important policy implications. The GTEC and Ministry of Education should prioritize curriculum revisions that reflect programme-specific competencies, invest in digital and physical learning infrastructure, and formalize internal monitoring systems to ensure timely feedback and continuous improvement. Strengthening academic counseling, enhancing library resources, and promoting adaptive teaching pedagogies will further support student retention and academic success.

Thus, the study demonstrates that meaningful quality assurance in Ghanaian CoEs requires moving beyond compliance-driven checklist approaches toward a holistic, capability-oriented model that integrates human, curricular, and institutional dimensions. This shift is essential for preparing effective teachers and improving learning outcomes in an evolving educational landscape.

Limitations and Future Research

While this study provides critical insights into quality assurance in CoEs, it is limited in scope due to the relatively small sample size and qualitative design. Future research should consider a mixed-methods approach to quantify the impact of IQA measures on student performance across multiple regions. Longitudinal studies could also assess how sustained professional development and curriculum revisions influence teaching effectiveness over time. Moreover, comparative studies between public and private teacher education institutions may uncover sector-specific best practices and challenges. Further exploration into student voice, particularly in curriculum design and evaluation, is also recommended to ensure participatory and responsive educational reforms.

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