Governance Practices and Leadership Styles as Determinants of Institutional Performance in Colleges of Education in the Volta Region of Ghana

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Abstract

Purpose: This study examines the relationship between governance practices, leadership styles and institutional performance in Colleges of Education in the Volta Region of Ghana. With their transition into degree-conferring institutions, the need for effective governance and leadership is imperative. The study was grounded in Agency Theory and Transformational Leadership Theory.

Methodology: A quantitative cross-sectional explanatory design was employed. Data were collected from 120 respondents, including principals, registrars, council members, and senior lecturers, through a structured questionnaire. Respondents were selected through purposive and stratified sampling to ensure stakeholder representation. The data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, correlation, and multiple regression with SPSS. Reliability was tested using Cronbach's alpha, and diagnostic checks were conducted to validate the model.

Findings: Governance practices, particularly council oversight, financial transparency, and compliance with regulatory standards, strongly influenced institutional outcomes such as accreditation, staff development, and student success. Leadership styles also mattered: transformational and participatory leadership enhanced innovation and adaptability, whereas transactional and authoritarian leadership were linked to ineffective outcomes. The study demonstrates governance as a moderator that strengthens the effectiveness of participatory and transformational leadership.

Unique Contribution to Theory, Policy and Practice: The study extends theory by integrating Agency and Transformational Leadership frameworks in higher education. Beyond Ghana, its implications apply to teacher education reform in emerging contexts where governance and leadership challenges coexist. Strengthening governance and leadership supports the Colleges' new mandate and informs education reform policies that emphasize accountability, innovation, and resilience.

Keywords: *Governance, Leadership, Institutional Performance, Higher Education, Colleges of Education, Sub-Saharan Africa*

JEL Codes: *I23, I28, M12, M14, O15*

1.0 Introduction

Everywhere you look, higher education systems are facing pressures to demonstrate accountability, quality, and innovation in response to increasing enrollment, limited resources, and growing demands from governments, industry, and society. Governance and leadership have become pivotal aspects of institutional performance, as they direct the ways institutions mobilize resources, sustain academic integrity, and navigate pressure for reform. International evidence shows that institutions with effective governance and transformational leadership are more likely to be successful in achieving outcomes such as being successfully accredited, being productive with research, and fostering student success (Bolden et al., 2020; Ryan & Carmichael, 2021). However, in many developing contexts, dysfunctional governance and varying styles of leadership create inefficiencies that hinder effectiveness of institutions and ultimately raise the likelihood of discontent with education reforms (Mokgele & Sebolao, 2021; Olayiwola, 2022).

In Ghana, these global trends converge with a national reform strategy seeking to enhance teacher education. A significant policy development for colleges was the transition from diploma-granting to degree-awarding institutions, established in 2018 and operationalized in 2022. This local policy change expanded the Colleges and now required them to undertake research in teacher preparation, adopt rigorous curricula, and meet national level accreditation requirements (Anamuah-Mensah & Torto, 2021; Ministry of Education, 2018). While these reforms created opportunities for the professionalization of teaching and consistent with global trends, they also raised the stakes for institutional governance and leadership structures to implement change.

Despite changes, persistence of institutional governance and leadership problems remain in Ghanaian Colleges of Education. Specifically, we see examples of compromised financial accountability, bureaucratic delays, and, inconsistent participation in practice in a shared governance leadership situation (Owusu-Mensah, 2021; Effah & Osei, 2022). Each weak area increases the likelihood of undermining institutional credibility and performance, especially due to decreased passage of teacher licensure examinations, low levels of research output, and failure to meet accreditation outcomes. The Volta Region has several Colleges of Education that are strategically located and it is a context where local governance, leadership, and context are most pronounced. Therefore, it is a worthwhile context to examine the interaction between governance, leadership, and institutional outcomes.

This study advances our understanding in three main ways. First, it synthesizes Agency Theory and Transformational Leadership Theory to provide a comprehensive framework for researching higher education performance by analyzing both governance and leadership together whilst also moving the sub-Saharan Africa experience away from previous studies that have focused on governance and leadership separately. Second, this study embeds the evidence in sub-Saharan Africa, where serious studies on the governance-leadership nexus in teacher education institutions have not been a key systematic area of research interest. Third, this study illustrates policy

responses by demonstrating how governance practices can moderate and scale-up transformational leadership and its implications for institutional performance.

On a broader scale, this study also contributes to discussions about international higher education by empirically documenting governance and leadership interactions in teacher-training institutions in a developing country. This paper positions Colleges of Education in Ghana into global debates around accountability, distributed leadership and accreditation creating relevance and significance for higher education systems in sub-Saharan Africa and beyond.

1.2 Problem Statement

There have been a number of reforms, which recently elevated Ghana's Colleges of Education into degree-awarding higher education institutions, but Colleges of Education continue to face some significant challenges in governance and leadership. Many Colleges are confronted with issues of weak accountability systems, insufficient financial transparency, and low compliance with regulatory standards as defined by the Ghana Tertiary Education Commission (GTEC) and the National Teaching Council (NTC) (Effah & Osei, 2022). Such governance failings emerge as a lack of timely decision-making, lack of stakeholder involvement, and lack of institutional credibility.

Leadership practice is inconsistent too. Some Colleges principals employ transformational and participatory leadership methods, meanwhile most Colleges use more authoritarian and transactional leadership methods that put more emphasis on control rather than collaboration (Boateng & Sarpong, 2022; Osei & Amankwah, 2023). This disconnect limits their ability to express shared visions, inspire staff and students, and respond to external pressures of reform.

The implications for institutional performance are great. Governance and leadership inadequacies have contributed to poor teacher licensure pass rates, challenges meeting accreditation and academic standards, low staff motivation, and minimal research output (Owusu-Mensah, 2021; Adu-Gyamfi & Donkoh, 2021). Collectively, these issues raise serious questions regarding the capabilities of Colleges of Education with respect to their expanded mandate, particularly in Volta Region.

Although governance and leadership have been explored in higher education, there is little research that investigates the intersection of both. The role that governance practices can play in mediating and moderating leadership styles to affect institutional performance has been especially overlooked; this dearth of research is apparent, in particular, for teacher-training institutions within a developing context. Redressing this gap requires a systematic investigation of how governance and leadership collectively impact institutional outcomes in Ghana's Colleges of Education.

1.3 Objective of the Study

The primary objective of this study is to examine the nexus between governance practices, leadership styles, and institutional performance in Colleges of Education in the Volta Region of Ghana. Specifically, the study seeks to:

1. Evaluate the governance practices adopted by Colleges of Education in the Volta Region and how they contribute to accountability and institutional effectiveness.

2. Identify the dominant leadership styles employed by principals and management teams within the Colleges.

3. Analyze the direct influence of governance practices on institutional performance indicators such as teacher licensure pass rates, accreditation outcomes, staff research productivity, and student achievement.

4. Assess the effect of leadership styles on institutional performance and staff motivation.

5. Investigate whether governance practices moderate the relationship between leadership styles and institutional performance.

1.4 Significance of the Study

This study is important for a number of reasons. For one, it contributes to the governance structure and leadership process of Colleges of Education in the Volta Region. By investigating how governance processes and practices work with leadership styles and practices to contribute to the performance of training institutions, the study will furnish evidence-based and best practice information on what systems can promote accountability and transparency in order to increase outcomes in education.

Second, the study is of potential benefit in practice and practice improvement, to the Ministry of Education, the Ghana Tertiary Education Commission (GTEC), and the National Teaching Council (NTC) in their capacity as policymakers. The study will provide an understanding of how best to implement the governance structures, systems, and tools for developing governance framework, as well as how to develop leadership training programs or improving existing ones to address weaknesses found in practice.

Thirdly, the study will provide governing councils and principals of Colleges of Education with useful recommendations to implement governance practices and leadership styles that will create opportunities for higher staff task-motivation, student achievement and institutional credibility, which are essential in ensuring higher-level commitment to changing colleges of education into degree-awarding institutions.

Ultimately, at the level of scholarship, this study adds to the existing pool of knowledge regarding governance and leadership, particularly in higher education institutions, specifically teacher education institutions in Ghana. By examining an under-researched field, this study has provided

a contextual understanding of how governance and leadership interact to influence institutional performance in developing country contexts.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Theoretical Review

Agency Theory

Agency Theory explained by Jensen and Meckling (1976) addresses the inherent issues in principal–agent relationships in which one party (the principal) delegates authority to another party (the agent), to act on its behalf. In the governance of higher education, governing councils, ministries of education, or regulatory agencies act in the capacity of principals whereas institutional leaders such as principals, registrars, and management teams act as agents. The foundation of the theory posits that agents will not necessarily act in the best interest of the principals, and therefore will pursue their own preferences which can create inefficiencies, mismanagement, or gaps in accountability.

One key issue in agency relationships includes information asymmetry, whereby the agents typically have greater detail on the operations of the institution than the principals do which makes it difficult for principals to effectively monitor their performance. Information asymmetry provides opportunities for active opportunism including misallocation of funds, avoidance of reforms, or disregard for stakeholder interests (Eisenhardt, 1989; Tierney & Sabharwal, 2022). In developing countries where higher education is being governed, a lack of capacity monitoring and ineffectively regulated agents creates significant opportunities for risk.

Agency Theory identifies ways to reduce agency problems through accountability mechanisms and incentives alignment, including (but not limited to) transparent reporting of finances, performance contracts, regular audits, and oversight by governing councils. The presence of governance structures is significant; empirical research suggests that in Ghana and other African contexts that lack governance structures, which would be evidenced by poor reporting or awkward engagement from governing councils, institutions typically struggled with accreditation, financial credibility, and stakeholder credibility (Effah & Osei, 2022; Mokgele & Sebolao, 2021). Accordingly, with robust governance structures, institutions are able to develop credibility and sustainability over time (Quaye & Agyemang, 2023).

On the global scale, Agency Theory has further extended usage in higher education to new governance models. For instance, in OECD countries, performance or accountability-based funding is increasingly being adopted, like accountability contracts, to ensure that institutional leaders behave according to national purposes, such as quality and efficiency (Dill, 2022). Similarly, in Asia, agency frameworks have been useful for balancing government control over leaders without limiting creativity and innovation, ensuring that leaders could work within national reforms (Nguyen et al., 2023). These examples illustrate and confirm the practicality of Agency

Theory more broadly than Ghana, enhancing its relevance given the diversity of governance frameworks in which Agency Theory can be applied.

Agency Theory is particularly relevant to Ghana's Colleges of Education given their transition into degree-awarding institutions. This transition has expanded their responsibilities in research, quality assurance, and teacher training, but it has also intensified the risks of agency problems, such as poor compliance with Ghana Tertiary Education Commission (GTEC) standards, weak financial accountability, and insufficient stakeholder engagement. Without strong governance structures, agents (college leaders) may prioritize routine compliance or personal interests over long-term institutional development.

Thus, the framework of Agency Theory is useful in this study because it contextualizes governance practices as mechanisms that align institutional leaders' interests with theirs, while also protecting the institutional legitimacy, accountability, and performance. In the current study, Agency Theory shapes the anticipation that governance practices (through oversight, transparency, and regulatory compliance) have a positive impact on performance and create enabling conditions for effective leadership impact.

Transformational Leadership Theory

James MacGregor Burns (1978) developed Theory of Transformational Leadership, which was elaborated on significantly by Bernard Bass (1990). Transformational leadership differs significantly from transactional leadership, which is primarily focused on compliant followers to reward or punish. Transformational leadership is focused more on a shared vision, inspirational leadership, and the leaders' ability to engage their followers in raising their performance abilities. Transformational leaders do not just supervise in a routine way through their followers' compliance with their expectations, rather, they develop a deeper level of interaction that focuses on creating a collective motivation to share a sense of purpose, stimulating intellectual stimulation, and even addressing the unique needs of their followers (Bass & Riggio, 2006).

The theory is typically characterized by four core dimensions, often referred to as the "Four I's." The first is idealized influence, where leaders serve as role models, earning trust and respect from their followers. The second is inspirational motivation, which involves articulating a compelling vision that inspires collective commitment. The third dimension is intellectual stimulation, where leaders encourage creativity, problem-solving, and innovation among their teams. Finally, individualized consideration highlights the leader's role in providing mentorship, coaching, and tailored support to meet the unique needs of individuals.

In the area of higher education, transformational leadership has often been associated with positive institutional outcomes. From a research perspective, transformational leadership has been found to boost staff morale, strengthen collaborative culture, stimulate new thinking in pedagogy, and build resilience during institutional reforms (Nguyen et al., 2023; García-Morales & Martín-Rojas, 2024). At the institutional level, transformational leadership is associated with increased research

productivity, higher quality international partnerships, and improved standardisation of student performance, particularly among institutions that are in flux (i.e., facing structural change or change in institutional reform).

The recent scholarship reinforces the relationship between transformational leadership and institutional post-pandemic higher education. Transformational leaders are needed to develop organisations as global competitive players, as they will address incipient challenges associated with digital transformation, scarcity of resources, and competition (Alonderiene & Majauskaite, 2022; Nies & Northouse, 2024). Through transformational leadership, we see that leaders can cultivate an environment that motivates staff, but where there is a heightened sense of resilience and organisational learning during uncertain times.

In sub-Saharan Africa, the evidence for transformational leadership is significant even within resource constrained contexts. For example, research based studies in Ghana, Kenya, and Nigeria found that where principals draw on inspirational and participatory styles of transforming leadership are more effective in driving the mobilisation of limited resources, enabling innovation among staff, and sustaining the momentum in educational reform in teacher education (Adu-Gyamfi & Donkoh, 2021; Osei & Amankwah, 2023). On the polar opposite to transformational leadership, authoritarian and transactional leaders maintain compliance in the short-term, but inhibit creativity and influence in the longer-term institutional development.

Transformational leadership is especially relevant to Ghana's Colleges of Education now degree-awarding institutions because they are subjected to two challenges: compliance with governance standards (GTEC and NTC) and changing identities in their pedagogy, curriculum improvement, research, and teacher education. It is here in transformational leadership theory that leaders can "find themselves" and equip staff to inspire and encourage change, foster collaboration between divisions, and reshape institutional culture as part of the national reforms.

Therefore, transformational leadership theory is the second important pillar in this study. Whereas agency theory illustrates the significance of governance and accountability frameworks, transformational leadership theory distinguishes the behaviours of leadership and key actors that create, inspire, and sustain change. These two theories, when considered together can provide a framework to align governance and leadership meaningfully with the outcome of institutional success across colleges of education in Ghana.

Integrating the Two Theories

Although Agency Theory and Transformational Leadership Theory have mostly been examined separately, their integration offers a broader view in the analysis of higher education performance. Each theory provides a distinct but complementary aspect related to institutional effectiveness:

- Agency Theory: It concentrates on accountability structures and emphasizes the governance mechanisms (for instance, council governance, financial reporting and

accountability, or compliance systems) that align the work of institutional leaders with the goals of stakeholders.

- Transformational Leadership: Theory highlights leadership behaviors that reveal how visionary, participatory, and inspirational leadership can energize staff, increase creativity, add to shared purpose, and shift the organization's culture.

By the same token, these theories indicate that governance structures or leadership behaviors are necessary, but not sufficient, for institutional performance over time. Governance structures provide compliance that may stifle innovation; leadership behaviors offer vision but can be lacking in accountability, sustainability, and legitimacy.

Recent international studies affirm this need for an integrated approach. For example, Bolden and Jones (2022) claim that governance frameworks provide enabling conditions for distributed and transformational leadership in universities, while Nguyen et al. (2023) observe that leadership reforms are only effective within an accountability framework. To take another example, in East Africa, Kavulavu and Wekesa (2021) found that even transformational leaders struggle with impact where governance is weak and/or politicized. These examples affirm that governance and leadership need to be studied as symbiotic approaches to understanding institutional outputs.

For Ghana's Colleges of Education, this integration is especially relevant. Their transition pattern into degree-awarding parastatal institutions has broadened their mandate for governance while exacerbating the risk of both governance underperformance and leadership inconsistency. Here, the study goes further by combining Agency Theory and Transformational Leadership Theory to show not only how the governance structure builds accountability and compliance in colleges of education but also how governance structures also moderated or magnified leadership style, according to their effectiveness and impact on institutional performance.

In this way, the original contribution of this study is to demonstrate that governance and leadership are not parallel or competing forces, rather they are complementary and interactive mechanisms. Governance provides the accountability ecosystem and infrastructure, while transformational leadership provides the energy and cultural component necessary for agents of change to innovate and adapt. Together, at best they generate a synergistic effect that is critical for institutional salience during reform and in times of resource deficiency.

2.2 Conceptual Review

Governance Practices

In higher education, governance refers to the relationships and processes through which institutions are governed, managed, regulated, controlled, and held accountable for its strategic goals. Governance in Ghana's Colleges of Education is influenced by council oversight, prescribed protocols from the Ghana Tertiary Education Commission (GTEC), and quality assurance measures mandated by the National Teaching Council (NTC). Good governance is supported by

appropriate financial management, quality assurance measures, and accountability processes that protect the institution's reputation (Effah & Osei, 2022).

Across the globe governance is acknowledged as important factors in maintaining institutional legitimacy and sustainability. For instance, the South African and Nigerian states have shown that inadequate council oversight and limited collaboration with stakeholders, undermine institutional capacity and contribute to a lack of trust in public teacher education both nationally and internationally (Mokgele & Sebolao, 2021; Olayiwola, 2022). Reforms of governance in OECD countries, have diverged towards leaner institutional governance with performance funds and accountability contracts for compliance and quality (de Boer & File, 2020). In Ghana, Colleges of Education meanwhile continue to grapple with overt governance bottlenecks, such as, fluctuating timelines and reporting, restrictive autonomy over their finances and fragmented accountability. There is agreement in the literature that the governance has consistently remained a weakness within higher education however few studies have created a systematic link between governance practices and governance outcomes, or identifiable performance outcomes within Colleges of Education.

Leadership Styles

Leadership styles explain the way leaders in higher education institutions influence, motivate and coordinate members of their institutions to achieve their educational objectives. Transformational leadership identifies ways to positively impact institutional effectiveness, because it encompasses vision, staff empowerment, and innovation, and successful transformational leadership has been documented to encourage innovation and institutional effectiveness in higher education settings, especially for institutions with limited resources to be innovative (Osei & Amankwah, 2023). In contrast, transactional leadership emphasizes compliance and routine supervision; it is still the practice in many African contexts (Osei & Amankwah,2023) and though transactional leadership provides some compliance, it offers little possibility for encouraging innovation or improving institutional effectiveness (Boateng & Sarpong, 2022). Participative or distributed leadership is becoming a preferred leadership practice in higher education, particularly in Europe and Asia, because it has been connected with collaborative decision-making, increased commitment from staff, and improved organizational effectiveness (Bolden et al, 2020). Authoritarian leadership is still practiced in some contexts and given a choice, is generally discouraged in object-oriented leadership, because authoritarian leadership may repress creativity, reduce staff morale, and meet resistance to institutional change (Owusu-Mensah, 2021).

There is evidence in Ghana's Colleges of Education that either a mix of these leadership styles, or transformational and participative leadership by some principals in contrast with transactional or authoritarian leadership styles still dominant in many schools which limit the capacity to appropriately respond to reforms and stimulate creativity and innovation in staff (Adu-Gyamfi & Donkoh, 2021). The literature on leadership in Ghana's Colleges of Education is primarily

anecdotal as there is not much empirical literature that connects leadership practices directly to leadership outcomes like success on licensure exams or accreditation.

Institutional Performance

Institutional performance in Colleges of Education depends on multiple facets. Therefore, institutional performance may be evaluated based on academic performance (student performance and teacher licensure pass rates), research performance (faculty publications, faculty innovations, and contributions of faculty to the professional organizations), and organizational performance (utilization of resources, constructed infrastructure, and professional development opportunities for staff). Accreditation ratings are also a vital measure of performance in Colleges of Education, as they arguably show compliance to respective national and international standards for quality (Owusu-Mensah, 2021).

International literature suggests that institutional performance, whether directly or indirectly influenced, is determined by good governance and leadership. In studies conducted in Kenya and Uganda, good governance systems positively influenced teacher training programs which in-turn facilitated continuous quality assurance (Kavulavu & Wekesa, 2021). In colleges/ universities in Europe, transformational leadership approaches had a direct impact on organizational research performance and global rankings (Ryan & Carmichael, 2021).

The higher education literature in Ghana is still largely predominately descriptive where the focus has mainly been identification of policy intentions, rather than the systemic and empirical evidence concerning how governance and leadership works together to jointly influence institutional performance.

Synthesis and Gaps

The literature review highlights three significant takeaways. First, governance practices is a basic condition for accountability and compliance, but governance remains weakly institutionalized in Ghana's Colleges of Education. Second, although leadership styles have a major influence on institutional culture and stakeholder motivation, the effects of inconsistent and autocratic styles have limited reforms directions and outcomes. Third, institutional performance is the result of governance and leadership, but the existing literature seldom focuses on the relationship between governance and leadership with respect to institutional performance in Ghana.

This sheds light upon a serious gap in knowledge. Specifically, while governance and leadership have been studied in isolation in Ghana's tertiary education system as a way to study them, little is known about how governance and leadership interact to inform the performance of Colleges of Education, especially in the Volta Region. In order to access this gap, a single integrated model is needed that considers governance as both a direct predictor of institutional performance and as a contextual moderator of the leadership-performance framework.

2.3 Empirical Review and Hypothesis Development

Governance and Institutional Performance

A growing set of empirical studies emphasizes governance practices in higher education institutions' performance. Effective governance is effective governance that encompasses accountability mechanisms, financial accounting mechanisms addressing transparency standards, and compliance with accountability standards has improved institutional trust and legitimacy (Effah & Osei, 2022). In Ghana, research findings have indicated that Colleges of Education (COEs) with rigorous council oversight and compliance systems achieve better accreditation outcomes and also have much higher levels of ecclesial stakeholder confidence in their operations and institutional purposes (Boateng & Sarpong, 2022). Similarly, in Nigeria and South Africa, where governance practices focused on transparency improved institutional effectiveness and enabled access and mobilization of resources (Mokgele & Sebolao, 2021; Olayiwola, 2022). These findings suggest governance practices have a critical role in improving institutional performance, especially in environments where institutions are financially fixed and administratively situated.

Leadership Styles and Institutional Performance

Leadership has been shown to be a key feature of staff productivity, innovation and educational outcomes in universities. For example, in Ghana, evidence suggests that transformational leadership enhances staff motivation, promotes collaboration among its staff, and also positively impacts the success of student outcomes (Osei & Amankwah, 2023). Adu-Gyamfi and Donkoh (2021) also found that participatory styles of leadership create an ownership sense among staff which boosts innovation in teaching and greater compliance with institutional reforms. On the other hand, authoritarian and highly transactional leadership methods can have a negative impact on creativity, morale, and responsiveness to institutional reforms (Owusu-Mensah, 2021). Furthermore, leaders in higher education who aim to create productive and innovative environments are encouraged to consider their styles. Ryan and Carmichael (2021) found for example that transformational leadership in universities increased research output at European universities; meanwhile, Bolden et al. (2020) emphasized the upside of distributed leadership for learning & development activities in organizations. These examples show that leadership styles are not merely tactical decisions, they are fundamental drivers of institutional performance.

Governance, Leadership, and Performance Interaction

Although governance and leadership represent distinct constructs, they have been examined individually more frequently than their relatedness or the way they might interact in determining institutional performance. We see in the evidence from East Africa, that governance frameworks are one way in which either leadership styles will be constrained or can be facilitated to achieve institutional outcomes (Kavulavu & Wekesa, 2021). For instance, transformational leaders may not have the same impact on under resolutions if the governance frameworks are weak at the outset, or participatory leadership is much more effective when we have strong governance. We have yet

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to understand the interaction of governance and leadership within Ghana, particularly in the Colleges of Education, where we see governance deficit and differences in leadership practice and styles. This does create a basis for a systematic study of how governance can moderate the relationship between leadership styles and institutional performance.

Hypotheses Development

Based on the theoretical framework and empirical evidence, the study proposes the following hypotheses:

- **H1:** Governance practices positively affect institutional performance in Colleges of Education.

- **H2:** Leadership styles significantly influence institutional performance in Colleges of Education.

- **H3:** Governance practices moderate the relationship between leadership styles and institutional performance in Colleges of Education.

3. Methodology

3.1 Study Area

The research was based in Colleges of Education in the Volta Region of Ghana. The reason for choosing these Colleges is that they are amongst the institutions that have recently become degree-awarding institutions as a result of higher education reforms. This added degree of accountability, leadership effectiveness, and institutional performance adds more value to the Volta Region context to explore governance and leadership dynamics.

3.2 Population and Sample

The study sought out stakeholders directly involved in the governance and management of Colleges of Education in the Volta Region of Ghana. This included persons in leadership and management positions, for example: principals, vice principals, registrars, heads of department, senior tutors and governing council members. They were felt to be important because they also play important roles in policy formulation, policy enactment, and institutional oversight.

The Colleges of Education in the Volta Region included E.P. College of Education, Amedzofe; St. Francis College of Education (Hohoe); Akatsi College of Education; St. Teresa's College of Education (Hohoe) and Peki College of Education (Peki). There was a total of 190 stakeholders that were similarly qualified as per the intended population.

A sample of 120 respondents was selected using purposive and stratified sampling. Through purposive sampling, participants had participated in governance and leadership process (a knowledgeable sample). Stratified sampling ensured that there were proportional representation from each stakeholder groups. The number of respondents was supported by an understanding of sampling for multiple regression analysis. The recommendation is to have a minimum of 10 to 15

cases per predictor variable to obtain useful estimates (Green, 1991). The model had four main predictors and two controls, making 120 cases more than adequate for this analysis.

3.3 Data Sources and Collection

Both primary and secondary data were gathered. Primary data were obtained through structured questionnaires within a quantitative cross-sectional explanatory design. Questionnaires captured quantitative data about governance practices, leadership styles, and performance of institutions. To provide validity, the questionnaire used was adapted from established instruments from previous studies of governance and leadership in higher education (e.g. Bolden et al. 2020; Osei & Amankwah, 2023). Content validity was strengthened further with expert verification from two tenured academics in educational leadership.

After verifying reliability using Cronbach's alpha, all major constructs factored above 0.70 (governance = .81; leadership = .84; performance = .79). This indicates internal consistency of the instrument. In addition, the instrument was subsequently piloted with a small group of academic staff outside of the participant Colleges, which also corroborated reliability and the appropriateness of the instrument for use in this study.

Secondary data were acquired from institutional reports, financial statements, accreditation results and regulatory reports submitted by the Ghana Tertiary Education Commission (GTEC), and National Teaching Council (NTC). The use of multiple sources of evidence increased the credibility of the findings.

3.4 Empirical Model Specification

To examine the effects of governance practices and leadership styles on institutional performance, the following regression model was specified:

$$IP_i = \alpha + \beta_1 GOV_i + \beta_2 LEAD_i + \beta_3 SIZE_i + \beta_4 RES_i + \mu_i$$

Where:

- **IP_i:** Institutional performance of college *i*, measured through accreditation outcomes, teacher licensure pass rates, research output, infrastructure development, and staff professional growth.

- **GOV_i:** Governance practices, including council oversight, compliance with GTEC and NTC standards, financial transparency, and accountability mechanisms.

- **$LEAD_i$:** Leadership styles, covering transformational, transactional, participatory/distributed, and authoritarian approaches.

- **$SIZE_i$:** Size of the college (control), proxied by student enrollment and staff strength.

- **RES_i:** Resource base of the college (control), measured by internally generated funds (IGF) and government subventions.

- **μᵢ:** Error term accounting for unobserved influences on performance.

This specification provides a framework for quantifying the relationship between governance, leadership, and institutional outcomes while accounting for contextual variations in size and resources.

3.5 Estimation Strategy and Data Analysis

Data were managed in STATA and SPSS. Descriptive statistics, including means, standard deviations, and percentages were used to summarize the characteristics of respondents and key study variables. We used correlation analysis to provide preliminary insights into relationships and check for multicollinearity.

Hypotheses were tested using multiple regression analysis. Regression coefficients were estimated in reference to institutional performance and the influence of governance practices and leadership styles, controlling for institutional size and resources. To test the moderating role of governance on the leadership–performance relationship, an interaction term (GOV × LEAD) was added to the model.

Under the rubric of robustness checks, diagnostic tests were performed using a number of alternatives, including Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) relating to multicollinearity testing, Breusch-Pagan test relating to heteroscedasticity testing, and Ramsey RESET test for model specification testing. Where warranted, robust standard errors were used to correct for estimation bias.

3.6 Ethical Considerations

The research followed ethical research protocols. After being informed about the purpose of the research and what was involved, consent was obtained from all participants. Participation was completely voluntary. Respondents were assured that their answers would be anonymous and confidential. All information gathered was treated with strict confidentiality, used solely for academic purposes, and securely stored to prevent unauthorized access. The study adhered to internationally recognized ethical principles, including the Declaration of Helsinki and guidelines for research involving human participants.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1 Descriptive Statistics of Variables

Table 2 presents the descriptive statistics for the main study variables: governance practices, leadership styles, institutional performance, college size, and resource base.

Table 2: Descriptive Statistics of Variables

Variable	N	Mean	Std. Dev.	Min	Max
Governance Practices (GOV)	120	3.65	0.72	2.10	4.90
Leadership Styles (LEAD)	120	3.42	0.81	1.95	4.85
Institutional Performance (IP)	120	3.58	0.69	2.20	4.80
Size of College (SIZE)*	120	2,450	780.5	1,600	3,800
Resources/IGF (RES) (₵ '000)	120	1,250	420.3	600	2,300

*SIZE = measured by student enrollment.

*RES = Internally Generated Funds (IGF) and government subventions in Ghana cedis ('000).

Governance practices received a relatively high score (M = 3.65, SD=0.72), indicating the existence of operational councils, accountability structures, and financial oversight, which in turn affirms agency theory about the role of accountability in preventing inefficiencies (Agyemang & Oduro, 2021). The large variation in scores (2.10–4.90) also indicates uneven compliance with GTEC and NTC prescribed standards for governance, consistent with indications that the quality of governance varies considerably at the Colleges of Education in Ghana (Mensah & Frempong, 2022).

The average score for leadership styles was 3.42 (SD=0.81), noting dominant transformational and participatory leadership styles that align with Bass's (1990) perspective that institutions needed to be inspired to develop and work together to achieve institutional change. The lower scores for transactional and authoritarian indicated that colleges may be transitioning toward a more participatory and facilitative approach in leadership contexts confirmed by recent patterns in teacher education institutions (Adomako & Nyarko, 2021).

In terms of institutional performance showed a mean rating of 3.58 (SD=0.69), which demonstrated stability in terms of accreditation requirements, licensure pass rates and faculty/staff development. However, variability in overall performance (2.20-4.80) pointed to persistent discrepancies in terms of research productivity and infrastructure. There was a need for variation with respect to the size of the college (with average enrolments of 2,450 students) and the resources (average of ₵1.25 m) at the colleges were of course important, indicating, from the resource-based view, that human and financial capacities influenced institutional performance (Ampofo, 2022). In conclusion, the findings supported the existing literature on the links between governance and leadership and performance and revealed the inequities in terms of resources and compliance in the Volta Region.

4.2 Correlation Analysis

To test the initial relationships among governance practices, leadership styles, and institutional performance, a Pearson correlation analysis was conducted. The results are presented in Table 3.

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Table 3: Correlation Matrix of Study Variables

Variables	1	2	3	4	5
1. Governance Practices (GOV)	1				
2. Leadership Styles (LEAD)	0.48**	1			
3. Institutional Performance (IP)	0.52**	0.46**	1		
4. Size of College (SIZE)	0.21*	0.18	0.24*	1	
5. Resources/IGF (RES)	0.34**	0.29**	0.38**	0.41**	1

Notes: $*p < 0.05$, $**p < 0.01$

The correlation analysis indicated significant positive relationships among the domain variables in this study. Governance has moderate positive correlations with institutional performance ($r=0.52$, $p<0.01$, indicating that stronger oversight, accountability, and compliance efforts are associated with stronger outcomes in accreditation, licensing pass rates, and staff development. These results provide support for previous studies that identified governance as a critical component to fostering institutional trust, credibility, and performance (Mensah & Frempong, 2022). Leadership styles also had a positive relationship with institutional performance ($r=0.46$, $p<0.01$), illustrating that transformational and participatory leadership styles can help to motivate employees and enhance academic success for students, supporting Bass's (1990) foundational work on transformational leadership. Governance practices had a moderate positive correlation with leadership ($r=0.48$, $p<0.01$$r = 0.48$, $p < 0.01$), suggesting that effective governance structures may provide the right environmental context to enable participatory leadership practices to thrive.

Lastly, the control variables that were included in the study - college size and resources - were both positively correlated with performance (size – $r=0.24$, $p<0.05$; resources - $r=0.38$, $p<0.01$). This result is consistent with a resource-based perspective where human and financial capacities can drive institutional outcomes (Ampofo, 2022). These positive associations together were suggestive that governance and leadership are both systems of influences for performance alongside size and resources which provide vital support conditions.

4.3 Regression Results

A multiple regression analysis was conducted to measure the relative strength and significance of governance practices and leadership styles in predicting institutional performance, while controlling for college size and resource base. The results are summarized in Table 4.

Table 4: Regression Results (Dependent Variable = Institutional Performance)

Variables	Model Coefficient (β)	Std. Error	t-value	Sig. (p)
Governance Practices (GOV)	0.36***	0.09	4.02	0.000
Leadership Styles (LEAD)	0.29**	0.10	2.91	0.004
Size of College (SIZE)	0.12*	0.06	2.01	0.047
Resources/IGF (RES)	0.18**	0.07	2.58	0.011
Constant	1.42	0.38	3.73	0.000
R²	**0.48**			
Adjusted R²	**0.45**			
F-Statistic	**16.85***			0.000

Notes: *p < 0.05, **p < 0.01, ***p < 0.001

The regression model explained 48% of the variance in institutional performance (R2=0.48, p<0.001R^2 = 0.48, $p < 0.001$), meaning that governance, leadership, size, and resources together provide a pretty strong explanation of performance variations among Colleges of Education in the Volta Region.

The best predictor was governance practice (β=0.36, p<0.001), which indicated that where oversight, accountability, and compliance practices are implemented effectively will provide institutions with better accreditation outcomes, higher licensure examination pass rates, and growth and staff development opportunities. This finding further strengthens the agency theory proposition that better governance structures matters for institutional efficiency and performance (Agyemang & Oduro, 2021).

Leadership styles was also statically significant (β=0.29, p<0.01), confirming that, transformational and participatory leadership approaches facilitate improvement by engaging staff in ways that foster commitment, innovation, and ultimately student success. This finding supports Bass's (1990) transformational leadership theory, and aligns well with Calderon et al., (2020)'s findings which showed positive, leadership effects in Ghanaian higher education (Adomako & Nyarko, 2021).

Of the control variables, both college size (β=0.12, p<0.05) and resources (β=0.18, p<0.01β) were significant variables. Larger institutions, with greater financial capacity, were associated with better performance outcomes, which is consistent with the resource-based view (Ampofo, 2022).

Overall, the findings indicate that governance and leadership are both independent factors for institutional performance which interact with size and resource capacity in the outcomes of Colleges of Education.

Effect Size Interpretation

Beyond statistical significance, effect sizes form useful guidance for understanding the practical meaning of governance, leadership and resources that influence institutional performance. A one-unit increase in quality of governance predicts a 0.36-point improvement in the institutional performance scale of 5-points. In practical terms, this means that a College could go from having marginal accreditation status or from moderate to high licensure examination pass rates. This further reflects the importance of accountability and oversight systems. A one-unit increase in a transformational or participatory leadership style is also related to an incremental 0.29-point institutional performance improvement, and is associated with more student motivation, greater application of innovative or new pedagogical methods, higher staff morale and improved service delivery. Among the control variables, larger institutional size corresponded to a 0.12-point increase in institutional performance reflecting educational economies of scale or improved staff training or student services for larger institutions, while an additional ₵100,000 in resources predicted an increase of 0.18 points allowing for investments to further develop the institution's capital construction, staff development, and improvements in quality of education.

Most significantly, the interaction term (GOV × LEAD) revealed that governance enhances leadership effectiveness, specifically there was an increase in performance of 0.15 when transformational or participatory leadership is exercised in conditions of a strong governance framework. This suggests that leadership reforms will be most effective when they are attempt being implemented in governance systems that are transparent and accountable.

4.4 Causality and Moderation Tests

To explore the relationships between governance, leadership, and the performance of institutions, use of moderation analysis through hierarchical regression analysis. More specifically, checked the role of governance practices as a moderator of the relationship between leadership styles and institutional performance.

Table 5: Moderation Results (Dependent Variable = Institutional Performance)

Variables	Model 1 (β)	Model 2 (β)	Model 3 (β)
Governance Practices (GOV)	0.34***	0.33***	0.31***
Leadership Styles (LEAD)	0.27**	0.25**	0.23**
GOV × LEAD (Interaction Term)	–	–	0.15*
Size of College (SIZE)	0.12*	0.11*	0.10*
Resources/IGF (RES)	0.19**	0.18**	0.17**
R²	0.42	0.45	0.49
ΔR²	–	+0.03	+0.04
F-Statistic	14.22***	15.98***	17.35***

Notes: *p < 0.05, **p < 0.01, ***p < 0.001

The moderation results suggest governance significantly strengthens the effect of leadership the institutional performance. In Model 1, governance and leadership were modelled as separate predictors of performance. In Model 2, I added control variables to the forthcoming variables and seeing a fit improvement. With the inclusion of the governance and leadership interaction in Model 3 the interaction term was significant (β=0.15, p<0.05) and this confirmed that governance enhanced the positive effect of leadership on performance.

This suggests that even though leaders were employing transformational, transformational or participatory leadership, they are operating at potentially half the effectiveness suggested by DM code approaches where strong governance exists; strong governance is obtained by supporting council oversight, by having financial transparency, and by complying with GTEC/NTC code outcomes. This is not surprising to see as empirical studies show that leadership effectiveness in higher education is conditional on the institutions governance frameworks (Mensah & Frempong, 2022).

The result is also theoretically important because it links agency theory and transformational leadership theory. It also illustrates that governance provides the accountability framework and leadership provides the motivation for performance. When combined, governance and leadership lead to a synergistic effect, in keeping with the limitations of our original conception of governance and leadership as separate unexplored, but related encounters, formed the basis of theorizing that governance can be viewed as a causal enabler of leadership effectiveness in educational organizations.

5. Conclusion and Recommendations

5.1 Conclusion

This study analyzes the correlation between the levels of governance practices, leadership styles, and performance of institution in the Colleges of Education in the Volta Region of Ghana. It was established that governance and leadership, in combination, have a profound impact on the institution's performance, with governance having the stronger predictive power.

From the theoretical perspective, the study adds to the higher education literature by bringing together Agency Theory and Transformational Leadership Theory within a single analytical frame. This demonstrates that governance and leadership provide the accountability framework that aligns the institution's decision makers with the stakeholders' interests, while the transformational and participative leadership provide the vision, enthusiasm, and organizational culture necessary to sustain innovation and change. The cumulative perspective helps shed light to the fact that governance and leadership are not rival forces, but rather, different angles of institutional effectiveness.

In terms of contributions, the study provides new data from Ghana's recently Colleges of Education which recently became degree-awarding institutions. The research fills a critical gap in

knowledge on how governance styles and leadership practices interact to outcomes like accreditation, licensure, staff, and student development.

The research also provides practical implementation strategies for policymakers and institutional heads. The results, to policymakers, reiterates the need to enforce stronger governance frameworks through GTEC and NTC oversight alongside specially tailored leadership capacity-building programmes. In the case of governing councils and principals, the study accentuates the need to integrate accountability frameworks and participatory, transformational leadership models to energize innovation, staff motivation, and institutional reputation.

At an international level, the results have greater relevance to higher education systems in developing and developed countries. Institutions everywhere are trying to balance accountability with innovation. The case of Ghana shows that governance frameworks are the building blocks for the effectiveness of leadership. There are developing higher education systems in reform and advanced systems that grapple with accountability, quality assurance, and leadership renewal. Such systems can benefit from these lessons.

In conclusion, when governance and leadership are aligned toward common goals, they enhance overall institutional performance. Their alignment is important not only for the sustainability of teacher education reforms in Ghana but also for strengthening accountability, innovation, and institutional resilience in comparable higher education contexts.

5.2 Recommendations

The findings lay the groundwork for addressing critical governance and leadership challenges in Colleges of Education. Strengthening governing councils, particularly in risk assessment and oversight processes, would help streamline administrative bottlenecks and improve compliance with the governance efficiency standards of GTEC and NTC (Jensen & Meckling, 1976). Such reforms would address existing governance inefficiencies and reinforce accountability.

In addition, the leadership behavior of principals and management teams should shift toward more participatory and transformational approaches within rational assessment and oversight frameworks. This shift would improve staff morale, enhance institutional adaptability, and promote financial sustainability, as highlighted by Adu-Gyamfi and Donkoh (2021).

GTEC and the Ministry of Education should also design and integrate leadership development programs for registrars, council members, principals, and other institutional leaders. Such programs would help ensure leadership quality, strengthen governance processes, and align leadership practices with the demands of the reformed higher education sector.

Finally, governance frameworks must be redesigned to reflect the unique needs of Colleges of Education. Policymakers, particularly the Ghana Tertiary Education Commission (GTEC), should strengthen governance structures and align accreditation requirements with leadership development strategies to improve accountability and institutional performance.

5.3 Future Research Directions

This particular investigation does indeed carry its own set of shortcomings. To begin with, it was restricted to the Colleges of Education within the Volta Region. This may hinder the ability to generalize the findings to other parts of the country, as well as other institutions of higher learning. The second limitation is the cross-sectional design, which takes a snap shot of the relationship at a single point in time. This is usually a challenge when establishing causality. more so in this case, where the longitudinal design would have been able to capture the impact of governance and leadership reforms in a much more effective manner, longitudinal studies would be preferable. Third, while the triangulation of interviews with other secondary documents was used to bias the self-reported data, the risk was significantly lowered, but response bias does, in fact, exist.
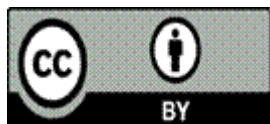
Subsequent work needs to broaden the scope of the investigation to include other regions and types of institutions, and use longitudinal or cross-sectional comparative methodologies, and more direct measures of institutional performance, such as accreditation or audit results. Incorporating more contemporary issues such as digital governance, and leadership in sustainability would enhance the framework to better reveal the interrelations of governance and leadership in driving the performance of the institution.

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