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COMMUNICATION PRACTICES AMONG ADMINISTRATORS IN COLLEGES OF EDUCATION IN GHANA

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Abstract: Colleges of Education in Ghana occupy an important position in the country's educational system as the primary institutions responsible for training professional teachers. However, the ongoing national educational reforms (elevating the college status to the university level) require effective administration and communication, which are essential for their success. Administrators in these institutions serve as the backbone of policy implementation, coordination, and institutional governance, yet empirical evidence on how they communicate and how effective these practices are remains limited. The primary goal of this paper is to examine the communication practices of administrators in selected Colleges of Education in Ghana, with a particular focus on their effectiveness and the challenges that hinder their sustainability. Using a mixed-methods sequential explanatory design, data were collected from 31 administrators in Tamale College of Education, Bagabaga College of Education, and St. Vincent College of Education in the Northern Region of Ghana through structured questionnaires and semi-structured interviews. The quantitative aspects of the data were analysed using descriptive statistics in SPSS, whereas qualitative data were analysed through thematic analysis following Braun and Clarke's framework. The findings reveal that administrators employ a combination of formal channels, such as memos and meetings, informal interactions, including face-to-face discussions and digital platforms, such as email and WhatsApp, to perform their duties. The findings further indicated that communication practices were generally perceived as enhancing coordination, collaboration,

and decision-making within the colleges. On the other hand, bureaucratic delays, limited Information and Communication Technology (ICT) infrastructure, resource constraints, heavy workloads, and cultural resistance to change emerged as significant barriers. Drawing on organizational communication theory, participatory decision-making models, and ICT adoption frameworks, the study concludes that strengthening communication effectiveness requires systemic reforms, including clearer institutional policies, improved ICT investment, targeted capacity-building, and workload redistribution.

Keywords: administrative communication, colleges of education, ICT adoption, participatory decision-making, Ghana, institutional governance.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Communication has long been acknowledged as the lifeblood of organisational effectiveness, yet in educational institutions, especially Colleges of Education in Ghana, it assumes even greater significance because it underpins governance, coordination, and the pursuit of institutional goals. Effective administrative communication is not only about the exchange of information but also about fostering collaboration, sustaining morale, and guiding collective action toward academic excellence. When communication flourishes, institutional harmony and decision-making are enhanced; conversely, its breakdown breeds misunderstanding, conflict, or even inefficiency. This study is motivated by the recognition that communication practices within higher education institutions directly affect the ability of administrators to lead, inspire, as well as respond to the diverse needs of staff and students. In Ghana's Colleges of Education, where resources are often limited and expectations high, administrators' communication styles can determine whether reforms and policies succeed or fail (Akafia, 2018; Agyeman-Dua, 2007).

The relevance of this study becomes clearer when one considers that the quality of administrative communication can either help or harm institutional actors. Where communication is transparent, timely, and inclusive, both faculty and non-academic staff feel engaged in decision-making, boosting commitment and performance. However, where communication is ineffective—whether due to bureaucratic bottlenecks, hierarchical silos, or poor interpersonal skills—staff morale declines, and institutional goals are undermined (Poku, 2022). The matter is puzzling because, despite decades of scholarship stressing the importance of communication in education (Schulze, 1958), persistent communication gaps remain a common challenge in Ghanaian tertiary institutions. Some scholars attribute these to structural factors such as rigid hierarchies and unclear channels (Habaci *et.al.*, 2013), whereas others argue they stem from administrators' lack of competence, that is, their attempt to adapt communication to evolving organisational and technological demands (Rungruang & Boonphadung, 2025). Still, others maintain that the problem lies in insufficient appreciation of communication as a strategic management tool, which is observed to drive institutional change (Stevens, 2025). These debates underscore the controversial nature of administrative communication: whereas some celebrate its capacity to unify and mobilise, others point to its failures as sources of institutional dysfunction.

This paper addresses the central research question: What are the communication practices among administrators in Colleges of Education in Ghana? How effective are these practices in

promoting coordination and decision-making, and what challenges do administrators face in sustaining them? The paper focuses on three selected institutions, namely Tamale College of Education, Bagabaga College of Education, and St. Vincent College of Education, providing an in-depth exploration of communication dynamics in contexts where institutional histories, resource limitations, as well as policy reforms intersect. Whereas earlier research in Ghana examined communication in universities (Akafia, 2018; Agyeman-Dua, 2007) and secondary schools (Khasawneh et al., 2024), little attention has been paid to Colleges of Education, which now serve as pivotal training grounds for teachers under Ghana's educational reforms. This constitutes an important empirical gap that this study seeks to fill.

Prior studies show that administrators' communication practices strongly influence decision-making effectiveness, teachers' motivation, and overall institutional performance. For instance, Adu and Duku (2023) demonstrated in their study that effective administrative communication tends to enhance teaching outcomes in South African schools, whereas Faloyin and Onasanya (2023) linked administrators' communication competence to principals' effective performance in Nigeria. These confirm that communication is a determinant of institutional productivity across contexts. Yet, despite these valuable contributions, most existing studies have focused either on universities or on secondary education leaving Colleges of Education relatively underexplored. Moreover, the unique status of Colleges of Education in Ghana, recently integrated into a full tertiary system, tends to face resource pressures as well as be tasked with delivering teacher education in the country, making them particularly worthy of investigation.

The contribution of this study lies in its effort to advance knowledge on communication practices in Ghanaian Colleges of Education, which integrates perspectives from administrators' lived experiences. Unlike earlier works, which concentrated predominantly on the perceptions of staff (Agyeman-Dua, 2007) as well as broad institutional structures (Poku, 2022), this paper delves into how communication is practised daily by college administrators, how the practices facilitate or hinder decision-making, and what challenges persist. It highlights the contextual nuances of Tamale, Bagabaga, and St. Vincent Colleges of Education. The paper adds value to comparative research on administrative communication in African higher education. Furthermore, it illuminates how administrators balance formal and informal communication channels, leverage technology, and navigate cultural factors such as respect for hierarchy and communalism, which shape communication in Ghanaian institutions.

The findings are expected to enrich both theory and practice. Theoretically, the paper provides empirical insights into how classical notions of communication, such as Schultze's (1958) emphasis on administrator-teacher communication or Habaci et al.'s (2013) frameworks on effective educational communication, are applied in contemporary Ghanaian Colleges of Education. In practice, the results may guide administrators, policymakers, and educational stakeholders in strengthening communication systems to improve coordination, staff relations, and policy implementation. In doing so, the study responds to Stevens' (2025) call for renewed focus on the communicative dimensions of tertiary administration in Africa.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Communication

Communication is frequently portrayed as the heartbeat of organisational life and the bedrock upon which effective administration rests, and nowhere is this more evident than in educational institutions where policies must be clearly articulated, activities carefully coordinated,

and relationships among administrators, staff, and students continuously nurtured to ensure institutional stability and growth. As far back as Schultze (1958), scholars have drawn attention to the central role of administrator–teacher communication, demonstrating that the quality of interaction within schools is not a peripheral concern but one that directly shapes how well institutions function on a daily basis. This early insight has since been reinforced by later studies, including those of Akafia (2018) and Agyeman-Dua (2007), who showed that staff in Ghanaian universities tend to judge their administrators largely on the basis of how clearly they communicate, how transparent they are in their dealings, and how consistently they provide feedback—qualities that, taken together, strongly influence levels of trust, cooperation, and overall organizational harmony.

However, communication in administration extends far beyond the simple transmission of information, as it also creates the space for participation and shared decision-making, a position strongly supported by Habaci et al. (2013), who identified effective communication as a major driver of success in educational administration. More recent research continues to affirm that when communication is open and participative, it not only strengthens coordination but also promotes inclusiveness and institutional cohesion (Kaya et al., 2025; Khasawneh et al., 2024). At the same time, communication has become increasingly intertwined with technology, as studies such as those by Hashim et al. (2010) illustrate how ICT can enhance participatory decision-making in higher education, while research by Kipsoi et al. (2012) and Abodohoui et al. (2014) draws attention to both the significant opportunities and persistent challenges associated with the adoption of electronic communication in African contexts.

2.2. Communication practices among administrators

The role of communication in educational administration has long been recognised as foundational to institutional functioning and leadership effectiveness. In higher education and school administration, communication is not only about information exchange but also about establishing relationships, which clarifies institutional goals, motivates staff, and sustains morale. Early works such as Schultze (1958) highlighted that communication between administrators and teachers is central to aligning institutional objectives with instructional practices, noting that without effective communication, administrative directives remain abstract and disconnected from the realities of classrooms. Subsequent studies in Ghana further reinforced this argument, highlighting that administrators' communication practices shape the perceptions and attitudes of staff toward management. Akafia (2018) found that communication practices among university administrators at Central University directly influenced staff trust and willingness to cooperate, whereas Agyeman-Dua (2007) reported that senior staff at the University of Cape Coast evaluated administrators primarily through the transparency and clarity of their communication. The findings, however, emphasise that communication is not merely technical but a relational and cultural process that defines the organisational climate.

Current scholarship bridges the gap between these studies by connecting administrators' communication practices to institutional performance and the achievement of educational reforms. Poku (2022) studied communication channels in Ghanaian universities and argued that effective communication enhances administrative efficiency and policy implementation, whereas poor communication can lead to policy misalignment and poor outcomes. In addition, Habaci et al. (2013) contend that effective communication in educational management entails formal and also informal practices in addition to consideration of cultural and organisational factors. Communication practices, in this view, extend beyond merely sending messages to include participatory mechanisms, active listening, and feedback loops, all of which enable administrators to remain responsive to the

needs of staff and students. The viewpoint of Elegbe and Ibikunle (2015) supports this, for in their study of organisations in Ibadan, Nigeria, they showed that participative communication fosters trust and inclusiveness and so enhances organisational cohesion. The focus of communication in Ghanaian Colleges of Education becomes even more critical within the contemporary paradigm of these institutions, transforming from teacher training colleges to tertiary institutions. In tertiary administrative practice, effective communication is a buffer against resistance to change (Stevens, 2025), thus allowing administrators to build consensus for the implementation of reform efforts. This viewpoint is consistent with the report by Rungruang and Boonphadung (2025), which noted that effective administrators have strong communication skills that help ensure the engagement of other stakeholders and the preservation of institutional harmony. These findings indicate that administrators in Ghanaian Colleges of Education need to consider effective communication strategies, such as achieving a proper balance between providing formal edicts to staff members at the top levels and engaging them in decisions as a participatory element, especially in resource-constrained environments where mistrust can easily emerge.

Comparative knowledge of secondary school practice in the administration of communication is enlightening. In secondary schools, Khasawneh et. al. (2024) demonstrated that administrative communication has a positive effect on the effective decision-making of secondary school principals, and that transparent and participatory practices have a positive influence on trust and decisiveness in making decisions. Kaya et al. (2025) also examined decision-making systems among school administrators, and the authors conclude that through participatory communication, they achieve greater decision acceptability and improved institutional performance. Communication practices are universally important factors in effective administration at all levels of education. The literature indicates administrators' communication practices involve a mixture of formal directives, participatory dialogues, interpersonal interactions, and the integration of digital channels. However, there is a lack of literature on the practical implementation of these practices in Ghana's Colleges of Education, working within the specific backdrop of resource scarcity, reform imperatives, and societal expectations of authority and reverence. Whereas previous research has highlighted communication practices in universities (Akafia, 2018; Poku, 2022) and schools in other African contexts (Adu & Duku, 2023; Elegbe & Ibikunle, 2015), there seems to be little empirical exploration of how administrators of Ghanaian Colleges of Education engage with staff, faculty, and external elements of the institutions. This study aims to bridge this gap by targeting the lived experiences and practices of leaders in Tamale College of Education, Bagabaga College of Education, and St. Vincent College of Education.

2.3. Effective communication practices used by administrators in promoting coordination and decision-making

Effective communication is a significant factor in both coordination and decision-making in educational administration and has been extensively explored in the literature. That is, when administrators can relate organisational resources appropriately, incentivise staff, and act on policy, then they can ensure effective communication; in turn, they facilitate successful implementation. Adu and Duku (2023), for example, found that educators perceived administrative communication as central to effective teaching, with clear directives and feedback enhancing teacher motivation and classroom coordination. In a comparable vein, Faloyin and Onasanya (2023) claim that communication competence among administrators is closely related to their capacity for effective decision-making, as communication enables information sharing, builds consensus, and facilitates the prompt implementation of policies. In conclusion, it is argued that communication

is not merely a means of management; rather, it is a strategic weapon of empowerment in successful decision-making. Kaya et. al. (2025) emphasise that when administrators involve staff in decision-making through transparent communication processes, they develop stronger stakeholder ownership of decisions, which is achieved by cutting resistance and making implementation more effective. Elegbe and Ibikunle (2015), for instance, demonstrated that participative decision-making in Ibadan organisations was related to communication strategies that were effective for ensuring all stakeholders were informed and engaged. In educational contexts, this means administrators must foster communication practices that are inclusive, dialogic, and transparent to coordinate the complex functions of institutions.

The importance of technology and digital communication tools as tools for increasing administrative decision-making is also emphasised by scholars. According to Hashim et al. (2010), ICT-based communication supports collaborative decision-making through faster information flow, greater stakeholder participation, and better accountability. In a similar vein, Abodohoui et al. (2014) also state that adopting electronic communication in public administration improves efficiency, but also point out that e-communication adoption and implementation in public administration can be complex, posing a major challenge to overcome resistance and lack of infrastructure, which is crucial for management. ICT tools enhance coordination by facilitating administrative processes in educational management (Kipsoi et al., 2012), despite access and capacity issues that still prevail in African contexts. The findings indicate that ICT tools may enable better communication and improved decision-making among Ghanaian Colleges of Education administrators, but this has to be weighed against infrastructural limitations. The clarity and timeliness with which communication is performed are also significant contributors to decision-making efficacy. Khasawneh et al. (2024) found that the effectiveness of managerial decisions made by secondary school principals was positively related to administrative communication, such that clear and timely, participatory communication resulted in better outcomes. On the other hand, Okeowhor et al. (2024) also linked principals' communication skills to their decision effectiveness in Nigerian secondary schools, noting that administrators who demonstrate clear communication skills can better coordinate staff, resolve problems, and implement policies effectively. The findings of these studies further buttress the contention that effective communication is at the heart of effective decision-making and is likely to hold in effect at the Ghanaian College of Education.

Furthermore, open, feedback-based communication, grounded in mutual respect and feedback loops, is essential for sustainable coordination. Habaci et al. (2013) observe that communication should involve conveying information and active listening to consider the needs of the different stakeholders, as well as listening, then responding to and tailoring the message to them. Garan (2022) also claims that administrators effectively communicate empathetically with both staff and students in disadvantaged schools, thereby improving institutional performance, suggesting that communication is an administrative and relational discipline. Such findings remind organisations that decision-making by communication means that the administrator needs to have interpersonal skills and emotional intelligence, as well as formal means of communication. These diverse sources of literature indicate that effective communication practices, whether participative, ICT-enabled, or feedback-focused, are crucial to institutional coordination and decision-making. But, there is also evidence from the literature that although university and secondary schools have been studied, little is known about their practices in Colleges of Education in Ghana, where resources, hierarchical customs and reform pressures can lead to specialised communication problems. This lack calls for the analysis of how communication practices of administrators in these organisations are practised as a mechanism for shaping their coordination and decision-making in the latter context.

2.4. Challenges administrators face in adopting and sustaining effective communication practices

Effective communication management strategies and practices of communication in administration are well established and can be beneficial, but there are also studies that point out issues that are faced when it comes to administrators implementing and maintaining these practices. These problems are frequently structural, cultural, as well as technological in nature that illustrate the complex realities of educational management in African and global contexts. Another general theme is the continued existence of hierarchical and bureaucratic structures, which prevent open communication. Agyeman-Dua (2007) noted that senior staff members at the University of Cape Coast generally believed that communication is top-down, leading to a lack of input in decision-making, tensions between administrators and staff, and other issues. Akafia (2018) similarly noted that administrators at Central University faced challenges with transparency, with institutional hierarchies favouring authority over dialogue. This suggests that hierarchies remain a significant impediment to effective communication in Ghanaian higher education.

Resource constraints are also a major challenge. Kipsoi et al. (2012) outlined that the lack of ICT infrastructure and capacity in Kenyan schools played a critical role in the reluctance to adopt modern communication tools, a challenge which echoed Hashim et al. (2010), who showed that technology deficits hampered participatory e-management as an activity in the higher education environment. Poor ICT infrastructure and limited training for administrators in Ghana and similar contexts are among the factors that stand in the way of modernising communication practices. Abodohou et al. (2014) further explain that even when e-communication systems are embraced, major problems such as resistance to change, lack of technological skill levels, and insufficient funding tend to make sustainability difficult. For Ghanaian Colleges of Education, this suggests that the lack of resources may discourage administrators from embracing and sustaining modern communication modes, thereby sustaining historical, often slower communication modes. Cultural norms and institutional expectations are also barriers. Habaci et al. (2013) point out that effective communication requires overcoming cultural obstacles, such as hierarchical deference, where staff generally do not want to question in public or to challenge administrators; Ekinçi and Kırkgöz (2023) further highlight that new administrators may experience struggles in managing the tension between authority and open communication, specifically in atmospheres that view hierarchy as a key component of cultural obligation. According to Garan (2022), administrators in low-resource schools have difficulty communicating with one another due to situational pressures, including community expectations and resource limitations, which curb their ability to encourage open communication and promote effective discourse. Based on these observations, administrators in the Ghanaian Colleges of Education must be aware of cultural challenges in terms of reconciling authority in their practices with a space for greater inclusivity.

Another important problem is that, as a strategic function, institutional support and recognition for communication are scarce. Stevens (2025) found that many tertiary institutions underestimate the importance of communication in administration. Instead, they mainly discuss administrative management in technical and financial terms. This lack of emphasis, however, leads to poor training, weak communication policies, and low returns for administrators on their investment in communication practices. Okeowhor et al. (2024) similarly argue that principals' capacity to communicate effectively is frequently compromised by institutional neglect, in which staff, as administrators, have little training in communication skills but are indispensable to decision-making and coordination. Lacking structural infrastructure, communication is a matter of personal accountability — rather than being an institutionalised practice. Lastly, administrators also experience

personal problems, such as stress, workload pressure, and inadequacy. Rungruang and Boonphadung (2025) point out that effective administrators develop their communication skills through experience and self-improvement, but not all administrators can benefit from or have the ability to develop these skills. Such is the case in resource-poor institutions like Ghanaian Colleges of Education when leaders play multiple roles with little support. Faloyin and Onasanya (2023) also contend that communication competence needs continuous professional development and that it is often not available or provided by African educational institutions. Perhaps it is precisely that the literature clearly demonstrates that challenges to promoting and maintaining effective communication practices for administrators are multilevel, with structural hierarchies, resource limitations, cultural norms, institutional neglect, and personal capacity deficits. Although the difficulties in addressing these are well documented in universities and schools across Africa and beyond, the empirical evidence on how they manifest in Ghanaian Colleges of Education varies widely. To fill this gap, the current study aims to provide insights into the key institutional barriers administrators encounter and the role of context-sensitive strategies in enhancing effective communication in these contexts.

3. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This study draws on Organisational Communication Theory, the Participative Decision-Making (PDM) model, and aspects of ICT adoption frameworks. According to Organisational Communication Theory, communication lies at the heart of organisational functioning, as it mediates coordination, leadership effectiveness, and institutional performance via formal structures and informal networks (Miller & Barbour, 2009; Keyton, 2017). Administrators in Colleges of Education communicate through downward, upward, and horizontal channels to align policies, foster teamwork, and maintain institutional stability. The PDM model underlines that open and inclusive communication promotes trust, increases the quality of decision-making, and ownership over the organisational outcome, in that shared decision-making contributes to acceptance and reduces resistance to change (Lam et al., 2015; Probst et al., 2007). This model is also relevant to Ghanaian Colleges of Education, where resource constraints and systemic reforms necessitate collaborative governance. ICT adoption frameworks also point to the speed, clarity, and inclusiveness with which digital platforms facilitate administrative communication by widening the scope for information, enabling participatory engagement, and contributing to transparency in institutional decision-making (Venkatesh et al., 2003; Tarhini et al., 2017). All of these perspectives form a multidimensional analytical lens on communication as a structural and technological process, highlighting the intersections between participatory and digital tools as vehicles for enhancing coordination, decision-making, and administrative effectiveness in Colleges of Education.

The diagram provides an explanatory framework for exploring communication practices among administrators in Ghanaian Colleges of Education, grounded in three interconnected theories. From the viewpoint of Organisational Communication Theory, communication is viewed as a core component of organisational life, shaping coordination and direction, leadership, and performance. This view underscores that both formal and informal pathways serve important roles in promoting coherence and effectiveness. The central and highest point in the Participative Decision-Making (PDM) Model recognises that inclusive and participatory communication contributes to ownership, trust, and better policy implementation. The ICT Adoption Frameworks describe how digital tools and platforms ensure speed, transparency, and inclusiveness of communication, while expanding participation and promoting contemporary administration. These three theories

align with the pivotal issue of administrators' communication practices in Ghanaian Colleges of Education. The arrows show how each theoretical standpoint both informs and strengthens the understanding of administrators' communication mechanisms. The bottom of the box shows that with proper communication, organisations ultimately realise better coordination, decision-making, and administrative effectiveness, providing a holistic foundation for analysing communication in higher education settings.

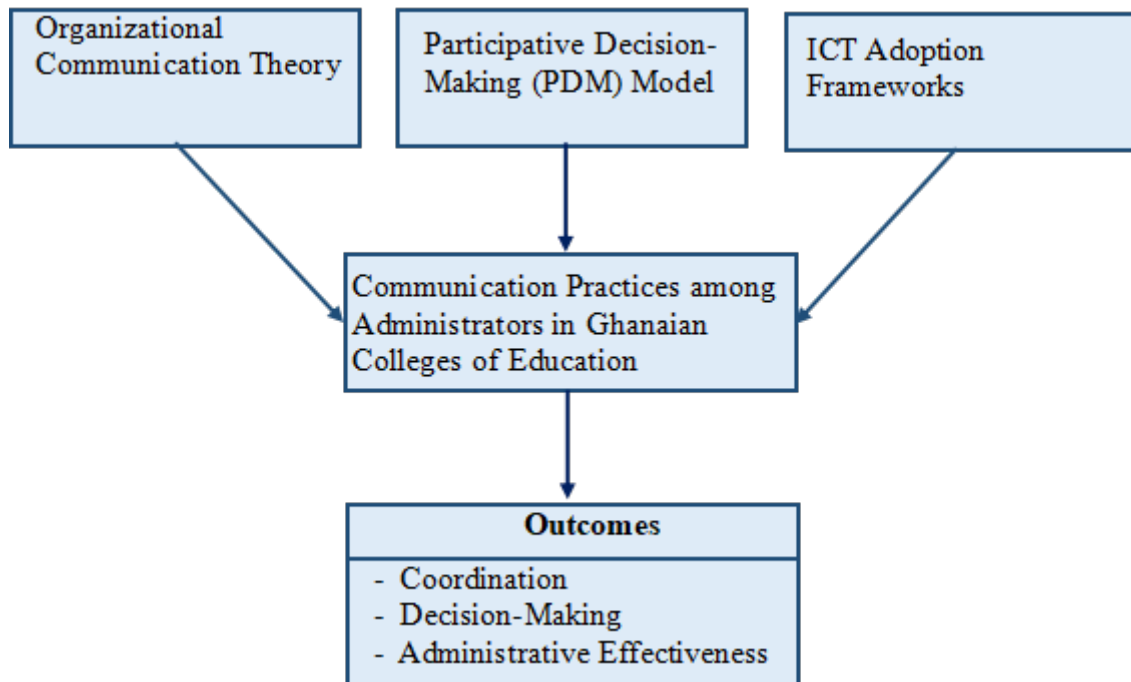


Figure 1. *Theoretical Framework Diagram*

4. METHODOLOGY

This study employed a mixed-methods paradigm featuring a sequential explanatory design, a combination of quantitative and qualitative approaches, providing an understanding of communication practices among College of Education administrators. Structured questionnaires and semi-structured interviews were used to collect data that included statistical trends and in-depth perspectives. Three Colleges of Education in the Northern Region of Ghana, namely Tamale College of Education, Bagabaga College of Education, and St. Vincent College of Education, were purposively selected for conducting the study. Convenience and purposive sampling techniques were used to guarantee relevant and accessible participants. The study population included 31 administrators across the three institutions, who were recruited for the survey, and a census technique was used (questionnaires were distributed to all 31 participants). Alongside the quantitative analysis, nine administrators (n=9), three from each institution, also shared more in-depth communication practices to flesh out our research findings. The interviews were conducted face-to-face, and informed consent was sought before audio recording. All recordings were verbatim transcribed and revised for consistency. Quantitative data were examined using descriptive statistics in SPSS version 22 to establish frequencies, percentages, and patterns, while qualitative data were thematically analysed using Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-stage methodology for coding, theme development, and interpretation. Ethical clearance was obtained from the relevant institutional body, and

participants were assured of confidentiality, anonymity, and voluntary participation. This methodological integration ensured that the study yielded findings that were statistically representative, but also deeply sensitive to administrators' lived experiences.

5. FINDINGS

In this section, the authors report the study's findings on communication practices among administrators at three Colleges of Education in the Northern Region of Ghana: Tamale College of Education, Bagabaga College of Education, and St. Vincent College of Education. Data were collected from 31 administrators through structured questionnaires and analysed using descriptive statistics. The results are presented by demographic distributions, cross-tabulations, and descriptive statistics consistent with the objectives, highlighting patterns in communication practices and their effectiveness.

Table 1a. *Cross-tabulation of Respondents' Gender and Age Group*

Age Group	Male	Female	Total	Percent (%)
Below 25 years	1	1	2	6.5%
25–34 years	4	3	7	22.6%
35–44 years	6	5	11	35.5%
45 years and above	6	5	11	35.5%
Total	17	14	31	100.0%

Table 1a reveals that 17 of the 31 administrators surveyed were men, 14 were women, indicating a fairly balanced distribution of the two sexes, though males slightly outnumbered females. The age distribution indicates that more administrators are concentrated between the ages of 35 and 44, and those aged 45 and above account for 35.5% of the sample. The least age category was under 25 years (6.5 per cent), which is consistent with the relatively older and more experienced personnel in administrative roles in Colleges of Education. This age structure suggests administrators' ability to develop maturity and institutional experience, characteristics that are likely to impact communication practices.

Table 1b. *Cross-tabulation of Respondents' Gender and Position in the Institution*

Position	Male	Female	Total	Percent (%)
Senior College Registrar	3	1	4	12.9%
Assistant College Registrar	4	3	7	22.6%
Junior Assistant College Registrar	3	2	5	16.1%
Senior Administrative Assistant	4	3	7	22.6%
Administrative Assistant	3	5	8	25.8%
Total	17	14	31	100.0%

Table 1b shows that different administrator statuses were fairly distributed throughout administrative functions. Administrative Assistants ranked first with a percentage of 25.8%, followed by Assistant College Registrars and Senior Administrative Assistants, each with a percentage of 22.6%. There were 12.9% of Senior College Registrars and 16.1% of Junior Assistant College Registrars. This spread reflects a position hierarchy where junior and middle levels are more often seen as representatives versus senior-level positions. The male administrators took charge

of higher levels of administrative roles like Senior College Registrar, whereas female staff were more numerous in lower levels, as a representation of the possible gender imbalance in how women get promoted to administrative posts.

Table 1c. *Cross-tabulation of Respondents' Gender and Institution*

Institution	Male	Female	Total	Percent (%)
Tamale College of Education	6	5	11	35.5%
Bagabaga College of Education	6	5	11	35.5%
St. Vincent College of Education	5	4	9	29.0%
Total	17	14	31	100.0%

The institutional breakdown (Table 1c) indicates an even distribution among the three Colleges of Education. Tamale College of Education and Bagabaga College of Education each contributed 35.5% of respondents, while St. Vincent College of Education accounted for 29%. To do this, an appropriate balance is maintained, ensuring that findings reflect perspectives of all three institutions while remaining as inclusive as possible. Gender distribution within institutions also remained relatively even; that is, both male and female voices were accommodated in the investigation of communication.

Table 2. *Frequency Table for Years of Experience*

Years of Experience	Frequency (N)	Percent (%)
Less than 1 year	2	6.5%
1–3 years	6	19.3%
4–6 years	8	25.8%
More than 6 years	15	48.4%
Total	31	100.0%

In Table 2, the authors demonstrate that approximately half of the administrators (48.4%) had more than six years of experience, while almost 25.8% had between four and six years. Participants (19.3%) had 1–3 years of administrative experience, and only 6.5% had less than 1 year of administrative experience. This pattern emphasises that most administrators have significant tenure and professional experience, thus positively impacting communication effectiveness, since highly experienced administrators have been able to hone formal and informal communication skills through experience.

Table 3. *Descriptive Statistics for Communication Practices among Administrators*

Indicators	N	Min	Max	Mean	Std. Deviation
Administrators use formal communication channels (memos, circulars, etc.)	31	2.00	5.00	4.35	0.72
Informal communication is frequently used	31	1.00	5.00	4.16	0.88
Email and digital platforms are commonly used	31	1.00	5.00	4.06	0.91
Feedback is encouraged and valued	31	2.00	5.00	4.19	0.81
Administrators communicate transparently and timely	31	1.00	5.00	4.10	0.89
Communication Practices (Overall)	31	2.00	5.00	4.17	0.65

Table 3 shows that administrators reported being very involved in various communication strategies. Formal channels of communication had the highest mean ($M=4.35$, $SD=0.72$), indicating that formal modes like memos and meetings were the most frequently used. Informal communication

($M=4.16$, $SD=0.88$) and digital media ($M=4.06$, $SD=0.91$) were also used in a common manner, reflecting both older and contemporary approaches. Feedback ($M=4.19$, $SD=0.81$) and transparent communication ($M=4.10$, $SD=0.89$) also scored well, indicating that administrators value clarity and openness. The overall mean ($M=4.17$, $SD=0.65$) shows that administrators view their communication practices as helpful and comprehensive.

Table 4. Descriptive Statistics for Effectiveness of Communication Practices

Indicators	N	Min	Max	Mean	Std. Deviation
Communication practices enhance coordination among departments	31	2.00	5.00	4.19	0.82
Communication practices support timely and effective decision-making	31	2.00	5.00	4.23	0.79
Communication practices promote collaboration with stakeholders	31	1.00	5.00	4.06	0.87
Effective communication reduces misunderstandings and conflicts	31	1.00	5.00	4.13	0.84
Communication strategies improve overall institutional performance	31	2.00	5.00	4.29	0.76
Effectiveness of Communication Practices (Overall)	31	2.00	5.00	4.18	0.61

Table 4 indicates administrators' impressions of the effectiveness of communication practices on organizational coordination and decision-making. Communication strategies were rated the highest in the ability to improve institutional performance ($M=4.29$, $SD=0.76$), followed by timely and effective decision-making ($M=4.23$, $SD=0.79$). Coordination among departments ($M=4.19$, $SD=0.82$) and reduction of misunderstandings ($M=4.13$, $SD=0.84$) were also rated very high. Collaboration with stakeholders showed a somewhat lower mean ($M=4.06$, $SD=0.87$), although still positive. The overall effectiveness mean ($M=4.18$, $SD=0.61$) shows that administrators perceive communication to be a powerful tool in supporting decision-making, minimising conflict, and enhancing institutional cohesion.

5.1. Challenges administrators face in adopting and sustaining effective communication practices in Colleges of Education in Ghana

This aspect presents the findings from semi-structured interviews conducted with nine administrators across three Colleges of Education. Thematic analysis revealed two main themes: (1) Challenges in Adopting Communication Practices, and (2) Challenges in Sustaining Communication Practices. Each theme is supported with representative quotations and detailed interpretations to capture the complexity of administrators' experiences.

5.2. Challenges in adopting communication practices

The administrators in the interview indicated several challenges that hinder effective communication. These primarily include organisational, cultural, and technological issues. For example, one senior administrator indicated, "*The number one barrier is bureaucracy; it takes forever for a piece of information to get through the right departments before any action can be taken.*" This indicates that the communication channels are restricted in a way, and it also suggests how this barrier hinders timely decision-making within the Ghanaian organisational environment. This barrier can undermine the goal of the organization.

Another senior administrator indicated, *“We are supposed to be using digital tools, but not all of the administrators are comfortable using technology.”* This interviewee’s response indicated that some administrators had skill-related challenges with digital tools. It also implied that, even if digital tools were available, some administrators may still have difficulty using them due to limited digital literacy. Indeed, such administrators need regular digital training in order for them to keep abreast with these digital tools. This will help to minimise the outdated way of handling administrative issues within the organisation.

However, a junior administrator indicated *“there are times when there are no explicit guidelines as to what communication means can be employed in connection to different things”*. The participant’s response indicates ambiguity and a lack of a clear channel of communication across various organisational roles; members of the organisation relied on different, inconsistent methods to share information with one another. Such a communicative act can undermine the responsiveness and organisational success.

A different junior administrator noted, *“I wish we could just talk in person, but that does not happen because we are all busy and in meetings.”* This statement by the junior administrator indicated that a face-to-face meeting would have been helpful in addressing this communication gap, but he also revealed obstacles related to their busy schedules and meeting attendance. This indicates that the management of these organisations needs to provide a holistic measure to address this gap.

Finally, a senior administrator said, *“Limited resources make it difficult to put in place the investments for effective communications systems like intercoms or reliable internet.”* This administrator’s response indicates limited devices and services that will help to promote effective communication within the organisation. In this regard, management needs to provide digital communication tools and workshops for members to stay abreast of them. Such an act can minimise the communication challenges in these organisations.

However, it can be inferred from the above that both junior and senior administrators face challenges with regard to communication within these organisations. Such challenges include the organisational structure, limited digital skills, ambiguous and a lack of clear communication channels, as well as insufficient digital resources.

5.3. Challenges in sustaining communication practices

Sustaining communication practices within the organisation can be persistently challenged in one way or another. However, without a regular measure, these may lose their effectiveness. For example, one senior administrator stated, *“Even when they put in new procedures, they do not maintain them; every couple of months they don’t work anymore.”* This further points to a sustainability issue. It also implies that actions that fail to consider sustainability can still undermine efficiency.

An administrator continued, *“Some of the staff will resist too, especially some of them who have been here for years and are used to the old way of doing things, and don’t want to change.”* This revealed that introducing new practices is a major challenge due to the attitude of some senior members, who still prefer to use old methods in discharging their duties. However, ensuring sustainability also involves changing the mindset of such administrators.

As one junior administrator said, *“I do think there are policies, which is to say, some of it is never done.”* This implies having policies and implementing them properly. Policy enforcement is a key to ensuring sustainability.

In addition, one junior administrator expressed, *“Sometimes the caseload is such that they truly do not have the time to follow through with communication as they should.”* This indicates that employees’ workload can sometimes undermine the sustainability of communication practices. In addition to ensuring the sustainability of communication practices, management should also consider their subordinates’ caseloads, as excessive caseloads may prevent some information from being communicated.

One senior administrator said, *“There is no merit or recognition for their administrators for engaging and doing good communication work.”* This shows that a lack of motivation and incentive can undermine the sustainability of communication in organisations. So, fostering motivation is key, that is, not only to support effective communication but to ensure its sustainability.

It can be observed that key ways to ensure sustainability include structural support, collaborative organisational culture, reduction of workload, clear accountability, and motivation.

6. DISCUSSION

This study demonstrates the important role of communication in educational management, consistent with the extant literature, which locates communication as the core of organisational productivity and leadership. Schultze (1958) argued that the quality of communication between managers and staff affects institutional performance, and the prevailing findings of the Ghanaian Colleges of Education corroborate his remarks decades later. Administrators were consistently found to depend significantly on formal communication systems, memos, and circulars ($M = 4.35$), while informal exchanges were also increasing and digital platforms were becoming increasingly popular, leading to an overall mean of 4.17 for communication practices. This is consistent with what has been demonstrated by Akafia (2018) and Agyeman-Dua (2007), who found that Ghanaian administrators are mainly assessed on clarity, transparency, and responsiveness. The significant role of feedback and transparency in this study ($M = 4.19$ and $M = 4.10$, respectively) supports Habaci et al.’s (2013) view that communication in education should be participatory, relational, rather than technical. It is worth noting that high communication effectiveness scores reflect administrators’ self-conceptions, which might differ from staff perceptions; therefore, they should be viewed in the context of this constraint.

Meanwhile, the findings also support that communication is not only widespread but also enhances coordination and decision-making. In support of this finding, administrators emphasised improved institutional performance ($M=4.29$) and timely decision-making ($M=4.23$), supporting the views of Adu and Duku (2023) and Faloyin and Onasanya (2023), emphasising that when communication competence is integrated into decision-making effectiveness, there is a direct correlation between communication competence and decision-making. The results also agreed with Kaya et al. (2025), who showed that participatory communication processes encourage acceptance of decisions, decrease resistance, and increase institutional cohesiveness. The study’s administrators also found that practices improved coordination among departments ($M=4.19$) and reduced misunderstandings ($M=4.13$), echoing what Khasawneh et al. (2024) described what they discovered in the secondary school setting, where clear communication led to better decision-making quality. Taken together, these results indicate that communication is not just an administrative task but also a strategic tool for maintaining collaborative trust.

Yet, in addition to the above findings, their interviews also suggest that administrators encounter significant barriers to the uptake and maintenance of efficient practices, mirroring the ‘gaps’ identified between theory and practice. Administrators said administrative bottlenecks slow

the flow of information and delay decision-making. In line with Agyeman-Dua's (2007) findings on top-down communication at the University of Cape Coast, hierarchical structures constrained staff participation. Similarly, Akafia (2018) recognised that hierarchy is a barrier to transparency at Central University, a point also noted in this paper, where administrators pointed to time lags and poor efficiency due to inflexible systems. It reflects that bureaucratic cultures where authority is given greater emphasis than dialogue persist, as emphasised by Stevens (2025), who stressed that communication is often placed at a lower level due to the undervaluing of the strategic potential of tertiary institutions. These communication practices are further complicated by resource constraints. Interviews with administrators emphasised insufficient investment in communication tools, i.e., intercom systems and reliable internet, in line with Hashim et al. (2010) and Kipsoi et al. (2012), who found that limited ICT infrastructure has hampered participatory communication in higher education and schools. Abodohou et al. (2014) similarly found that, even when e-communication is used, sustainability is undermined by weak support and inadequate funding. These findings validate the idea that the scarcity of resources in Ghanaian Colleges of Education reinforces reliance on traditional, slower processes despite administrators' openness to digital solutions.

Cultural and organisational norms were also identified as potential barriers. Administrators cited the importance of face-to-face communication, even when impractical, due to trust and cultural preferences. Habaci et al. (2013) indicated that hierarchical deference shapes communication, whereas Ekinçi and Kırkgöz (2023) found that novice administrators can be challenged by balancing authority with openness. Indeed, these patterns echo the present results, where administrators acknowledged challenges in adopting new practices. The absence of clear guidelines for communication channels further underscores the institutional vagueness highlighted by Poku (2022), who suggests that unclear communication frameworks in Ghanaian universities can lead to inappropriate policies. And the challenges of sustainability were clear — administrators complained that new systems break down due to inadequate maintenance and poor enforcement of policies. This is consistent with Abodohou et al. (2014), who highlighted the absence of follow-up as an impediment to sustainable communication, and Stevens (2025), who observed that communication is frequently undermined by institutional policies. Administrators also identified workload pressures and a lack of incentives as barriers, in line with Okeowhor et al. (2024), who observed poor communication efficacy due to institutional neglect and a lack of training. Without recognition or motivation, administrators may prioritise other things and fail to sustain communication. These results strongly concur with Organisational Communication Theory; communication is considered the foundation of institutional effectiveness, as shown by the use of both formal and informal communication channels adopted by administrators (Akafia, 2018; Agyeman-Dua, 2007). The role of inclusive communication in enhancing coordination and decision-making supports the Participative Decision-Making Model, in which increased staff involvement strengthens acceptance and cohesion with the decision-making process (Kaya et al., 2025). Moreover, administrators' ambiguous attitudes towards digital platforms align with ICT adoption frameworks; however, sustainability challenges highlight infrastructural and policy shortcomings (Hashim et al., 2010; Abodohou et al., 2014).

Consistent with the findings and literature, although Ghanaian Colleges of Education administration may exhibit strong and effective forms of communication to increase coordination and decision-making, its use is limited by hierarchical frameworks, resource constraints, cultural norms, and institutional neglect. The high ratings for communication effectiveness reflect the resilience and adaptability of administrators, who combine formal, informal, and digital approaches to keep institutions focused on unity. But the challenges highlighted suggest that a structural overhaul is

required: to ease bureaucratic bottlenecks, invest in ICT infrastructure, develop clear communication policies, and acknowledge and train administrators. By situating these findings within the broader literature, the study provides new insights into the technical and relational aspects of communication as a process, necessary for effective governance but fragile without institutional and cultural support.

7. LIMITATION

The study has several limitations, including a relatively small sample size (31 participants). Although the respondents were members of different institutional administrative strata, the small sample size limits the generalizability of the results to a wider audience of colleges of education in Ghana. A small sample may not fully capture the diversity of experiences, perceptions, and institutional practices that exist across colleges. As such, their results must be regarded with caution, since the responses might not necessarily be representative of the larger administrative or academic workforce, but of this particular group. Future research might increase the validity and generalizability of these findings by using a more representative, diverse sample drawn from several institutions.

8. CONCLUSION

This study explored the communication practices of administrators at three Colleges of Education in the Northern Region of Ghana. Key objectives were to explore the communication methods used, their perceived effectiveness, and the barriers to sustaining them. Administering formal, informal, and digital communication mechanisms was described. Written communication (such as memos, circulars, and official meetings) was widespread across all institutions. It often also included much ad hoc interpersonal communication and casual dialogue. Routine interaction was also increasingly mediated by digital methods, and administrators tended to depend on media, such as the use of e-mail and text messaging systems. Feedback mechanisms were sought from different perspectives and were widespread in the institutions. It was emphasised that clear, timely communication was at the core of enhancing organisational efficiency. Clear, effective communication among department administrators was encouraged to facilitate action coordination. Both the staff and the group considered communication a key determinant of collaboration between staff and stakeholders. Administrators noted that better communication prevented misunderstandings. Good communication also had a significant impact on institutional performance and on timely decision-making. Senior administrators' perceived experience differed, and they faced more challenges than junior administrators. Top-tier executives cited bureaucratic delays, insufficient infrastructure, and an aversion to digital tools as major roadblocks. In contrast, junior administrators said that unclear communication processes, unclear responsibilities, and heavy workloads were major challenges. Due to scheduling constraints, both groups reported very few opportunities for direct face-to-face contact. Lack of digital literacy and poor ICT infrastructure limited effective communication. Because of the resources available, reliable communication tools had to be limited. The institution's culture and its aversion to change — especially resistance from older faculty and employees — played a role in how new communication practices were maintained. Nevertheless, administrators rated their overall communication processes positively. At the system level, systemic, cultural, and ICT changes need to be introduced to improve sustainable and effective communication in Colleges of Education. To achieve sustainable communication, it is necessary to reform systems and communication systems.

9. RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the study, a number of recommendations are suggested to enhance communication in Ghanaian Colleges of Education. First, clarity and consistency in policies are necessary so that administrators have clear guidelines on how to use communication channels and procedures in distinct areas. Second, Colleges of Education should also develop modern ICT systems that include reliable internet access, intercom systems, and digital platforms, and conduct regular training to build administrators' digital literacy and confidence in technology implementation. Third, administrators need to be inspired to implement participatory methods that promote staff involvement in decision-making, foster a sense of ownership and shared responsibility that reduces resistance to change. Fourth, workplace managers, for example, need to implement human resource reforms designed to ease this workload pressure. These reforms could include appropriate staffing levels and a balanced workload spread among staff, so that administrators have time to focus on proper communication. Fifth, the sustainability of communication practices must be further enhanced by introducing monitoring and support mechanisms for ICT tools and communication frameworks for routine evaluation and renewal. Finally, identifying and rewarding administrators who continuously practice good communication will act as incentives and motivators to engage in good practices. These recommendations, taken together, illustrate that improving communication is not only an individual pursuit but also requires structural arrangements, institutional commitment, and cultural transformation to maintain and reinforce administrative effectiveness.

Conflict of Interest

The authors state that there is no conflict of interest.

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