



POSITION PAPER ON THE PROPOSED NATIONAL UNIVERSITY OF TEACHER EDUCATION

Eduwatch supports the proposal to establish a National University of Teacher Education (NUTE) as a public, degree-awarding, federated university comprising Ghana's 49 public Colleges of Education. We consider the reform a timely opportunity to address longstanding institutional fragmentation, uneven academic capacity, weak research orientation and limited system-level coordination in teacher education. Properly designed, NUTE could provide a coherent national architecture for initial teacher education, quality assurance, research, faculty development and continuing professional development.

Our support is anchored in one fundamental expectation: the reform must be a teacher education system-strengthening intervention, not simply the creation of another public university. Its value should ultimately be demonstrated through stronger Colleges, better-prepared teachers, improved academic quality, reduced costs to students and better learning outcomes.

The Policy Problem: A Fragmented Teacher Education Architecture

The Colleges of Education Act, 2012 (Act 847) provided a common legal framework for Ghana's public Colleges of Education and supported their transition into tertiary institutions. However, the 49 Colleges continue to operate under separate governance arrangements while depending on six mentoring universities for degree-awarding and significant academic functions.

One practical manifestation of this fragmentation is the lack of uniformity in assessment and grading, even where Colleges implement the same teacher education curriculum. Academic regulations inherited from different mentoring universities may prescribe different weightings for continuous assessment and end-of-semester examinations, as well as different grading thresholds. For example, a score of 70 may qualify for Grade A under one mentoring university while another may require 80 under the same curriculum.

The result is an amorphous assessment regime in which students undertaking broadly comparable programmes may be assessed and classified according to different academic standards. This has contributed to perceptions that achieving a particular class of degree, including a First Class, may be easier in some Colleges than in others. Beyond perceptions of fairness, such variation has raised questions about the comparability, credibility and consistency of teacher education qualifications across the system.

Fragmentation is also reflected in duplicated governance and administrative systems, uneven faculty capacity, limited academic ownership by the Colleges, weak research development and the financial and administrative costs associated with multiple affiliation arrangements.



The underlying policy challenge is therefore not simply that Ghana has 49 Colleges. It is that these institutions lack a sufficiently coherent academic, quality assurance, research and professional development architecture capable of assuring comparable standards and efficiently developing the country's teacher workforce.

A well implemented NUTE should end the current fragmented affiliation regime and create one coherent national system for academic standards, assessment, quality assurance, research and teacher development across all 49 Colleges, without eroding their geographical reach and institutional identities.

Potential benefits of the NUTE model

Potential for stronger academic ownership: A degree-awarding National University of Teacher Education would end the dependence of Colleges on multiple mentoring universities for core academic functions. This would strengthen ownership of curricula, assessment, certification and academic standards, while creating clearer institutional accountability for the quality and relevance of teacher preparation. It also provides an opportunity to build a more coherent teacher professional continuum, linking initial teacher education with induction, continuing professional development, educational leadership and research.

Opportunity to promote comparable academic standards across the 49 Colleges: A common university framework provides an opportunity to harmonise assessment, grading, certification and quality assurance across the Colleges. Students undertaking comparable programmes should be assessed against comparable academic and professional standards, irrespective of the College they attend. A common assessment and grading framework would strengthen the credibility, portability and equity of teacher education qualifications across the system.

University status can strengthen the attractiveness of teacher education to PhD-qualified faculty: A major constraint facing the Colleges is their difficulty attracting and retaining doctoral-qualified academics. A recent recruitment exercise reportedly attracted PhD holders to only five of the 49 Colleges, reflecting the stronger appeal of university posts with better prospects for progression, research leadership, publication, grants, supervision and mobility. University status could make teacher education a more competitive academic career path, helping the system attract, retain and deploy PhD-qualified faculty across the 49 Colleges. A federated model would also allow scarce expertise to be pooled and shared across campuses and zones.

Better integration of initial and continuing teacher development: The proposed University creates an opportunity to better connect initial teacher education, induction, continuing professional development and educational leadership development. Such continuity is consistent with a systems approach to teacher development, where professional learning extends throughout a teacher's career rather than ending at initial certification.



Opportunity to reduce affiliation costs, and general cost of teacher education:

The existing affiliation architecture imposes significant costs on College students. Payments to mentoring universities, manifested through examination-related fees, constitute about 20 per cent of fees paid by College of Education students. Removing the intermediary affiliation arrangement should therefore create an efficiency gain that directly benefits students. The establishment of NUTE should not merely transfer these costs from mentoring universities to the new institution. Cost reduction should be an explicit and measurable reform outcome.

Recommendations for Strengthening the NUTE model

1. Protect the specialised mandate of NUTE: NUTE's mandate should remain focused on strengthening teacher education coordination, academic standards, research, professional development and quality assurance. The 49 Colleges should continue as the main undergraduate teacher preparation sites, while the apex University leads academic coordination, common standards, research, postgraduate programmes, faculty development, CPD and teacher workforce policy support. Eduwatch cautions against creating a large central undergraduate campus that competes with the Colleges for students, staff and resources, as this could cause mission drift and recreate the coordination problem NUTE is meant to solve.

2. Translate the abolition of affiliation into lower student costs: The reform should translate into measurable cost savings for College of Education students. Government should clearly identify the affiliation and examination-related charges currently paid to mentoring universities and specify which of these costs will cease once NUTE assumes degree-awarding responsibility. Affiliation-related costs should not be transferred to NUTE or reintroduced under new fee categories. The reduction of these charges should be adopted as a clear performance indicator for the transition to NUTE.

3. Establish a sustainable financing framework: Institutional restructuring without adequate financing risks changing governance arrangements without improving teaching and learning. A federated university comprising 49 campuses and five zonal structures will require predictable financing for academic staffing, faculty development, research, libraries, digital infrastructure, teaching and learning facilities, practicum supervision, quality assurance and continuing professional development. Government should therefore accompany the reform with a medium- to long-term financing and implementation framework, covering both transition and recurrent costs. Resource allocation should prioritise academic quality and institutional capacity rather than the expansion of administrative overheads.

4. Combine system coherence with decentralised institutional management: The reform should avoid replacing fragmentation with over-centralisation. The central University, five zonal structures and individual Colleges should have clearly differentiated functions, with decision-making authority located at the lowest appropriate institutional



level. Routine academic and administrative decisions should, as far as practicable, remain with the Colleges. Zonal structures should facilitate coordination, specialist support and resource sharing, while the central University focuses on strategy, common standards, quality assurance and system-wide academic leadership. The reform should therefore streamline rather than expand bureaucracy, while preserving the longstanding names, traditions, community relationships and faith-based identities of individual Colleges.

5. Position NUTE to attract and retain PhD-qualified faculty: The current College structure has struggled to attract PhD holders who are more likely to seek employment within universities, where there are broader opportunities for academic progression, research leadership, publication, grant participation, postgraduate supervision and mobility within the university system. The transition to university status should therefore be deliberately used to make teacher education a more competitive academic career destination for doctoral-qualified faculty. NUTE should establish university-level academic appointments and conditions across its campuses, with opportunities for promotion, research leadership, supervision, professional mobility and participation in wider academic networks. This would strengthen the ability of the 49 Colleges to attract and retain the calibre of faculty required for degree-level teacher education.

6. Anchor quality assurance in graduate and classroom outcomes: Quality assurance should extend beyond compliance with accreditation and administrative standards. NUTE should establish strong institutional relationships with the Ghana Tertiary Education Commission, National Teaching Council, Ghana Education Service and Ministry of Education, while developing systematic feedback loops between Colleges and the schools that employ their graduates. The ultimate measure of teacher education quality should be whether graduates demonstrate the subject knowledge, pedagogical competence, professional values, inclusive teaching skills and classroom readiness required to improve learning.

Conclusion

The proposed NUTE presents an opportunity to undertake a significant structural reform of Ghana's teacher education system. The federated model has the potential to strengthen academic ownership, comparability of standards, faculty quality, research, professional development and system coherence, while reducing inefficiencies associated with the current affiliation regime. However, institutional consolidation is a means, not an end. The ultimate test of NUTE should be whether it strengthens the 49 Colleges, produces more consistently prepared teachers, attracts and retains high-quality faculty, reduces unnecessary costs to students, deepens research and professional development, and contributes to improved teaching and learning outcomes in Ghanaian schools.

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