Characteristics of school effectiveness at the level of colleges of education in Ghana

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Abstract

Purpose – School effectiveness has attracted some currency in educational research globally since the 1960s though such studies mostly point to the efforts of principal leadership as the basis for promoting effective schools. However, in the case of Ghana, there is a lack of research conducted in the area, and due to that, this study sought to explore internal public perspectives of what constitutes school effectiveness in the Colleges of Education in the Upper East Region of Ghana.

Design/methodology/approach – This study employed the convergent parallel mixed-method design otherwise called concurrent mixed-method design. The population for the study comprised second and third-year students, tutors and leadership of the colleges. In total, 308 respondents constituted the sample size. The breakdown is 257 students in all, 41 tutors and 10 leaders of the colleges. Two instruments, namely, an in-depth interview guide and a questionnaire were used to elicit responses to address the object of this study.

Findings – The study revealed that the characteristics of effective schools include the high academic performance of students and a good show of disciplined behavior by both students and staff in the colleges among others.

Originality/value – To the best of our knowledge, during the search for studies conducted on school effectiveness, there is no scientific study done in Ghana highlighting the attributes of effective educational institutions. Most of the studies conducted in the area of educational studies only focused on principal leadership, educational access, participation and equity at the level of pre-tertiary institutions.

Keywords School effectiveness, Internal publics, Characteristics, Colleges of education, School leadership, School management, Administration

Paper type Research paper

1. Introduction

School effectiveness is a concept that educational authorities use to describe schools that can meet their set objectives, aims and goals. The concept of "school effectiveness" can, however, mean different things because of the myriad of interpretations educational authorities give to it (Botha, 2010; Mortimore, 2000).

Research on school effectiveness identifies factors that are characteristics of effective schools (Sun, Creemers & De Jong, 2007). Rutter, Maughan, Mortimore, and Ouston (1979) indicate the features of effective schools include but are not limited to effective classroom management, high teacher expectation, positive feedback, good treatment of students and

good working conditions for staff and students. Morrison (2004) asserts that good leadership by senior- and middle-level managers, clear aims and objectives that translate into classroom practices and a relevant, orderly, firm and well-planned classroom are essential conditions that promote school effectiveness. Scheerens (2004) cited in Saleem, Nassem, Ibrahim, Hussain, and Azeem (2012) also intimate that school effectiveness as an educational concept refers to enhancing conditions at the school level. These conditions relate to learning, administration, student motivation and community involvement. From the literature, school effectiveness embodies many characteristics.

In making a preliminary search on studies conducted on school effectiveness, there is no scientific study done in Ghana highlighting the attributes of effective educational institutions. Most of the studies conducted in the area of educational studies only focused on principal leadership, educational access, participation and equity at the level of pre-tertiary institutions.

1.1 Statement of the problem
Internal publics of the educational institutions such as school leadership, teachers and students remain committed to promoting the effectiveness of their respective schools by playing their roles and responsibilities as expected of them. Agezo and Frimpong (2015) postulate that school effectiveness depends much on teachers and the way they perform their tasks.

About Colleges of Education (CoE) in Ghana, it is a truism that tutors' responsibilities have largely increased owing to the institutions having been converted to tertiary status for over a decade now. Therefore, the tutors teach and conduct research works of national relevance. In line with the academics of conventional universities in the country and worldwide, tutors of education colleges also serve as academic counselors to students and undertake community extension services within and outside the college community all in the quest to promote school effectiveness. This notwithstanding, there is a paucity of empirical studies highlighting school effectiveness and its characteristics generally and particularly in the education colleges in Ghana. Considering this, the study sought to explore the perspectives of internal publics in the CoE in the Upper East Region of Ghana about what they consider to be the characteristics of effective educational institutions offering teacher training programs for the basic education level and whether their institutions are up to scratch as per their vision and mission statements.

1.2 Research objective and question
Specifically, the study seeks to determine the characteristics of effective schools at the level of the Colleges of Education in the Upper East Region of Ghana. In tandem with the objective stated above, this research question has been posed. What are the characteristics of effective schools at the level of Colleges of Education in the Upper East of Ghana?

2. Literature review
2.1 Concept of school effectiveness
According to Rutter (1983), describing schools as effective or otherwise will depend on the availability of both human and material resources in such schools. It is therefore difficult to define school effectiveness because it depends largely on people who are forced to choose from competing values (Stoll & Funk, 1996). Other studies in the field describe school effectiveness as the level of goal attainment of a school. Average achievement scores of examinations are normally regarded as the most effective (Botha, 2010; Scheerens, 2013).

Studies on school effectiveness also seek to examine further, the impact of one institution compared with another to establish any similarities or differences. School effectiveness

studies can also be conducted to ascertain what happens within an educational institution in terms of differences in performance at the departmental or class levels. This is to ascertain the view that there can be internal variation in effectiveness at the departmental or class level in the same school (Scheerens & Bosker, 1997). The major task of school effectiveness research is to "reveal the impact of relevant input characteristics on output. Within a school situation, it is significant to distinguish a school and a classroom level in terms of their effectiveness, organizational and instructional process" (Scheerens, 2004, p. 1).

The concept of school effectiveness is much used in the literature of school management and administration. Its meaning is normally wrongly equated with school efficiency, which is interpreted to mean the capacity of a school to maximize its functions based on a given fixed amount of school input (Saleem, 2010). Reynolds (2010) posits that the unique behavior portrayed by teachers during the teaching and learning interaction, the clarity of the teacher's mode of questioning and the pledge to academic achievement by management all point to school effectiveness. He further submits that the quality of a school head is a universal factor that determines the level of school effectiveness worldwide. Similarly, Ninan (2006) makes the argument that a school is effective if the school processes result in observable positive outcomes among students consistently over a while. Teddlie and Reynolds (2000) also argue that "the differences in characteristics of schools affect school effectiveness" (p. 15).

Also, from the perspective of Hoy and Miskel (2001), a school is deemed effective if the outcomes of its activities meet or exceed its goals. Effective schools promote high levels of academic achievement of students. Emphasis on frequent monitoring of students' academic progress and other areas of the school curricula must be viewed as an important tool for measuring school effectiveness. In summing up, school effectiveness is seen as the degree to which schools achieve their goals compared with other schools equal in terms of student intake and through manipulation of certain conditions by the authorities of the school. Simply put, school effectiveness is the extent to which the set goals of educational institutions are accomplished. Whatever a school can do and should do, its central purpose is to teach; success is, therefore, measured by students' progress in knowledge, skills and attitudes.

2.2 Determinants of effective schools

Apparently, because of the difficulty in describing or interpreting what constitutes effective schools, Stenger (2013) intimates that there is no single factor that can be relied upon. Here, he posits that effective schools are usually successful in their activities or programs of action. To this end, such schools display good signs of visionary leaders who work side by side with committed teachers, thereby creating a warm and achievement-oriented climate. School authorities must be in one accord and, therefore, work with both internal and external publics of the school to achieve success.

In the words of Kirk and Jonas (2004), the correlates that determine effective schools are those that have clear missions, high expectations for success in all spheres of the school, good instructional leadership, the capacity to be time on task, safe working environment, the show of friendly human relations to all stakeholders and the need to frequently monitor the progress of students. In support of this assertion, Joseph, Yeboa-Appiagyei, and Fentim (2014) also submit that several factors are attributable to the academic success of schools and students. They further note that the academic performance of students is an important factor when it comes to measuring school effectiveness. Also, Agezo and Frimpong (2015) in shedding light on the subject state the indicators of effective schools. Otherstudies indicate that the presence of a good and attractive environment, the existence of laboratories, libraries and workshops in their well-equipped form and shape are major determinants of effective schools (Ijeoma, 2007; Ohakamike-obeka, 2016).

Saleem *et al.* (2012) in a study, which was conducted in Pakistan, intimate that effective schools exhibit high expectations from both students and teachers and place priority on staff development. It is also worth mentioning that good principal leadership is a catalyst that transforms schools that hitherto were unsuccessful to become effective schools. Admittedly, it is the case that good school leadership calls for the sharing of leadership responsibility in the area of active supervision of instruction and other related activities of the school (Calman, 2011; Teddlie & Stringfield, 2007). Leadership ensures high curriculum coverage and tends to offer better learning opportunities for students.

From the readings of the literature so far, it is appropriate to note that the characteristics or features of effective schools could be synthesized and put succinctly as captured below. First, these schools possess high and effective instruction. Second, they are guided by a clear vision and mission statements that allow them to exude success. Third, they exhibit strategic leadership that establishes growth goals guided by strategic planning. Finally, effective schools have school boards that are effective and up to their tasks.

3. Methodology

3.1 Research approach and design

The study adopted the mixed-methods approach. This tradition of research involves combining both quantitative and qualitative research and data in response to research questions or hypotheses in a single study. The research approach deals with analyzing both quantitative and qualitative data separately, comparing and contrasting both datasets and integrating the two to address the research problem. The methods employed for collecting and analyzing data need to be rigorously conducted. According to Tashakkori and Teddlie (2010), this approach is variously referred to as quantitative and qualitative methods, multi-methods and mixed methodology. Creswell (2014) indicates that this approach is a relatively new methodology that originated in the late 1980s and early 1990s. Accordingly, the approach came from individuals from the fields of education, sociology, management and the health sciences (Teddie &Tashakkori, 2009).

The rationale for the choice of the mixed-methods tradition was because of its ability or strength to draw on the two data types and simultaneously, being capable of dealing with the limitations of both approaches. Furthermore, its selection afforded a better understanding and appreciation of the research problem by enabling the ability to compare the different perspectives drawn from both quantitative and qualitative data collected. However, challenges confronting researchers who adopt this approach include the issue of adequate time needed for collecting and analyzing both data types. It is important to also note that mixed-method has limitations such as the potential for researchers to unintentionally favor one method over the other leading to biases in the data collection process and analysis (Creswell & Clark, 2017).

Furthermore, researchers need to be abreast of the various methods of analyzing both types of data. Fortunately, the current researchers have sufficient understanding of the two traditional approaches and good knowledge in analyzing their corresponding data. This is against the backdrop that fortunately, the two researchers have expertise in the two traditional research approaches to wit, one specializes in terms of collection and analysis of qualitative data and the other has competence in doing the same with respect to quantitative data. Guided by this, each dealt with one set of data by way of collection, analysis and interpretation of the analyzed data in order not to favor one approach against the other. Therefore, the researchers were able to navigate around the challenges associated with these approaches with minimal or no difficulties.

The design of this study was the convergent parallel design as shown in Figure 1. Creswell (2014), indicates that the notation of the convergent parallel design is "QUAN + QUAL." In
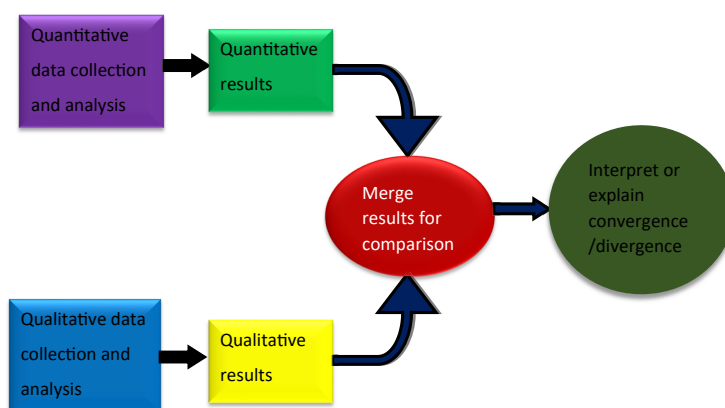
Source(s): Figure is by the courtesy of Creswell (2014)

using this design, both datasets were collected concurrently from the respondents and or participants, analyzed data separately and compared the results to ascertain whether the findings confirmed or disconfirmed each other. It is normally assumed in this design that quantitative and qualitative data provide different results (Creswell, 2014). Creswell (2003) also intimates that researchers nest one form of data within another. All in all, the basis for the choice of the convergent parallel design was in tandem with the intent to collect the two types of data from teachers and students on the one hand and school leadership on the other hand at the same time.

3.2 Population of the study

The targeted population for the study comprised tutors, second and third-year students of the two education colleges in the region. The first-year students were excluded from the study because they had just reported to the college and were yet to settle down, experience and appreciate college life, administration and governance.

Additionally, school leadership made up of the principals, college secretaries, college librarians, college accountants as well as college matrons formed the qualitative component of the study. The total population of school leadership for both colleges stood at 10 and that of tutors stood at 81, with males forming a larger majority. Together, the two colleges produced a student population of 1300 for levels 200 and 300.

The total population of the study stood at thousand 1391 participants and respondents. The breakdown of the population is depicted in Table 1.

Institutions	Students Level 200	Level 300	Total	Tutors	School leadership
St. John Boscos' College of Education	351	340	691	43	5
Gbewaa College of Education	310	299	609	38	5
Total	*661*	*639*	*1300*	*81*	*10*
Source(s): Table by authors					

3.3 Sampling techniques and sample size

First, the quantitative sampling approach or the probability sampling procedure of the simple random sampling technique was employed to select students in the second year as well as tutors in the colleges to obtain part of the quantitative data. Accordingly, this sampling technique afforded the opportunity to sample the population of students and tutors in such a way that every member of the population had an equal chance of being chosen. As asserted by Fraenkel and Wallen (2006), the advantages of this technique include the fact that it produces a representative sample. It can also be used to eliminate bias that could be introduced while selecting a sample. Again, a sample derived from this technique lends itself to both descriptive and inferential statistics.

In the case of the third-year students who were already out in the field for their teaching practice, the coordinators for the teaching practice unit of the colleges provided the lists of the students indicating the places and schools that they were posted to. Also, the study offered every respondent an equal chance of being selected from the group to be part of the study by strictly going by laid down scientific procedures. Sarantakos (2005) categorically states that this technique accords all units of the target population with an equal chance of being chosen or selected. Therefore, 65 second-year students' and 20 tutors were to be drawn from each college through the lottery method as applicable in the simple random sampling technique. It is also worth indicating that though the study initially targeted 20 tutors who were expected to be selected from each college, 21 tutors were inadvertently selected in one of the colleges. The tutors were met in the staff common room during lunch break and the lottery method of the simple random technique as has already been alluded to be used to obtain the required sample size.

Concerning the third-year students who were in the field for their internship during the time of the data collection, the study employed the cluster sampling technique of probability sampling to select the clusters and after which the simple random sampling technique was employed to draw the respondents. The rationale for the choice of cluster sampling was based on the fact that the third-year students had been posted to basic schools in the districts and municipal capitals in the Upper East Region of Ghana. These districts and municipals are far apart from one another hence accessing the students as respondents without resorting to the cluster sampling technique.

A simple random sampling technique was then used to select the various schools and finally, the lottery method was applied to draw 32 respondents from each cluster. It is worth indicating that approximately 20% of the respective populations were used in arriving at the various sample sizes drawn regarding the students' population and that about 50% of the population was drawn regarding the tutors' population. The total number of respondents and or questionnaires retrieved from the field stood at 257, a little below the anticipated figure of 260 and 41 questionnaires retrieved from tutors.

Regarding obtaining qualitative data, the study employed the intensity-sampling technique of purposeful sampling to draw participants. According to Patton (2002), intensity sampling deals with information-rich cases that manifest the phenomenon of interest intensively. Intensity sampling places less emphasis on the extremes. In this study, the school leaders of the two institutions were considered information-rich cases. They were in a privileged position relevant information. Therefore, the study selected both principals of the two colleges, but one of the principals was not available at the time of the data collection exercise. However, his vice-principal stood in for him. Other members included the college secretary, college librarian, college accountant and finally college matron. Ten participants, therefore, formed the sample size that provided qualitative data for the study. All in all, the total sample size of the study was 308.

The researchers were of the considered view that 257 college students who returned their answered questionnaires, made up of males and females, the second and third years and 41

tutors that provided quantitative data for the study and the 10 participants who provided the qualitative data during the interviews were ideal and representative enough for the entire study. The study postulation hinged on the fact that the student population, tutor population and the population for school leadership were all homogenous on the grounds that all respondents were college students, college teachers and college leadership, respectively, as far as the two colleges were concerned. To buttress this position, Sarantakos (2005) intimates that if a population is homogenous regarding a study object, a small sample would suffice. If it is also the case that the population is heterogeneous, a larger sample is required. It is worth indicating that the researchers resorted to the use of the online electric sample size calculator in the determination of the sample size estimates. Therefore, the researchers keyed in the total population onto the calculator and set the calculator at a 95% confidence level, it produced the estimated sample size, the results corroborated the table for determining sample size from a given population cited in Sarantakos, p. 163 and that of Badu-Nyarko (2019, p. 151).

3.4 Data collection instruments
The instruments that were used for the data collection included an in-depth interview guide and questionnaire.

3.4.1 In-depth interview guide, rigor and trustworthiness. The instrument for the qualitative data was the in-depth interview guide for school leadership. The instrument focused on the characteristics of effective schools. In-depth interviews are time-tasking and require both the interviewer and interviewee to devote ample time to the process. However, Charmaz (2006) posits that in-depth interviews make it possible for an in-depth exploration of a particular topic or experience. The study used in-depth interviews to elicit each participant's interpretation of his or her perspectives relative to the research question. The instrument allowed the interviewer to go beneath the surface of the phenomenon under study.

In addressing the issues of rigor and trustworthiness of the interview guide during the pilot study and the main study, three professors who have expertise in this area of the study reviewed the piloted data collected and made their inputs so that it would be enriched and capable of achieving the set objective. In the process, there was the utilization of several strategies to ascertain rigor. First, the study used member checking in which, parts of the transcribed data obtained from the instrument were sent back to the research participants for confirmation of what they said and meant. Second, the researchers engaged in an audit trail and spent some good time in the field during the data collection period so that they would develop an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon under study and have more experience with participants' settings for more valid and accurate findings. Finally, the different data collected from the participants were triangulated by examining evidence from other sources.

3.4.2 Questionnaire, validity and reliability. The instrument was largely made up of closed-ended items. Using questionnaires as a data-gathering tool has become widely accepted in research arenas because of its advantages. For instance, it is relatively easy to be used for an average large sample size and responses can easily be coded. The questionnaire items that elicited responses from both tutors and students are presented in Appendix 1.

In establishing validity and reliability, a pilot study was conducted to pre-test the questionnaire for tutors and students. The instrument was pre-tested at Bagabaga College of Education, Tamale, in the Northern Region of Ghana. As a consequence, 30 respondents comprising tutors and students were used. Relying on the experiences of senior colleagues in the field of research, the questionnaire items were perused by three professors in terms of their validity before the pre-testing activity. They offered some insightful suggestions about the questionnaire and subsequently, the questionnaires were amended to cater to the suggestions made. Having effected the corrections, then preliminary data were collected from

the piloted college. Exactly a week was used to administer and retrieve the questionnaires from the respondents. The questionnaires were then subjected to a reliability analysis test. The overall alpha coefficient or Cronbach's alpha for the 30 cases had a value of 0.8199. The results recorded indicated that the instrument had passed the fit-for-purpose test. The reliability statistics showing the overall Cronbach's alpha value of the questionnaire items are presented in Appendix 2.

3.5 Data collection procedures

In the collection of the data, clearance and an introductory letter were applied for from the Ghana Tertiary Education Commission, an agency under the Ministry of Education in-charge of tertiary educational institutions in Ghana introducing the purpose of the study to the principals of the two education colleges in the region regarding my intention to conduct a study in their institutions. Having been granted permission by the two principals upon showing them both the clearance and introduction letters, the needed courtesies and protocols in line with ethical standards and considerations concerning this study were observed.

As the first step in the data collection process using the interview guide, appointments were booked with the college authorities to avoid the unpleasant situation of unannounced visits. During the interview sessions, all the submissions made by the participants were attentively listened to, to distil the points being made. In the process, there was the maintenance of a clear and logical mind throughout. The interview schedules lasted about 1 h per participant in most cases. At the end of the interview process, all the participants were thanked for their time.

The two colleges and the basic schools that fell under the two clusters in each college were visited and the questionnaires were distributed to both tutors and students. Sample frames of those that were selected to respond to the questionnaires were checked and identification numbers were assigned to every respondent. A period of an hour was allowed for respondents to respond to the items after which questionnaires were collected.

4. Results/findings

4.1 Quantitative results on the characteristics of effective schools

The quantitative results were obtained from a total of 298 respondents from the two Colleges of Education. The number of student respondents stood at 257 and that of tutors was 41. Descriptive statistics, such as means and standard deviations, were utilized in the analysis process and results were then presented on a simple descriptive statistical table.

In response to the above, respondents (both tutors and students) were asked to indicate the extent to which they agreed or disagreed with the 15 different statements on a five-point Likert scale in a continuum of (Strongly Agree = 5, Agree = 4, Uncertain = 3, Disagree = 2, Strongly Disagree = 1) that formed the basis of the attributes or characteristics of schools described as effective. The items under this subheading were thus asked to ascertain the presence or otherwise of the characteristics that prevailed in the colleges. As presented in Table 2, relative to the involvement of teachers and students in the decision-making process as a constituent of effective schools, a mean rating of 3.19 and a standard deviation of 1.41 were found for the students compared to a mean of 3.88 and a standard deviation of 1.10 for the tutors. This implied that the students were uncertain about whether students' and teachers' active involvement in the decision-making process at that level indicated a good sign of school effectiveness. The teachers on the other hand agreed that the active involvement of students in that regard was an attribute of effective schools.

Furthermore, the values of the standard deviation indicate that tutors were more homogenous in their responses as opposed to the students. Comparatively, tutors' standard

Statement	Students			Tutors			Mean of means ($\bar{X}$) and mean of SD	
	N	$\bar{X}$	SD	N	$\bar{X}$	SD	$\bar{X}$	SD
School leadership actively involves teachers and students in the decision-making process	257	3.19	1.41	41	3.88	1.10	3.54	1.26
Effective communication exists between and among teachers, students and school leadership	257	3.46	1.27	41	3.71	1.01	3.59	1.14
High Students' academic achievements exist in this school	257	4.07	1.06	41	4.27	0.59	4.17	0.83
Parents and community members participate in school activities	257	2.88	1.37	41	3.49	1.14	3.19	1.26
There is discipline by both tutors and students in school	257	3.91	1.14	41	4.10	0.63	4.01	0.89
Much emphasis is put on the culture of maintenance relative to school property	257	3.07	1.44	41	3.10	1.20	3.09	1.32
Unity of purpose and a conducive environment for teaching and learning exist in the school	257	3.26	1.36	41	3.76	0.99	3.51	1.18
The school places much emphasis on time on tasks	257	3.79	1.20	41	3.90	0.89	3.85	1.05
There is orderliness in terms of classes and school timetables	257	4.23	0.99	41	4.20	0.72	4.22	0.86
The school compound is kept clean to provide a good and safe environment	257	3.34	1.47	41	3.59	1.22	3.47	1.35
There exist professional development programs for staff	257	4.21	1.09	41	4.46	0.51	4.34	0.80
Staff and students actively participate in the school's co-curricular activities	257	3.83	1.23	41	3.93	0.93	3.88	1.08
Presence of an active board of governors in the school	257	3.02	1.45	41	2.88	1.44	2.95	1.45
School leadership effectively discharges its functions	257	3.26	1.34	41	3.76	0.86	3.51	1.10
Presence of clear vision and mission statements of the school that guides its activities	257	4.12	1.04	41	4.39	0.83	4.26	0.94
Total		*3.58*	*1.26*	*41*	*3.83*	*0.94*	*3.70*	*1.10*

Note(s): Scale: Strongly Agree = 5, Agree = 4, Uncertain = 3, Disagree = 2, Strongly Disagree = 1
Source(s): Table by authors

deviation was closer to their mean. About whether the existence of effective communication between and among teachers, students and school leadership constitutes a feature of effective schools, it was found that the students were uncertain, with a mean value of 3.46 and a standard deviation of 1.27 while the tutors responded in the affirmative with a mean of 3.71 and a standard deviation of 1.01. Again, according to the standard deviations of both respondents, tutors' responses were closer to their mean thus suggesting that their responses were more converging. On the statement of high students' academic achievements in schools constitute the effectiveness of schools, with a mean rating of 4.07 and standard deviation of 1.06 for students and 4.27 and 0.59 mean and standard deviation, respectively, in the case of teachers, both parties agreed to the statement even though the tutors were closer in terms of their responses. Also, the respondents were asked to indicate whether parents' and community members' participation in school activities and programs constitutes effective schools. It was found that the students were uncertain with a mean rating of 2.88 and a standard deviation of 1.37. On behalf of tutors, a mean rating of 3.49 and a standard deviation of 1.14 were recorded. The mean value of the tutors also suggests that they were uncertain.

However, their responses congregated around their mean as against the students. Concerning the exercise of discipline by tutors and students as an attribute of effective schools, the students answered in the affirmative with a mean rating of 3.91 and a standard deviation of 1.14. The tutors on the other hand also agreed to the statement with a mean rating of 4.1 and a standard deviation of 0.63. However, the responses of the tutors were much closer to their mean compared to the students, as can be seen from the values of the standard deviation.

In response to the statement, emphasis on the culture of maintenance relative to school property as a measure of effective schools, the students' mean was 3.07 and a standard deviation of 1.44. In the case of tutors, the mean value was 3.10, and a corresponding standard deviation of 1.20. Both respondents, therefore, chose uncertain as the response set. However, the individual responses of tutors were closer to their mean as opposed to the students. Also, the students were uncertain whether the unity of purpose and a conducive environment for teaching and learning in the school constitutes a measure of effective schools. Their mean rating was 3.26 and a standard deviation of 1.36. The tutors on the other hand agreed to the statement with a mean rating and standard deviation of 3.76 and 0.99, respectively. Here again, the individual tutors were closer to one another in their responses. About time on task as a determinant of effective schools, the mean rating of students was 3.79 and a corresponding standard deviation of 1.20. In the case of tutors, a mean value of 3.90 and a standard deviation of 0.89 were recorded. Both respondents, therefore, agreed with the assertion. However, in comparative terms, the spread of the scores of the tutors' responses was much closer to their mean than was the case of the students. Furthermore, students, as well as tutors, agreed that in ineffective schools, there is orderliness in terms of classes and school timetables. The mean rating and standard deviation for the students were 4.23 and 0.99, respectively, while that of the tutors was 4.20 and 0.72, respectively. For variability of responses by both respondents, it was noticed that tutors had a close spread as against the students. Relative to the assertion that effective schools keep the school compound clean to provide a good and safe environment, students were uncertain on the matter. A mean rating and standard deviation of 3.34 and 1.47, respectively, were thus obtained. However, the tutors agreed to the assertion with a mean figure of 3.59 and a standard deviation of 1.22. In comparative terms, a lower standard deviation of the tutors implied more closeness in their responses. On the presence of organizing professional development programs for staff as a characteristic of effective schools, both respondents agreed. A mean rating of 4.21 and a standard deviation of 1.09 was obtained in the case of the students. The tutors had a mean rating of 4.46 and a standard deviation of 0.51. Of course, according to the standard deviation of the tutors, their variability of scores was near the mean. Furthermore, the students agreed to the statement that staff and students actively participate in the school's co-curricular activities in effective schools. They had a mean of 3.83 and a standard deviation of 1.23. Tutors' responses were consistent with those of the students with a mean of 3.93 and a standard deviation of 0.93. However, the standard deviation of the tutors was comparatively lower.

Concerning the presence of an active board of governor's ineffective schools, both students and tutors settled on the response category of uncertain. Students had a mean rating of 3.02 and a standard deviation of 1.45. The tutors' mean rating was 2.88 and the standard deviation of 1.44. Both had about the same variability or spread around their means. Furthermore, while the students were uncertain with a mean value of 3.26 and a standard deviation of 1.34, tutors, on the other hand, agreed with a mean value of 3.76 and a standard deviation of 0.86 about the assertion that ineffective schools, school leadership effectively discharge their functions. In response to the assertion that in an effective school, there are clear vision and mission statements that guide its activities, both students and tutors consented. A mean rating of 4.12 and a standard deviation of 1.04 was obtained regarding the students, whereas a mean rating of 4.39 and a standard deviation of 0.83 was obtained from

the tutors. Tutors' distribution of the scores of their responses clustered more around their mean in comparative terms.

The major dynamics that emanated from the study as captured in the above table show that in terms of the mean of means and standard deviations regarding the collective responses of respondents, they agreed to the presence of some characteristics that portrayed effectiveness in their colleges. For instance, there is the presence of high students' academic achievement (Mean of Means = 4.17, SD = 0.83), there is discipline by both students and tutors (Mean of Means = 4.00, SD = 0.89), the feeling of orderliness in the school timetable and classes (Mean of Means = 4.22, SD = 0.86), the presence of professional development programs for staff (Mean of Means = 4.36, SD = 0.80) and clear and present vision and mission statements to guide school activities (Mean of Means = 4.26, SD = 0.94). Also, based on the standard deviation values obtained from the respondents, one cannot but intimate that their responses did not deviate much from their mean scores. Additionally, respondents were undecided in terms of emphasis put on the culture of maintenance (Mean of Means = 3.09, SD = 1.22) by authorities regarding school property. Finally, the presence of an active board of governors in the colleges (Mean of Means = 2.95, SD = 1.45).

In conclusion, the results of all 15 statements that sought to describe effective schools according to the responses from all students (Mean of Means = 3.58, SD = 1.26) and tutors (Mean of Means = 3.83, SD = 0.93) revealed that both students and tutors regarded their colleges as effective. Furthermore, the standard deviation values also indicate more homogenous responses from tutors than against students.

4.2 Qualitative results on school effectiveness and characteristics

An interview guide was used to elicit responses from participants. The responses were audiotaped and then transcribed verbatim to ensure that every single word from the audio was captured. The line-by-line coding method was used to analyze data and results were then presented based on the research objective/questionnaire of the study.

In answer to the question of how participants would describe an effective school or college in terms of its characteristics, the themes that emanated from the results of all 10 participants showed among other things that educational institutions that are branded effectively would showcase a conducive learning environment that promotes students' academic activities. Also, the presence of quality school leadership to direct the affairs of the school so that the school achieves its goals and objectives. Added to these, students are disciplined and exercise their rights and responsibilities devoid of intimidation and the fear of school authorities. The relationship between the school and the community in which the school is located should be cordial such that the school should be accessible to the community at all material times. Again, one other characteristic that should not be lost is the presence of competent and committed teachers who are time on task. Also, the school has to experience high academic excellence and good performance of its products in the world of work.

A participant (P5) in speaking to what he perceived as characteristics of school effectiveness in his institution indicated that

……... When the school practices a goal-oriented approach where roles, responsibilities, and channels of communication in various issues are specified, taking student leadership seriously and encouraging initiative from all stakeholders, then such an environment meets the characteristics of an effective school. I also believe that when systems and structures are put in place to support teaching, learning, and research as well as the total development of staff, we can say the school is effective

Similarly, P7 in his elaboration on school effectiveness added that

. . . . for me, an effective school has a clear vision, set goals within a time frame, action plan, implementation strategy, participatory decision-making process, clear channels of communication, and staff professional development programs put in place to help address the professional needs of staff members. As you can see, when you were coming in, at the entrance of the college gate, you saw our vision and mission statements boldly written. All the staff works hard so that collectively, we can achieve them in the end.

Another interviewee (P9) further explained that

. . . . .A school that takes care of gender issues, inclusively and equity, a school that operates an open and transparent leadership, schools that have a regular and robust system of monitoring, and schools that provides a congenial environment is branded effective schools. My college somehow has some of these qualities.

Therefore, on the matter of what characterizes school effectiveness, it is no gainsaying that participants spoke on the basis of having been in administrative and leadership positions for some time now and would have experienced college governance over a period. Again, they would have also worked under different administrations. Hence, their definitive submissions were to be expected.

In addressing the issue further on the question of whether schools, departments and classes differed in terms of their effectiveness, all 10 participants answered in the affirmative. However, when the issue of whether they did consider their colleges as effective, 7 participants out of the total answered positively. Two participants answered in the negative and one participant indicated his indecisiveness. Accordingly, the seven participants who intimated that their colleges are effective educational institutions said among others that their colleges produce excellent academic results, both school authorities and students play their roles effectively, there are good collaborations between the colleges and their external stakeholders, targets set by the colleges each semester are mostly met. An interviewee (P5) in speaking broadly to the issue, further intimated that

. . . ...we have regular updates on the day–to–day running of the school. We equally have a quality assurance unit, which conducts an assessment of all teaching staff, which is good and has enhanced our college image and its effectiveness. Again, the school achieves good academic results, high staff qualification, effective teaching and learning activities, etc.

Conversely, P10 who did not consider his college as effective in recent times hinted that the college has a lot to do to be on the list of good colleges in the country. He categorically intimated that

Hmmm, hitherto my college was an effective college but leadership changed in relation to the college principal and the expectations of both students and tutors have not been met as expected. The new leadership is not that strong and cannot lead to the positive influence of learning outcomes

Also, P4 who answered negatively to the question intimated that

The College has not fully established systems and structures to support school effectiveness according to the characteristics of effective schools. Therefore, I do not consider it as an effective school.

4.3 Discussion of results
The quantitative results of both students and tutors indicated that high students' academic performance, good or disciplined behaviors by both students and tutors, orderliness in the school timetable and classes, the opportunity for professional development of staff, and finally, the colleges having clear vision and mission statements that guide their activities are hallmarks of an effective school and in this regard, all are being experienced in the colleges.

To demonstrate this assertion, the responses to all the 15 statements describing characteristics of effective colleges as far as the students are of the essence, attracted (Mean of Means = 3.58, SD = 1.26). Tutors also obtained (Mean of Means = 3.83, SD = 0.93. A clear case of an agreement to the matter in issue. However, it is worth noting that tutors slightly agreed more with the factors being experienced as responsible for the effectiveness of the institutions as against the students. Apparently, tutors feel that the buck will stop with them to help promote effectiveness. Therefore, passing a negative verdict on the matter will cast a bad image of their roles. In the same regard, the school leadership of the two colleges confirmed all the issues as agreed by both students and tutors on the subject in their submissions and contended that the issues spoken about found space in the colleges. They stated among others that school effectiveness constitutes the ability of schools or colleges to promote students learning hence producing excellent academic results. Second, a disciplined student body and well-behaved staff discharge their duties and responsibilities with little or no supervision. The positions adopted by the internal public support Botha (2010) and Scheeren (2013), who assert that the achievement scores of students' examinations are a major attribute of school effectiveness. Hoy and Miskel (2001) also contend that students' academic progress and some aspects of the school curriculum are important tools that are considered when measuring school effectiveness. Similarly, Kirk and Jonas (2004) also affirm that effective schools have a clear vision and mission statement that they strictly adhere to the letter.

Whereas students and staff were uncertain about effective communication present among the internal public as a component of effectiveness at the college level, the qualitative results from leadership captured that as a determinant of school effectiveness. Students' uncertainty on the matter perhaps resulted from the fact that leadership needed to do more in expanding communication to the student body than it is currently. Here again, the onus lies on school leadership to ensure effective communication in educational institutions at all material times. Therefore, to indicate the lack or uncertainty of the presence of well-structured channels of communication systems in the colleges would reveal a damming report about leadership hence the reason why they took to their position. Again, they further intimated that there are competent and dedicated teachers who discharge their duties efficiently and effectively, thereby helping promote school effectiveness in colleges.

Lastly, students and tutors indicated their uncertainly concerning parental and community participation as a determinant of effective educational institutions. On the subject of uncertainty by both sets of respondents, it is worthy of presumption that there may be some amount of parents/community members participation concerning school activities regardless, a lot more needs to be done. However, the qualitative results of leadership showed that parental and community participation in college activities constituted part and parcel of effective schools as was experienced in their situation. It is key to indicate that the seeming uncertainty of both students and tutors about this issue means that school leadership engagement with the community and parents in school activities is sluggish and will require a more active and participatory approach that would yield dividends for the colleges and communities. Agezo and Frimpong (2015) intimate that parental and community involvement in matters relating to school activities such as class attendance, school rules and regulations to curb indiscipline promotes school effectiveness, and thus educational institutions should aim at promoting such relations.

5. Conclusion and recommendations
This study aimed at exploring internal public perspectives in education colleges on what constitutes the characteristics of school effectiveness and whether or not their institutions be described as such. Based on the quantitative and qualitative data that have been analyzed,

The study showed that the characteristics of effective schools include; high academic performance of students in their examinations and the existence of a well-structured timetable that ensures orderliness in teaching, utmost display of discipline by internal publics in the colleges, an opportunity for professional growth and development of staff and the presence of clear vision and mission statements that guide college authorities, staff and students to work toward the achievement of the set goals. To this end, they maintain that the two colleges are largely deemed effective schools.

As per the findings that have emanated from the study and the conclusion arrived, the following recommendations have been proffered to the relevant policymakers and stakeholders.

(1) Students, teachers and college authorities should continue to work together in unity and a common purpose with the sole aim of driving the mission and vision of the college to even higher levels. This would bring about the achievement of more laurels in the respective colleges.

(2) College authorities should endeavor to establish good school and community relations with their respective communities and members. This move will attract some assistance to the colleges by the populace as and when the colleges require support from the community.

(3) College authorities should reach out to their affiliated universities for assistance in the form of mentorship and best practices so that to continue to main standards or improve upon the same in the discharge of their core mandate of training teachers for the basic education level.

6. Suggestions for future research
In the nature of empirical studies, it is obvious that researchers are not able to cover all the areas that may attract their interest. As a corollary, this current study suggests the following areas for further research.

(1) The replication of the study in education colleges located in other parts of Ghana.

(2) A study of a similar kind be conducted to cover both internal and external publics of education colleges in the country.

(3) Comparative study be done between and among the various education colleges in Ghana.

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Appendix 1

Questionnaire for Colleges of Education Tutors and Students

Dear Sir/Madam,

This questionnaire is designed to seek information on research titled, "Characteristics of School Effectiveness at the Level of Colleges of Education in Ghana". The researchers appreciate your participation and further entreat you to complete this research instrument as accurately and candidly as possible. Be assured that your responses will be treated with the outmost confidentiality. Please supply the right information to the items by ticking or filling in the spaces provided where applicable.

SECTION A- Biographical Data

1. Age: 18 - 27   [   ]
          28 - 37   [   ]
          38 - 47   [   ]
          48 - 57   [   ]
          58   and above [   ]

2. Gender: Male [ ]   Female [ ]

3. Name of College: St John Bosco's [ ]   Gbewaa [ ]

4. Study year (Students only):   Level 200 [ ]   Level 300 [ ]

5. Number of Years of Teaching (Tutors only):

                              1 - 10   [ ]
                              11 - 20   [ ]
                              21 - 30   [ ]
                              Other, please specify.

6. Academic Qualification (Tutors only):

                     Bachelor's   [ ]
                     Master's   [ ]
                     Others, please specify

7. Professional Status (Tutors only):

                     Tutor   [   ]
                     Senior Tutor   [   ]
                     Principal Tutor   [   ]
                     Chief Tutor   [   ]
                     Others, please

Specify……………………………………………………

Statements	Strongly agree [5]	Agree [4]	Uncertain [3]	Disagree [2]	Strongly disagree [1]
8. School leadership actively involves teachers and students in decision-making process					
9. Effective communication exists between and among teachers, students and school leadership					
10. High students' academic achievements exist in this school					
11. Parents and community members participate in school activities and programs					
12. There is discipline by both tutors and students in school					
13. Much emphasis is put on the culture of maintenance relative to school property					
14. Unity of purpose and conducive environment for teaching and learning exist in the school					
15. The school places much emphasis on time on task					
16. There is a presence of orderliness in terms of classes and school timetable					
17. The school compound is kept clean to provide a good and safe environment					
18. There is the organisation of professional development programmes for staff					
19. Staff and students' actively participate in the school's co-curricular activities					
20. There is the presence of an active board of governors in the school					
21. School leadership effectively discharge their functions					
22. There is very clear vision and mission of the school that guides its activities					
23. My school can largely be classified as an effective school					

Table A1.
SECTION B – characteristics of effective schools

Source(s): Table by authors

Appendix 2

S/N	Item	Mean	Std Dev	Cases
1	Q4	4.1333	0.9432	30.0
2	Q5	4.1667	0.9499	30.0
3	Q6	4.3667	0.4601	30.0
4	Q7	3.3667	1.0334	30.0
5	Q8	4.0333	0.8503	30.0
6	Q9	3.0333	1.0452	30.0
7	Q10	4.1000	0.7589	30.0
8	Q11	3.9333	0.8277	30.0
9	Q12	4.4333	0.6789	30.0
10	Q13	4.0333	0.8899	30.0
11	Q14	4.3000	0.7022	30.0
12	Q15	3.9667	0.9279	30.0
13	Q16	3.1667	1.3667	30.0
14	Q17	4.1000	0.8030	30.0
15	Q18	4.5667	0.6789	30.0

Note(s): Overall Cronbach's alpha $= 0.8199$
Source(s): Table by authors

Table A2.
Reliability analysis of
questionnaire items –
Cronbach's alpha

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