

## **CHALLENGES FACING FEMALE TEACHER-LEARNERS ON DISTANCE EDUCATION PROGRAMMES AT WINNEBA STUDY CENTRE, UNIVERSITY OF EDUCATION, WINNEBA (GHANA) AND EXISTING SUPPORT SERVICES**

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**ABSTRACT:** *The study explored the challenges facing female teacher-learners on distance education programmes at Winneba Study Centre, University of Education, Winneba, and the support services available for them. A descriptive survey design was employed for the study and a structured questionnaire was used to gather data. A sample of 140 female teacher-learners selected through stratified and simple random sampling procedures was used for the study. The data gathered was presented in means and standard deviations. The study revealed that the students were confronted with many challenges relating to poor academic performance, funding of their programmes, communication with the Study Centre and, sometimes, their tutors for feedback on the quizzes written and the assignments submitted. Among others, the study concluded that most of the teacher-learners struggle to study at home which translates into poor academic performance. This was attributed to combination of numerous household duties and social responsibilities. Therefore, the study recommended that the Study Centre in collaboration with the authorities at the University of Education, Winneba, should support these students by strengthening the counselling services offered to them. Apart from the support from the University's Counselling Centre, Academic Counsellors could be attached to each of the study centres so that they could assist the students to address the challenges they face.*

**KEYWORDS:** Female-teacher Learners, Distance Education, Student Services, Support Systems, Study Centre

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## **INTRODUCTION**

Education is regarded as both consumer and public good because it offers satisfaction for the consumer and serves as catalyst for developing the human resources necessary for socio-economic transformation of nations. The calibre of human capital of every nation determines the extent of its development. Education plays a critical role in the development of the needed stock of human resources for the development of every nation. In order to make a significant contribution to economic growth and development, high quality education is required (Mincer & Becker, 1994).

However, Attri (2012).notes that there have been a lot of challenges with respect to achieving quality education over the years in developing countries. One of these challenges is the sharp difference of enrolment between male and female students. In Ghana, the governments has worked hard over the past years to overcome the enrolment deficit between females and males

in the formal educational system at all levels, yet there is much work to be done (Beldarrain, 2006). In an effort to achieving quality education, access still remains a hurdle to females at various levels of education.

Literature, however, suggests a global acknowledgement that improving the state of women would bring more development, not only to the world, but to the families they belong to. There is clear indication that given women the necessary support in education, they can also rise to contribute to the development task of the country. Women are partners in development and they play a very crucial role in decision making process (DFID, 2005).

Despite the significant contribution made by women to the socio-economic development of various nations and states, it appears they have limited opportunities in terms of access to higher education. Throughout history, women have had more restricted and limited roles in society with restricted opportunities to education. UNESCO (2012) pointed out that the preference to males over females in education has been a marked feature since ancient societies, a practice that has shaped contemporary gender disparities in this sector in virtually all countries. Papadópulos and Radakovich (2005) noted that higher education is the best environment for reshaping such gender disparities in education. Access of women to this level of education has gone through a story of a long struggle. UNESCO (2012) in support of Education for All (EFA) movement and Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) has identified higher education system as unfair to women in South and West Asia and in Sub-Saharan Africa. Almost everywhere in Africa and especially Ghana, women's access to higher education is considerably lower than that of men (UNESCO, 2012).

However, this trend appears to be changing in Ghana and at the University of Education, Winneba. For some time now, efforts have been made by nations and institutions to ensure gender equity in access, especially into higher education. The government of Ghana has introduced policies that promote females' access to education at all levels. The University of Education, Winneba, has also established Gender Mainstreaming unit as one of the gender advocacy groups to educate students and community members on gender-related issues at the university. It appears the efforts made by the Government of Ghana, agencies and educational institutions have brought about significance improvement in women's access to higher education. Data on students' admission onto distance education programmes at the University of Education, Winneba, suggests that between 2014/2015 and 2016/2017 academic year, the number of female applicants for programmes and those admitted outweighed their male applicants, as the table below shows.

**Table 1.1: General Admission Offers and Enrolment Statistics of Distance Education Students**

ACADEMIC YEAR	TOTAL APPLICATIONS RECEIVED	NUMBER OF ADMISSION OFFERS			NUMBER OF REGISTERED STUDENTS		
		MALE	FEMALE	TOTAL	MALE	FEMALE	TOTAL
<b>2014/2015</b>	13,002	5,702	5,991	<b>11,693</b>	3,571	4,320	<b>7,891</b>
<b>2015/2016</b>	13,705	5,464	5,607	<b>11,071</b>	4,181	4,677	<b>8,858</b>
<b>2016/2017</b>	10,369	3,968	4,593	<b>8,561</b>	2,933	3,702	<b>6,635</b>

*Source: Admission Office of Institute for Distance Education and e-Learning*

With this significant improvement and changing trend, one would have thought that the female teacher-learners have overcome the challenges they face at home and at the University, affecting their application and enrolment onto the distance learning programmes positively. However, the interaction the researchers who also teach on some of the distance programmes at the Winneba Study Centre of the University of Education, Winneba, had with the students appeared to suggest that the female students, in particular, face many challenges, making some drop out of the programmes, under-perform in examinations and, sometimes, defer their programmes. To be able to support the students effectively in their academic pursuit, efforts must be made to identify the challenges they face and how they are being supported. However, it appears little is known empirically about these issues, necessitating this particular study.

The findings of this particular study are significant in diverse ways. In the first place, the findings of the study would help the management of the Study Centre and the authorities of the university identify the challenges the students face, enabling them to put in place the relevant support systems for them. Also, by knowing the existing support services for the students through this study, the management of the Winneba Study centre, in collaboration with the authorities of the University, would be able to determine whether the existing support systems are adequate and relevant considering the changing trend of female enrolment on the programmes.

### **Theoretical Framework**

This study was guided by the role-conflict theory. The theory emanated from the functionalist point of view which was propounded by Talcot Parsons and Bales in 1955. It argues that, for efficient functioning of society, individuals have to ensure effective institutional roles and statuses. Biddle (1986) asserts that role theories are predominantly concerned with describing the mechanisms by which individuals are socialised to assume congruous societal roles in a manner that sustains a stable social order. Every status is attached with a role, which the status incumbent is expected to perform without waver. In other words, for effective functioning of families, individual members in the family must assume status which go with responsibilities. To address the economic needs of the family, men are assigned to this role whereas taken care of children and keeping the home is attributed to women as well. Parsons and Bales were of the view that any attempt to combine these roles would bring role conflict. Role conflict occurs when people are confronted with incompatible role expectations in the various social statuses they occupy. Role conflict can take several different forms. When the roles are associated with two different statuses, it is called status strain. When the conflicting roles are both associated with the same status, the result is known as role strain. Conflict may also occur when people disagree about what the expectations are for a particular role or when someone simply has difficulty satisfying expectations because their duties are unclear, too difficult, or disagreeable.

Conflict is, therefore, a form of friction in which role pressures from work and family domains are mutually incompatible in some respects. Work-family conflict is a form of inter-role conflict in which role pressures from work and family domains become an obstacle to employees' job performance. This implies that conflict always occur when women, for instance, combine their daily family routine with their occupational work.

### **Conceptual Framework**

Female teacher-learners on the University of Education, Winneba, distance education programmes play some traditional roles in their homes. Since most of them are adults and

probably married, they are expected to play some assigned roles which are played by females in society. Paramount among such probable roles include cooking for the family, sweeping, child care, washing and other family-related duties. While performing these family duties as women, the teachers still work and study on distance basis, implying they experience role conflicts, which could affect them negatively.

Also, as workers, their respective employers require some roles to be performed by these female learners. To secure their jobs, they have to become competitive and improve their performance on the job. They therefore have to acquire the relevant knowledge, skills and competencies as a requirement of human resource. The traditional, professional and academic roles of the female teachers as students on the distance education programme at University of Education, Winneba, may conflict with each other, posing a challenge for them.

### **Nature and Meaning of Distance Education**

Distance education has a plethora of definition. It is defined as “a planned teaching/learning experience that uses a wide spectrum of technologies to reach learners at a distance and is designed to encourage learner interaction and certification of learning” (Greenberg, 1998,p. 13). To Attri (2012), distance education is used to refer to the education of those who, for one reason or another, choose not to attend conventional schools, colleges, or universities but study at home. Distance education basically caters for the needs of people who really have an inner-quest to grow academically, in spite of various constraints. Distant learners can be understood as more sophisticated learners, in spite of several challenges, trying to cope with regular learners, as far as academic development is concerned.

Keegan (1996) defines distance education in which six basic elements were suggested. He observed that distance education is characterised by the separation of learner and tutor as opposed to face-to-face teaching, the influence of an educational organisation which distinguishes distance education from private study, the use of technical media, e.g. print, audio, or website to unite tutor and learner, the provision of a two-way communication so that the student may engage in dialogue with the tutor, the possibility of occasional meetings for purposes of interaction and the self-directed nature of the learner’s involvement.

## **METHODOLOGY**

### **Research Design**

This was a quantitative study underpinned by the positivist paradigm. Specifically, a descriptive survey design was considered appropriate to investigate the challenges facing the female teacher-learners on the distance education programmes at the Winneba Study Centre, University of Education, Winneba, and the existing support services for them. Avoke (2005) views a descriptive survey as a design that portrays accurately the characteristics of particular individuals, groups or situations.

The survey design examines and explains conditions or relationships that exist; practices that prevail; beliefs, points of views, or attitudes that are held; processes that are going on; effects that are being felt; or trends that are developing (Best, 1970, cited in Cohen, Manion&Morrison, 2007).The descriptive survey was used for the study because the

researchers intended looking at female teacher-learners in order to describe, classify, analyse and interpret their challenges and how they are supported.

### **Population, Sample and Sampling Strategy**

The population of the study was all the female teacher-learners who were on the distance education programmes at the University of Education, Winneba. The target group was the female teacher-learners on both the Diploma and Post-diploma Distance Education programmes at the Winneba Study Centre in 2016/17 Academic year. The estimated population was 3,700 female distance education students. Out of this figure, 65 second years students, 24 third years and 191 post diploma students, totalling 280 constituted the target population. A sample size for the study was 140 female students, constituting 50% of the total population of female distance students at the Winneba Study Centre. Out of this 140, 20 (14.3%) students who were on second year Diploma programme, 40 (28.6%) third year Diploma programme and 80 (57.1%) Post-diploma students were selected for the study.

To get the sample, the students were stratified into programmes: second year Diploma programme, third year Diploma programme and Post-diploma students. Stratified sampling, according to Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2007) involves dividing the population into homogenous groups, each group containing subjects with similar characteristics. Then simple random technique, specifically the lottery method, was used to select the sample. Bryman (2008) notes that simple random is the most basic form of probability sample. He states further that each unit of the population has an equal probability of inclusion in the sample. Simple random technique was suitable because it afforded each member of the population equal opportunity to be selected. Pieces of papers were cut and folded for all the female teacher-learners to pick with 'Yes and No'. Those with 'Yes' formed the participants of the study. This was done before their bi-monthly tutorials began in the morning.

### **Instrument for Data Collection**

A structured questionnaire was used to collect data in this study. We considered a questionnaire for the study because it is widely used and it is a useful instrument for collecting survey information, providing structured, often numerical data, being able to be administered without the presence of the researcher, and often being comparatively straight forward to analyze (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2007).

The questionnaire was in Likert-scale format: strongly agreed (SA), agreed (A), uncertain (U), strongly disagreed (SD) and disagreed (D), and collected data on various dimensions of challenges confronting the female teacher-learners as well as the support services available for them.

### **Validity and Reliability of the Instrument**

An instrument is valid when it measures what it is supposed to measure. Two dimensions of validity were ensured in this work and these were face and content validity. The face validity of the instrument was established by giving the instrument to some lecturers and students at the University who were associated with the distance education programme for their comments on it, which were considered. The content validity was ascertained through the discussion of the questionnaire items with experts in distance education at the University of Education, Winneba for their comments before the instrument was pre-tested.



Reliability is the extent to which a test or procedure produces similar results under constant conditions on all occasions (Bell, 1993). The test-retest method was employed to establish the reliability of the instrument. With regard to the method, the researchers administered the instruments to 15 female teacher-learners at the Cape Coast Study Centre of the University of Education, Winneba, for them to respond to the items. After two weeks, the same instrument was administered to the same students again. Then the researchers checked and compared the responses to the items, which showed strong consistency. The students at the Cape Coast Study Centre were selected because they had the same characteristics as the respondents in the study area.

### **Data Collection and Analysis**

The questionnaire was distributed to the students when they visited the Winneba Study Centre for tutorials. This was done after seeking permission from the authorities of the University to conduct the study at the Centre and, after seeking the informed consent of the target respondents. The instruments were self-administered by the researchers after the students had closed from the tutorial section. The instruments were collected about 40 minutes after distribution and the return rate was 67%.

Information collated from respondents was analysed descriptively with the help of Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). Fraenkel and Wallen (2000) observed that a descriptive statistics is a statistical technique that is used to analyze data by describing or summarizing the data from a sample. Means and standard deviations were used to analyse and interpret data relating to the challenges confronting the students. The data on the support services were ranked and interpreted in means and standard deviations.

### **Presentation, Analysis and Discussion of Results**

In this section of the study, the findings relating to the nature of the challenges confronting the female teacher-learners on the distance programmes at the University of Education, Winneba Centre as well as the existing support services for them are presented, analysed and discussed in relation to relevant literature.

#### **Nature of Challenges Confronting the Female Teacher-learners on the Distance Education Programme**

The first objective focused on the nature of the challenges confronting the female teacher-learners on the distance education programme at Winneba Study Centre. The instrument covered various dimensions of challenges relating to time and funds, challenges relating to studies and distance, challenges relating to communication as well as socialization and domestic duties.

### Challenges Relating to Time and Funds

The table below showcase the result of challenges relating to time and funds of female teacher-learners on Distance Education programmes at Winneba Study Centre at the UEW.

**Table 1.2: Responses to Challenges Relating to Time and Funds**

Statements	Mean	S.D
Contacting colleagues for discussion is difficult due to limited time	3.75	1.27
Getting enough time to study is a burdensome due to numerous activities at home	3.74	1.30
Expensive school fees charged by the University create financial burden on students	3.58	1.26
Inadequate funding of the universities has repercussion effects on distance students	3.51	1.46
Payment of school fees is always a burden	3.50	1.45
Holding chat sessions, responding to emails are more labour and time consuming	3.28	1.27
Finds it difficult to buy books due to lack of funds	3.03	1.48
There is always inadequacy of time to attend tutorials	3.00	1.38
Composite mean	3.42	1.36

**n = 80. Source: Field Data, 2015. Means were calculated from a scale of 1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Somewhat Agree, 4 = Agree, 5= Strongly Agree.**

The result of the study as presented in Table 1.2 shows the respondents views on the challenges they face relating to time and funds as female teacher-learners. Generally, the respondents somewhat agreed that they have challenges with respect to time and funds (Composite mean = 3.42, S.D = 0.66). Apart from holding chat sessions and responding to emails (Mean = 3.28, S.D = 1.27), respondents indicated that they were finding it difficult to buy books (Mean = 3.03, S.D = 1.48), as well as inadequacy of time to attend tutorials (Mean = 3.00, S.D = 1.38) the teacher-learner somewhat agreed to these challenges. They, however, agreed that contacting colleagues for discussion is difficult (Mean = 3.75, S.D = 1.27). Also, getting enough time to study is a burdensome due to numerous activities at home (Mean = 3.74, S.D = 1.30). They also agreed that, school fees charged by the University is expensive (Mean = 3.58, S.D = 1.26), inadequate funding of the Universities (Mean = 3.51, S.D = 1.45) and payment of school fees (Mean 3.50, S.D = 1.45) creates a financial burden which has repercussion effects on them as distance students.

### Challenges Relating to Studies and Distance

The table below unfolds the results of data concerning challenges relating to studies and geographical distance of female teacher-learners who were distance education programme at Winneba Study Centre at the UEW.

**Table 1.3: Responses to Challenges Relating to Studies and Distance**

Statements	Mean	S.D
Always travels a long distance for tutorials	3.89	1.20
Demand and expect a high level of service when it comes to registration and others	3.83	1.31
Accessing Inability of institution's management to visit its students due to scattered nature of students materials for studies always delay due to distance between campus and home	3.74	1.27
Contacting lecturers regularly are impeded by distance	3.56	1.27
Inadequate student-support system (example, counselling, internet, library facilities)	3.54	1.30
No visit by the University management	3.33	1.11
Difficult to get relevant materials to read on	3.22	1.42
Inadequate tutorial sessions (Face-to-face meetings with lecturers)	3.19	1.52
Overwhelming number of assignments also posed a big difficulty to teachers-learners	3.13	1.43
Quality of instruction is low	2.91	1.33
Composite mean	3.43	0.71

**n = 80. Source: Field Data, 2015. Means were calculated from a scale of 1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Somewhat Agree, 4 = Agree, 5= Strongly Agree.**

Table 1.3 presents the challenges of the teacher-learners relating to studies and distance. The respondents somewhat agreed that they have challenges relating to their studies and distance they cover in order to attend tutorials (Composite mean = 3.42, S.D = 0.71). The teacher learners agreed that they have to always travel long distances to attend tutorials (Mean = 3.89, S.D = 1.20). Again, accessing materials for studies which always delay due to distance between campus and home (Mean = 3.74, S.D = 1.27) were challenges which affected their studies. They also agreed that the inability of institution's management to visit its students due to scattered nature of students (Mean = 3.83, S.D 1.31), inadequate student-support systems (example, counselling, internet, library facilities) (Mean = 3.54, S.D = 1.30) and difficulties in contacting lecturers regularly due to distance impeded their studies (Mean = 3.56, S.D = 1.21). It is worth noting that the respondents somewhat agreed that the quality of instruction is low (Mean = 2.91, S.D = 1.33).

### **Challenges on Communication**

Table 1.4 represents the communication challenges of respondent of female teacher-learners on distance education at Winneba Study Centre at the UEW.



**Table 1.4: Responses to Challenges Relating to Communication**

Statements	Mean	S.D
The institution does not allow greater flexibility in choosing resources and strategies for learning	3.90	1.12
Inability of the institution to provide quick service when it comes to registration, delivery of course material and exams	3.78	1.30
There is limited number of face to face contacts with tutors and students which is key in communication	3.70	1.22
There are serious communication problem between students and the institution	3.34	1.44
Composite mean	3.68	1.27

**n = 80. Source: Field Data, 2015. Means were calculated from a scale of 1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Somewhat Agree, 4 = Agree, 5= Strongly Agree.**

The challenges on communication faced by the teacher learners are indicated in Table 1.4. The results show that, overall, the respondents agreed that they have challenges with communication (Composite mean = 3.68, S.D = 1.27). The student learners agreed that the inability of the institution to provide quick services when it comes to registration, delivery of course material and exams (Mean = 3.78, S.D = 1.30), and the limited number of face to face contacts between tutors and students (Mean = 3.70, S.D = 1.22) were key communication challenges. They also agreed that the institution should allow greater flexibility in choosing resources and strategies for learning (Mean = 3.90, S.D = 1.12). The respondents however, somewhat agreed that there are serious communication problems between students and the institution (Mean = 3.34, S.D = 1.44).

### **Challenges Relating to Socialization and Domestic Duties**

The below table highlight the results of the respondents on challenges of socialization and domestic duties of female teacher-learners.

**Table 1.5: Responses to Challenges Relating to Socialization and Domestic Duties**

Statements	Mean	S.D
Domestic workload, lack of sleep, lack of electricity in most homes, posed a lot of challenge	4.18	1.22
Bereavement and illness also distract our concentration on studies	4.10	1.06
Distance learning takes away much of the social interactions	3.76	1.28
Husband entirely disagreeing with me of combining too much work together	3.46	1.25
Distance students suffer from the disadvantage of being unable to interact with other students	3.40	1.40
Composite mean	3.78	1.24

**n = 80. Source: Field Data, 2015. Means were calculated from a scale of 1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Somewhat Agree, 4 = Agree, 5= Strongly Agree.**

Table 1.5 shows the challenges on socialization and domestic duties faced by the teacher learners. Generally, the respondents agreed that they have challenges relating to socialization and domestic duties (Composite mean = 3.78, S.D = 1.24). The teacher-learners somewhat agree that distance students suffer from the disadvantage of been unable to interact with other students (Mean = 3.40, S.D = 1.40). Contrarily, the respondents agreed that domestic workload, lack of sleep, lack of electricity in most homes (Mean = 4.18, S.D = 1.22), bereavement and illness (Mean = 4.10, S.D = 1.06) and distance learning takes away much of the social interactions (Mean = 3.76, S.D = 1.28) distract their concentration, and posed a challenge on their studies. The teacher-learners also agree that their husbands disagree with them for combining too much work with their studies (Mean = 3.46, S.D = 1.25).

They also expressed difficulty of combining their household chores with their academic lives. Notable among this was the issue of domestic workload, lack of sleep, lack of electricity in most homes, posed a lot of challenge. Again, bereavement and illness also distracted their concentration on studies. The teacher-learners were confronted with communication problems and ability to honour social obligations as well as geographical distances to the tutorial centres. For example, majority (mean 3.75, S.D. 1.27) of the learners expressed the opinion that contacting colleagues for discussion is difficult due to limited time. Again, it was indicated that majority of respondents (mean 3.89, S.D 1.20) always travels a long distance for tutorials. Also, majority (mean 3.83, S.D 1.31) of the learners demanded and expected a high level of service when it comes to registration and others. This finding was in agreement with Zirkle (2001) who purported that not only contacting colleague learners is most at times difficult but also faculty members to teach at “off” times always posed a challenge. Edge and Loegering (2000) also asserted that learners demand and expect a high level of service when it comes to registration, delivery of course material and exams, quick turn-around times for grading exam and assignments and answering questions. With respect to finance, Koomson, (1998) muted the idea that most distance education students are faced with the problem of meeting the financial obligation of the programme

### Existing Support Services for the Female Distance-Learners

This section presents the results of responses of respondent of female teacher-learners on existing support services on distance education as way of sustaining them in their programme.

**Table 1.6: Existing Support Services for Female Distance-learners**

Statements	Mean	S.D
There is adequate face-to-face interactions with the tutors in a semester	3.35	1.51
Enough assignments and project works are given to test the understanding of students	2.98	1.46
The gender mainstreaming support us with talks and periodic seminars and workshops	2.66	1.49
Feedbacks of assignments are prompt and adequate	2.54	1.46
Library services are always available on wherever we are	2.53	1.48
The institution provide us with internet connectivity even in our homes	2.43	1.64
Adequate guidance and counselling programmes are provided periodically	2.41	1.49
Composite mean	2.70	1..50

**n = 80. Source: Field Data, 2015. Means were calculated from a scale of 1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Somewhat Agree, 4 = Agree, 5= Strongly Agree.**

Table 1.6 present the existing support services for female distance education students in the University of Education, Winneba. The female teacher-learners somewhat agreed that there is existing support services for female distance education students in the University of Education, Winneba (Composite mean = 2.70, S.D = 1.50). The students somewhat agreed that there is adequate face-to-face interactions with the tutors in a semester (Mean = 3.35, S.D = 1.51), enough assignments and project works were given to test their understanding (Mean = 2.98, S.D = 1.46) and the university providing them with gender mainstreaming support through talks, periodic seminars and workshops (Mean = 2.66, S.D = 1.49). The students however, disagreed that the institution provided them with internet connectivity at home (Mean = 2.43, S.D = 1.64) and adequate guidance and counselling programmes periodically (Mean = 2.41, S.D = 1.49).

Concluding from the above discussion, it was evident that the institution provides some support services for the teacher-learners but it was inadequate. The results indicated that periodic workshops provided by gender mainstreaming and guidance and counselling were inadequate. For example, the majority of the respondents (mean=2.41, S.D=1.49) disapproved that adequate guidance and counselling programmes are provided periodically. The respondents (mean=3.35, S.D=1.51), however, somewhat confirmed that there is adequate face-to-face interactions with the tutors in a semester. This assertion is in agreement with Rumble (1992) that most important student support services which must be provided at a distance study centre include: provision of library services, motivation of students to continue their education, evaluation of assignments, provision of feedback to students, provision of counselling services to learners and the provision of quality learning materials. Keegan (1996) argued that the most important characteristic of distance education is the provision of adequate student support system at study centres.

## CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

It emerged from the study that most of the teacher-learners struggle to study at home which translates into poor academic performance. This was attributed to combination of numerous household duties and social responsibilities, limiting them from getting more time for serious academic work. Therefore, the Study Centre in collaboration with the authorities at the University of Education, Winneba should support these students by strengthening the counselling services offered to them. Apart from the support from the University's Counselling Centre, Academic Counsellors could be attached to each of the centres to discuss issues relating studies, marriage and personal studies.

The study revealed that the students face challenges relating to funding of their education, as they struggle to pay tuition fees and acquire relevant teaching learning resources to facilitate their academic work. Therefore, it is recommended that this institution should organize guidance and counselling sessions for teacher-learners with special focus on financial management to help students manage their finances. Also, the payment of the tuition fee could be made flexible so that finance-related stress could be avoided.

The study concluded that the students have problems communication with the centre, the staff and the management of the university when necessary. This was compounded by inadequate contact with their tutors, difficulty in accessing teaching learning materials and relevant information. It is therefore recommended that the University should establish student service

centre, where experienced staff in student services would be placed to offer relevant support to distance learning students. The internet connectivity at the University could also be strengthened for student support. Additionally, a website for distance learning students could be developed so that they could access relevant teaching and learning resources placed on it.

The female teacher-learners have less contact with their tutors which affected the feedback mechanism from quizzes and assignments organized by the institution. This problem was compounded by lack of books and other materials which were not received as expected to facilitate learning. Teacher-learners with children do not receive special care from the institution in the form of counselling sessions and provision of care-takers waiting room. The study recommended that the institution should put in place measures of providing feedback to students from quizzes and assignments to boost the morale of students to study hard to achieve academic excellence.

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