

# Using phenomenography to unearth factors influencing the delivery of guidance services

John Sedofia<sup>1</sup>  | Stephen Doh Fia<sup>2</sup> | Cecilia Tutu-Danquah<sup>3</sup> 

<sup>1</sup>Department of Teacher Education, University of Ghana, Accra, Ghana

<sup>2</sup>University of Cape Coast, Department of Guidance and Counselling, Cape Coast, Ghana

<sup>3</sup>Department of Teacher Education, University of Ghana, Accra, Ghana

## Correspondence

John Sedofia, Department of Teacher Education, University of Ghana, Accra, Ghana.

Email: [jsedofia@ug.edu.gh](mailto:jsedofia@ug.edu.gh)

## Abstract

Which factors influence the delivery of school guidance services in Colleges of Education (CoEs) in Ghana? The guidance needs of students in the CoEs may not be fully met if the factors that influence guidance service delivery at that level of education are not explored for effective upgrade of service quality. This phenomenographic study therefore explored factors influencing the delivery of guidance services in CoEs in Ghana. We interviewed second-year teacher trainees ( $n = 24$ ) and counsellors from three randomly selected CoEs in the Volta region of Ghana ( $n = 3$ ). The findings indicate that material resources and awareness influenced guidance service delivery in the CoEs. It was also found that although students reported that confidentiality and attitude influenced service delivery in the colleges, the counsellors did not agree with this. Finally, the study discovered that human resource does not influence guidance service delivery in the colleges. It was recommended that college authorities should provide the material resources, such as offices, computers, and test batteries, that are needed for counselling, and counsellors should publicise the guidance programme to raise awareness and lead to the development of positive attitudes towards the programme. This study contributes to the guidance and counselling literature by illuminating the factors influencing guidance service delivery in CoEs. This should be of interest to practitioners, policymakers and researchers in school guidance and counselling.

## KEYWORDS

colleges of education, factors, guidance and counselling services, influencing, phenomenography

## 1 | INTRODUCTION

Guidance services are necessary in educational institutions because they can be used to address many of the issues that confront students. Students face a number of issues that can negatively affect their learning and development (Buraga & Caballero, 2018). Students on college and university campuses have issues such as depression, anxiety, self-harm, suicidality (American College Health Association, 2016; Center for Collegiate Mental Health, 2020), and

emotional problems (Ebert et al., 2019) for which they need counselling to address. Effective guidance services can be used to reduce the negative impacts of such issues on the lives of students, and improve their well-being (Martin et al., 2015). Counselling services have been shown to be effective in treating psychological distress in a wide range of situations (Bani et al., 2020).

Guidance is defined as a set of cognitive educational services that use accurate, reliable and valid information to help students understand themselves (Esere, 2020). In this study, guidance services

Contributing authors: Stephen Doh Fia ([sfia@ucc.edu.gh](mailto:sfia@ucc.edu.gh)); Cecilia Tutu-Danquah ([ctutu-danquah@ug.edu.gh](mailto:ctutu-danquah@ug.edu.gh)).

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refers to all the guidance activities, namely counselling, appraisal, information, consultation, placement, referral and orientation services, which the school undertakes to meet the academic, financial, placement, personal and social needs of students. As guidance and counselling play important roles in the lives of students, it is necessary to investigate factors influencing guidance service delivery and use the outcomes to improve service quality.

In spite of the abundance of research on factors influencing the delivery of school guidance services, little of this research has focused on the Colleges of Education (CoEs) in Ghana. Colleges of Education are the institutions in which teachers are trained to teach in Ghana's elementary schools. Statistics from the National Accreditation Board (2020) indicate that there are currently 46 public CoEs with a student population of 46,825 students (24,548 male students and 22,277 female students) across Ghana. The then Volta region where the study was conducted had a trainee population of 5,449 students (ibid). Like their counterparts in traditional universities in Ghana, students in CoEs do not pay tuition fees. They only pay what are described as Academic Facility User fees. Students in CoEs are, however, paid a monthly stipend or allowance equivalent to 50.00 USD to support their education. The education of these young students could be in danger if they are not provided guidance services that meet their needs. Teacher trainees in the CoEs would benefit from comprehensive guidance and counselling services just like students at senior high schools and other tertiary levels. Effective guidance service delivery will benefit teacher trainees in two ways. First, it will help meet their academic, financial, placement, personal and social needs and make them function fully, all other things being equal. Second, it will help them to gain sound and positive mental health which can influence their service quality when they become fully fledged teachers. Providing basic guidance services to learners is one of the important co-curricular duties of a teacher. However, research suggests that teacher trainees may not be benefiting from effective guidance services because some services are poorly provided in colleges (Adzakpa et al., 2020; Alale, 2019) and there is low demand for guidance services in the colleges (Adu & Opoku, 2020). The absence of effective guidance services in the CoEs may account for the indiscipline reported among teacher trainees (Fosu-Ayarkwah, 2020). There is, therefore, a need to examine factors influencing the delivery of guidance services in CoEs.

The extant literature reveals a number of factors which influence school guidance and counselling service delivery. However, the conceptions of college counsellors and teacher trainees regarding factors influencing guidance service delivery have not received the required research attention.

Using a mixed methods approach involving 80 second-year university students and 19 guidance counsellors, Maupa (2020) evaluated the effectiveness of guidance and counselling services offered in Zimbabwean universities. The study revealed that Zimbabwean universities were not adequately resourced in terms of guidance and counselling personnel and materials, and this could explain why the guidance and counselling services offered there were not effective.

### Implications for Practice and Policy

- The finding that the availability of material resources and awareness influence guidance service delivery in CoEs implies that guidance practitioners in CoE environments should look out for these factors and take steps to reduce their negative impact on guidance service delivery. College authorities should provide the resources that are needed for counselling. Counsellors should also publicise the guidance programme and educate stakeholders about the benefits.
- The study found that human resources did not influence guidance service delivery in the colleges studied. Policymakers should thus take this into account when introducing policies for guidance practice at the CoE level. Again, the fact that teacher trainees reported that confidentiality and attitude of key stakeholders influence guidance service delivery in the colleges means that college counsellors should work to address these concerns. Doing this will possibly lead to a change in people's negative attitudes towards guidance and counselling.

Material resources can thus be seen to influence guidance and counselling service delivery.

In a study that used combinations of descriptive survey and correlation research, Cheruiyot and Orodho (2015) studied 440 participants consisting of 400 students, 20 principals and 20 heads of guidance and counselling departments in schools in Bureti Sub County, Kenya, and reported that approximately two-thirds of the practicing school guidance and counselling personnel did not have the minimum qualifications, and guidance and counselling facilities were inadequate to facilitate the effective implementation of guidance and counselling services in most schools within the study locale. Similar findings on the training and experience of counsellors were found by Bitu (2015), Alice et al. (2013), as well as Karangu and Muola (2011).

Aside from material resources and training and experience of counsellors, other factors that were found to exert a significant influence on school guidance service delivery include confidentiality (Pybis et al., 2012); national needs, laws and educational policy (Martin et al., 2015); and the workload of school counsellors (Muola & Mwanja, 2013). Other researchers have found that allocation of time for counselling; workload for teacher counsellors; lukewarm or negative attitudes of head teachers (Masadia, 2015); awareness, perception and use of guidance and counselling services (Lasode et al., 2017); and attitude (Balin & Hirschi, 2010; Syed et al., 2012) affected the delivery of school guidance and counselling services. Studying the help-seeking behaviour and attitudes towards counselling among Hong Kong Chinese university students, Busiol (2016) established that the students were

not reluctant to receive help but were reluctant to seek help from outsiders. Likewise, Ameso (2015) found that, in public teacher training colleges in Rift Valley Province, Kenya, the majority of the students and tutor-counsellors had a positive perception towards guidance and counselling services.

From the literature review, it came to light that no study employed phenomenography to report the perspectives of CoE counsellors and students on the factors that influence guidance service delivery within an emerging economy context. Existing studies are largely quantitative in nature and differ in scope and focus (see Adzakpa et al., 2019; Agyeiku, 2020; Fosu-Ayarkwah, 2020; Kemetse et al., 2018; Man et al., 2018). Though the findings from these quantitative studies are important, they lack depth. Research has established that students in the CoEs have a need for guidance in academic factors (study habits, how to further their studies, time management and test anxiety); financial aspects (how to fund their education and how to handle or use money); social factors (intimate or boy/girlfriend relationships, interpersonal relationships); personal issues (knowing oneself, problem solving, self-control); and placement aspects (the selection of elective courses, postings, and joining other professions) (Sedofia et al., 2018). The profile of students who are assisted in counselling indicates that the mean age range of the trainees is 20–24 years, and different age groups have different guidance needs; female teacher trainees have significantly greater guidance needs than their male counterparts; teacher trainees who were married or in a relationship reported a greater need for guidance than their colleagues who were single, and trainees in different colleges expressed different guidance needs (Sedofia & Kumassah, 2020).

As factors influencing school guidance service delivery can negatively impact service quality and thus deny clients the desired outcomes, it is important to study these factors to mitigate their negative impacts. The guidance needs of teacher trainees risk being unmet if the factors that influence service delivery are not identified and their negative impacts mitigated. The literature, however, fails to provide an in-depth analysis of factors influencing guidance service delivery from the viewpoint of counsellors and teacher trainees in the colleges. Inquiring about factors influencing the delivery of guidance services in the colleges is critical to ensuring that guidance services meet the guidance needs of teacher trainees. Such a study could explain why there is low attendance of guidance services in CoEs and lead to the proffering of improvement strategies in guidance service delivery. Consequently, this study focused on factors influencing the delivery of guidance services in CoEs in Ghana. The purpose was to understand and document the perspectives of teacher trainees and counsellors regarding factors influencing the delivery of guidance services in CoEs in Ghana within the context of phenomenography.

A study on factors influencing the delivery of guidance services in CoEs will enrich the guidance literature on how to use phenomenography as a theoretical and methodological tool to understand factors influencing guidance service delivery from a developing nation's perspective. Findings from this study could provide the basis

for interventions in the practice and policy of guidance counselling within the Sub-Saharan African (SSA) context. Teacher training institutions within the sub-region often have commonalities in terms of culture, history of the development of guidance counselling and even student characteristics. This study will provide vital information to guidance practitioners and policymakers in CoEs. Counsellors would have a greater understanding of the factors that influence effective service delivery and could put in place measures to mitigate their negative impacts. Policymakers could use the findings to review policies to strengthen guidance practice at the CoE level. It is hoped that the findings of this study will illuminate factors influencing the delivery of guidance services at the CoE level and how these can detract from the achievement of quality education for all, as enshrined in Sustainable Development Goal four (4).

## 2 | METHODOLOGY

The objective of this study was to explore with counsellors and teacher trainees the factors influencing the delivery of guidance services in CoEs. The study collected qualitative data to enable us adequately explain and clarify factors influencing guidance service delivery in CoEs, as the bulk of the extant quantitative research has not done this. To achieve the above-stated objective, the study employed phenomenography, which seeks to map the qualitatively different ways in which people experience, conceptualise, perceive, and understand various aspects of phenomena (Marton, 1986). Phenomenography is ideal for this study because it provides a useful tool to capture the diversity of constructed realities in guidance and counselling and helps link practice to research (Kettunen & Tynjälä, 2018).

Through purposive sampling, we hand-picked three counsellors, one from each college, to acquire the in-depth information which we believed they were in possession of (Cohen et al., 2018). Two of the counsellors were men. We also selected 24 teacher trainees (eight from each of the three colleges) to partake in a focus group interview. The majority of the trainees were 20–24 years old. The trainee sample size was based on the suggestions of Fraenkel et al. (2019) and Leedy and Ormrod (2016) on focus group size. The study was confined to college counsellors and second-year (level 200) teacher trainees only. Counsellors were involved because they are the principal providers of the guidance services. Data were obtained from only three counsellors because the accessible population consisted of three CoEs and each college had one counsellor. Teacher trainees were included because they are the direct beneficiaries of the guidance services. First- and third-year trainees were deliberately excluded because the first-year trainees had not completed one full academic year at the time data were being collected for the study, and the third-year trainees were completing their year-long teaching internship away from the college campuses.

After obtaining informed consent and assuring the participants of confidentiality, we conducted face-to-face interviews with the

counsellors. The interviews were recorded and we also took written notes. The main interview question was, "What factors do you think influence the implementation of guidance services in your college?" with prompts on level of awareness/publicity of guidance and counselling services, human resources, attitudes, confidentiality and material resources. The interviews sought to dig deeper into the factors that influence the delivery of guidance services in the CoEs. Each semi-structured interview lasted for about 35 min.

We then carried out the focus groups with the selected teacher trainees. The same procedures used in the one-to-one interviews, namely, explaining the purpose of the study, seeking consent and assuring confidentiality, and recording the interview, were also implemented during the focus group interviews. The focus group interviews lasted approximately 1 h in each college. We trained one research assistant to assist in the data collection. The research assistant was a tutor in a CoE that was not being studied. In all, data were collected over the course of three days. One day was used to collect data from both students and counsellors in each college.

We followed the steps for phenomenographic data analysis outlined in Marton (1986) to analyse the data. We started by reading through all participants' accounts several times to familiarise ourselves with the data, to enable us identify and describe the participants' experiences regarding factors influencing guidance service delivery in the CoEs. Utterances of interest for the question being investigated were selected based on their relevance. We then selected quotes from the interviews that we believed illustrated the phenomenon in question. We continued selecting quotes to make up a data pool. We put similar utterances into categories and used direct quotations from the data to illustrate each category. To conclude the process, we shared the report with a small number of participants to ascertain if the descriptions captured their experiences.

We relied on Hays et al.'s (2016) suggestions to achieve methodological rigour in this study by providing a strong rationale for the study; articulating a clear statement of purpose; referring to authoritative sources when discussing methodologies; providing a strong rationale for methodological decisions; comparing and contrasting the findings with those of previous literature; and discussing limitations and future directions for practice and research.

The analysis of the interview transcripts revealed five categories highlighting the varied ways that the teacher trainees and counsellors experienced guidance service delivery and the factors influencing it in their colleges. The categories are:

1. Awareness (knowing that guidance and counselling services exist in the colleges)
2. Human Resource (availability of a counsellor)
3. Material Resource (availability of counselling offices and counselling materials)
4. Confidentiality (the degree to which counsellors keep clients' information to themselves)
5. Attitudes (of teacher trainees, counsellors, college tutors and authorities)

Each of these categories is described below. In some instances, verbatim quotations were used to lend credence to the categories.

### 3 | RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

#### 3.1 | Awareness factors

In this study, awareness means knowing that guidance and counselling services exist in the college. Most of the teacher trainees were of the opinion that awareness influences the delivery of guidance services. According to them, when clients are not aware of the availability of services that are supposed to benefit them, they would not attend those services. One male teacher trainee in College Z explained:

... assuming you are thirsty and you need water to drink. There is free water available but you are not aware that there is water available, you can't drink that water until you are told there is water available. So when you are aware that there is a counsellor available offering or providing this to teacher trainees, when you have a problem, you can walk to the person boldly and share your problems.

(TTM1-Z)

Similarly, in College X, a female trainee said:

... in our college here, what I have seen is the guidance and counselling committee is not well known to the student body. Therefore, students don't even know those who are in the committee to talk of knowing the head. So a student might be having a problem but instead of going to see the guidance and counselling officer, he would either talk to a friend or maybe a master...

(TTF1-X)

These revelations suggest that awareness influences guidance service delivery, in line with the findings of Atta-Frimpong (2013) and Aida et al. (2010). Lasode et al. (2017) revealed that 91.1% of the respondents they studied were aware of guidance and counselling services and 74.6% of those who were using the services found them very helpful. Owing to the fact that guidance practice is not well developed in Ghana compared with the Western world, awareness creation for guidance services should be pursued much like the way advertising companies advertise their products. The nature and experiences of clients, availability of facilities, differences in the facilitating environment, cultural influences and policies are some of the reasons why guidance practice in Africa differs from what pertains in the west (Goss & Adebawale, 2014). Due to the contextual differences in guidance service delivery, awareness creation should be an ongoing priority in the African context.

Awareness creation can awaken students to the benefits of the services. One male trainee from College Y observed that sometimes the trainees are oblivious of the benefits the services could offer them, so they do not bother to access them. He said:

Me, I would say sometimes, they [the teacher trainees] do not know the importance of it [the guidance services]

On the part of the counsellors, one of them agreed that awareness does influence guidance service delivery. Counsellor A reported that awareness was low in their college but they were working hard to raise it. Two of the counsellors, however, felt that awareness was not a factor that influenced the delivery of guidance services in their colleges as their trainees were aware of the guidance services that were being provided. This is perhaps unsurprising because the counsellors may have felt that their job was under scrutiny and so may have wanted to protect their image. Be that as it may, the trainees are the prime beneficiaries of guidance services and are therefore likely to be better placed to report on the awareness of the existence of the services in the trainee population. Teacher trainees cannot attend services they are not aware of. Periodic awareness creation beyond what is provided during orientation programmes is therefore crucial as it can increase uptake of guidance services. Conversely, lack of awareness can prevent teacher trainees from accessing the guidance services.

### 3.2 | Human resource factors

Human resource, as defined in this study, refers to the availability of a counsellor. The views expressed by both the teacher trainees and the counsellors are that human resource is not a factor that influences the delivery of guidance services in the colleges. The respondents said that each college had at least one counsellor. The biographic data on the qualification of the three counsellors further showed that Counsellor A held a Bachelor's degree in Guidance and Counselling, while Counsellors B and C both held Master of Philosophy degrees in Guidance and Counselling.

This finding contradicts those of Cheruiyot and Orodho (2015) and Alice et al. (2013) which indicated that counsellors and guidance staff were lacking in the contexts they studied. For guidance and counselling in schools to work well, staff who have the appropriate professional knowledge and skills are required. Without professional counsellors and staff, guidance services may not be properly rendered. It is therefore encouraging that, in the present study, the counsellors and teacher trainees agreed that human resource did not influence guidance service delivery because each of the colleges studied had a trained counsellor.

Despite the availability of one counsellor in each of the CoEs studied, it is important to recognise that counselling thrives on the recruitment, retention and development of high-quality professional and support staff. Professional and support staff are needed to help counsellors discharge their duties more effectively and

efficiently. Guidance staff need to have the right mix of training and experience to carry out their responsibilities professionally. The revelation that there is one counsellor in each of the colleges studied needs to be examined further, as this may not be enough to adequately meet all the guidance needs of the many trainees in the colleges.

### 3.3 | Material resource factors

Material resources refer to the availability of a counselling offices and counselling materials such as computers and test batteries. The teacher trainees reported that material resource factors do influence the delivery of guidance services in the colleges. In the three colleges, the trainees indicated overwhelmingly that they had no counselling offices, materials, computers, printers and Internet connectivity. One male teacher trainee from College X explained:

In our case the unavailability [of a counselling office] is what is influencing counselling and it's also negative

This finding supports those of Bitu (2015), Cheruiyot and Orodho (2015), Gitonga (2013), Karangu and Muola (2011) and Alice et al. (2013). An important physical facility in guidance service delivery is the counselling office. A counselling office must not only be properly situated; it must also be adequately resourced. Although it is possible to provide some guidance services outside the counselling office, counselling service in particular cannot be effectively carried out outside the counselling office.

In addition to a suitable counselling office, guidance also cannot be implemented successfully in schools without adequate counselling materials. The availability of physical facilities and counselling materials is a necessary precondition for effective service delivery. A female trainee from College Y noted:

Since he [the counsellor] does not have an office, those things [materials for counselling] are not there

In College Z, all the trainees answered in unison:

No materials

Like the trainees, the counsellors also believed that material resources influence the delivery of guidance services in CoEs. Two of the counsellors said that they had no counselling offices and no counselling materials, which was negatively impacting their work. Only Counsellor B reported having access to a counselling office, but described it as:

...very, very small and not comfortable. There is an office, very small, uncomfortable and the location too is not favourable

These revelations by both the counsellors and the trainees could explain why Adzakpa et al. (2020) and Alale (2019) reported that guidance services were not provided well at the colleges they studied. This could also be attributable to the low demand for guidance services in the colleges, as observed by Adu and Opoku (2020).

### 3.4 | Confidentiality factors

Confidentiality refers to the ability of the counsellor to prevent clients' information being accessed by others. The trainees were almost unanimous in their views that they had some issues with confidentiality in their colleges. In College Z in particular, it appears the trainees had significant concerns about confidentiality. One female trainee in that college simply said:

[The counsellor] does not keep our information

A male trainee of the same college added:

[The counsellor] got my information, and then all I know, Principal heard it, and it was at staff meeting, yes. So I was very mad and then I was wondering how [the counsellor] could have done that thing ... So the confidentiality is negative.

(TTM-Z)

One of the factors reported as encouraging students to seek professional counselling help is the maintenance of a high level of confidentiality (Lukito Setiawan, 2006). Due to the sensitive nature of some of the issues that clients present in counselling, it is important to assure clients that their information will remain confidential. Failure to do so could prevent people from seeking counselling help.

There is, however, an interesting disjuncture in the views of students and counsellors on confidentiality as a factor that influences guidance service delivery in the CoEs. The counsellors reported that confidentiality was not a factor that influenced the delivery of guidance services. All three counsellors believed that they kept their clients' information confidential. Thus, the views of the trainees on confidentiality contradict those of the counsellors. This disjuncture is not surprising. Since confidentiality is an important ethical consideration in counselling, it may be the case that the counsellors did not want to be seen to be breaching it and, therefore, may have been trying to portray themselves in a good light. Whatever the case may be, a number of studies have established that confidentiality is an important influencing factor in guidance and counselling (Atta-Frimpong, 2013; Gilat et al., 2010; Pybis et al., 2012). Counsellors should therefore strive for higher levels of confidentiality in counselling practice.

### 3.5 | Attitudinal factors

Attitude refers to people's dispositions (positive or negative) towards guidance and counselling. Almost all of the teacher trainees expressed the view that attitudinal factors influenced the delivery of guidance and counselling in their colleges. Most of them believed that the attitudes of counsellors, college authorities, tutors and trainees themselves were, in most cases, negative. One male trainee of College X, for instance, stated:

... the attitude of the trainees should be positive towards guidance and counselling so that the officer can also work

On the attitude of tutors, the trainees believed that this varied; sometimes it was negative and other times positive. A male trainee from College Z explained:

It varies with persons. It varies in the sense that some encourage us ... and some too, the comments that would be passed wouldn't be favourable...

(TTM-Z)

The teacher trainees also reported that their college authorities had negative attitudes towards guidance and counselling and that such attitudes influenced the delivery of guidance services in the colleges. It appears that the attitude of counsellors was a major concern for the teacher trainees, with nearly all trainees expressing concern about the negative attitudes of their counsellors. When the issue was raised, one male trainee in College Z responded:

As for that one we will not talk again [implying it is obvious]

Another trainee of College Z, a female, said:

Very negative, very negative. Sir, for one I know the counsellor would be someone friendly..., whose arms are always open so that whenever you have a problem you jump into it and she's there for you or he's there for you. But in our case, it's different. You have a case and you wish [the counsellor] never heard of it. So it's [the counsellor's attitude] very negative.

(TTM-Z)

Research has established that attitude has an influence on guidance service delivery (Balin & Hirschi, 2010; Karangu & Muola, 2011; Masadia, 2015; Syed et al. 2012). The views on attitude expressed by the teacher trainees contradict Ameso's (2015) finding that the



majority of students and tutor-counsellors had a positive perception towards guidance and counselling services. In addition, Mwangi and Otanga (2015) discovered that students had a positive evaluation and appreciation of the role of guidance and counselling services. The level of awareness and confidentiality can combine to influence people's attitudes towards guidance services. Generally, positive attitudes will impact the delivery of guidance services positively and negative attitudes will have a negative impact. If the reports of the teacher trainees on attitudinal factors is anything to go by, then serious consideration should be given to attitudinal factors.

However, there are differences in the views of the counsellors on whether or not attitudinal factors influence the delivery of guidance services in the colleges. All the counsellors, contrary to what the trainees said, reported that they had positive attitudes towards guidance and counselling. The counsellors also reported that the authorities and tutors in their colleges did not portray negative attitudes towards guidance and counselling. Counsellor C, for instance, stated that the attitude of the authorities was not good initially, but later became more positive:

I can see some effort from our Principal in particular, to get us an office at all cost. So far he has given us different options as to where to get office. ... he has even offered his own boys quarters for us to use in the interim. So you can see that he has interest. So for now his attitude is a positive one.

(CCC-M)

Counsellor B indicated that, in their college, the attitude of the authorities was not negative as such. When asked to explain what this meant, the counsellor explained:

Oh, they, they do not have any negative attitude as such. Which means some [of the negative attitudes] are there but not too much of it

This could be seen as a subtle confirmation of the report of the trainees on attitude. Again, the counsellors reported that the trainees in their colleges had positive attitudes towards guidance and counselling. Counsellor B said:

They [the trainees] come, they come. I do not think they have any negative attitudes

Meanwhile, Counsellor C said:

... from my little time I spent here, I can describe their attitude as positive, for now. But time will tell. But for now, it's positive

The divergent views expressed by the counsellors and teacher trainees on the influence of attitude on guidance service delivery

constitutes another disjuncture in this study. However, the admission by one counsellor that the attitude of college authorities was initially negative seems to confirm what the teacher trainees said. As Busiol (2016) discovered, students may be willing to seek help, but certain factors, including negative attitudes, can prevent them from doing so.

## 4 | CONCLUSION

This study used a qualitative, phenomenographic design to explore factors influencing the delivery of guidance services in CoEs in Ghana. Five main themes emerged: awareness, material resources, human resources, confidentiality, and attitude. From the analysis and findings, it can be concluded that material resources, such as counselling offices, and awareness of the availability of guidance services influence guidance service delivery in CoEs. Human resource was not found to influence guidance service delivery in the CoEs. The counsellors and teacher trainees gave contradictory viewpoints on the influence of confidentiality and attitude on the delivery of guidance services in the CoEs. While the teacher trainees believed confidentiality and the attitudes of counsellors, college authorities and trainees themselves do influence the delivery of guidance and counselling services in the colleges studied, the counsellors reported otherwise. Through this study, we have been able to highlight factors influencing guidance service delivery in the CoEs. This brings into sharp focus the nuances in guidance service delivery in an emerging economy context and what pertains in the developed world.

The finding that the availability of material resources and awareness influence guidance service delivery in CoEs implies that guidance practitioners in CoE environments should be aware of these factors and take steps to reduce their negative impact on guidance service delivery. College authorities should provide the resources that are needed for counselling. Counsellors should also publicise the guidance programme and educate stakeholders about the benefits. The study found that human resources did not influence guidance service delivery in the colleges studied. Policymakers should thus take this into account when introducing policies for guidance practice at the CoE level. Again, the fact that teacher trainees reported that confidentiality and attitudes of key stakeholders influence guidance service delivery means that college counsellors should work to address these concerns. Doing so will possibly lead to a change in people's negative attitudes towards guidance and counselling.

This study has some limitations that should be considered when interpreting the findings and when planning future research. First, the study focused on Volta regional CoEs only, because the literature revealed a paucity of research in this part of Ghana. There may be some interesting insights if a similar study was conducted in colleges in the other regions of Ghana. Future research should thus focus on CoEs in other regions. Second, the student sample was

limited to second-year teacher trainees because they are the direct beneficiaries of the guidance services and may be better placed to discuss the factors that influence guidance service delivery in their respective colleges. First- and third-year teacher trainees were not involved because they did not meet the inclusion criteria. Users of the findings of this study should therefore be guided by this, and future research should consider the possibility of including teacher trainees at different stages of training.

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## CONFLICT OF INTEREST

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors.

## ORCID

John Sedofia  <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-5409-516X>

Cecilia Tutu-Danquah  <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-5848-5264>

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## AUTHOR BIOGRAPHIES

**John Sedofia** is a lecturer at the Department of Teacher Education, University of Ghana. John's research interests include teacher education and development, teaching, learning, school/academic counselling, and vocational/career counselling.

**Stephen Doh Fia** is a Senior Lecturer and the Head of Guidance and Counselling Department in the University of Cape Coast, Ghana. His research interests include rehabilitation counselling, educational counselling and career counselling, abuse and addiction counselling, and marriage counselling.

**Cecilia Tutu-Danquah** is a lecturer at the University of Ghana, and a Counselling Psychologist who advocates for inclusive and ubiquitous counselling via emerging technologies. Her research interests include, but are not limited to, counselling, educational technology and lifelong learning.

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