The Impact of Covid-19 on the Work Practices of Teaching and Administrative Staff in Public Universities in Ghana: A Qualitative Case Study

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ABSTRACT

The outbreak of COVID-19 revealed the unpreparedness of many people and institutions to deal with crisis situation. The pandemic has brought about changes in the operations of both teaching and non-teaching personnel in institutions. The objective of this study was to explore the aftermath impact and challenges that the Covid-19 pandemic has had on the work of faculty members and administrators in a public university context. Employing a holistic case study design using a qualitative research approach, the study recruited 54 senior members (teaching and non-teaching) from five colleges, 18 Faculties/schools, and nine directorates senior members using a multi-stage selection techniques. The study found key challenges of administrative staff due to the pandemic to include staff unreceptiveness, role ambiguity, supervision issues, lesson plan and delivery issues, assessment issues, poor trainee disposition, trainee unpreparedness, among others. Participants also intimated that the pandemic has resulted in shifts to remote learning, requiring administrative support in the provision of Information communication Technology (ICT) services to ensure students' access to the necessary technology, among others. A majority further mentioned measures such as strengthening institutional alert and response capacities through the creation of pandemic task forces, diversifying university academic programmes to attract massive student enrolments support, institutionalizing the use of blended learning modes among others to mitigate the adverse effects of future pandemics. These measures, according to the interviewees have been effective especially because they have resulted in flexible work and learning, which helps to improve institutional productivity and the finances of the university in the face of dwindling government subventions. The study concluded that the COVID-19 pandemic has brought about many challenges for teaching and administrative work in public universities and so these universities have to put in place effective measures to mitigate the adverse effects of future pandemics.

Keywords: Covid-19 pandemic, Teaching and Administrative Work Practices

INTRODUCTION

The sudden global outbreak of COVID-19 spawned the world's unpreparedness to face the crisis has brought some challenges to the entire humanity (WHO, 2020a). The global educational system has also had its fair share of the concomitant swift for instance from the face-to-face classroom setting approach to a fully online classroom approach or a combination of the two approaches as described as blended approach (Garcia-Morales et al., 2021) and accompanying change in the administrative duties of university administrators. Due to the pandemic, the traditional classroom setup has been altered amounting to transitions for teachers both at their professional and personal fronts (Rajab et al., 2020). Similarly the administrative duties and responsibilities of university administrators such as clerical duties; coordination of meetings; appointments, orientation training and supervision of staff work were also changed from traditional modes to virtual approach. Globally, the changeover and administrative system of technology to

carry out teaching and administrative activities had been the usual practices among some universities in the developed countries with few universities in the developing countries prior to the advent of the COVID-19.

This lead to the unpreparedness of teachers and administrators for a sudden change of work procedures that necessitated fully into a virtual approach to administrative form of work and instruction at the university level (Bashir et al., 2021; García-Morales et al., 2021; Mahyoob, 2020; Johnson et al., 2020; Henaku, 2020; Chidambaram, 2020; Duong, 2021; Cheng et al., 2021; Jin et al., 2021; Banji et al., 2021; Amir et al., 2020; Puspitawati, 2020; Almendingen et al., 2021; Aliyyah et al., 2020; Means &Neisler, 2020).

The outbreak of COVID-19 in the city of Wuhan in China, forced the World Health Organization (WHO) to investigate the behavior and mode of transmission of the various and declared it as a public health emergency of international concern (PHEIC) on 30th January, 2020. As the number of reported cases increased across the globe, WHO pronounced the COVID 19 a pandemic on 11th March, 2020 (Cucinotta & Vanelli, 2020; WHO, 2020 Aboagy et al.2021). Following this, WHO further recommended punctilious course of actions such as public open test and social distancing (WHO, 2020). This pronunciations compelled countries across the globe to comply and declared state of emergency. For example the government of Ghana, through the Ministry of Health haven recognized the threat of the COVID 19 pandemic declared public emergency (Ghana Imposition Restriction Act, 2020). This lead to the closure of almost all social activities such as churches businesses, sports and educational institutions purposely to avoid human contacts. The closure of educational institutions pronounced by the president of Ghana on 16th March, 2020 affected all levels of educational institutions ranging from basic schools (pre-schools, primary and junior high schools) senior high schools to tertiary educational institutions, technical universities and colleges of education both private and public schools in Ghana (Akuffo-Addo, 2020). This consequently interrupted the traditional (face to face) approach to teaching and learning activities in the classroom and its administrative practices in Ghana.

To alleviate the unfavorable effects of the closure of schools especially at the universities as a result of the pandemic on teaching and learning activities, higher educational institutions eventually transitioned from the traditional face-to-face classes to fully online teaching classes. The change has also brought in its wake, alterations in the work of university administrators. Faculty members knew little that the only option for them was to use the online mode partially since this could help to meet the diverse learning needs of the student population. By implementing social distancing measures to break the chain of COVID-19 transmission, educational institutions opted for emergency online teaching via zoom and other platforms as an alternative mode of instruction. Most University academic and administrative staff across the globe including Ghana had to resort to virtual teaching, learning and administrative duties with it concomitant challenges. University lecturers and administrators in many countries including China, Pakistan Georgia and Ghana employed virtual technologies such as Skype Call, Vipers, Thing Link, Zoom, Google Meet, Telegrams, Video Conferencing WhatsApp and Socrative teaching and learning (Butakor, Kakutia, Shah & Hunt, 2023; Hamzah & Ahmad Shaberi, 2021; Sobaih et al., 2021; Barrot et al., 2021). In Ghana, teaching, learning, and administrative activities in most of the traditional universities such as University of Ghana, (Legon), Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology (KNUST) and University of Cape Coast (UCC) were done online.

Research Problem

The switch from offline to online approach to teaching, learning and administrative task at the university level has come with lots of challenges for university administrators and teachers globally especially the developing countries in sub-Saharan African including Ghana. (Liguori & Winkler, 2020). Evidence in the literature show that major challenges associated with these online teaching and administrative activities in higher education institutions in developing countries include: lack of staff with ICT skills; inadequate content development competences; lack of uninterrupted power supply; lack and unstable internet

connectivity (Aung & Khaing, 2015; Hadullo et al., 2018; Noor et al., 2020). Reports from Kanya indicate three key hurdles of online education to include lack of funds to support ICT activities, insufficiency of IT infrastructure and inadequate ICT skills (Ngwacho, 2020 & Almaiah et al., 2020). Similarly, in Pakistan, Kanwal and Rehman (2017) found lack of IT infrastructure, unavailable internet connectivity and computer literacy as key hurdles for effective online teaching and learning activities. For Libya, politics, culture and ack of financial resources were found to be major barriers to online teaching and learning activities (Kenan et al. as cited in Barrot et al., 2021). Reporting from Tanzania, Kisanga and Ireson (2015) found absence of IT skills, inadequate technical support and erratic internet design to support e-learning activities were key hurdles to online activities in educational institutions.

There is no doubt that academic faculty members are struggling to migrate fully from face to face mode of teaching and learning duties as a result of the sudden shift. Administratively, the transition has also created problems in the process of fully implementing student support activities. This is because universities are compelled to create a student-friendly environment, studios and e-learning classrooms to offer relevant services to support students of all social status or disabilities. (Bakradze, 2020, p.3-4). It is clear that the migration and emphasis on online duties of university administrators and faculty members has burdened stakeholders of the university communities in the public Universities such as of Cape Coast. Therefore, efforts need to be put in place to mitigate and support the effective virtual teaching and administrative work and also sustain the gains made during the pandemic as transition is made into the post-COVID-19 era. In this paper, an attempt has been made to map the best practices at those junctures where we stumbled due to the sudden shift. The study therefore explores the impact of the pandemic on the work practices of teaching and non-teaching staff in a public university context in Ghana. The study then examine some measures taken by universities to mitigate the negative effects of the pandemic on the work practices of teaching staff and administrators, explore the effectiveness of these measures. It focuses on finding answers to the following research questions:

1. How has the COVID-19 pandemic impacted the work practices of teaching staff and administrators in the University of Cape Coast?
2. What are the concomitant challenges you are experiencing now due Covi-19 pandemic relative to staff shift to remote work, changes in communication and collaboration, and the use of technology to support teaching and administrative tasks?
3. What measures have management of the University taken to mitigate the negative effects of the pandemic on the work practices of teaching staff and administrators?
4. How effective, in your view, are these measures to mitigate the negative effects of the pandemic on the work practices of teaching staff and administrators in the University of Cape Coast?

METHODOLOGY

Case Study Design:

A case study is an in-depth examination of a specific instance or event within its real-life context (Scribbr, 2023;Yin, 2003). We used this qualitative approach to explore the complex phenomena about covid-19, uncover unique details, and gain a holistic understanding of the phenomenon (). We chose this design for a number of reasons. First, this design allowed researchers to delve deeply into the intricate issues and situation implied in this study. By focusing on the specific instance, we could uncover nuanced details and layers of understanding that might be missed with other research methods (Scribbr, 2023). This depth of analysis made possible with this design provided the investigators rich insights into the underlying factors and dynamics of the studied phenomenon (Lee, & Saunders, 2017). Second, the use of the case study helped the investigators to understand the topic from multiple angles. It afforded us the chance to explore different perspectives and contextual factors related to the case study but did not restrict us to pre-determined

questions. This benefit provided a deep understanding of the phenomenon of interest in the study. Lastly, the design helped us to investigate the "rare and unusual" phenomena (Lee, & Saunders, 2017). The use of the case study allowed an in-depth exploration of the germane issue in the study (Yin, 2003). As merits, the design helped us to explore the complex phenomena deeply, and helped us to have a comprehensive view of the phenomenon from various angles (Helpful Professor, 2023). Despite its merits, case study is limited relative to generalizability of results (Helpful Professor, 2023;Yin, 2003). In other words, the findings from this single instance cannot be broadly applied to larger populations. Also, the study may be influenced by researcher bias or interpretation and ensuring rigor in data collection and analysis could be challenging (Page Shack, 2024). However, the merits far outweighed the demerits and hence the resolve by the investigators to use this design.

Selection of Cases, and Ethics

The population for the study comprised teaching and administrative senior members in the university of Cape Coast. **Purposive sampling technique was used to s**elect participants whose work practices have been impacted or changed somehow due to Covid-19. This technique enabled the investigators to select participants who are most likely to provide rich and detailed information about the challenges they have faced as a result of the pandemic (see, Yin, 2018). The pandemic left behind, the culture of using online teaching and other innovative administrative practices in universities. Qualitative data was collected using focus group discussion and interview guide (see, Creswell & Clark, 2017).

To get the participants, we first purposively selected 35 senior members (academic and administrative staff) from all the five colleges and nine directorates in the university administration. The academic staff comprised 25faculty members who consisted of nine professors (N=9), 10 senior lecturers (N=10) and six Assistant Lecturers (N=6) were selected using purposive sampling. Similarly, 10non-teaching staff (administrators) comprising four Senior Assistant Registrars, four Senior Accounts Officers, and two Chief System Administrative Analysts. The criteria for their selection was having, cumulatively worked in the university for more than six years in their respective duties and responsibilities. The reason for this population structure was to collect detailed and objective information from different groups of staff who are to work to ensure the attainment of the mandate of the university, one that is strongly positioned for innovative teaching research, outreach and professional development (Patton, as cited in Ayuen, 2015).

Qualitative data was gathered using unstructured focused group discussion and interview guide with questions related to the study. In all, eight participants, consisting of three faculty members, two senior member administrators, two senior accountants, and one system administrative analyst were interviewed (IS1; IS2; IS3; IS4; IS5; IS6; IS7; and IS8).On the other hand, 27 participants, nine in each group, participated in the focus group discussions (FG1; FG2; and FG3). None of these participants who consisted of 22 faculty members, two senior member administrators, two senior accountants, and one system administrative analysist was interviewed.The interviews lasted averagely about 50 minutes while the focus group sessions lasted for one hour thirty minutes on the average (Saunders et al. cited in Asare, 2023). To collect data, the researchers obtained introductory letter form the Directorate of Research, Innovation and Consultancy (DRIC) in the University of Cape Coast. Respondents were assured of anonymity, confidentiality and were informed of their wright to withdraw from the focus group discussion and the interview (Marshall & Rossman, 2010).

Instrumentation

The study used unstructured protocol to explore the impact, challenges and coping strategies of university faculty members and administrators. This was to allow the researchers to explore to ascertain deeper understanding of the influence of the advent of Covid-19 which has warranted online mode of teaching and

administrative practices and obtain the participants' thoughts and feelings about the challenges face and coping measures (Yin, 2018). The instrument was organized into three main sections: the introduction, the actual interview and the post interview section. The introductory part provided a space for the interviewee to share pleasantries with interviewers, to know their names and how they would want to address issues, expectation and rights during the interview. In addition, the section had statements of assurance of confidentiality and anonymity of participants, an opportunity to validate their responses and benefits. We requested for audio recordings of discourse in order to capture all discussions. The actual interview section of the protocol was further classified into four themes with each describing issues about Covid-19. The first theme comprised five questions items aimed to enable participants to describe how the advent of Covid 19 imparted on their work. The second theme focused on the challenges that interviewees face using online teaching and discharge of administrative innovative modes of practices necessitated by the Covid-19 pandemic. The third theme had three question items that elicited responses on the opportunities that the dawn of Covid 19 has brought to faculty members and administrators. The final theme also comprises three items which beseeched description of institutional arrangement that could be initiated to cope effectively transition to innovative ways to ensure continue teaching and administrative work in an unexpected similar situation such Covid 19. The last section contained statements that offered interviewee opportunities for post interview issues and things that the interviewee wanted to ask.

Credibility and Reliability of Instrument

The most practical way of achieving greater validity with qualitative data is to minimize the amount of biasness associated with the use of unstructured interview guide and focused group discussion guide which may come from investigator characteristics, participant characteristics, and the substantive content of the questions. Attempts was made, therefore, to completely avoid threats to data credibility which was likely to originate from attitudes, opinions, expectations and misperceptions of what the interviewer had to say and encouraged participant to be frank and objective in their responses. In addition, previously asked questions were rephrased during the interview as a way of checking contradictory statements with regard to issues relating how the covid 19 has imparted teaching and administrative work and challenges emanating from copping strategies at the university (Kumar, 2011). The researchers developed an early familiarity with the culture of participating organizations before the formal interviews (see Brinkmann &Kvale, 2015). In addition, prolonged engagement between the investigator and the participants were used for both researcher and respondents to gain an adequate understanding of the institution, and to establish relationship of trust relative to the actual interview sessions. Lastly, the researchers employed member-checking, a technique in which the transcribed data are given to participants to clarify what their intentions were, correct errors, and provide additional information if necessary.

Data Analysis

The focus of this study was to obtain qualitative data on how the dawn of Covid-19 has imparted the work faculty members and administrative staff and report in a form of narration based on the themes that may arise. The researchers first recorded the discourse and transcribed them according to the data gathered from the respondents. This was to allow for the diverse perspectives from categories of participants to be explored. This process involved transcribing and translating words and responses into more formal statements which were manually coded and categorized into themes that emerged from the data for interpretations. Heather to, the researchers, through member checking, sent the transcribed data to members to verify and confirmed whether what has been written, truly represent what they intended to mean. This helped in eliminating untended words and statements that could possibly undermine easy analysis, and interpretation of the data.

RESULTS

The study had as objective to explore the imprints of the pandemic on the work practices these staff. again,

it examined the concomitant challenges that staff are experiencing relative to staff shift to remote work, changes in communication and collaboration, and the use of technology to support teaching and administrative tasks and the measures that university management have taken to mitigate the negative effects of the pandemic on the work practices of staff. Finally, the study assessed the views of staff in determining whether the measures that university management put in place to mitigate the negative effects of the pandemic are effective or not in the University of Cape Coast. To achieve these objectives, data were collected to answer the germane research questions.

To the matise the responses, the investigators first read through the data to become familiar with it, identified and labelled different parts of the data with codes and then grouped similar codes together to form themes. Then they checked to ensure that the themes accurately reflected the data before defining and naming each theme. Finally, they write the analysis, including quotes from the data to support each theme. Using this process, the researchers analyzed the responses to the question *"How has the COVID-19 pandemic impacted the work practices of teaching staff and administrative staff in the university of Cape Coast?"*

RQ 1: *How Has The Covid-19 Pandemic Impacted The Work Practices Of Teaching Staff And Administrators In The University Of Cape Coast?*

To answer this research question, investigators used the interview and the focus group discussion data.

The common themes that pointed to the negative impact included increased workload, challenges with online teaching, and increased stress levels for staff. For instance, many staff members reported working longer hours and struggling to maintain a work-life balance was difficult. Interviewee IS2 observed, that, " *The pandemic has made it difficult to maintain a work-life balance, with many of people working longer hours and struggling to disconnect from work."* [IS2; IS4; IS5; IS7; IS8]. This sentiment was corroborated by the focus groups (FG1; FG3) who expresses similar sentiment. Again, the issue about challenges with online teaching dominated the responses of both the interview and the focus group sessions. Almost all the faculty members (IS1; IS2; and IS3) pointed out that the shift to online teaching has been challenging for many staff members, who have had to adapt to new technologies and find ways to engage students. Lastly, some also mentioned that, *"the pandemic has increased stress levels among staff members, who are dealing with a range of personal and professional challenges related to the pandemic."* [IS1; IS2; IS5; and IS8] These same messages ran through the responses of the focus group discussants.

RQ 2: *What are the concomitant challenges you are experiencing, relative to staff shift to remote work, changes in communication and collaboration, and the use of technology to support teaching and administrative tasks?*

The responses on this matter from the interviews and the focus group sessions reflected some the challenges that the staff in the university face due to the pandemic. The themes that emerged in this regard included staff unreceptiveness, role ambiguity, supervision issues, lecture delivery issues, assessment issues, poor trainee disposition, trainee unpreparedness, among others. It became clear the issue of role ambiguity which many of the administrators pointed out to be a key challenge they are facing because of the pandemic. One respondent remarked that, *"it not very clear the role we are supposed to be playing and this has been a major challenge for most of us, who have had to adapt to new responsibilities and expectations ..."* [IS5]. In sum, the focus group discussions also identified role ambiguity, supervision, and lecture delivery issues as challenges that staff of the university faces. The focus group found that supervision is a big issue because of the advent of the hybrid mode of teaching occasioned by the pandemic, which has made it difficult to provide proper feedback and support to staff and students as the case may be." [FG1 and FG2]. The assessment issue is also a challenge to faculty members today due to the pandemic. One interviewee noted

that, "*assessment is a concern now for many of us the teaching staff, who have had to develop new assessment methods and ensure that they are fair and effective.*" [IS2; FG1]

In sum, the study found key challenges of administrative staff due to the pandemic to include staff unreceptiveness, role ambiguity, supervision issues, lesson plan and delivery issues, assessment issues, poor trainee disposition, trainee unpreparedness, among others.

RQ 3: What measures have management of the university taken to mitigate the negative effects of the pandemic on the work practices of teaching staff and administrators?

The responses on this research question reflected the participants' views some measures that university management have put in place to mitigate the negative effects of the pandemic on the duties of teaching and non-teaching staff. Some themes that emerged included the strengthening of institutional alert and response capacities, diversifying academic programmes, institutionalizing blended learning modes, providing additional training and support, and implementing new policies and procedures. Five themes emerged from the responses during the interviews and focus group discussions. They included beefing up institutional alert and response capacities, diversifying academic programmes, institutionalizing blended or hybrid learning modes, providing additional training and support for staff, and providing required resources for staff. For instance, one interviewee stated that, "*the university has created a pandemic task force in all the colleges to ensure institutional alert and response capacities.*" [IS1; IS3; and IS6]. The focus group corroborated this stance by observing that even some departments had their own decentralized task forces to deal with future pandemics [FG2]. On programme diversification, one interviewee stated, "*I am aware of moves by management to diversify its academic programmes to attract more students in an era of academic competition.*" [IS4; IS7; and GF1]. The focus groups also noted that university management is focused of getting many of its new programmes accredited and diversified to attract massive student enrolments and generate the necessary money to fund its activities in the face of declining government support. Also, it became clear that university management has consciously institutionalized blended learning or hybrid modes where students are engaged them both face-to-face and online.

Evidence from this is illustrated by a remark that, "*blended learning modes have been institutionalized now in UCC and any lecturer who fails to stay current risks being left behind.*" [IS6; FG3]. The interviews and focus group sessions fund that as a measure, management has initiated and funded many career development programmes to bring staff to speed on new ways of carrying out their duties. One interviewee, in this regard noted that, "*the university has provided additional training and support to staff members to help them adapt to new technologies and teaching methods.*" [IS8; FG2]. An interviewee further noted that, "*management has implemented new policies and procedures to ensure that staff members have access to the resources and equipment they need to work effectively from home.*" [IS1] and this sentiment was expressed by the FG2 session. Lastly, on the provision of resources and equipment, it became clear that university management had put in place mechanisms to ensure the timely provision of resources and equipment to ease the work of staff. One interviewee stated, "management being aware that the whole world is not in normal times, makes sure has implemented new policies and procedures to ensure that staff have access to modern equipment such as internet, projectors, modern desktop and laptop devises among others that we need to work effectively whether from home. But let me add quickly that we still have issues with our internet connectivity [IS5]." In sum, the majority intimated that some of the measures that management has put in place include strengthening institutional alert and response capacities through the creation of pandemic task forces, diversifying university academic programmes to attract massive student enrolments support, institutionalizing the use of blended learning modes among others to mitigate the adverse effects of future pandemics.

RQ 4: How effective, in your view, are these measures to mitigate the negative effects of the pandemic

on the work practices of teaching staff and administrators in the University of Cape Coast?

This research question sought the participants' views on the effectiveness or otherwise of the measures that university management put in place to mitigate the adverse effects of the pandemic on the work practices of teaching staff and administrators. Some themes that emerged included increased flexibility and productivity, improved finances, increased support and value, and effective continuation of teaching and administrative tasks.

On the flexibility, some interviewees said, *"I think, by and large, that the measures so taken have been effective in extenuating* [...mitigating] *the negative effects of the pandemic on our work practices".* [IS1] *"Now I think many staff, especially teaching can attest to increased flexibility and high productivity."* Another interviewee[IS2] also intimated that, *"the flexible work learning environment is beneficial even now, it is allowing us to adapt to the new work environment more easily."* On the improvement of finances of the university, a participant said, *"I feel the measures to diversify academic programmes have improved the financial status of the university, especially in the face of dwindling governmental financial support."* [IS7]. The majority of interviewees also felt that the measure have resulted in more support for staff and this was illustrated by an interviewee who said, *"I now feel more supported and valued because of the measures taken by management to reduce the effects of the pandemic."*[IS4]. A majority of the interviewees shared that the measures taken by university management is helping to ensure effective teaching and administrative practice, despite the challenges. The outcome of the focus group discussions [FG1 and FG3] validated the findings of the interviewees. However, the FG2 differed from the two other sessions. The group [FG2] rather were unanimously of the view that not all the measures have been effective. Some of them cited the issue about improved internet infrastructure, which some described as a mirage. They said the situation had rather deteriorated instead of improving and since internet is the fulcrum around which technology revolves, much is still needed to be done.

In sum, the interview and the focus group data pointed to the effect that the measures that university management have put i place to mitigate the adverse effects of the pandemic have been effective. They intimated that some of them have particularly resulted in flexible work and learning, helping to improve institutional productivity. In other cases, it became clear that the measures have also improved the finances of the university in the face of dwindling government subventions or support.

DISCUSSIONS OF RESULTS

The findings of the study are consistent with previous research on the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the work practices of teaching staff and administrators. Increased workload, challenges with online teaching, and increased stress levels have been identified as common themes in many studies. For example, a study by Mosleh et al. (2022) found that the transition to remote education imposed mental burdens and stress on faculty members. Similarly, a study by UNESCO, UNICEF, and the World Bank (2020) found that the shift to online teaching and learning became an emergency response, which increased the levels of stress and workloads among university faculty and teaching staff.

The findings of the study also highlight the need for universities to provide additional support and resources to staff members to help them adapt to new technologies and teaching methods. This is consistent with the recommendations of other studies, which have emphasized the importance of providing training and support to staff members to help them cope with the challenges posed by the pandemic.

Also, the measures taken by university management to mitigate the negative effects of the pandemic on the work practices of teaching staff and administrators are consistent with the recommendations of previous

studies. For example, a study by UNESCO, UNICEF, and the World Bank (2020) recommended that universities should adopt blended learning modes to mitigate the adverse effects of future pandemics. Similarly, a study by Alqurashi (2021) recommended that universities should provide additional support and resources to staff members to help them adapt to new technologies and teaching methods. The creation of pandemic task forces is also consistent with the recommendations of another study, which emphasized the importance of establishing emergency response teams to manage crises such as pandemics (Alqurashi, 2021). Diversifying academic programmes to attract massive student enrolments support is also consistent with the recommendations of other studies, which have emphasized the importance of developing flexible and innovative academic programs to meet the changing needs of students and society.

The findings of the study suggest that the measures taken by university management to mitigate the negative effects of the pandemic on the work practices of teaching staff and administrators have been effective because they have resulted in flexible work and learning, improved institutional productivity, and improved finances of the university in the face of dwindling government support. These findings are consistent with previous research on the effectiveness of measures taken by universities to mitigate the negative effects of the pandemic on work practices. For instance a study by CIPD (2021) found that flexible working arrangements can improve productivity and wellbeing among employees. Similarly, a study by Harvard Business Review (2021) found that flexible work arrangements can improve employee satisfaction and retention. Another study by UNESCO, UNICEF, and the World Bank (2020) found that universities should adopt blended learning modes to mitigate the adverse effects of future pandemics. The flexible working arrangements is an example of the measures that when put in place, can improve productivity in public universities.

CONCLUSIONS

The study suggests that the Covid-19 pandemic has had a negative impact on the work practices of teaching staff and administrators in the University of Cape Coast. It brought about increased workload, challenges with online teaching, and increased stress levels among others. The study further brought to light, some measures such strengthening institutional alert and response capacities through the creation of pandemic task forces, diversifying university academic programmes to attract massive student enrolments support, institutionalizing the use of blended learning modes, to mitigate the negative effects of the pandemic on staff work practices. The study concluded that many of the measures taken by university management to mitigate the adverse effects of the pandemic have resulted in increased flexibility and productivity, improved finances, increased support and value, and effective continuation of teaching and administrative tasks. Lastly, the study suggests that the measures taken by university management to mitigate the negative effects of the pandemic on the work practices of teaching staff and administrators have been largely effective because they have resulted in flexible work and learning, improved institutional productivity, and improved finances of the university in the face of dwindling government financial support.

The study highlights a conceptual framework that exemplifies the expected relationships between and among the variables identified in the study. It demonstrates that pandemics have adverse impact on the practices of both teaching and non-teaching staff. This adverse impact, usually manifests in increased workload, challenges with online teaching, and increased stress levels. The framework also highlights that measures taken by university management to mitigate negative effects of pandemics on work practices, can either be effective or ineffective. However, effective measures, when instituted, may lead to the strengthening of institutional alert and resilient response capacities, the diversification of academic programmes, and the institutionalization of hybrid or blended modes of teaching and learning. These variables may result in increased flexibility and productivity, improved university financial status, and culminate in overall increased work output level. The framework again suggested that two principal actors who need to play a major role to ensure resilience and success of public universities are management and

government, for that matter the ministry of education.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the study's findings, we recommend the following for implementation to improve practice in public universities in Ghana:

1. Government, together with university management, should focus on the provision of additional support and resources to staff of public universities members. More importantly, universities should provide modern training and support to staff to enable them work either on face-to-face or virtually and help them adapt to new technologies in their teaching and administrative tasks to reduce stress levels and improve productivity among staff members.
2. Public universities should, as a matter of priority, establish emergency response teams and not disband the ones already established to manage crises such periods and make the universities resilient. These teams, though might appear irrelevant during 'no crises' periods but can help to strengthen institutional alert and response capacities through the development of frameworks that ensure that public universities are better prepared to deal with future crises.
3. The academic boards of public universities should develop flexible and innovative academic programmes that guarantees high enrolments of students to meet the changing needs of students and society. This implies encouraging departments to develop programmes and ensure that these programmes are accredited by the appropriate agencies to attract more enrolments thereby improving the financial health of the university.
4. Management of public universities should also provide clear communication and support to staff to help them cope with the challenges posed by the pandemics, thereby reducing stress levels and improving morale among all staff.

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