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## MANAGING TRANSITIONAL CHANGE: STAFF PERSPECTIVES FROM TECHNICAL UNIVERSITIES IN GHANA

*Research Article*

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# MANAGING TRANSITIONAL CHANGE: STAFF PERSPECTIVES FROM TECHNICAL UNIVERSITIES IN GHANA

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## Abstract

The transition of polytechnics into technical universities in Ghana represents a significant structural shift in higher education, aimed at enhancing technical and vocational training. This study examines the perspectives of academic and non-academic staff on the organisational transition, focusing on key challenges and opportunities arising from the conversion. Employing a qualitative case study approach, the research purposefully sampled participants from three technical universities while adhering to ethical considerations. The Seven Drivers of Change model provided a theoretical lens to analyse the factors influencing the transition. Findings indicate that organisational politics influenced perceptions of the conversion, with many staff members questioning the motivations behind the policy. Additionally, mistrust and a lack of confidence emerged due to limited stakeholder engagement and inadequate communication, creating resistance among employees. The transition also impacted institutional identity and culture, necessitating adjustments in governance structures, academic expectations, and staff roles. Furthermore, academic heterogeneity presented both opportunities and challenges, requiring curriculum alignment and faculty development to ensure educational quality. The study concludes that successful organisational transformation requires inclusive stakeholder participation, transparent policy formulation, and strategic capacity building. The findings contribute to higher education transformation discourse, providing insights for policymakers, institutional leaders, and scholars on managing large-scale educational reforms effectively. Future research should explore the long-term implications of the transition on faculty development, student employability, and institutional performance.

*Keywords:* Organisational change, change management, higher education transition, academic restructuring

## I. Introduction

Globally, it has become relevant for organisations and institutions to continually utilise changes in the workplace (Aninkan, 2018) that are suitable for their current situation. According to Stobierski (2020), organisational change involves significant adjustments within a given working environment, including shifts in institutional culture, operational frameworks, technological advancements, and administrative processes. This helps institutions to adjust to new challenges and evolving environments. Aninkan (2018) augments that organisational change is evident when there is a conversion or transition away from the current state of an existing establishment and directed toward some desired future state to increase efficiency. Hence, organisational change is a continuous process that enables institutions to evolve in response to internal and external factors.

Stobierski (2020) further maintains that organisational change can take different forms, but two broad categories are widely recognised. These are adaptive change and transformational change. Hence, when gradual modifications are made to improve institutional effectiveness, it is termed adaptive change (Karaxha, et al., 2018; Stobierski, 2020). These changes are often

incremental and designed to help organisations or institutions respond to emerging needs while maintaining stability. Such changes ensure that institutions remain responsive to industry demands and evolving educational standards without causing major disruptions. Transformational change, however, involves fundamental shifts that redefine the structure and operations of an institution (Mizrak, 2024; Stobierski, 2020). It must be noted that transformational changes are typically large-scale and may require significant time, effort, and resources to implement. This type of change is often driven by policy reforms, technological advancements, shifts in global education standards, or changing workforce demands. Managing both adaptive and transformational change requires strong leadership, effective communication, and the involvement of key stakeholders.

A notable example of transformational change in Ghana's higher education sector was the conversion of polytechnics into technical universities in 2016. This transition aimed to enhance the country's technical and vocational education by aligning it with international best practices and addressing the growing need for highly skilled professionals in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) (Mohamed, 2023). The Technical University Act (Act 922) was enacted to facilitate this transition, enabling polytechnics that met the required criteria to attain technical university status (Bentum-Micah, Cai, & Kyei-Nuamah, 2023). However, like many higher education reforms, this transformation was met with mixed reactions from staff and students, some of whom perceived it as beneficial while others viewed it as disruptive to their established roles and expectations (Akanpaadgi & Mumuni, 2021).

To oversee the transition, the government established a technical committee in August 2013 to develop a structured framework for implementing the conversion (Benneh, Kyeremeh, & Sarfo, 2014). The initiative drew inspiration from similar reforms in countries such as Germany, Singapore, and South Korea, where technical and vocational education was strengthened through structured transformations. As part of the preparation process, a delegation led by the Deputy Minister of Education visited Germany to study the country's successful conversion of polytechnics into technical universities (Benneh et al., 2014). The transition was generally well received, particularly among students, as it eliminated the need to enrol in traditional universities for further education and elevated the status of these institutions to align more closely with global higher education standards (Akanpaadgi & Mumuni, 2021). The phased implementation allowed polytechnics sufficient time to meet the required criteria before being granted full university status.

Korantwi-Barimah and Schultz (2019) emphasise that organisational transformation in higher education requires active participation from management and other key stakeholders to ensure a successful transition. Similarly, Benneh, Adomah, and Sarfo (2014) argue that technical and vocational education plays a crucial role in national development, making the upgrade of polytechnics into technical universities a necessary step. However, the transition required extensive sensitisation efforts to engage staff, students, and stakeholders to minimise resistance and foster institutional buy-in (Kumarasinghe & Dilan, 2021). International experiences further highlight the importance of structured change management in higher education. For example, in Germany, the conversion of polytechnics into technical universities was executed smoothly through stakeholder consensus and strategic planning, providing valuable insights for Ghana's transition process (Schneijderberg, 2020).

Several studies have examined aspects of organisational change management within the context of Ghana's polytechnic-to-university transition. Benneh (2014) focused on the role of Sunyani Polytechnic in this process, while Kyere (2015) explored its implications for mechanical engineering students. Akanpaadgi and Mumuni (2021) examined institutional reform and change management in relation to this transformation. However, none of the above-

mentioned works considered furthering their research to explore the perspective of technical university staff on organisational transition change. According to the literature, there are minimal considerations in the study of how employees resist or support organisational transition change (Akanpaadgi & Mumuni, 2021). Hence, exploring the perspectives of technical university staff on organisational transition change is a gap that needs further investigation. Moreover, the study will examine the perception and attitude of the technical university staff on organisation transition change.

## 2. Overview of Literature

### 2.1. State of Technical Universities in Ghana

Higher education plays a crucial role in shaping a country's socio-economic development, and technical education, in particular, has been recognised as a key driver of industrial growth and technological advancement (Mohamed, 2023). Over the years, Ghana's technical education sector has undergone significant changes, driven by the need to align with global best practices and ensure that graduates possess the skills required in a rapidly evolving job market. The transformation of Ghana's polytechnics into technical universities in 2016 marked a critical shift in the country's approach to technical and vocational education, aiming to reposition these institutions as centres of excellence in applied sciences, engineering, and technology (Dsane-Nsor et al., 2019).

The journey towards technical university status can be traced back to the establishment of technical institutes in the 1950s, which provided foundational training in various vocational disciplines. In 1992, these institutions were upgraded to polytechnics with a mandate to train middle-level professionals in science, technology, and applied fields, granting Higher National Diplomas (HNDs) upon completion (Dsane-Nsor et al., 2019). The role of polytechnics was to bridge the skills gap between traditional universities, which focused primarily on theoretical education, and industry demands for practical, job-ready graduates (Appiah & Aheto, 2021). However, by the early 2000s, concerns arose regarding the limited career progression opportunities for HND graduates, disparities in qualification recognition, and the perceived lower status of polytechnic education compared to traditional university degrees (Nsiah-Gyabaah, 2009).

To address these challenges, the government initiated discussions on converting polytechnics into technical universities. According to Benneh, Kyeremeh, and Sarfo (2014), this transition aimed to enhance the prestige of technical education, expand academic opportunities, and improve graduates' competitiveness in both local and international labour markets. Similar models had already been successfully implemented in countries such as Germany, Singapore, and South Korea, where technical universities played a pivotal role in economic transformation through strong industry linkages and applied research (Schneijderberg, 2020). The Ghanaian government, recognising the benefits of such an approach, established a technical committee in 2013 to develop a structured framework for implementing the transition (Benneh et al., 2014).

The transition from polytechnics to technical universities was not merely a rebranding exercise but a comprehensive structural transformation requiring governance reforms, faculty development, and curriculum enhancement. The Ghana Tertiary Education Commission (GTEC), formerly the National Accreditation Board (NAB), was tasked with overseeing this transition, ensuring that institutions met the required academic and infrastructural standards (Dsane-Nsor et al., 2019). However, several challenges emerged, including discrepancies in the implementation process, inadequate funding, and resistance from some stakeholders (Korantwi-Barimah & Ofori, 2014).

A major concern has been the need for continuous professional development for faculty members. Research suggests that technical education institutions thrive when their lecturers are equipped with up-to-date industry knowledge and pedagogical skills (Gervedink Nijhuis et al., 2009). However, many technical universities in Ghana have struggled to provide sufficient training opportunities, leading to gaps in instructional quality and research output (Nsiah-Gyabaah, 2009). Additionally, Korantwi-Barimah and Ofori (2014) observed that inadequate professional development for academic staff has contributed to low research productivity, limiting the institutions' ability to engage in meaningful industry collaborations.

Another challenge has been the concern over a perceived decline in the quality of graduates. Public discourse on technical education has pointed to inconsistencies in academic delivery, outdated curricula, and a lack of practical training opportunities (Dsane-Nsor et al., 2019). Employers have expressed concerns that some graduates lack the critical problem-solving skills and hands-on experience necessary for modern workplaces, reinforcing the need for stronger industry-academia partnerships (Appiah & Aheto, 2021).

Despite these challenges, technical universities have seen significant enrolment growth since their conversion. The Ministry of Finance and Economic Planning (MoFEP, 2022) reported that student enrolment across the ten technical universities in Ghana reached 56,610 in 2020, reflecting an 11% increase from the previous year. That same year, 11,950 students graduated, with a notable increase in female and disadvantaged student enrolment. However, by 2021, enrolment among these groups declined by 2%, despite overall student numbers rising to 63,728. The science-to-humanities enrolment ratio also shifted from the conventional 60:40 to 54:46, suggesting a gradual increase in STEM-related disciplines (MoE, 2014; MoFEP, 2022).

The Ghanaian government has taken steps to address some of the systemic issues affecting technical universities. Policies have been introduced to promote STEM education, encourage industry collaboration, and enhance the employability of graduates (MoFEP, 2022). Additionally, there have been efforts to strengthen regulatory frameworks to ensure that technical universities remain distinct from traditional universities and retain their practical, skills-based orientation (Dsane-Nsor et al., 2019).

While the conversion of polytechnics to technical universities was a necessary step towards modernising Ghana's education system, sustaining this transformation requires deliberate policy and institutional efforts. Unlike traditional universities, technical universities are expected to prioritise applied research, hands-on training, and direct engagement with industries to meet workforce demands. However, the risk of these institutions gradually adopting a theoretical, lecture-based model remains a concern, as has been observed in other transitioning economies (Schneijderberg, 2020).

To ensure that technical universities remain true to their mandate, greater investment is needed in faculty development, modern laboratory facilities, and industry partnerships. Strengthening the governance structures of these institutions is also critical to ensuring accountability and the effective implementation of reforms (Benneh et al., 2014). Furthermore, aligning curricula with industry trends and technological advancements will be essential in equipping graduates with relevant skills for the future job market (Appiah & Aheto, 2021).

The transformation of Ghana's polytechnics into technical universities represents a bold step towards a more skills-oriented education system. However, the long-term success of this transition will depend on how well these institutions adapt to emerging global trends while maintaining their core mission of producing technically proficient graduates. Sustained stakeholder engagement, strategic investment, and continuous policy refinement will be key in

ensuring that technical universities play a leading role in Ghana's industrialisation and economic growth.

## **2.2.Change Management**

Change management plays a pivotal role in institutional transformation, particularly in higher education reforms. Hayes (2020) challenges the assumption that change is a straightforward process, arguing instead that it is complex, unpredictable, and often met with resistance. Institutions undergoing transitions, such as Ghana's polytechnics converting into technical universities, require strong leadership, active stakeholder engagement, and an adaptable institutional culture to navigate these shifts effectively (Lutaaya, Ndagire, & Otto, 2019). Without careful planning and broad consultation, even well-intentioned reforms risk failure due to resistance and inconsistent implementation. This encourages the need for institutions to approach change management as a multidimensional process that integrates both structural and human considerations.

It must be noted that a key aspect of successful change management is guiding institutions through structured transitions (Hiatt, 2010). However, Hashim (2013) argues that traditional models prioritise structural and policy adjustments while neglecting the psychological impact on employees. This is particularly evident in higher education, where faculty and administrative staff play a crucial role in implementing reforms. Yet, when change is imposed in organisation, it sometimes lacks meaningful engagement, which leads to anxiety, resistance, and diminished institutional effectiveness (Kumarasinghe & Dilan, 2021). Ghana's transition from polytechnics to technical universities exemplifies this challenge, as faculty members had to adapt to new academic expectations with limited professional development support. The success of such transitions depends not only on policy changes but also on ensuring that those responsible for enacting these changes are well-equipped and motivated.

Closely linked to the above is the challenge of balancing structural adjustments with workforce readiness. Pavlakis et al. (2011) stress that leaders must ensure employees are not only informed but also empowered to contribute meaningfully to institutional goals. However, Fusch (2020) critiques many organisations for implementing top-down directives that fail to address employee concerns, leading to disengagement and a lack of ownership in the change process. In the case of Ghana's higher education reforms, insufficient investment in capacity-building initiatives for faculty and administrative staff resulted in inconsistencies in policy execution. Miller, Jones, Graves, and Sievert (2010) further caution against overreliance on external consultants, who may lack the contextual knowledge needed for sustainable transformation. Instead, fostering internal leadership and empowering stakeholders enhances institutional ownership, ensuring that change is both effective and lasting.

Central to the success of any organisational transformation is effective communication. Maria (2009) asserts that trust between leadership and employees is crucial in determining whether change efforts gain support or face resistance. However, Salem (2008) and Fusch (2020) argue that many institutions rely on a one-way communication model, where decisions are imposed rather than developed through collaboration. In Ghana's transition to technical universities, inadequate sensitisation efforts resulted in confusion about new academic structures and institutional objectives. Without clear and transparent communication, uncertainty grows, leading to greater opposition to change. Therefore, fostering open dialogue and ensuring that stakeholders understand and contribute to the process is essential in minimising resistance and ensuring a smooth transition.

Another ongoing debate in change management is whether change should be approached as a single event or a continuous process. Some institutions implement large-scale reforms within

fixed timelines, while others integrate continuous adaptation into their long-term strategies (Fusch et al., 2020). Salem (2008) warns that institutions resistant to ongoing transformation risk stagnation and inefficiencies. In the case of Ghana's technical universities, the shift required not only structural and policy changes but also a cultural shift towards flexibility and innovation. Institutions that approached change as an ongoing process, rather than a rigid restructuring effort, were better able to achieve stakeholder buy-in and sustain long-term improvements.

In tandem with the above, it is evident managing change in higher education requires a holistic approach that balances strategic planning, workforce engagement, and institutional adaptability. While leadership is vital, sustainable transformation depends on clear communication, continuous professional development, and participatory decision-making. Lasting transformation.

### **2.3.Organisational and Transitional Change**

Organisational change is a fundamental aspect of institutional evolution, allowing organisations to adapt to internal dynamics and external pressures. Moran and Brightman (2001) define organisational change as the ongoing renewal of an institution's direction, structure, and capabilities to meet emerging needs. This change can be incremental, involving small-scale improvements, or transformational, requiring a complete overhaul of systems and processes (Al-Haddad & Kotnour, 2015; Van de Ven & Sun, 2011). However, the effectiveness of organisational change depends largely on strategic implementation, as poorly executed transitions can lead to operational inefficiencies and workforce disengagement.

While change is often necessary, it is rarely seamless. Marnada, Raharjo, Hardian, and Prasetyo (2022) argue that change initiatives carry significant risks, influencing financial sustainability, employee morale, and overall institutional stability. Meimaridis and Diakaki (2020) further assert that uncertainty associated with change can reduce job satisfaction and productivity, particularly when staff feel excluded from the decision-making process. This supports Kumarasinghe and Dilan's (2021) assertion that successful organisational change is not merely about structural adjustments but also about fostering an adaptive organisational culture. However, one of the most persistent shortcomings in change management is the failure to anticipate and mitigate human resistance, leading to superficial rather than meaningful reform.

The concept of transitional change is particularly relevant in the context of organisational restructuring. Mullins and Christy (2016) emphasise that transition management is essential for redefining institutional roles and expectations. However, Hayes (2020) warns that many transitions occur without a clear assessment of their long-term impact, often resulting in fragmented reforms that fail to deliver sustainable improvements. Organisational leaders must, therefore, balance strategic imperatives with human-centred change management approaches to ensure stability and institutional cohesion. This is especially important in higher education, where policy-driven transitions frequently disrupt established academic and administrative structures.

Organisational change is driven by both external and internal factors. Kitchen and Daly (2002) identify key drivers such as policy reforms, technological advancements, economic fluctuations, and globalisation. However, one of the most pressing challenges organisations face is resistance to change. Employees often respond differently to organisational transitions—some view them as opportunities for growth, while others perceive them as threats to job security (Aninkan, 2020; Schulz-Knappe, Koch, & Beckert, 2019; Setordzi & Asante, 2019). Lundmark, Richter, and Tafvelin (2021) stress that managers play a vital role in



alleviating employee concerns through clear communication and transparent decision-making. However, de Jong et al. (2016) argue that many managers lack the necessary skills to lead change effectively, resulting in inconsistent and, at times, counterproductive management practices.

Fusch et al. (2020) critique the tendency of organisational leaders to focus on technical expertise at the expense of structured change management. This often results in inadequate preparation and limited employee engagement, leading to resistance and inefficiency. Rosaria et al. (2025) reinforce this argument, noting that many employees resist change due to insufficient sensitisation efforts. Successful change management, therefore, requires more than just executive directives; it necessitates a participatory approach that fosters trust, transparency, and active involvement from all stakeholders.

While organisational change is essential for institutional progress, its success depends on thorough planning and execution. Fusch, Ness, Booker, and Fusch (2020) emphasise that well-structured action plans are essential for ensuring that transitions are both effective and sustainable. Davis and Newcomer (2010) further highlight that well-managed change initiatives minimise inefficiencies, control operational costs, and improve coordination across departments. However, rigid change management frameworks may prove counterproductive if they fail to incorporate flexibility and continuous learning. Institutions must, therefore, balance structured planning with adaptive strategies to navigate change effectively.

It is therefore crucial to maintain that organisational and transitional change are critical elements of institutional development. However, their success hinges not only on structural modifications but also on the willingness of individuals to embrace transformation. Leaders must adopt a strategic yet inclusive approach, ensuring that organisational change is not simply imposed but actively supported by employees. Change management, when executed with foresight, adaptability, and stakeholder involvement, has the potential to drive long-term institutional resilience and success in an increasingly dynamic environment..

### **3. Theoretical Framework**

It is essential to note that the theoretical framework relates the researcher to existing scholarly work, which helps to underpin messages within other relevant texts (Zamil et al., 2023). A suitable theory serves as the fulcrum for research methodologies. Notwithstanding, stating the theoretical assumptions of a research study assists in answering the rationale behind the research questions. A theory helps you move beyond reporting an observed event to make broader generalisations about various aspects of that behaviour. It also enables you to identify the boundaries or limitations of those generalisations. Furthermore, a theoretical framework highlights the key factors influencing a particular phenomenon of interest. It informs you to investigate how and under what conditions those critical factors may change. In tandem with the above, the study adopted the seven drivers of change model (Anderson & Anderson, 2010) as a framework to aid in answering the research question.

#### **3.1. The Seven Drivers of Change Model**

Organisational transformation has seven catalysts or drivers (Anderson & Anderson, 2010). To effectively scope your change, it is necessary to determine its rollout strategy, where all the seven drivers are considered. The relationship between the driver's model is showcased in the diagram below.





*Figure 1 Drivers of Change Model (Source: Anderson & Anderson, 2010)*

According to Anderson and Anderson (2010), while the final three drivers of the change model are relatively recent areas of focus, the first four categories of drivers are well-known to most corporate leaders. Unsurprisingly, we repeatedly discover that most businesses' issues with their change attempts result from insufficient attention to these less obvious factors.

### **3.2. Definitions of the Seven Drivers of Change**

#### ➤ **Environmental Forces**

This focuses on the broader environment within which organisations and individuals operate (Anderson & Anderson, 2010). These forces encompass various factors such as social, economic, political, governmental, technological, demographic, legal, and environmental influences. Therefore, it is crucial for an organisation's management to thoroughly assess its external environment before initiating any organisational transition.

#### ➤ **Marketplace Requirements for Success**

This driver emphasises the full spectrum of client needs that determine what a company must do to succeed in its industry (Anderson & Anderson, 2010). Beyond the fundamental needs for products or services, this includes delivery speed, customisation, quality, innovation, and customer service. Changes in environmental forces often lead to shifts in market demands. As organisations consider transitioning, it is essential to consider stakeholders' preferences.

#### ➤ **Business Imperatives**

This refers to an organisation's strategic actions to meet the market's demands. Consequently, the organisation may need to modify its mission, strategy, goals, products, services, pricing, or branding (Anderson & Anderson, 2010). These imperatives are typically integral to the organisation's strategic plans.

#### ➤ **Organisational Imperatives**

This driver focuses on an organisation's necessary actions to fulfil its strategic business objectives. Organisational imperatives define what must change within the organisation's systems, processes, technologies, resources, skill sets, or workforce (Anderson & Anderson, 2010).

➤ **Cultural Imperatives**

Cultural imperatives are centred around supporting and advancing the organisation's new strategy, design, and operations. The organisational culture—the collective way of being, working, and interacting—must evolve to align with these new objectives (Anderson & Anderson, 2010).

➤ **Leader and Employee Behaviour**

Organisational culture is shaped and expressed through collective behaviour. This behaviour goes beyond visible actions and encompasses the attitudes, demeanours, and character of individuals within the organisation. For cultural change to occur, leaders and employees must intentionally change their behaviours.

➤ **Leader and Employee Mindset**

Mindset refers to the worldview, assumptions, beliefs, and mental models that guide individuals' actions. A shift in attitude is often a crucial first step toward fostering lasting change in behaviour and culture. To drive transformation, organisational leaders must usually adopt new perspectives to recognise shifts in external forces and market demands. Similarly, employees may need to adjust their mindset to understand the reasons behind the requested changes.

Every organisation undergoing substantial change has its rationale for why such transformation is necessary. The Drivers of Change model provides a practical framework to understand this process. According to the model, the typical narrative of organisational change begins with external forces—such as shifts in customer demands—creating new needs in the market (Anderson & Anderson, 2010). Organisations must adjust their structure, systems, processes, or technology to implement new business strategies to meet these changing needs effectively.

In transformational change, the magnitude of these shifts is often so great that cultural changes are also necessary for the new strategy and organisational design to succeed. Culture change requires altering how leaders and employees behave, which, in turn, calls for a shift in mindset—often regarding how to meet customer needs, improve the business model, adjust work processes, or enhance interpersonal interactions.

The success of an organisational transition relies on addressing all the forces outlined above. If behaviour doesn't change, a shift in thinking will not lead to the desired outcomes. Likewise, the business plan will falter if the culture does not evolve. Ultimately, all components—structure, behaviour, mindset, and culture—must be realigned to achieve the desired outcomes in response to market demands.

## **4. Methodology**

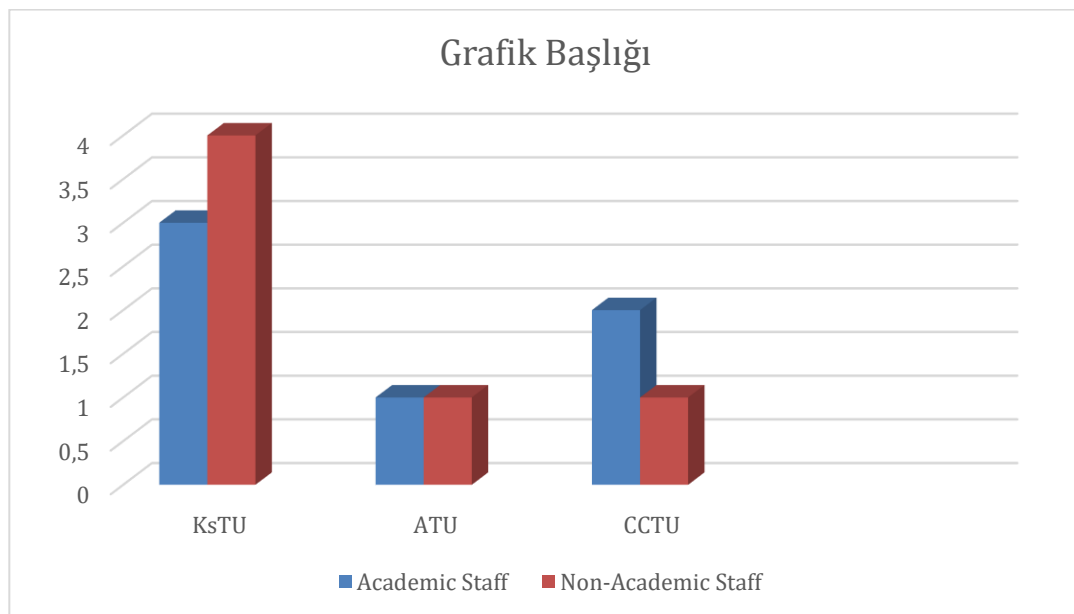
### **4.1. Research design**

This study adopts a qualitative research approach to explore the perspectives of technical university staff on organisational transition. A qualitative approach allows for a deeper understanding of how individuals experience and interpret change within their work environment (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Kreuger and Neuman (2006) emphasise that qualitative research captures the complexities of human behaviour, making it well-suited for examining institutional transitions. Given the study's focus on the lived experiences of staff members, a case study design was chosen. As Creswell and Poth (2018) explain, case studies enable researchers to explore real-world situations in depth by drawing on multiple sources of

information, such as interviews and observations. This design provides a rich and nuanced analysis of the factors influencing staff attitudes towards organisational change.

#### 4.2.Sampling

To ensure relevant and insightful data, purposive sampling (Creswell and Poth, 2018) was employed to select participants who had firsthand experience with the transition process. Lindlof and Taylor (2002) argue that qualitative research benefits from targeted sampling, as it prioritises depth over breadth in data collection. In this study, five staff members from technical universities were interviewed, offering a range of perspectives on how the transition affected their roles and work environment. A total of twelve (12) participants were purposefully selected from three Technical Universities in Ghana: Kumasi Technical University (KsTU), Accra Technical University (ATU), and Cape Coast Technical University (CCTU). Seven participants were from KsTU, comprising three academic and four non-academic staff, while the remaining five were drawn from ATU and CCTU. The selection was based on their direct involvement in or experience with the transition process to ensure diverse insights into the impact of the change. By including both academic and administrative staff, the study captured a comprehensive understanding of how the transition influenced teaching, governance, and institutional culture.



**Figure 2 Data on Academic and Non - Academic Staff (participants) from the selected Technical Universities**

#### 4.3.Data collection and analysis

Data collection involved semi-structured interviews and participant observation. Semi-structured interviews provided the flexibility to explore key themes while allowing participants to express their thoughts freely (Leavy, 2017; Yin, 2016). Questions were designed based on the study's theoretical framework and literature review, ensuring that discussions remained relevant. Interviews were conducted in English, each lasting between 20 to 30 minutes, and were recorded with participant consent. In addition to interviews, participant observation was conducted to supplement the findings. Hurst (2023) notes that observing participants in their natural work environment enhances the credibility of qualitative research by providing context

to their responses. Field notes were taken to document workplace interactions, staff engagement, and reactions to organisational changes.

Data were analysed using thematic analysis, following Braun and Clarke's (2006) structured process. This involved familiarising with the data, generating codes, identifying patterns, reviewing themes, refining them, and compiling the findings into a coherent narrative. Thematic analysis was selected for its ability to reveal meaningful insights by identifying recurring ideas across participant responses. Transcripts and observation notes were reviewed multiple times to ensure a thorough and accurate analysis (Starks & Trinidad, 2007; Crowe, Inder, & Porter, 2015).

This study adhered to internationally recognised ethical standards to protect participants' rights, privacy, and well-being. While formal institutional ethics approval was not obtained, literature suggests that in certain qualitative research contexts, particularly those with minimal risk to participants, formal ethical clearance may not always be required (Gelling, 2016; Israel, 2015). Creswell and Poth (2018) emphasise that ethical responsibility in qualitative research extends beyond institutional approval to include voluntary participation, informed consent, and data confidentiality. In line with best ethical practices in social science research (Tracy, 2020), all participants were fully briefed on the study's objectives and voluntarily consented to participate, with the right to withdraw at any stage without consequence. Pseudonyms were used to maintain anonymity, and all data were securely stored with access restricted to authorised research personnel. The study prioritised non-coercion and participant autonomy, ensuring a safe environment for open and honest responses. Additionally, as Israel (2015) notes, ethical considerations must balance procedural ethics (formal approval) with practical ethics (responsible decision-making throughout the research process). By upholding these principles, the study maintains credibility and integrity while contributing to best practices in ethical research on organisational change.

## **5. Findings and Discussions**

To ensure the confidentiality of participants and the reliability of their responses, alphanumeric codes such as Participant 1 (P1), Participant 2 (P2), Participant 3 (P3), and Participant 4 (P4) etc. were used to conceal the identities of the research participants. Communicating their anonymity to them allowed them to interact freely.

### **5.1. Organisational Politics**

The role of organisational politics in shaping the transition was strongly reflected in participants' responses. Many perceived the decision to upgrade polytechnics to technical universities as being driven more by political considerations than by a genuine commitment to improving technical education in Ghana. Participants noted that the announcement of the conversion was made during a political campaign, raising concerns that it was primarily an electoral strategy rather than a carefully planned educational reform (Akanpaadgi & Mumuni, 2021; Appiah & Aheto, 2021). This perception resonates with Anderson and Anderson's (2010) argument that environmental factors, including political influences, significantly impact organisational transitions. However, the absence of comprehensive stakeholder consultations appears to have deepened scepticism about the rationale behind the transition. Without clear engagement strategies, the policy was met with uncertainty, reinforcing the broader literature on change management, which stresses the importance of participatory decision-making in minimising resistance and fostering institutional alignment (Kumarasinghe & Dilan, 2021). Evidence from the interaction with P2 and P5 confirmed that the conversion, although relevant, was to score a political point rather than making an overall effort to upgrade the institutions and their stakeholders.

An excerpt from the interaction of P2 below confirms the organisational politics theme:

***My brother, I have been lecturing here for the past thirty-two years, and I will never say an upgrade was irrelevant. But the truth is, how can you call for an upgrade when the necessary resources are not available? We have indeed struggled, and the reality is that there is little pain for most of our staff. As a President, you pronounce before setting up a committee to look into it. That was not right. If not for the politics of Ghana, where would you experience this?***

As evidenced in the excerpt from P2, there was broad acknowledgment that the upgrade was necessary, yet concerns over inadequate resources remained a central issue. The frustration expressed by long-serving faculty members suggests that the transition was implemented without sufficient preparatory measures, limiting its effectiveness in fostering meaningful institutional change.

Similarly, P5 emphasised that while the idea of technical universities was fundamentally sound, the absence of proper planning negatively affected salaries and academic ranks.

***...do you know something? The involvement of our political leaders in our day-to-day education has had a significant effect. If you read from available sources, the idea of commencing a technical university was not bad in itself, but not making adequate preparation to meet up with its competitors across the countries affected staff in terms of salary and rank. It may have been a government decision, but it was loose.***

The above supports Korantwi-Barimah and Schultz's (2019) argument that stakeholder engagement is indispensable in organisational transition, as it ensures that those affected are adequately informed and prepared for change. The lack of structured consultation contributed to uncertainty and dissatisfaction, reinforcing the argument that significant organisational reforms must be preceded by extensive dialogue with those directly impacted. This resonates with broader change management literature, which emphasise the importance of participatory decision-making in reducing resistance and enhancing institutional commitment (Kumarasinghe & Dilan, 2021). Without a clearly articulated strategy that integrates stakeholder input, transitions of this magnitude risk fostering disengagement and inefficiency rather than institutional growth.

However, not all participants viewed the transition negatively. This was evident in the interaction with P10, P12 and P8. P8 suggested that opposition to the policy was sometimes politically motivated rather than based on substantive concerns.

***...some opposers made noise not because they hated the idea but because it may go against their presidential aspirant since the NDC was likely to use the conversion to score a political point. It even reached a time when, during faculty meetings, our friends from the other side of campus did not see the relevance of making the policy successful. When they got the opportunity to play roles as guests on morning shows, there was always criticism. However, I am an alum of this institution and had a chance to study abroad. I can tell you from the authority that the conversion should have been initiated long ago. Germany, Sweden, and some other Scandinavian countries enjoy the fruit of technical education and skill training because of similar conversions and upgrades of technical institutions.***

These contrasting perspectives tie with Aninkan's (2020) and Schulz-Knappe et al.'s (2019) argument that organisational change creates supporters and opponents, depending on individual interests and affiliations. The divergent viewpoints explain the complexity of institutional transition, where political, economic, and social factors intertwine to shape acceptance or resistance. This further strengthens the argument that external political pressures, when not balanced with internal institutional preparedness, can lead to resistance and confusion rather than a smooth transition. The findings explain the need for policymakers to depoliticise institutional reforms, ensuring that well-structured planning, stakeholder involvement, and long-term educational objectives rather than immediate political cycles guide change.

## **5.2. Mistrust and lack of confidence**

Mistrust and lack of confidence among staff emerged as significant barriers to the acceptance of the transition. Many participants expressed concerns over a perceived lack of transparency in decision-making and the absence of clear communication from leadership. Maria (2009) emphasises that trust is fundamental in organisational change, as it fosters confidence and minimises resistance. When leaders fail to communicate effectively, uncertainty about job security, salary structures, and career progression can intensify anxiety among employees. In this case, inadequate communication resulted in widespread apprehension, reinforcing the notion that change initiatives are likely to fail when employees are excluded from key decision-making processes (Fusch, 2020). The findings indicate that without an inclusive dialogue, trust in leadership eroded, contributing to institutional instability and making employees hesitant to fully embrace the transition. This aligns with broader change management literature, which highlights that transparent communication and meaningful stakeholder involvement are essential in fostering trust and ensuring the successful implementation of reforms.

In an interaction with the participants, it was evident that the inability to disclose meaningful information to the staff about the organisational transition change posed some uncertainty about the sustenance of the job. P6 said;

*In the beginning, most of us were naïve about the details of the conversion. We did not know our fate after the announcement, and even after the conversion, it took some time for things to be calmed. You see, at a point, no one knew how we would be affected as staff. We never gave any input and were not consulted when the government made the pronouncement. It came to us as a blow, then we were called POTAG (Polytechnic Teachers' Association of Ghana). So, it wasn't easy to trust the system and maximise our effort in teaching and learning. All we desired to do then was to strike, strike, and strike at the detriment of our future leaders, the students.*

Another excerpt that revealed the possibility of mistrust or lack of confidence is evident below:

*In my hey days, I used to teach at a secondary technical institute in the central region. However, there was a similar event where tutors or teachers with diploma certificates were required to upgrade or be transferred to junior secondary schools. I was a victim. So, I may face the same plight when a similar upgrade is announced. I did not trust the system, but that same system motivated me to pursue my PhD (P1).*

The excerpts from P6 and P1 illustrate the depth of uncertainty experienced by employees during the transition. P6 recounted how the lack of transparency and communication surrounding the conversion led to industrial action, as staff felt alienated from key decisions that directly impacted their professional stability. Similarly, P1's past experience with policy-induced redundancies heightened anxieties about job security, reinforcing



concerns that history might repeat itself under the new structure. These findings support Fusch's (2020) argument that ineffective communication fosters misinformation and distrust, which can ultimately derail change initiatives. The absence of proactive engagement with staff resulted in unpreparedness and heightened resistance, reinforcing the need for inclusive leadership in change management. This aligns with the Seven Drivers of Change model, which stresses the importance of synchronising leadership vision with employee expectations to ensure smooth organisational transitions (Anderson & Anderson, 2010). When employees are excluded from meaningful dialogue about change, resistance becomes an inevitable outcome, further complicating implementation and institutional stability.

Despite these concerns, some participants acknowledged that the transition ultimately created opportunities for professional growth. The requirement for faculty members to pursue further academic qualifications and engage in research was viewed as a positive development. However, participants maintained that better communication and consultation would have eased the transition and minimised initial resistance. Anderson and Anderson (2010) emphasise that leaders must not only implement structural change but also address its emotional and psychological impact. The findings suggest that greater transparency and structured engagement would have helped build confidence in the transition process. It also confirms argument from several scholars who maintains that institutions must invest in comprehensive change communication strategies to mitigate resistance and ensure smoother transitions (Korantwi-Barimah & Schultz, 2019; Kumarasinghe & Dilan, 2021).

### **5.3. Impact on Institutional Identity and Culture**

The transition from a polytechnic to a technical university has influenced the identity and culture of the institution. Staff noted that the transition led to re-evaluating and refining the university's mission and core values. During the data collection phase, participants reflected on the significant changes in the institution's identity and culture following its transition from a polytechnic to a technical university. One of the most notable observations shared by staff was the evolution of the university's mission and values. With the transition, there was a palpable shift towards emphasising research, innovation, and academic excellence, aligning more closely with the expectations placed on a technical university. This redefinition of the institutional mission reflected a change in direction and signalled the University's commitment to meeting the evolving needs of education in Ghana as a whole. One of the participants, P5, was of the view that:

*... The transition to technical university status brought about a profound shift in our institutional identity. We moved away from merely imparting knowledge to actively pursuing research and innovation that align with the change from Polytechnic to Technical University. Initially, I was not concerned about the number of research papers I needed to publish, but that is not the case now. This time, all tutors now think more about research, and I can confidently conclude that publishing new papers is our new culture. Of course, this is a good culture, and we owe it to the transition that has taken place. We must remain relevant in the market, so we adopt this new culture without complaints...*

Alongside the evolution of mission and values, staff noted changes in how the institution was perceived internally and externally. There was a tangible impact on the institution's reputation, with many acknowledging an increase in prestige following the transition. This newfound prestige was reflected in heightened interest from prospective students and parents, underscoring the positive transition of Polytechnics to Technical Universities within the academic community. The transition not only elevated the status of the institutions but, more importantly, positioned them as leading players in the realm of technical



education research in Ghana. Other participants also expressed concerns and views about this, echoing similar sentiments. P4, a management member of the Institution, for instance, stated that:

***...Since the transition, industry partners and prospective students have noticed a noticeable surge in interest. Our upgraded status has clearly bolstered our reputation and positioned us as a leading institution in technical education. Integrating humanities as programmes into our traditionally technical programmes has helped us to send students to industries other than purely technical industries for attachment and internship programmes...***

Notwithstanding the transition came the challenge of cultural adaptation and integration. Staff shared insights into the hurdles encountered in aligning with the expectations of a technical university. While initial uncertainties and adjustments were required, efforts were made to foster a cohesive organisational culture that reflected the new status of the Technical University. This involved preserving elements of the institution's historical identity while embracing the changes brought about by the transition. Through proactive measures, some institutions aimed to balance honouring its roots and embracing its future as a technical university. P4 also continued to assert the following sentiments:

***...Adjusting to the new culture hasn't been without its challenges, but it has been a rewarding journey; you know, we've managed to retain the essence of our polytechnic roots while embracing the forward-thinking philosophy of a technical university...***

The transition also prompted staff to reconsider their professional identities and roles within the institution. Many noted adjustments in job responsibilities, expectations, and career developments as they adapted to the evolving organisational context. Despite initial uncertainties, staff demonstrated resilience and flexibility in embracing their evolving roles within their various institutions. This adaptability was crucial in negotiating the challenges posed by the transition and ensuring a smooth transition for staff and students alike. The changes in institutional identity and culture also had a discernible impact on student and staff morale. Staff reported fluctuations in morale, with some expressing concerns about the transition's uncertainties. However, efforts were made to foster a positive and inclusive organisational culture, ultimately improving student and staff morale, motivation, and engagement levels. Through collaborative efforts, all the institutions created a supportive environment conducive to learning, growth, and success.

***...The transition forced us to rethink our roles and responsibilities. It was a period of uncertainty, but ultimately, it presented us with new opportunities for growth and development. Morale was certainly affected during the transition, but the leadership's commitment to fostering a positive work environment made all the difference. We have emerged stronger and more united due to the collaborative efforts...***

The unanimity of participants on the effects of the transition on institutional culture and practices is also well documented in the literature, where Hayes (2020) alludes that the term 'change management' forms the impression that change is easy and can be contained, controlled, and managed without facilitating any rigorous effort. However, change management is a structured approach to transitioning individuals, teams, and organisations from the current state to the desired future (Lutaaya, Ndagire, & Otto, 2019; Sacheva, 2009). This is evident in the current study, where the transition from Polytechnic to Technical

University demands the transitioning of the institutional culture while keeping tabs on the institution's roots of technical education in Ghana.

#### **5.4. Academic Heterogeneity**

The transition from a polytechnic to a technical university status has significantly changed the landscape of academic programmes and curriculum development. During our interactions with the staff of the institutions, it became evident that the transformation from Polytechnic to Technical University status has led to challenges and opportunities in shaping the institution's programme offerings. One of the primary shifts observed during the transition is the diversification and expansion of academic programmes. Staff members unanimously highlighted introducing new programmes and restructuring existing ones to align with the technical university status. This expansion reflects a strategic response to meet the evolving demands of both industry and society, ensuring that the institution remains relevant and competitive in the educational landscape. Moreover, introducing new programmes has been perceived as a positive step towards enhancing the institution's academic profile and attracting a broader pool of students with diverse interests and aspirations. One of the participants, P7, expressed the sentiment:

*The transition to technical university status has broadened our horizons regarding programme offerings. We have introduced new specialisations within engineering disciplines, catering for the diverse interests and career aspirations of our students. However, ensuring the quality of these programmes amidst rapid expansion remains a key concern. We need adequate resources and expertise to develop a curriculum that meets both academic standards and industry expectations.*

However, alongside the expansion of programmes, staff members have also expressed concerns regarding the quality and coherence of the curriculum development process. The rapid pace of change and the need to adapt to new requirements have sometimes strained the few available resources and capacity of academic departments. As a result, there have been challenges in ensuring the alignment of the curriculum with industry standards, pedagogical best practices, and the overarching mission of the institution. For staff members, the importance of robust mechanisms for curriculum review and accreditation to maintain the integrity and relevance of academic programmes amidst the transition is paramount and must be treated with great concern. This is certainly, because the transition into Technical University has prompted a re-evaluation of pedagogical approaches and teaching methodologies across disciplines. Staff members have highlighted the need for a more interdisciplinary and experiential learning framework to foster innovation, problem-solving skills, and industry-relevant competencies among students. This shift towards a more applied and hands-on approach to education reflects the broader emphasis of technical universities on bridging the gap between theory and practice, preparing graduates for the demands of the industry. A participant expressed the concern that:

*...I think that the transition has prompted us to rethink our approach to curriculum development. We are moving toward a more interdisciplinary model, integrating theoretical concepts from various scientific disciplines to address real-world challenges. By emphasizing hands-on learning and practical applications, we are preparing our students not just for exams, but also for the dynamic demands of the world of work. We are very much aware of the daunting task placed on us because all eyes are on us, and our students are our immediate ambassadors, so we try to vary the pedagogical approaches to meet the demands of the change. Technology is transforming the way we teach and learn. With the transition, there is a growing emphasis on digital literacy and e-learning initiatives. However, it is not just about using the latest gadgets; it is about leveraging technology to enhance learning*

*outcomes. We need comprehensive training and support to integrate technology effectively into our curriculum and ensure equitable access for all students...*

The discussions show that the transition of Polytechnics into technical universities status have profoundly influenced academic programmes and curriculum development. While the expansion of programmes reflects a strategic response to industry demands and student needs, it has also posed challenges in ensuring the quality, coherence, and relevance of curriculum offerings. This change has necessitated the institution to adopt a collaborative and iterative approach to curriculum development, fostering innovation, and responsiveness to the evolving needs of stakeholders while upholding academic standards and integrity. This is also evident in Dsane-Nsor et al., (2019) who posit that, one of the major internal challenges facing the polytechnics in Ghana in meeting the demands of relevant curricula, quality teaching and learning has been the need for continual updating of the professional knowledge and skills of lecturers as well as the employability of their students.

## 6. Conclusion

This study explored the transition of polytechnics to technical universities in Ghana, focusing on the perspectives of academic staff. Using the Seven Drivers of Change model (Anderson & Anderson, 2010) as a guiding framework, the research examined how organisational politics, mistrust and lack of confidence, institutional identity and culture, and academic heterogeneity influenced the transition process. The findings suggest that political considerations played a crucial role in shaping policy decisions, leading to scepticism about the true intent of the conversion. Many participants felt that the transition was driven more by political motivations than by a structured strategy to enhance technical education. This aligns with Anderson and Anderson's (2010) assertion that external pressures often dictate organisational change, sometimes at the expense of comprehensive institutional preparedness. The study underscores the need for policymakers to move beyond politically motivated reforms and instead adopt strategic, evidence-based approaches that ensure long-term institutional sustainability and development.

The study also highlights the impact of mistrust and lack of confidence among staff, significantly affecting the transition process. Concerns about job security, salary structures, and career progression emerged primarily due to poor communication and limited stakeholder involvement. Maria (2009) and Fusch (2020) emphasise that trust is fundamental to successful organisational change, and this study reaffirms that when transparency is lacking, resistance and disengagement become inevitable. The shift to technical university status also brought substantial changes to institutional identity and culture, including new governance structures, evolving faculty roles, and heightened research expectations. While these adjustments aligned technical universities with global academic standards, they also introduced challenges in maintaining a balance between traditional technical education and broader academic requirements. Hayes (2020) and Kumarasinghe and Dilan (2021) highlight that managing cultural adaptation is key to ensuring the sustainability of institutional reforms, reinforcing the need for structured strategies to integrate new expectations while preserving the core mission of technical universities.

Another significant aspect of the transition was academic heterogeneity, as institutions expanded their programme offerings to align with industry needs. However, this shift also raised concerns about maintaining curriculum coherence, ensuring faculty readiness, and upholding academic quality. Dsane-Nsor et al. (2019) stress that continuous professional development is crucial in maintaining high educational standards, and this study supports the

argument that investment in faculty training, curriculum development, and industry collaboration is essential for sustaining academic excellence. Moving forward, institutional leaders and policymakers must prioritise inclusive stakeholder engagement, strategic resource allocation, and proactive change management to ensure that technical universities effectively fulfill their mandate. Future research should explore the long-term effects of this transition on student employability, faculty career development, and institutional performance, contributing to the broader discourse on higher education transformation in Ghana and beyond.

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