

# Chapter 11

## Community College Adaptation in Ghana: A Perspective Analysis

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### ABSTRACT

*Community colleges are institutions dedicated to the mission of providing skilled manpower and labor in technical and vocational areas. There are many community college models in the world. In Ghana, polytechnics and technical institutes are adapted models of community colleges. The objective of this chapter is to examine the polytechnic system as practiced in Ghana using the American community college system as a perspective. Community colleges with their provenance in the early 20th century have undergone vicissitudes in their bid to carry out their functions. The polytechnics have also experienced evolving historical circumstances as second cycle technical institutes, then upgraded to tertiary education institutions, and then recently converted to technical universities. In spite of all these developments, the technical universities are believed to be inferior to the traditional public universities.*

### INTRODUCTION

Community colleges are integral to many higher education systems in the world. They are institutions dedicated to the mission of providing skilled manpower and labor in technical and vocational areas. Despite their complexity, they are agents of social mobility for students from historically underrepresented backgrounds (Clark, 1960) and are the most responsive to the workforce needs of the community (Kasper, 2002). There are many community college models with various nomenclatures relative to various national educational jurisdictions. Some of them are:

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- National College of Professional and Technical Education in Mexico;
- Institute of Vocational Training in Greece;
- Junior College in Belize, Canada, China, Sri Lanka, U.S., etc.;
- Polytechnics in Burma, Ghana, United Kingdom, Iraq, Zimbabwe;
- Regional or District Colleges in Chile, Ethiopia, Iran, Mauritius, Pakistan, Ukraine;
- Technical Colleges/Institutes in Belgium, France, Germany, Ghana, Guyana, Hungary, Indonesia, Kenya, Spain, and South Africa;
- Workers' College in People's Republic of China (Latiner Raby & Valeau, 2009).

From the aforementioned models, there are two community college models practiced in Ghana – polytechnics and technical institutes. This chapter seeks to analyze the Ghanaian adaptation of the community college using the American community college system as a perspective by reviewing literature. It begins with a background information on the Ghanaian education system. Then comparative analyses are made between polytechnics and the American college system. Finally there is a discussion of the transformation of some of the polytechnics to technical universities in Ghana.

## **GHANA'S EDUCATION SYSTEM**

The Education Act 745, 2008 governs the education system in Ghana made up of pre-school (crèche and kindergarten), primary junior high and senior high schools. Beyond pre-primary school, Ghana's education system operates the 6-3-3-3/4 education structure: six years of primary school, three years of junior high school, and three years of senior high/technical school and three or four years of undergraduate tertiary education. The postgraduate tertiary education system is made up of the nominal year of Master degree program and the two year-nominal research master degree. The Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) degree spans for at least three years. The tertiary education system is made up of 10 public universities, 63 private universities, six technical universities (former polytechnics), four polytechnics, 43 colleges of education, and 41 nursing training colleges. The Ministry of Education is responsible for policy formulation for basic and second cycle schools while the Ghana Education Service (GES) does the policy implementation. The National Council of Tertiary Education (NCTE) and the National Accreditation Board (NAB) coordinates and assures the quality of tertiary education institutions respectively. The National Board for Professional and Technician Examinations (NABPTEx) determines the assessment standards and certification of polytechnics.

## **Polytechnic Education in Ghana**

Polytechnics are the technical and vocational arm of Ghana's tertiary education system. The aims and objectives of polytechnics stated by the law establishing them are:

- Providing tertiary education through full time courses in the field of manufacturing, commerce, science, technology, applied social science, applied arts and such other areas as may be determined by the authority for the time being responsible for higher education;
- Encouraging study in technical subjects at tertiary level; and
- Providing opportunity for development, research and publication of research findings.

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