

**Cap-and-gown collaboration in community development:  
Implications for counselling**

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**Abstract**

*This research explored the power of dominant partnerships in promoting community development. Two local communities sited in a coastal West African town, recorded notable transformation as a result of their members' long-standing interaction with a famous close by higher education institution. With a sample of three hundred and seventy-two community members, the initial survey explored the physical influence of the university, on the lives of the studied communities. Purposive and convenient sampling techniques were used in the initial case to reach the respondents but the ensuing qualitative inquiry engaged four additional purposively selected participants to generate more data through structured interviews on education, transportation and health, as key emerging physical indicators, from the quantitative aspect. The SPSS, descriptive statistics and percentages facilitated the quantitative data analysis, but thematic analysis was used to make meaning from the gathered qualitative data. Efficient triangulation of gathered data from both approaches generated interesting findings regarding the research topic. As a result of proximity to the university, the natives presently enjoy pipe borne water, hydro-electric power, easy access to formal education, better transportation and modern-styled cement buildings.*

*Further collaborations were recommended among the stakeholders to sustain the identified infrastructural changes that have taken place within the studied communities. Some counselling implications of the research were also drawn.*

**Keywords:** higher education, collaboration, community development, counselling, partnership

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## **Introduction**

The world is fast becoming urbanized as a result of diverse factors. It is projected that two-thirds of the world's population in developing Africa, Asia and Latin America especially, will be living in urban centres in the nearest future (Gollin et al., 2016; Ikumapayi et al., 2020; Afolalu et al., 2021). The developed world has clearly taken the lead in this advancement movement, though the advancement journey has been plagued with myriads of issues. Enhanced communication, technological resource management and outsourcing, including natural resource development have remained the primary elements driving the transformation movement (Gollin et al., 2016; Ikumapayi et al., 2020; Afolalu et al., 2021). In Africa equally where resources are often limited, many have received the news of imminent change with immense excitement, irrespective of the clear challenges the move brings to bear on the disadvantaged poor. In Nigeria, several governments engaged private sector partnerships to meet their development needs (Fadeyi et al., 2016). It is generally acknowledged that fruitful partnerships generate worthwhile results, especially when the partners carefully deliberate the benefits they each bring to the collaboration table. Hunger and Muchtar (2013) have also emphasized the importance of longer partnership experiences in generating fruitful collaborative outcomes. Over ten years of 'eye-level' collaborations between the Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia (UKM) and University Duisburg-Essen (UDE) in Germany accordingly engendered marked positive effects on the partners (Hunger & Muchtar, 2013). In effect, the aims of each engaged partner and the methods they adopt in charting their collaborative experiences, largely define their relationship outcomes. This justifies the many rewards the Rwandan nation gained from their private sector collaborations (Nkurunziza, 2021). Partnering others thus demands careful ally selection while simultaneously engaging

painstaking planning, (Korah et al., 2017) ‘under extrinsic and intrinsic uncertainties’ (Snider et al., 2015, p. 1) for greater benefits. In the absence of both or either factor, dire repercussions are likely to occur on both or either partner. The pivotal role of education and resource mobilization cannot also be down-played in seeking sustainable development goals (Zenchanka, & Malchenka, 2017). One cannot fathom the effect of relevant higher education support on the international students’ overall progress, not to mention the rippling effects on the students’ respective societies (Dassin et al., 2018; Campbell & Baxter, 2019). The innate desire for advancement is thus real to all and sundry, no matter the cost hence the focus of this research, to explore the infrastructural influence of a famous higher education institution in Ghana, on its surrounding communities.

### **Background to the Study**

Education to date remains the most powerful weapon that notably transforms the world. It has often been described as the bedrock of advancement, in view of the invaluable returns it brings to the human resource, physical territories and natural resource, infrastructure and socio-economic development of the nation (Schofer et al., 2021). Particularly in recent times when national development has gained significant attention among government bodies, the importance of higher education has so firmly been associated with the number of universities, colleges of education and polytechnics a nation possesses (Awuzie & Emuze, 2017). Critical thinking, detailed exploration of relevant factors, resilience and diligence are to date believed to be effortlessly attainable through higher education (Awuzie & Emuze, 2017; Schofer et al., 2021). Each of the aforementioned factors unequivocally promote both individual students’ educational and overall life goal- achievement, that also has ultimate favorable influence on the quality of the nations’ human resource (Owusu-Bio et al., 2015; Schofer et al., 2021). It is for this reason that many simply describe universities as the backbone of the nation’s economy (Campbell & Mawer, 2019; McCowan, 2019).

By virtue of their educational focus, universities are obliged to disseminate, transmit and enlarge the nation’s heritage through teaching, conducting research and community engagement (Awuzie & Emuze, 2017). The purpose of new knowledge creation in higher learning set-ups is desired to instill problem-solving skills, that transform graduates into engines of societal advancement (Owusu-Bio

et al., 2015; Schofer et al., 2021). It is a well-known fact that higher education is the prime resource for able leadership and an overall responsible work force for a robust nation (McCowan, 2019). The purchase of the institutional land from the local chiefs in the early 1960s by the first government of Ghana, Osagyefo Dr. Kwame Nkrumah today, may be considered a blessing in disguise (Kwarteng, Boadi-Siaw & Dwarko, 2012). In this study, we focus on the physical transformations recorded within the two mentioned local communities, since the university's inception some sixty years ago in the vicinity.

### **A Brief History of the understudied communities as revealed by the opinion leaders' interviews**

The name Amamoma was coined from the Fantse adjective “*aman-aman*”, that literally means ‘*different towns or countries*’. It reflects the heterogeneous nature of the settlers who were believed to have migrated from different parts of Africa to the studied site for various reasons. Difficulties of the educated university community to rightfully mention the typical local name, culminated in the modified name ‘*Amamoma*’, that to date reflects no clear meaning. As the first to be established near the University of Cape Coast, Amamoma is currently one of the oldest Cape Coast communities (Owusu et al., 2016). It was couched precisely in 1824, long before the arrival of the British Colonialists in the Gold Coast. Presently, the pnce small and primitive Amamoma farming community, populated with mud huts with thatched roof, where long winding foot paths run through the vicinity with no schools, hospitals and potable water, to mention just a few, boasts of modern infrastructure (Zume et al., 2021). Population increase and territorial expansion of the community today has also created three sub-divisions, namely the Zongo, Kwesi-Pra and the main Amamoma township from the original locality. The sole original water source for the locals at the time, a lone stream known as ‘*Nsu-Brim*’ has reportedly dried up due to neglect and the members’ access to potable water.

The Apewosika community was also believed to have emerged from a group of Ethiopian migrants in the year 1945. This larger and wealthier group was compelled to settle in at a far away site to keep away from persistent harassment from their envious Amamoma neighbours who forcefully demanded portions of their wealth (i.e. their gold and other resources). The strong verbal

resistance the Ethiopians later developed to confront their oppressive Amamoma neighbours in subsequent months (Appiah & Bosiwah, 2015) ended up creating their name ‘Apewosika’ meaning “*Have you lent me any money, that you make such demands from me?*” (Appiah & Bosiwah, 2015). Like their neighbours, the early life experiences of the Apewosika members was simple..

### **A Brief History of the University of Cape Coast**

The University of Cape Coast is the third Ghanaian public institution established in 1962 by the Osagyefo Dr. Kwame Nkrumah. Its primary aim was to train and produce highly skilled and competent teachers to meet the nation’s urgent educational needs (Ankrah & Atuase, 2018), an undertaking that could not at the time be fulfilled by the two earlier established universities, (the University of Ghana, 1948 and the Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology, (1952) (Lartey & Marful, 2021). With only three faculties namely, Arts, Education and Science and a small population of a hundred and fifty-five, comprising only fifteen females (Ohene, 2010), the institution had a huge responsibility to serve the entire motherland population at its inception. It was not until October 1, 1971, that the university college attained the status of a full and independent university (Ohene, 2010), hence gaining the authority to confer its own degrees, diplomas and certificates pursuant to the University of Cape Coast Act, 1971[Act 390] and subsequently the University of Cape Coast Law, 1992 [PNDC Law 278]. With the motto “*Veritas Nobis Lumen*” (Truth, Our Guide) which can be found emblazoned on the institution’s coat of arms (School of Graduate Studies Handbook, 2016). The University of Cape Coast (UCC) has since its establishment added to its original functions the training of educational planners, administrators, business entrepreneurs, legal professionals, agriculturalists and health professionals (Kwarteng et al., 2012). The University of Cape Coast (UCC) nicknamed ‘Cape Vars’, is situated about five kilometres west of Cape Coast, in the Central Region of Ghana, West Africa (Owusu et al., 2016)..

### **Theoretical Background**

The institutional theory acknowledges the effect of both formal and informal education on human behaviour (Bruton, Ahlstrom, & Li, 2010; Tomizawa, Zhao, Bassellier, & Ahlstrom, 2020). Formal institutions’ use of carefully structured and systematic

procedures to train their students often engenders enduring effects on their physical partners (Bruton et al., 2010). Proximity and frequency (familiarity) serve as two significant factors that engender marked transformations in the lives of higher education students. While frequency refers to the consistency in physical partner interactions, proximity or immediacy connotes easy physical access or contact. Both elements inadvertently strengthen partnership processes and therefore efficiently promote notable transformations between and among collaborating partners. The familiarity principle inherent in the institutional theory suggests that the more frequently intimate partners interact, the greater their association and therefore the more pronounced their influence on each other. The element of time is therefore crucial in determining the physical effect or impact extent among collaborating partners. In this sense, the institutional theory enunciates the socio-economic and infrastructural changes that have occurred in the lives and physical terrain of the Apewosika and Amamoma natives in the past sixty years, as they shared physical boundaries with the University of Cape Coast community in Ghana. The excesses of this long-standing collaboration equally deserve mention as every social encounter usually attracts some disadvantages.

### **Statement of the Problem**

Life is essentially about seeking advancement. A stagnated life is therefore deeply problematic and never desired by any. Communities, societies, homelands and nations equally deserve development with time. Change however often comes from diverse activities including collaboration. While perfect matching often yields invaluable returns, endorsed with industrious relationships (Fadeyi et al., 2016) a lot more is often desired of laborious, exploitative and misguided partnerships (Hargreaves 2019). Both Hunger and Muchtar (2013) and Nkurunziza (2021) attest to the benefits accrued to fruitful and lasting partnerships. Yet the pains and groans of the disadvantaged poor, not to mention the debilitating effects of preying partners never tells an interesting life story (Hargreaves 2019). Governments' reduced support for communities' infrastructural development in recent times, has meanwhile heavily saddled African nations with the challenging responsibility of independently seeking to make ends meet (Fadeyi et al., 2016). Many are those who for that matter continue to engage diverse partnerships to overcome their

difficulties. Our investigation of the physical infrastructural effects of the Amomoma and Apewosika communities, while interacting with the University of Cape Coast in this research, portrays collaboration as a reliable community change agent. The partners' over sixty years of interaction in the Cape Coast vicinity obviously has a lot to offer. But could this co-existence be described as one of bountiful blessings, or rather, a bait to land the locals into bigger trouble?

### **Purpose of the Study**

The study thus sought to investigate the long-term infrastructural changes that have characterized the Apewosika and Amamoma local communities, as a result of their interactions with the University of Cape Coast community. Sixty long years of shared physical territories with intimate partnership often generates considerable impact. As to whether the alterations can be considered as beneficial or otherwise depends solely on the individual collaborators. A focus on both sides of the coin, fairly assesses the situation in effect. This enables not only the collaborating parties, but also the general populace to gain an in-depth understanding of partnerships in order to take full advantage of the resource in future. Our research focuses on the key infrastructural changes recorded on the engaged parties' vicinities, while simultaneously highlighting the severe challenges that emerge among the partnering communities. The counselling implications of the parties' collaborative efforts were also explored.

### **Research Question**

The primary research question that guided the study was:

What infrastructural changes have taken place within the Apewosika and Amamoma communities, since the establishment of the University of Cape Coast, at its current location?

### **Method**

Our research adopted a mixed methods approach, with a sequential (quantitative-qualitative) research design, to investigate the infrastructural changes that occurred within the mentioned communities, as a result of their over their sixty years' association with the University of Cape Coast in the Central region of Ghana. Mixed methods research provides a more thorough exploration and

understanding of extremely complex phenomenon (Clark & Ivankova, 2016; Halcomb & Hickman, 2015). In the initial quantitative survey, we employed the purposive and convenience sampling techniques to reach 368 respondents, comprising 174 and 192 natives from Apewosika and Amamoma communities respectively. This was in agreement with Cohen, Manion and Morrison's (2011) approved sample size for quantitative research.

In the qualitative phase however, we purposively selected an institutional head, a health worker from the university's lone hospital, two taxi drivers who plied the vicinities of the studied local communities, the two community chiefs and an opinion leader each, from both communities to gather further data on three key social indicators namely, education, transportation and health, as primary change initiators from the previous quantitative research. At the hospital, our interviewee was a long-serving staff in the facility. We relied on a structured interview during the qualitative phase and gathered data in the familiar physical contexts of study participants, while using the Fantse language where respondents had difficulties understanding the research items, since both researchers and assistants were fluent fantse speakers. Data collected from both research phases were deeply triangulated to enhance credible findings for our study. The entire study population was however pegged at seven thousand, seven hundred and fifty-three (7,753) locals, with a breakdown of three-thousand, seven hundred and thirty ( $n = 3,730$ ) Apewosika inhabitants and four thousand and twenty-three ( $n = 4,023$ ) natives from Amamoma, (Electoral Commission of Ghana, 2012).

### **Characteristics of study participants**

Study participants essentially comprised members of the Apewosika and Amamoma communities in the Central Region of Ghana. The group comprised 252 Christians, representing 70 percent of the respondents, with 78 Muslims and only 30 traditionalists. Respondents' ages also ranged between 18 and 55, with a majority of Basic and Secondary school leavers ( $n = 250$ ). Many study respondents (78) were additionally engaged in petty trading, self-employed (42), farming (35), running of hostel facilities for university students (45), employed as security personnel (39), cleaners (65) and office administrators in the nearby university (48). The two interviewed taxi drivers and health workers were also local



community members, though the Primary school head engaged in the second phase of the research was simply a native of Cape Coast.

### **Instrumentation**

According to Merriam and Tisdell, (2015), a key research element is the use of appropriate data collection instruments to mobilize suitable data. Using questionnaires, interviews and observation as the primary instruments for mixed methods research serves the most useful research purpose as the multiple data sources enhance data validity, reliability and interpretation (Zohrabi, 2013). We thus engaged a three point likert-scaled structured questionnaire (agree, disagree and indifferent), a structured interview and researcher observation guides, as data-collection instruments for this study. The questionnaire consisted of two sections, namely participants' background information and the physical or infrastructural effects of the university community on the geographical terrains of the local communities. Prior to the actual research, we conducted a pre-test with thirty members from Kwaprow, another close community to the university under study, to validate our research's questionnaire. We subsequently derived a Cronbach alpha of 0.649 at the end of the pre-test.

The structured interviews we used in the qualitative phase was most suitable for accessing firsthand information from knowledgeable informants (Zohrabi, 2013). They equally offered us exclusive data that endorsed the research's credibility.

In the case of personal observation, the researchers who happened to have grown up attained primary, secondary and tertiary education in the university's vicinity since the early 1970s, and were for that matter extremely conversant with the early structures all the studied communities, reported appropriately on the outlined research questions.

### **Data collection procedure**

In this study, data-collection was accomplished in three phases – questionnaire administration, interview sessions and personal observation. Apart from personal observation that took place before the quantitative data-collection, both activities were conducted at the convenience of the respondents and participants.

## **Ethical considerations**

Ethical considerations provide confidence for research informants, and thus generate candid responses to study items (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). We thus followed due ethical processes, including assurance of confidentiality, anonymity, seeking participants' informed consent and voluntary participation among others in this study (Bryman, 2016).

## **Data analysis**

Data was analyzed with the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 20, descriptive statistics and frequency counts, but the results were presented with tables and percentages. Interview data on education, health and transportation was likewise analyzed through thematic analysis. Field reports and notes from personal researcher observations were also used to enrich and create an explicit view about the understudied institutions' physical settings.

## **Results**

The study revealed marked physical effects on the infrastructural amenities of the understudied local communities. Table 1 shows results on the physical transformations that occurred in the understudied communities.

**Table 1: Results on infrastructural changes within the studied communities**

<b>Item content</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>indifferent</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Total</b>
1.The university community's interaction with us has beautified the landscape of our community.	193 (53.6%)	50 (13.9%)	117 (32.5%)	360 (100%)

2.My community's association with the university, has facilitated the construction of quality and a well-laid down road networks in my community	123 (34.2%)	98 (27.2%)	139 (38.6%)	360 (100%)
3.My community's association with the university has facilitated the construction of cement buildings in my community	327 (90.8%)	24 (6.7%)	9 (2.5%)	360 (100%)
4.My community's proximity to the university has led to the construction of shops and small business outlets in my community	335 (93.0%)	16 (4.4%)	9 (2.5%)	360 (100%)
5.the university has facilitated the establishment of stationery shops in my community	276 (76.66%)	47 (13.05%)	37 (10.27%)	360 (100%)

Results in table 1 show (193 respondents, representing 53.6%) confirming the university's influence in beautifying their communities' landscape, though as many as 117, comprising 32.5% rejected the claim. This left 50 respondents made up of 13.9% being indifferent to the assertion. On the issue of road construction, a greater majority of the respondents (139) representing (38.6%) were against the notion that the university's influence improved their access road quality and network. The case of cement block buildings within the studied vicinities was also endorsed by a great majority of 327 respondents, making up (90.8%). The university's role in establishing shops and backyard sales points were equally endorsed by a greater majority (335, 93.0%) and (276, 76.66%) respectively.

On the qualitative front, results essentially confirmed the university's influence on road construction, modern styled cement-buildings as residences and hostel facilities, as well as school buildings. Interview reports by one chief and an opinion leader for instance contained phrases like *'schooling offers wisdom'*, *'schooling aids development'* and *'ensures good future employment'*. An opinion leader's regrets about the former community days when education was scarce was so revealing. He noted that *'their children were often aimless during the day and could hardly speak any English ...'* A chief further highlighted a key importance of education when he said the children *'...showed less innovation and creativity in their social endeavours.'* With the above results, the transformed physical terrains of the communities were indisputable.

From the personal researcher observations, phrases like a *'.. a more populated, beautified and neatly arranged setting'* were noted about the studied communities' physical settings. Common adjectives used to describe the locations included *'dense settings'* *'magnificent buildings'* and *'bigger modern-styled architectural buildings.'* The lost *'green grass'* and *'long winding foot paths,* like the sole water source, *'nsu birim'* were equally confirmed both by interview reports and observer notes to have all been *neatly eroded, giving way to tarred roads, pipe stands and electric cables linking the various residences to hostel facilities and even shops.*

## **Discussion**

Overall, the improved infrastructural facilities the local community members enjoy in recent times adds significant value to their lives. Residing in more spacious cement modern-styled buildings, indisputably comes with more comfort and prestige than living in clay-made huts. Similarly, easy access to hydro-electric power and pipe borne water (Boni & Walker, 2016), must have come to the natives with great appreciations. Immediately, the eroded stress from disturbed sleep as a result of leaking thatched roofs on the countless rainy nights has become history. Studies in cement school buildings and walking the tarred roads on rainy days are similarly more comforting and secured from reptiles than walking those early soggy footpaths to school (Zenchanka, & Malchenka, 2017). With better lighting systems in the vicinity likewise, the children would be assured of improved academic performance (Fitzgerald et al., 2016; Schofer et al., 2021). Other life transformations like reduced crime

rates as a result of increased security, more and better entertainment facilities and access to countrywide news via radio and television, equally come to play regarding infrastructural development in this study. Aside few respondents' indications that the university created slums and therefore did not beautify their communities, the study results generally aligned with earlier reports on the relevance of quality access roads, telephone communication and the use of pipe water among the local poor (Nelson & Bigger, 2021; Afolalu et al., 2021). The physical transformations are explicit and they undeniably confirm the many benefits accrued to the community members, as a result of their collaboration with the Cape Coast University community. Overall, proximity and frequency, as key aspects of the institutional theory that underpinned our research, merged meaningfully with the appropriate research methods we engaged to generate credibly interesting findings in this inquiry.

### **Study Limitations**

The noisy settings and rather limited time in which the interviews with the taxi drivers were held may have compromised some of their responses. Similarly, the use of audio recorders for the interviews could have been uncomfortable for them even though assurances of confidentiality and anonymity were provided them, prior to their engagement in the data collection process. Finally, the translation of some research items during data-collection may have somehow impacted some of the responses.

### **Conclusion**

The conclusion that the studied communities' enhanced physical settings can be attributed to the University of Cape Coast's influence is indisputable. Study findings about the locals' easy access to hydro-electric power, potable water and modern-styled cement buildings for instance attest to the famous institution's prominence in the vicinity. Additional reports about tarred and better access roads in place of the earlier long winding footpaths is equally reassuring. Ultimately, the community's siting near the University of Cape Coast can be described more as a blessing in disguise.

### **Recommendations**

We thus recommend that:

- The community chiefs and opinion leaders should endeavour to maintain their long-standing worthwhile relations with the famous institution, in order to sustain their affirmative influence on their communities.
- Secondly, the university authorities should make provision for quarterly outreach and counselling programmes to be held among the locals to assist the native youth in particular towards useful future life paths, thereby maintaining law and order in the vicinity.
- Chiefs and opinion leaders should encourage community youth groups to schedule weekly sweeping and cleaning rosters to maintain high health standards within the studied locations.

### **Counselling implications of the study findings**

- The high tendency of unhealthy competition and envy among the emancipated youth, as a result of the newly emerged modern infrastructure within the communities necessitates consistent professional counselling to direct the local youth onto a more responsible lifepath. Such a useful attitude will culminate in responsible life styles that will raise the communities' social status in the motherland.

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