

Challenge Fund - Rewarding Innovation in Teacher Education

The government of Ghana recognises that the quality of teaching and learning in schools has not kept pace with the modern-day needs of the country. A lack of innovation in the teacher education sector means that the country's Colleges of Education (colleges/CoEs) are not producing the high quality individuals our classrooms - and our country - needs.

More than two years since the former Teacher Training Colleges became Colleges of Education, CoEs have received insufficient technical and funding support to deliver strong results and make the successful transition to autonomous tertiary institutions. Colleges' independence of leadership and management is critical to ensuring they can adequately and innovatively prepare the country's future teachers to pass on excellent knowledge and life skills to Ghana's schoolchildren.

This policy brief sets out the parameters of the T-TEL Challenge Fund, to provide clarity on who and what it aims to support. The first round of applications has been submitted. T-TEL is supporting applicants to develop more detailed proposals.

What and how the Challenge Fund will be used

As part of multiple levels of support provided to CoEs, Transforming Teacher Education and Learning (T-TEL) has launched a Challenge Fund, to reward and promote innovative practices in teaching, learning and management practices in CoEs.

Drawing from international experience, the Challenge Fund specifically looks to identify and nurture new ways of improving the quality of pre-service teacher education in colleges, especially for female student teachers.

'**Innovation**' describes any project that tries out new ways to improve teacher education or implement an existing idea in a new situation. These can be initiated and implemented either by colleges themselves, or through partnerships with other organisations focused on delivering high quality teaching and learning in Ghana's schools, including schools, district education offices, civil society organisations (CSOs) and universities.

The Challenge Fund is a competitive way for colleges to address the issues that constrain the achievement of quality education outcomes. These include a lack of working technology, inadequate leadership and management structures, and insufficient gender responsive pedagogies that ensure children get an equal and well-rounded education.

The specific areas in which the Fund aims to stimulate innovation are:

- Teaching practice and experience
- Tutor professional development
- College leadership and management
- Gender and inclusion
- Improved school partnerships.

An open application process was initiated in December 2015 for CoEs and their partners working both at local and national levels. T-TEL staff then held Information Sessions offering support to Fund applications in January 2016.

Who can apply?

T-TEL recognizes that CoEs often cannot deliver innovation in teacher education alone. Funds have thus been made available to colleges working in partnership with each other or those working with an education institution, government body or civil society organisation that can support them to deliver their proposed projects.

There are three types of organisation that can apply for a T-TEL Challenge Fund grant:

- a) **A public College of Education**
- b) **More than one College of Education in partnership with each other (up to a maximum of four colleges)**

c) A partnership of one or more Public Colleges of Education with one or more organisation(s) already working with that college, including:

- a. Model schools
- b. CoE Partner Schools that host student teachers for teaching practice
- c. District/Municipal/Metropolitan Assemblies and Education Offices with schools that host student teachers for their teaching practice
- d. CSOs working in teacher education or girls' education
- e. Universities.

Partnerships of any of these organisations led by a College of Education are invited to design and implement projects aimed at demonstrating innovation in teacher education. The proposed projects can have a maximum duration of two years but could be shorter. Information about the Fund, the application process and deadlines for application have been advertised online and in the media since December 2015.

What kinds of innovation will the Fund support?

Though the Fund will reward any innovative approaches towards improving teacher education, we have identified specific areas to guide institutions in their applications, based on the challenges we have encountered across the sector. A summary of these are below.

No.	Suggested Areas of Intervention	Examples of areas for innovation
1	Student teachers' practical experience of teaching	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sufficient opportunities to practice teaching in schools • Structured and supported teaching practice
2	Professional development of college tutors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provision of opportunities for professional development • Tutors Professional Development - Integrating internet-based Open Educational Resources (OERs) in lessons; supporting colleges to integrate other OERs in their teaching plans; applying available resources in teaching.
3	Quality teaching and learning materials in Colleges of Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development low cost locally produced teaching and learning materials that can contribute to students' practical learning
4	Girl-friendly and inclusive Colleges of Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inclusive access to materials for all staff and students • Access to building for students/staff with physical disabilities
5	College of Education management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development of quality assurance systems • Comprehensive systems that enable evaluation of teaching and learning practices
6	Partnerships between colleges, schools and districts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strategies for strengthening and improving through a wide range of partnerships/collaborations • External stakeholder involvement

Successful application criteria

There are several ways applicants can approach implementation of projects. However, special attention will be paid to initiatives that appear to:

- **Test a new idea to achieve college objectives/ implement an existing idea but in a new situation**
- **Add to the gains or lessons from ongoing or previous initiatives to increase impact and add value**
- **Demonstrate a clear positive impact on the quality of teaching and learning in CoEs**
- **Collaborate with others, within and beyond their field to expand impact**
- **Deliver projects within the specified timeframe**
- **Ensure that projects take into consideration responsiveness to gender equality and social inclusion, particularly for girls and children with disabilities.**

BEYOND THE CHALLENGE FUND: DRIVING INNOVATION IN TEACHER EDUCATION LONG-TERM

T-TEL and the Government of Ghana know that the Challenge Fund cannot bring about long-term change in delivery of teacher education on its own. It can however act as a catalyst, mobilising the actors and institutions responsible for improving teacher education in new and effective ways.

Many CoEs still lack the capacity to prepare detailed proposals for innovation and implement them. The Fund is therefore designed to support colleges and their partners along the path to generating new and creative ideas to improve teacher education, for the long-term benefit of the country's future teachers and the lives of the children they will transform.



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