

# Political Identity Negotiation of Young Electorates in Ghanaian Colleges of Education

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## ABSTRACT

The formation of political in-groups and out-groups on campuses and involvement in political discourses in and out of the school setting clearly demonstrate students' political attitudes and behaviours which eventually reflect or sum up their political identities. However, it remains a mystery the exact ingredient cooking up this form of social identity. The study, as a result, was conducted to explore the factors underlying the political identity negotiation of students in colleges of education and to identify practices that reflect their explicit and implicit political behaviours and attitudes. The paper focused on examining factors that influenced political identity negotiation among college of education students in Ghana. In order to answer all four research questions, the concurrent triangulation mixed method approach to inquiry was adopted. Data collected were descriptively analysed, using the measure of central tendency and narration. Three factors were revealed as being influential in student teachers' identity formation: familial characteristics such as the level of education of parents, political preference, and occupation, among others; liberal school setting such as the ethnic composition of the student population; and new political stimuli such as contact with campaigns and volunteer services. Implicit and explicit political attitudes and behaviours of student-teachers were found to be evident through practices such as voting in student elections and participation in political discourses. The paper concludes that political identity negotiation of young adults is inevitable as a result of the different political cues they encounter within the social structures.

**Keywords:** College of Education, Identity, Negotiation, Political Attitudes, Political Behaviours.

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## I. INTRODUCTION

Contemporary identity theory suggests an interplay between cognitive processes and social or cultural influences (Meyer *et al.*, 2019). This has positioned the concept of 'identity' in its present incarnation to reflect and evoke the idea that social categories are bound up on the bases of an individual's self-respect (Fearon, 1999). Since identity keeps emerging as an ever-evolving phenomenon, it is right to accept that within every social context, identity formation is eminent. This presupposes that within the social structures, there are possible diverse identity constructions that are ascribed, imposed or acquired. Among the multiplicities of social identities that individuals tend to form as they assume membership in different communities is a political identity. Political identity, generally, is a form of social or group identity (Rebenstorf, 2004). Ideally, it is ideological and presupposes membership in political in-groups as opposed to political out-groups such as parties, movements or nation-states (Van Dijk, 2010). It can also be seen as a political approach wherein people of a particular gender, religion, race, social background, class or other identifying factors, develop political agendas that are based upon theoretical interacting systems of oppression that may affect their lives and come from their various identities (Garza, 2019).

Political identity is an important manifestation of political socialization of all calibers of individuals in the educational sphere, most especially students in universities. Nonetheless, it also seems to be an important content of ideological and political education in professional training institutions as evident in many teacher training institutions (Cao, 2018). Currently, Ghana is witnessing remarkable paradigm shifts in voting patterns and attitudes of this millennial generations more than any other generation ever existed since the formal inception of politics in the country. Millennials possess very different characteristics than the generations that came before them (Meyer *et al.*, 2019). They have more years of formal education than previous generations, are more racially and culturally diverse (Fry *et al.*, 2018), and are characterized by their confidence, self-expression, liberal leanings and openness to change (Pew Research Center, 2010).

Research following the 2016 election in the U.S. revealed that Millennials were mostly Democratic-leaning voters, with a growing share of Liberals and independents (Maniam & Smith, 2017, *as cited in Meyer et al.*, 2019). Current research on the political opinions of Millennials has revealed that a large majority holds egalitarian views, which is the belief in a fair society in which everyone is equal. A smaller percentage holds libertarian views, which place value in individual freedom and skepticism towards the government (CIRCLE, 2018). Interestingly, it appears that such are the characteristics of the Ghanaian millennial generations as far as voting patterns, political views, attitudes and behaviours are concerned. As the barometer of the times, groups of college students who largely constitute the millennial generation always react swiftly and directly to the changes in Ghanaian social and political reformation with their sharpest and most intuitive sense of political identity. Consequently, this has placed quite an amount of value on the political identity of students in colleges of education in Ghana, especially, when the subject of ‘political identity’ is subjected to careful consideration. As the most sensitive group to national transformation and social reformation, the political identity of a college of education students has become an important guarantee for national stability and social development. Studies have identified parental influence and liberal university environment as factors responsible for both implicit and explicit political behaviours of college students (Rico & Jennings, 2016). This is to say that students’ political identity construction walks hand-in-hand with familial political socialization and an encounter with external or new political stimuli. However, in the context of the Ghanaian college system, the exponential impact of such predictors as far as the political identity formation of students is concerned is largely unknown. This paper, therefore, aims to explore the predictors of explicit and implicit political attitudes (political identity negotiation) of students in colleges of education in Ghana.

## II. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Young adulthood is an important time for identity formation. During this time in life, an individual is deciding which values, beliefs, and goals are most essential to establishing one’s core self and one’s roles and responsibilities in society (Erikson, 1968). Identity formation is a complex process that links together various domains to construct who an individual is, including her ethnic (French *et al.*, 2006), sexual (Cass, 1996), and political identities. While identity formation takes place, there is a strong interplay between the psychological and the social self and the constant influence of these factors on each other.

Research has indicated that young individuals do not require political competence in order to form a political identity (Kroh & Selb, 2009). Rather, they learn to embrace a specific political environment as a process of building his or her personal identity. If adolescents have formed such an identity, they often experience cognitive dissonance when facing new political stimuli as they evaluate incoming political cues against their established identity (Dinas, 2014; Wolak, 2009). This phenomenon is crucial in understanding how political identities are maintained after young people leave home for college. As young adults are exposed to new political stimuli, it is relatively obvious that they are more likely to disregard those that do not favour their already acquired political attitudes (Dinas, 2014; Wolak, 2009).

In tertiary institutions in Ghana, students tend to exhibit certain characteristics that show forth their implicit and explicit political attitudes during campaigns and elections on campus. This is because that stage is more or less a tone set for young adults to either discard belief systems acquired at home as a result of exposure to new political experiences or strike a balance between a newly encountered belief system and ideologies inculcated by parents through familial political socialization. Such is the case pertaining to students in colleges of education in Ghana. The formation of political in-groups and out-groups on campuses and involvement in political discourses in and out of the school setting clearly demonstrate students’ political attitudes and behaviours which eventually reflect or sum up their political identities. However, it remains a mystery the exact ingredient cooking up this form of social identity. The study, as a result, was conducted to explore the factors underlying the political identity negotiation of students in colleges of education and to identify practices that reflect their explicit and implicit political behaviours and attitudes.

### A. Research Questions

The study thus seeks to answer the following questions;

1. What role does parental influence play in the political identity negotiation of students in colleges of education in Ghana?
2. How does a liberal school setting inform the political identity formation of the college of education students in Ghana?
3. To what extent do new political stimuli construct students’ political identity in colleges of education in Ghana?
4. What practices reflect explicit and implicit political attitudes and behaviours of students in Ghanaian colleges of education?

## III. REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

A. *Theoretical Framework*

This paper utilizes Astin's (1993) input-environment-output model as a theoretical framework for assessing elements of student teachers' political experiences. Input elements were represented by data relating to students' pre-college demographic, academic, attitude, behavioral, and familial characteristics as indicated on the adapted Freshman Survey (CIRP, 2008). The input and environment elements served as the focus of this study and informed the research questions and the design chosen. The output element, addressed in this discussion as well, is related to the students' characteristics after they have experienced these programs. Environment represented programs, policies, and people to which students are exposed during their educational experiences. Although output elements were not represented in the data collected for this study, the study findings may highlight opportunities for program development that relate to these elements. Therefore, the output elements are addressed subsequently.

B. *The Concept of Political Identity*

Political identity is an emergent area of research within the field of Political Science that is rooted in Identity Development Theory (Muhlberger, 2005, *as cited in* Mullberry, 2010). In The Communist Manifesto, Marx and Engels equate class consciousness to a feeling of belonging to a working class (Cao, 2018). As a way of promoting political expression, people in social and political relations gradually realized the acceptance of the political community and finally completed the recognition of the nation-state. History has long shown that broad political identity is the basis of political legitimacy and political stability while avoiding social contradictions and political instability to the greatest extent (Fry *et al.*, 2018).

Aristotle, the ancient Greek philosopher, asserted that man is born as a political animal. The reason why people are political animals is that people are born to become citizens. They expect to seek the meaning of individual existence and action in political life (Hajnal & Lee, 2006). The concept of political identity points to people in a certain social life, always in a certain social contact to determine their identity. They regard themselves as party members of a political party, members of a class, a participant in a political process or a suitor of a political belief. This phenomenon is a political identity.

In the process of political life, members of society will gradually generate a sense of emotional trust, conscious ownership and subjective recognition of the political system and political power (Maniam & Smith, 2017). This support and recognition of the political community is the basis for the stability and development of the modern state. On the contrary, if there is a lack of basic political consensus, it will affect the stability of the political system and shake the legitimacy of the foundation of the rule as Ryan (2017) maintains. Through the process of political identity, the individual gains self-consciousness. People establish a connection with political life. Also, in the process of political operation, people create a three-dimensional personal political role and complete the establishment of citizenship.

C. *The Process of College Students' Political Identity*

The formation process of political identity is referred to the identity subject inclined to achieve goals in the process of its mental structure, elements and the relationship between the subjective and objective factors as well as the way they should function (Guangqing, 2015). In an attempt to throw more light on the political identity construction of school-going young adults, Long and Meyer (2006), as cited in Meyer *et al* (2019), explain that this sense of identity is a social attribute that does not form naturally and needs to be shaped through some sort of acquired education. The process of political identity negotiation among third-cycle students includes three stages: cognition, assimilation and belief (Cao, 2018). Cao (2018) believes that the process encompasses distinct elements which appear to differ from one another but to some extents are also interrelated. That is, not only are they connected but they are also progressive.

The cognitive process can be related to the understanding of the political system and political ecology of college students (Vraga, 2014). This information, as a foreign power, has attracted and affected people's attention as a result of the frequency of occurrence. However, high intensity can also trigger feelings of resentment. According to Ryan (2017), college students choose which political factors to pay more attention to according to their needs and interests. The assimilation process takes into account the basis of cognition of the political system, compares existing concepts, judgments, refactoring, to assimilate and absorb ideological theory and political reality which conform to the scope of their original cognition. In contrast to their own cognitive dissonance, they may reconstruct their own cognition or continue to remain skeptical after comparing judgments. The belief here refers to the integration and internalization of college students through cognition and assimilation and the acceptance of mainstream political culture and political ecology. They gradually form their own firm political beliefs and integrate them into the process of thought and practice. The political identity reflects an attitude for or against, which is a kind of political attitude and expression. It has a basis for political authority and legitimacy, and it plays a very important role in political life.

#### D. Predictors of Political Identity Formation of Young Adults

One of the most oft-cited explanations of our political identity formation suggests parental influences (Niemi & Jennings, 1991, *as cited in Meyer et al.*, 2019). Before young people acquire a mature understanding of political affairs, their political preferences are heavily influenced by their parents' political views (Rico & Jennings, 2016). In the past, researchers have examined the role family plays in the political socialization of young adults (Dinas, 2014; Jennings *et al.*, 2009; Wolak, 2009). Suggestions about the mechanism of parent-child political socialization have been made, including the manifestation of observational and social learning (Dinas, 2014).

External political cues have also been found to play a major role in political identity formation together with an individual's upbringing. These external political cues include contact with campaigns, volunteer opportunities, and media exposure, each of which plays an important role in political engagement and attitudes among younger voters (Acconciamesa *et al.*, 2016). As young adults are exposed to new political stimuli, they are more likely to disregard those that do not support their prior established political attitudes. They often experience cognitive dissonance when facing new political stimuli as they evaluate incoming political cues against their established identity (Dinas, 2014). This phenomenon is useful in understanding how political identities are maintained after young people leave home for college. Dinas (2014) argues that if an adolescent is raised in a home that fosters discussion about politics, he or she is typically more attentive to these external political cues when moving on to new social contexts.

The college environment has been shown to have an effect on students' development. Carter and McClellan (2000) noted that not only does the collegiate environment account for the experience of the student, but the student also brings a set of experiences and expectations that they use to interpret their environment. The student also becomes part of the environment, thus influencing the experiences of other students. Early research on the college environment can be traced to Lewin (1936), who explained student behavior as a function of the interaction between the student and the environment. Murray (1938) described the college environment as a combination of the personal characteristics, or needs, of the students and the environmental characteristics, or press, of the institution.

Later research highlighted specific aspects of the college environment. Social influences on college environments became a focus for some researchers. Astin and Holland (1961) *as cited in Mullbery* (2010) based their Environmental Assessment Technique on the idea "that a major portion of environmental forces is transmitted through other people. Academic impacts on the college environment were also examined. Gamson (1966) noted that academic programs and departments could influence students' interests and abilities. Other research focused on comprehensive syntheses of previous studies. Feldman and Newcomb (1969) based their research on the total environment and the many sub-environments that can be found at an institution. Feldman and Newcomb (1969) found that the differences among students upon their initial entrance to an institution were of primary importance in the study of environmental impact. Pascarella and Terenzini (2005) based their research on several factors, including student change during the college years; change attributable to college attendance; the impact of institutional type on student change; the effects of different experiences on students at the same institution; conditional effects of the environment on student change; and the long-term effects of college.

#### IV. METHODOLOGY

The paper adopts a concurrent triangulation mixed method approach to inquiry. It made use of both numeric and interpretative data. This approach offered the researchers the opportunity to collect numeric data simultaneously with qualitative data (Cohen *et al.*, 2018). Data gathered were triangulated to establish their level of accuracy for generalizability purposes. Participants in this study were sixty-four (64) student-teachers from colleges of education from two regions in the southern part of Ghana: Eastern region – Methodist College of Education, and the Ashanti region – Wesley College of Education. The sample was drawn from the population of second-year student teachers (N = 635), and through randomization, the final sample was determined (n = 64). This comprised thirty (30) females and thirty-four (34) males. The rationale behind this sample size was based on one of the universal sample size determination assumptions which states that a good maximum sample size is usually around 10% of the population as long as it does not exceed 1000 (Survey Monkey, 2021). Furthermore, two major assumptions informed the gender distribution: male student teachers dominate the student population, and males are presumed to be more politically sensitive than their female counterparts.

##### A. Procedure

A self-developed electronic questionnaire was used to collect demographic information, student teachers' explicit political attitude, and the political affiliations of students' parents. Participants' explicit attitudes were gathered using a Likert scale that asked participants to express how much support they showed candidates during elections. The response set ranged from none at all to complete support.

Parental political affiliations were gathered by asking participants to identify whether each parent identified as a social democrat, patriot, independent, or not sure. Parents' degree of intrusion in student teachers' political awareness was measured by asking participants whether parents interfere in the formation of their own political ideologies. The designed instrument was again administered to find out if student teachers' political identity construction was dependent on a liberal school setting. Participants were asked to identify characteristics or structures of the school that promote their political awareness. Student teachers' reactions to new political experiences were also measured. The focus was on ascertaining whether participants' political identity crisis, cognitive dissonance or political awareness could be explained by the series of encounters with new political ideologies and events. Again, a semi-structured interview guide was employed to gather comparatively richer data on parental influence, new political stimuli, and liberal school setting (college/campus environment) vis-à-vis the level of influence of such predictors on student teachers' political identity formation. The analysis was done based on the data type gathered. Descriptive statistical tools specifically measure of central tendencies (frequency distribution) was used to analyse all quantitative data whereas qualitative data obtained through interviews were thematically analysed.

## V. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The demographic factor category included variables for students' gender, age, language-speaking status, citizenship status, disability status, family income, religious preference, and ethnicity. The familial factor category included variables for the parent's marital status, the religious preferences of both parents, the highest level of formal education obtained by both parents, occupations of both parents, political affiliation and language spoken by both parents. The liberal school setting factor category included students' grade point average, college governance, social clubs, the autonomy of the programme of study, the ethnic composition of the student population, the racial composition of the community in which the school is situated and career choice. The new political stimuli category included political campaigns, community/volunteer services and peer recommendations. The attitude factor category included variables measuring the frequency with which the students engaged in a series of personal and school-related activities within the past year as well as the frequency with which the students utilized critical thinking skills within the past year.

The study had a sample estimated to constitute 53.1% males and 46.8% females. However, there were three (3) missing responses (4.6%) in relation to gender which brought the figures to 45.3% ( $f = 29$ ) for females and 50% ( $f = 32$ ) for males. As had already been indicated, the distribution was done resting on the assumption that male student teachers' participation in politics comparatively tends to be higher than females. Besides, the student population in the colleges seemed dominated by male student teachers. Participants' age distribution at the time of the survey showed the majority ( $f = 44$ ; 68.7%) falling within the 18-20 age bracket. Fifteen (15) student-teachers (23.4%) reported their age as falling between 21-24 age brackets whilst three (3) student-teachers (4.7%) indicated their age as over 25 years. Meanwhile, two (2) student-teachers (3.1%) did not respond to this question.

Disability status revealed that 82.9% ( $f = 53$ ) did not have any disability at all whereas the remaining participants reported having at least one form of disability. Family income status also showed the majority of participants belonging to low-income earning families ( $f = 47$ ; 73.4%) followed by middle-income families ( $f = 12$ ; 18.8%) and high-income families ( $f = 2$ ; 3.12%) respectively. Three (3) participants forming 4.7% of respondents did not answer this question. Religious preference was another demographic indicator measured. Christians ( $f = 46$ ; 71.9%) were found to be proportionately more than other religions. This was followed by Muslims ( $f = 12$ ; 18.9%), other religions ( $f = 4$ ; 6.3%) and ATR ( $f = 2$ ; 3.1%) respectively. Ethnic status indicators revealed a majority of participants being Akans followed by northerners and Ewes respectively. However, language-speaking status revealed a greater proportion of participants as bilinguals (native language and foreign dialect) ( $f = 54$ ; 84.3%), others ( $f = 8$ ; 1.3%) indicated that they could speak more than two dialects. Only two (2) (3.1%) participants were identified as monolinguals. With regards to the citizenship status indicator, it was found that participants ( $f = 60$ ; 93.8%) were nationals except for three (3) participants constituting 4.7%. One (1) (1.6%) respondent failed to answer this question. No dual citizen was identified at the time the survey took place.

In relation to the research question 1: What role does parental influence play in the political identity negotiation of students in colleges of education in Ghana? Familial (parents') characteristics were measured and used to find out whether they exert any influence on student-teacher identity formation. The dependent variable for this study was students' political identity, which was characterized as patriots, national democrats, independents and others. The largest proportion, 41 student teachers (60.9%) were identified as patriots while 17 student teachers (26.6%) were identified as national democrats. 4 student teachers (6.3%) identified as independent, and 2 student teachers (3.1%) were found to be leaning against other political parties. Fig. 1 shows a pie-chart giving summary results of familial characteristics.

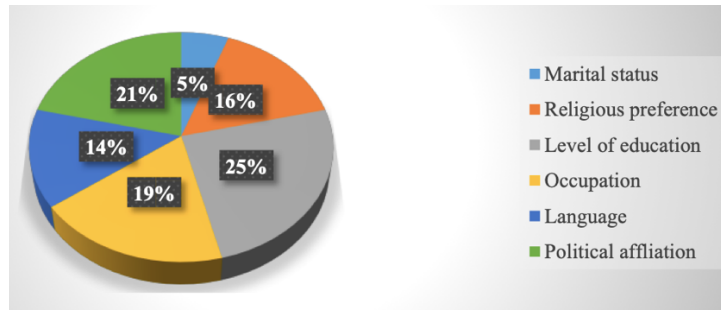


Fig. 1. Familial characteristics.

From Fig. 1, it can be inferred that certain characteristics of parents can interfere in the political identity formation of student teachers. The level of education of parents has been identified as an inevitable indicator as far as student teachers’ identity construction is concerned. This implies that there is a chance that parents would use their formal educational status as a tool to inform the way their wards in colleges of education create political awareness in and outside the school setting. In other words, student teachers are likely to make political decisions based on the achievement levels of their guardians in terms of formal education. The political affiliation of parents was also seen to be sensitive in the negotiation of student teachers’ identity. It can be deduced as well that student teachers are inclined to align their political views with their families. Occupation status as another parental influential indicator revealed similar results. It was realized that parents’ occupation, which invariably determines the income level of the family, is also likely to shape student teachers’ political experiences. This presupposes that there is a tendency that student teachers may form their political identities around the socioeconomic status of their families. Nonetheless, the marital status of parents was observed as having a relatively insignificant impact on the formation of student teachers’ political identities. This means that it is highly unlikely that student teachers in the college of education will build their political sentiments on parental spousal intimacy. Therefore, inferring from the data obtained and presented in the chart, it can be deduced that parents have a role to play in the negotiation of the political identity of student teachers in colleges of education. These findings confirm that before young people acquire a mature understanding of political affairs, their political preferences are heavily influenced by their parents’ political views (Rico & Jennings, 2016). The data obtained can be confirmed from the responses gathered from participants during the interview. These are sample expressions:

ST3: Honestly, in the last election, our whole house went together to cast our vote. I can tell you for sure that our voting patterns were the same. We voted for the same person, the same party.

ST1: I was once entreated by my mother to vote for a certain candidate at school because we all spoke the same language.

In relation to research question 2: How does a liberal school setting inform the political identity formation of the college of education students in Ghana? Data on the characteristics of the campus (school) environment was gathered and analysed. Characteristics were catergorised as follows: students’ grade point average, college governance, social clubs, the autonomy of the programme of study, the ethnic composition of the student population, racial composition of the community in which the school is situated and career choice.

TABLE I: LIBERAL SCHOOL SETTING

Campus characteristics	Frequency	Percentage
Student grade point	45	70.3
College Governance	52	81.3
Social clubs	59	92.2
Autonomy of the study programme	37	57.8
Ethnic composition of the student population	62	96.7
Ethnic composition of the community	58	90.6

Field data, 2021

n = 64

Note: Participants were not limited to response sets or opinions.

From Table I, it can be realized that participants’ political identity formation seemed dependent on a number of school characteristics. It was found that student teachers’ political identity was a result of the ethnic composition of the student population (f = 62; 96.7%). Participants again responded that the various social clubs the school presents to student teachers also play a crucial role in the formation of their political identity (f = 59; 92.2%). This was followed by the ethnic composition of the community (f = 58; 90.6). Participants were of the view that the community in which their campuses are situated affects their political ideologies. This denotes that student teachers are bent on aligning with the political standpoints of such communities as a result of their constant engagement with them. Participants agreed that student teachers’ political identity moves along with college governance (f = 52; 81.3%).

Grade points attained by students in the school were also identified as a predictor of student teachers' political identity construction ( $f = 45; 70.3\%$ ). Student teachers' participation in politics depended on the level of grade points they make in the course of their study. Nearly half the sample ( $f = 45; 70.3\%$ ) pointed to the autonomy of the programme of study as being influential in the formation of student teachers' political identity. This was the least recorded.

From the responses obtained, it can be inferred that the liberal setting of the school (campus environment) through its structures informs student teachers' political identity. The data shows that the ethnic composition of the student population among other school factors plays an effective role in the construction of student teachers' political identity in colleges of education in Ghana. These findings support McClellan (2000) who noted that not only does the collegiate environment account for the experience of the student, but the student also brings a set of experiences and expectations that they use to interpret their environment. There also seems to be a corroboration between the findings and Feldman and Newcomb's study (1969) which found that the differences among students upon their initial entrance to an institution were of primary importance in the study of environmental impact. The interview also revealed similar results. Below is a sample expression of participants' responses:

ST2: The student population is dominated by some particular groups. Many a time, they decide on voting patterns. Those who win elections are basically those who come from these groups. It is always difficult to try other options since these groups will eventually make their candidates win with their number. So, you see, if you cannot beat them, you join them.

In relation to research question 3: To what extent do new political stimuli construct students' political identity in colleges of education in Ghana? Regarding this, student teachers' participation in political campaigns, community/volunteer services and utilization of peer recommendations were measured, and the results are graphically presented in Fig. 2.

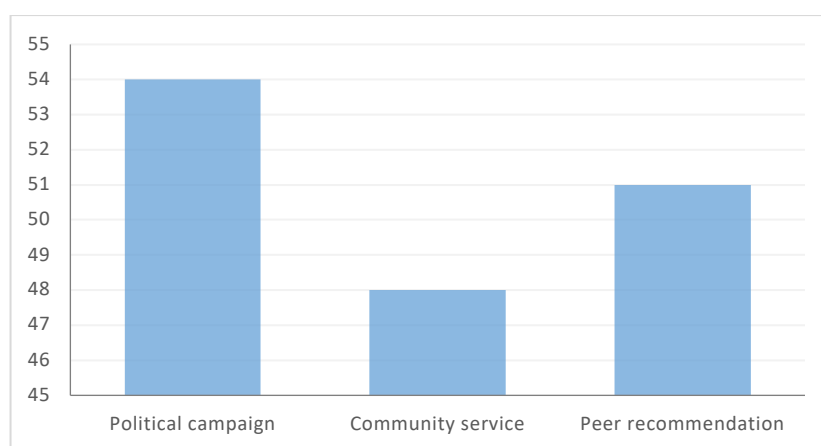


Fig. 2. New Political Stimuli.

Fig. 2 is a bar chart showing new political stimuli vis-à-vis student teachers' political identity formation. It can be observed that student teachers' contact with political campaigns and participation in other related forms of political discourses in and out of the college setting influence the way they construct their identity politically. This was followed by peer recommendation. Participants expressed that the frequent engagement in informal discourses such as political debates with colleagues exposes them to different forms of political ideologies. Participants disclosed that student teachers develop implicit and explicit political attitudes as they constantly participate in community/volunteer services. From the findings, it can be inferred that the political experiences of student teachers in colleges of education are shaped as a result of their encounter with new political cues such as participation in political debates, contact with political campaigns and volunteered services. The findings support Acconciamezza *et al.* (2016) who write that external political cues include contact with campaigns, volunteer opportunities, and media exposure and maintain that each of these plays an important role in political engagement and attitudes among younger voters. Analysis of the interview responses in relation to this question also showed that exposure to new political stimuli informs the political identity formation of college students. These are sample expressions of some selected participants:

S-T3: Although our opinions may differ in many regards anytime there is a discussion on politics, you could see that people are really making good points. Truth be told, I am sometimes torn between believing what I know and what they argue.

S-T2: I really did not understand why people would devote much time to politics until I first witnessed SRC elections. I had no clue students would spend so much money just to win student elections. One day, I took part in one of our course mate's campaigns, listened to manifesto readings and surprisingly got involved in arguments over campus politics. Now, I am the incoming Electoral Commissioner.

In relation to research question 4: What practices reflect explicit and implicit political attitudes and behaviours of students in Ghanaian colleges of education?

In relation to this, variables measuring the frequency with which the students engaged in a series of personal and school-related activities within the past year as well as the frequency with which the students utilized critical thinking skills within the past year were analysed and presented in Table II.

TABLE II: REFLECTIVE PRACTICES OF STUDENT-TEACHERS' POLITICAL IDENTITY

Reflective Practices	Frequency	Percentage
Students from disadvantaged social backgrounds should be given preferential treatment in college admissions	47	73.4
It is important to have laws prohibiting homosexual relationships	61	95.3
Comprehensive Sexuality Education should not be introduced in Ghana's pre-tertiary education curriculum	55	85.9
The government should do more increase allowances given to professional training institutions	60	93.7
Becoming an authority in my field is important to me	42	65.6
Obtaining recognition from my colleagues for contributions to my special field	39	60.9
Participated in political demonstrations	32	50
Voted in a student election	59	92.1
Discussed politics	55	85.9
Evaluate the quality or reliability of the information you receive	44	68.7

Field data, 2021

n = 64

Note: Participants were not limited to response sets or opinions.

From Table II, it can be seen that student teachers engaged in practices that reflected their identity politically. With regards to explicit and implicit political attitudes, it was found that student teachers have their own views on both national and institutional policies such as marriage systems ( $f = 61$ ; 95.3%), treatment given to those in professional training institutions ( $f = 60$ ; 93.7%), curriculum decisions ( $f = 55$ ; 85.9%) as well as college admission protocols ( $f = 47$ ; 73.4%). Again, student teachers' political attitudes are seen in their career projections where they aspire to become authorities in their field ( $f = 42$ ; 65.6%) or gain collegial recognition for contributing to their special fields ( $f = 39$ ; 60.9%). Nonetheless, student teachers' explicit and implicit political behaviours ranged from voting in student elections ( $f = 59$ ; 92.1%), engagement in political discussions ( $f = 55$ ; 85.9%) and participation in political demonstrations ( $f = 32$ ; 50%). The responses obtained also showed that student teachers have been making use of their critical thinking skills within the past year. They claim they evaluate the quality or reliability of the information they receive ( $f = 44$ ; 68.7%). These findings align with Ryan (2017) who argues that college students choose which political factors to pay more attention to according to their needs and interests. The analysis of the interview data similarly demonstrated a similar trend. Below are sample responses of participants:

S-T1: I voted in the last SRC elections.

S-T2: Why would anybody think that our nephews and nieces at the elementary school level need such an education? It is highly inappropriate. To be frank with you, sir, I do not think it will help so the government or NaCCA should do something about it. Parents can also initiate something to put a stop to this.

S-T3: I discuss national issues a lot with my friends. We even often go beyond boundaries to discuss college-level administration especially when we think things are not going down well with our details.

## VI. CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATION

Political identity construction is bound to happen as long as individuals remain exposed to sensitive political cues in the social structure. Participation of young adults in tertiary institutions particularly colleges of education students in political discourses goes a long way to inform the manner in which they assimilate and internalize political experiences. Firstly, it has been established that familial characteristics such as parents' occupation, education level, political preferences, and occupation among others influence student teachers' political identity. Therefore, parents need not lose sight of the fact that every bit of parent-child political socialization activity demonstrated at home has a tendency of creating political awareness among young adults when they eventually leave home.

It is equally vital to note that identity crises during identity formation among young adults are inevitable. As they go through new experiences and engage in relatively unfamiliar discourses, their scopes of knowing are challenged. This phenomenon is not far from happening to individuals who are going through political identity formation. The point of cognitive dissonance is eminent as they attempt to accommodate new political stimuli. This denotes therefore that the unknown political experiences that student teachers endure in and out of the school setting move along with the construction of their political identity. Thus, they build their political attitudes and behaviours around new political stimuli such as contact with campaigns, volunteer services, peer discussion among others.



The setting of the college also plays an important role in student teachers' political identity formation. It is possible that student teachers may form their political ideologies based on the views of the majority on campus. Again, there is also the chance that their participation in social clubs can shape their political attitudes. Consequently, parents and the school need to acknowledge and understand that student teachers' membership in such groups exposes them to ideologies of all kinds around which other distinct forms of identities such as political identity are negotiated.

Young adults have myriad ways of exhibiting their political attitudes and behaviours. They often show these through opinion and view expressions in political discourses. This presupposes that any critical thinking bound activity that offers student teachers the platform to voice their standpoints are supposedly means of making their political attitudes and behaviours known. They will for instance participate in political discourses such as national agendas, institutional governance, family philosophies, religious practices and many other related issues that require sense of reasoning and self-judgement. It is prudent that the school and the home recognize this process of identity formation in order to avoid any form of identity crisis or role confusion in this regard.

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