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Trainee-teacher instructional performance in distance education: The role of course facilitator evaluation, andragogical approach, and institutional infrastructure

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ABSTRACT

This study examined how the andragogical quality of course facilitators, instructional evaluation and feedback quality, and institutional infrastructure predict trainee-teacher instructional performance in Distance Education. Focusing on the relationships between these variables, the investigation aimed to determine how instructional evaluation, the andragogical approach of course facilitators, and infrastructure quality relate to trainee-teacher performance, and which predictors best explain instructional performance outcomes. A descriptive survey design was employed, with data collected from a sample of 397 trainee-teachers across 34 study centres in a developing economy. Survey instruments and lesson observation guides, adapted for this context, were used to gather pertinent information. Data analysis involved Pearson Product-Moment Correlation and multiple linear regression techniques. The results indicated that the andragogical quality of facilitators and the quality of instructional evaluation were the strongest predictors of trainee-teacher instructional performance, while institutional infrastructure showed the least predictive power among the variables examined. These findings suggest that although institutional infrastructure may contribute to educational quality, its influence on trainee-teacher performance in Distance Education is limited compared to instructional and andragogical factors. Consequently, efforts to enhance trainee-teacher instructional performance should prioritise improving facilitator approaches and evaluation processes over infrastructural constraints. This study contributes valuable insights for policymakers and educators seeking to optimise training quality in Distance Education environments.

Contribution/Originality: This study contributes to Ghanaian distance teacher education by showing that institutional infrastructure, instructional evaluation, and an andragogical approach significantly predict trainee-teachers' instructional performance. Using data from 397 UCC trainee-teachers, the model explained 73.6% of the variance in performance. Andragogy emerged as the strongest predictor, providing theoretical, empirical, and practical insights for improving distance teacher education.

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1. INTRODUCTION

The introduction of Distance Education (DE) into the global educational landscape has contributed to many working people worldwide upgrading themselves academically and professionally by studying from the comfort of their homes. Currently, some universities in both developed and developing economies have fully embraced DE. Globally, 9.4 million learners (61%) were enrolled in at least one distance education course, and 4.4 million (28%) of them took distance education courses exclusively (Amina, 2015). In tandem with the foregoing, one of the largest universities in a developing economy initiated distance education in 1997, with the total enrollment of its learners increasing exponentially from 750 to over 48,622 (College of Distance Education University of Cape Coast, 2016).

The increase in students' enrolment in various public and private universities in DE is a tremendous demonstration of the preference for DE. However, research has shown that there has been a continued negative perception of DE, which, to a large extent, has adversely influenced the enrolment figures in some universities (Egorov, Prokhorova, Lebedeva, Mineeva, & Tsvetkova, 2021). This situation emanates from the perceived poor andragogical quality exhibited by some course facilitators and the non-performance of some DE products (Mbwesa, 2014; West, 2011). In line with the negative perception of a regulatory body of higher education in West Africa, for instance, one such body ordered the shutdown of all senior high schools and teacher training institutions used as learning centres during face-to-face sessions by all universities running DE in that country (Ghana Tertiary Education Commission, 2025). The regulatory body perceived that the infrastructure quality of those institutions used as learning centres for face-to-face learning was not on par with that of conventional systems and therefore could not guarantee trainees' competence and performance. This raises a question about whether or not institutional infrastructure, as a component of quality instruction in DE, is the most significant correlate of trainee-teacher performance in DE. The order, however, is at variance with a meta-analysis of Simonson's equity theory in research, which has shown that, in DE, ensuring equity is what is relevant, not equality, which is impossible to attain (Egorov et al., 2021). Similarly, some perceived that the DE facilitator's andragogical approach, training, and evaluation mechanisms put in place for practical teaching skills acquisition by trainee-teachers, which are the most critical components of teacher-training architecture, are not of good quality and cannot guarantee the training of competent teachers to teach at certain levels of education (Chhetri, 2022; Madzore, 2019). In light of this, some other teacher regulatory authorities in some developing economies at some point directed the reposting of senior high school teachers with distance or sandwich degrees to basic schools (Citi Newsroom, 2019; Ike & Okechukwu, 2015; Vegas, 2007).

In connection with the unfavorable perceptions surrounding distance education (DE), research has identified a remedy in the need to reposition the andragogical methods employed by facilitators and align the performance of trainees with the satisfaction of key stakeholders in DE programmes (Chwiłkowska-Kubala, Spychała, & Stachurski, 2024; Sadeghi, 2019). Despite the prevalent negative views of DE instructional methodologies and the subpar performance of some graduates (Amina, 2015), there has been a significant increase in the number of private and quasi-public universities providing DE in both developed and developing countries. This trend in the DE landscape calls for targeted research on core variables defining the quality and performance of trainees trained via the DE mode. In light of this, the current research focuses on examining the relationship between the andragogical approaches of course facilitators, infrastructure quality, and the instructional performance of trainee-teachers, specifically their ability to articulate lesson objectives professionally, apply effective methodologies, deliver lessons, and manage classes during their final practicum or teaching practice phases. The scope of this study was delimited to one of the largest universities in a developing economy, which aims to offer access to higher education, train professional teachers for all educational levels, and cultivate skilled personnel for national development (Amina, 2015). Additionally, it seeks to enhance the professional competencies of existing teachers, as well as those of accounting and secretarial personnel in the public sector and industry, through Continuing Education.

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The university operates a dual-mode DE system. This means that the university's college responsible for distance education does not offer its programmes; instead, it adopts courses from various departments within the conventional system to maintain quality and parity with traditional education. The university's College of Distance Education has over 95 study centres, including six postgraduate centres across the country, serving a student population exceeding 48,466 (Andoh, Appiah, & Agyei, 2020). These study centres play a crucial role in connecting the university with its students, serving primarily two vital functions.

1. Promotion of student autonomy and professional teacher training and development.
2. Maximising the internal efficiency of the distance learning system.

Every trainee-teacher pursuing a teacher education programme undertakes On-Center and Off-Center teaching practices, a practical component of the training designed to measure their competence in instructional performance. Course facilitators (retired educationists, some Colleges of Education lecturers, and former university lecturers) assess the teaching performance of trainee-teachers using a Teacher Performance Assessment Instrument (TPAI). This assessment is conducted outside the university campus, where trainee-teachers on attachment in basic schools and senior high schools (SHS) across the country are supervised and assessed.

Notwithstanding these efforts by the university's distance learning college to provide quality professional training to its learners, many DE students experience difficulties with irregular and untimely feedback on evaluation results from their assessors (Amoono, 2019). Research indicates that the large class sizes in DE often make it difficult for trainee teachers to have adequate time to engage in their teaching practices. Furthermore, the andragogical approaches employed by some facilitators lack the necessary flexibility and patience for adequately monitoring and evaluating trainees' progress (Dankyi & Dankyi, 2015). Regarding similar challenges in DE, some empirical reports have examined the impact of instructional quality on trainee-teacher effectiveness, dimensions of instructional quality, as well as support services, counseling needs, and trainee-teacher performance in DE contexts (Dankyi & Dankyi, 2015; Plöger, Scholl, Schüle, & Seifert, 2019; Schlosser & Anderson, 1994; Senyametor, Dankyi, Dorsah, & Asare, 2023; West, 2011). However, none of these studies specifically addressed whether or not instructional evaluation, andragogical approaches, and the quality of institutional infrastructure are correlates of trainee-teacher instructional performance in DE. This study aims to bridge this research gap, guided by the following research questions:

1. What is the relationship between instructional evaluation of course facilitators and trainee-teacher performance?
2. Is there any relationship between the andragogical approach of course facilitators and trainee-teacher instructional performance?
3. Is there any relationship between infrastructure quality and trainee-teacher performance?
4. Which of the predictor variables (instructional evaluation, andragogical approach, and infrastructure quality) best predicts trainee-teacher instructional performance?

2. THEORETICAL AND EMPIRICAL BASES OF THE STUDY

The theoretical framework of this study was predicated on Knowles (1984) adult learning theory (andragogy) and constructivist theory. Knowles's adult learning theory (andragogy) explains how adults learn most effectively when instruction fits their needs, motivations, and life contexts. Grounded in several core assumptions, such as adults being self-directed, bringing prior experience as a learning resource, being ready to learn when content is relevant to real roles, preferring an immediate problem-centered orientation, and relying mainly on internal motivation, and supported by principles emphasizing learner involvement, relevance, and practical application (Knowles, 1980, 1984). In training contexts, this means instruction should be designed around authentic tasks, opportunities for reflection on experience, and active participation rather than lecture-heavy delivery, because adults are more likely to retain and apply 75 percent of what they learn when it solves pressing problems and aligns with their goals (Knowles, 1980; Pappas, 2026). This framework relates directly to the study topic, whether course facilitator evaluation, an

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andragogical approach, and institutional infrastructure matter for trainee-teachers' instructional performance, because each factor can influence the extent to which andragogy is actually implemented. A strong course facilitator (as reflected in facilitator evaluation) can operationalize andragogical assumptions by structuring learning around real classroom problems, facilitating experience-based discussions, and enabling learner choice and participation in planning and feedback (Knowles, 1984). Similarly, an explicitly andragogical approach should improve performance outcomes by increasing relevance, problem-centered practice, and internal ownership of learning (Knowles, 1980). Finally, institutional infrastructure (instructional materials, scheduling flexibility, learning platforms, mentoring capacity, and classroom practice opportunities) can either enable or constrain andragogy. If resources and systems do not support authentic practice, timely feedback, or adult-centered learning activities, then the theory's conditions for effective learning are less likely to be met (Pappas, 2026).

MacBlain (2018), Piaget (1976), and Bruner (1974) theories of constructivism, on the other hand, are both learning theories and philosophies of instruction that emphasize the active role of learners in constructing their skills and competencies based on experiences and prior knowledge, where the learning environment provides support that is gradually removed as learners internalize knowledge and skills (Fitri, 2017). The internalization of skills and competencies in educational systems such as DE is enhanced in an academic environment of quality infrastructure and collaborative dialogues with more knowledgeable individuals, such as teachers and peers, underpinned by scaffolding, where the learner is progressively aided in skill and knowledge acquisition (Binte Rahmat et al., 2025). This necessitates facilitators' dialogue and mentoring of teacher-trainees or learners, which will have significant educational implications for supporting collaborative learning, reciprocal teaching, and scaffolding as effective instructional strategies, particularly in DE. Knowles (1984) adult learning and constructivist theories bring to the fore a complex correlation between andragogy, trainee or mentee performance, and institutional infrastructure. By understanding and leveraging these connections, the management of educators, particularly in DE, can create academic environments that not only bolster effective instruction and learning but also engender overall trainee-teacher success. This all-embracing approach is important in addressing contemporary educational challenges and ensuring high academic performance and success for all trainees. Constructivist theory provides vital frameworks for examining how andragogical and institutional infrastructural architecture and periodic trainee evaluation factors influence learning and performance in educational settings such as DE.

Empirical reports on Knowles (1984) adult learning and constructivist theory on academic performance showed a positive correlation between learner performance and their sense of determination in instructional performance in DE (Aqda, Hamidi, & Ghorbandordinejad, 2011; Graham & Vaughan, 2022; Mukhoiyaroh & Aziz, 2024). Learners are likely to achieve their academic objectives when these objectives are intrinsically driven and aligned with their needs. In addition, learners tend to do well when aided by empathetic and encouraging facilitators and teachers rather than by controlling or dictatorial figures (Amina, 2015; Owens, Sadler, Barlow, & Smith-Walters, 2020).

In the context of this study, students engaged in distance education can be intrinsically motivated to excel academically, driven by their desire to acquire valuable skills that will help them become independent professionals. Their aspirations to obtain certificates can motivate them to advance in their respective workplaces, fulfilling their innate needs to acquire competence and develop personally. Additionally, the presence of empathetic and supportive families, facilitators, peers, and workplace superiors can further encourage their academic pursuits (Aldrup, Carstensen, & Klusmann, 2022; Dankyi, 2019; Gagné, 2014).

The correlation between facilitator duties and trainee-teacher instructional performance, as indicated by Mbwesa (2014) and Senyametor et al. (2023), entails the quality of lesson evaluation, andragogical quality, and institutional infrastructural quality. In connection with the aforementioned, Vemula (2013) and Amina (2015) found that quality evaluation must follow six broad parameters, including curriculum design, content, and organisation; teaching, learning, and assessment; learner progression and achievement; and student support and guidance. They revealed that facilitators who followed these parameters established a robust relationship between infrastructure and trainee

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performance and efficiency. Similarly, other empirical reports examined the impact of course facilitators' evaluation of trainee-teacher instructional performance among a sample of 1,098 Level 400 Bachelor of Education students in higher educational institutions, including teaching practice supervisors in low- and middle-income countries; over 90 additional participants from Colleges of Education and principals were also sampled (Agyei, Annim, Acquah, Sebu, & Agyei, 2024; Amina, 2015; Amoono, 2019; Burns, 2023). The results revealed a positive correlation between facilitator evaluation and the instructional performance of teacher trainees. However, the reports also indicated that their evaluation in some learning centres was not frequently conducted as expected, and some trainees did not receive the required number of supervisions and evaluations specified. Again, some facilitators were not well equipped for supervision, and others did not have enough logistics to effectively execute their mandate. It was, therefore, recommended that refresher courses, workshops, and seminars be organised for course facilitators to equip them with new techniques and strategies for helping trainee teachers demonstrate high levels of instructional performance. Effective evaluation of learners in instruction, according to an empirical report, cannot translate into instructional performance without facilitator andragogical quality (Thomas, 2020).

Therefore, the discussion of instructional performance in DE also considers the role of andragogy in relation to trainee-teacher performance. Mbwesa (2014) operationally described andragogical quality as the effectiveness of the instructional process, especially when teaching adult learners. He identified ten components of andragogical quality, including the use of teaching materials of high quality, the active involvement of facilitators and learners, and flexibility in teaching approaches and methods. Other aspects relate to the facilitator's ability to demonstrate subject knowledge and to accommodate individual differences. Overall, high-quality andragogical practice requires course facilitators to have a strong command of both the relevant course content and the methodology (action system) used to deliver lessons. This aligns with Feist and Rosenberg (2012), who argued that instructional competence and delivery quality depend on both subject matter knowledge and the teaching action system.

Mbwesa (2014) further reported that 93.5% of students rated the andragogy in the distance education (DE) course as fairly good, while only 4.9% rated it as low. This suggests that students generally perceived the andragogical aspects of their course as good. However, other studies found a weak relationship between andragogy and trainees' instructional performance, often due to poor or inappropriate application (Malunda, Ssentamu, & Atwebembeire, 2021; Mbunda & Ojwang, 2021). These authors noted that the weak relationship was not necessarily caused by low-quality facilitation; it also reflected learners' uncooperative attitudes, with some not adequately preparing their study materials before attending face-to-face sessions. This supports empirical findings from DE research indicating that learners bear much of the responsibility for mastering the skills and concepts identified by Simonson, Schlosser, and Hanson (1999). In this view, instructors mainly clarify ideas that learners struggle to understand during their home-based study. At the same time, Burgess (2014) emphasized that instructional quality assurance is not solely dependent on facilitators or learners, but rather is a shared responsibility. Consequently, andragogical quality in DE should not be treated as the facilitator's responsibility alone. Research also shows that effective instructional evaluation and facilitator andragogical competence are fully supported by a strong institutional infrastructure (Afari-Yamoah, 2024). Therefore, the following concluding section focuses on empirical findings linking infrastructure quality with trainee-teacher performance.

Researchers have examined educational facilities and infrastructure in relation to performance. For example, Agyei et al. (2024) studied the effect of the availability and use of educational facilities on trainee teacher performance in three Colleges of Education and found a weak correlation between infrastructure and performance. The weak link was attributed to inadequate library facilities, including books that were outdated and not aligned with many of the programmes trainees were pursuing. This situation limited trainees' ability to acquire the subject matter and action-system knowledge needed for strong performance. In addition, the sanitation of trainees' toilets and washrooms was reported to be very poor, which negatively affected teaching and learning due to unpleasant smells. Similarly, many laboratories lacked enough computers and had low seating capacity. In overcrowded classes, some trainee teachers

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did not receive the required number of on-centre teaching practice supervision sessions from their tutors, which also weakened their instructional performance (Walters, 2002; Yagmur & Koksal, 2023).

In the context of the current study, Trainee-Teacher Evaluation of Quality Facilitation (TEQF) in DE, developed by Mbwesa (2014), was adapted to design the items for the questionnaire used to collect data from trainee-teachers. It contains the following domains.

1. The andragogical quality domain addresses the methods employed by instructors or facilitators in teaching adult learners (trainee-teachers).
2. The infrastructure domain touches on the existence of lecture theatres, quality furniture, and technological infrastructure such as computer laboratories, internet access, and library services, among others.
3. The evaluation and assessment dimension addresses activities and standards associated with training, evaluation, and feedback.

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1. Population, Sample and Sampling Technique

A descriptive research design was used for the study. Using Slovin's formula (n=\frac{N}{1+Ne as cited in Chakraborty and Bhat (2018) a sample of 397 trainee-teachers was selected from an accessible population of 21,312 trainee-teachers across 34 study centres. A sample of 327 course facilitators serving as OCT supervisors was purposively selected. The sample was selected using a simple random sampling technique from three stratified zones within the study area: Southern, Middle, and Northern. One region was randomly chosen from each zone. All 34 education-programme study centres located in the selected regions were included. Respondents were then chosen using a proportionate stratified random sampling approach. Finally, only trainee-teachers scheduled to undertake On-Centre Teaching Practice at the identified study centres were purposively included in the study.

3.2. Instruments, Validity Issues and Data Collection Procedure

Data were gathered using two sets of instruments: one for course facilitators and another for trainees. After trainees completed the Trainee-teacher Evaluation of Quality Facilitation (TEQF), they also collected and attached the Trainee-teacher Performance Assessment (TPA) tool completed by their respective facilitators (OCTP assessors). The TPA was administered before supervision or observation of teaching. It assessed four main domains: (1) formulation of behavioural objectives, (2) key points in the lesson plan, (3) teaching methodology and delivery, and (4) class control and management. These domains represent key areas used to judge instructional performance. Before the main data collection, assumptions of normality, the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) measure of sampling adequacy, and Bartlett's Test of Sphericity were evaluated, with results reported in Table 1 and 2.

Table 1. Tests for normality of quality evaluation, andragogical quality, and trainee-teacher instructional performance.

Variable	Statistic (W)	p-value
Quality Evaluation	0.782	0.001
Andragogical Quality	0.778	0.000
Trainee-teacher Instructional Performance	0.880	0.000

Table 2. KMO and Bartlett's Test.

Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin measure of sampling adequacy.		**0.700**
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square	187.845
	df	3
	Sig.	0.000

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Table 1 shows that the Shapiro–Wilk test indicated non-normality for Quality Evaluation ($W = 0.782$, $p = 0.001$), Andragogical Quality ($W = 0.778$, $p < 0.001$), and Trainee-teacher Instructional Performance ($W = 0.880$, $p < 0.001$). However, this non-normality does not automatically invalidate Pearson's product–moment correlation and multiple linear regression, because Pearson's r is primarily used to assess linear association and OLS (Ordinary Least Squares) regression does not require the raw variables to be normally distributed. Instead, OLS inference depends mainly on assumptions such as linearity, independence, and homoscedasticity, while normality of residuals is chiefly important for exact inference in small samples. Given the relatively large sample size ($N = 397$) and the absence of problematic multicollinearity based on VIF and tolerance diagnostics, Pearson correlation and multiple linear regression remain appropriate for examining the relationships in the study (Field, 2013; Kutner, Nachtsheim, & Neter, 2004; Montgomery, Peck, & Vining, 2021; Wooldridge, 2010).

Table 2 presents the Kaiser–Meyer–Olkin (KMO) and Bartlett's test of sphericity to assess the suitability of the data for factor analysis. The KMO value of 0.700 indicates that sampling adequacy is sufficient for factor extraction. Bartlett's test of sphericity was significant ($\chi^2 = 187.845$, $df = 3$, $p < 0.001$), showing that the correlation matrix is not an identity matrix and that the variables are sufficiently correlated to proceed with factor analysis (Field, 2013; Kaiser, 1974).

To ensure content validity, the researchers verified that each questionnaire item addressed the domain it was intended to measure, using expert judgement from two supervisors and two professionals in educational psychology, measurement, and evaluation. To confirm construct validity and reliability, a pilot test was conducted. A total of 61 respondents (including 50 trainee-teachers and 11 course tutors) participated. Exploratory factor analysis (EFA) was conducted to determine the factor structure of the constructs. Items were retained based on their factor loadings and the strength of their contribution to the extracted factors. Specifically, items with factor loadings above the predetermined criterion (e.g., > 0.30) were retained, while items with correlation coefficients below +0.30 were removed because they contributed weakly to the extracted factors (Pallant, 2010). The remaining items were then combined to form each variable by computing the average of the responses, since the items were measured on a unidimensional scale. Initially, andragogical quality and trainee-teacher instructional performance comprised 40 and 30 items, respectively; after EFA, these were reduced to 35 and 23 items. For reliability, the study applied a common rule of thumb for Cronbach's alpha: Excellent ($\alpha > 0.9$), Good ($\alpha > 0.8$), Acceptable ($\alpha > 0.7$), Questionable ($\alpha > 0.6$), Poor ($\alpha > 0.5$), and Unacceptable ($\alpha > 0.4$) (George & Mallery, 2024). Cronbach's alpha for the trainee-teacher performance questionnaire and the course tutor questionnaire was 0.906 and 0.912, respectively, both falling within an acceptable range (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2000). Data collection spanned four weeks across selected learning centres. The course facilitator instrument was the TPA, consisting of 23 closed-ended items, and it was used to evaluate each assigned trainee-teacher during on-centre teaching practice observations and assessments. For the trainee-teachers' questionnaire, the TEQF instrument for the DE dimensions, developed by Mbwesa (2014), was adapted to generate the items. Finally, a total of 374 and 321 questionnaires were collected from trainee-teachers and course facilitators, respectively.

4. DATA ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

The data collected were analysed using the Pearson product-moment correlation and multiple linear regression. The items in the instruments were measured on a 4-point unilinear scale. The demographic characteristics of the respondents based on sex, marital status, and age are presented in Table 3.

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Table 3. Distribution of respondents by sex, marital status, and age.

Characteristics of respondents	Trainee-teachers	
	N	%
Sex		
Male	217	58.0
Female	157	42.0
Marital Status		
Single	278	74.3
Married	94	25.2
Separated	0	0.0
Divorced	2	0.5
Age		
Less than 21 years	31	8.3
21 – 30 years	295	78.9
31 – 40 years	26	6.9
41 years and above	22	5.9
Total	374	100

The results in Table 3 show that the majority (58.0%) of the trainee-teachers in the study were male. Additionally, 25.2% of the respondents were married, and the majority (78.9%) of the trainee-teachers were in the 21–30 age group. Only 8.3% of them were less than 21 years old. Table 4 presents the multiple correlation analysis of the relationship among instructional evaluation, andragogical quality, and trainee-teacher instructional performance.

Table 4. Pearson correlations between quality evaluation, andragogical approach, infrastructure and trainee-teacher instructional performance.

Variables	Mean	Std. Dev.	Trainee-teacher instructional performance	
			Correlation Coefficient (r)	Sig.
Quality Evaluation	3.410	0.886	0.609*	0.00
Trainee-teacher instructional Performance	3.678	0.671	1	
Facilitator Andragogical Approach	3.555	0.783	0.702*	0.00
Trainee-teacher instructional performance	3.678	0.671	1	
Infrastructure	1.908	0.795	0.073*	0.01
Trainee-teacher instructional Performance	3.678	0.671	1	

Note: N = 374. *. Correlation is significant at the $p \leq 0.05$ level (2-tailed).

As shown in Table 4, quality evaluation (Mean = 3.410, Std. Dev. = 0.886) and trainee-teacher performance (Mean = 3.678, Std. Dev. = 0.671) were positively perceived by the respondents.

The results further show that there was a significant positive relationship between Quality evaluation and trainee teachers' instructional performance ($r = 0.609$, $p < 0.01$).

The second research question of the study focused on the relationship between the andragogical quality of facilitator instruction and trainee teachers' instructional performance. The results illustrate that respondents perceived the andragogical quality of course facilitators as high (Mean = 3.555, Std. Dev. = 0.783), and there was a statistically significant positive correlation between andragogical quality and trainee-teachers' instructional performance ($r = 0.702$, $p < 0.01$). This indicates a strong relationship. The results further show that respondents had a negative perception of the university's infrastructure quality (Mean = 1.908, Std. Dev. = 0.795). The results also show a weak, statistically significant relationship between infrastructure and trainee-teachers' instructional performance ($r = 0.073$, $p < 0.01$). This correlation indicates a very weak relationship between the two variables.

Correlational analyses, though important in establishing the level of relationships among variables, are limited in determining the extent to which one variable influences another. Therefore, it was necessary to determine which of the predictor variables (instructional evaluation, andragogical approach, and infrastructure quality) best predict trainee-teacher instructional performance. Multiple linear regression was performed, and the results are presented in Table 5.

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Table 5. Regression model on the predictors of trainee-teacher instructional performance.

Variables	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.	Collinearity Statistics	
	B	Std. Error	Beta (β)			Tolerance	VIF
Infrastructure	0.219	0.027	0.260	8.111	0.000	0.690	1.449
Instructional evaluation	0.235	0.020	0.356	11.740	0.000	0.770	1.299
Andragogical approach	0.435	0.025	0.507	17.394	0.000	0.883	1.200
Constant	0.475						
R			0.859				
R Square			0.738				
Adjusted R Square			0.736				

Note: N = 374. Dependent Variable: Trainee-teacher instructional performance.

The multiple regression analysis involved testing whether the predictors (infrastructure, instructional evaluation, and andragogical approach) had any influence on trainee-teacher instructional performance. As shown in Table 5, all predictors significantly influenced trainee-teacher instructional performance in order of importance: andragogical quality [(β = 0.507 (0.025), p < 0.00)], instructional evaluation [β = 0.356 (0.020), p < 0.01], and infrastructure [β = 0.260 (0.027), p < 0.000]. Infrastructure, therefore, was the least contributor to trainee-teacher instructional performance.

5. DISCUSSIONS

The significant correlations established among the variables, coupled with the regression analysis results showing that the andragogical approach and lesson evaluation are the highest and most significant predictors, and that infrastructure quality is the least significant predictor of trainee-teacher instructional performance. This points to the fact that when the periodic course evaluation and assessment procedures conducted by the course facilitators are of good quality, the instructional performance of trainee-teachers is likely to increase. This is particularly evident in the context of professional competence, ensuring that the statement of lesson objectives and core points in lesson plans, teaching methodology and delivery, and classroom organisation and management are in line with professional best practices. The finding is consistent with the revelations of Chen, Lin, Wang, Lin, and Kao (2012) and Vemula (2013), who found that teacher-trainees who benefited from a high level of andragogical quality were able to demonstrate a high level of instructional performance in terms of addressing behavioural objectives and core points in lesson plans, teaching methodology and delivery, and classroom organisation and management.

Likewise, the results corroborate other empirical studies that examined the relationship between course facilitators' lesson evaluations and the instructional performance of Bachelor of Education students, revealing a statistically significant correlation between facilitator evaluations and the instructional performance of teacher trainees (Agyei et al., 2024; Amina, 2015; Amoono, 2019; Burns, 2023). This suggests that the more closely the course facilitators in the College of Distance Education adhere to activities and policies related to periodic performance assessment and feedback during teaching practice, the better equipped the trainee teachers will be to deliver effective instruction and achieve desired outcomes without unnecessary exertion. This revelation was confirmed by the regression analysis, which showed that the andragogical approaches of course facilitators predicted 0.507 of trainee-teacher instructional performance. The strong relationship, coupled with the significant prediction of instructional performance by course facilitators' andragogical approaches, shows that the higher the quality of the andragogical approach by course facilitators that promotes learner interactions in various forms of distance learning, as well as the delivery of suitable and quality content to learners, the higher the instructional performance and competence level of trainee teachers. This would likely emanate from trainees imitating their course facilitators. This finding is consistent with an empirical report, which revealed that facilitator competency and quality of delivery are wholly predicated on the possession of an action system and subject matter knowledge (Feist & Rosenberg, 2012).

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However, the finding contradicts that of Mbunda and Ojwang (2021) and Malunda et al. (2021), who found a weak relationship between andragogical quality and learner performance. Vemula (2013) added that a weak relationship was attributable not only to low-quality instruction or course facilitation but also to the uncooperative attitude of some DE learners, who normally do not rehearse their teaching skills very well before attending face-to-face sessions for assessment (Amina, 2015). According to Mbwesa (2014), thorough possession of relevant course content knowledge and delivery methods by course facilitators has a significant and positive relationship with trainees' performance. The findings also corroborate the theory of constructivism, which emphasizes the active role of learners in constructing their own skills and competencies based on experiences like teaching practice, where learners enjoy the latitude to construct their own knowledge predicated on a supportive instructional environment that is embedded in interaction and scaffolding that is gradually removed as learners internalise knowledge and skills (Fitri, 2017). Additional empirical reports on Constructivist Theory and academic performance showed a strong correlation between learner performance and their sense of determination in instructional performance in DE (Aqda et al., 2011; Graham & Vaughan, 2022; Mukhoiyaroh & Aziz, 2024). This attests to the fact that learners in DE are likely to achieve a high level of instructional performance when andragogical approaches are intrinsically driven and aligned with their performance needs, mediated by empathetic and encouraging course facilitators rather than by controlling or dictatorial figures (Aldrup et al., 2022). It is also significant to observe that the total contribution of the independent variables to the variance in the dependent variable is 0.738, with an adjusted R2 of 0.736. This indicates that the predictors of instructional performance could explain 74 percent of the variance in trainee-teacher instructional performance. This means, quite apart from the entered predictors of instructional performance, other variables that were not covered in this study have a chance of contributing to the remaining 26 percent of trainee-teacher instructional performance.

Finally, the results also show a weak but statistically significant relationship between infrastructure and trainee-teacher instructional performance ($r = 0.073$, $p < 0.001$). This correlation indicates a statistically significant but weak relationship between the two variables, with infrastructure being the weakest contributor to trainee-teacher instructional performance [$\beta = 0.260$ (0.027), $p < 0.000$], representing only 26 percent. This finding contradicts some previous empirical reports by Walters (2002) and Agyei et al. (2024), who found that the infrastructure of institutions of higher learning had the strongest and statistically significant positive relationship with trainee-teacher performance. Therefore, tertiary DE regulation in terms of ordering the shutdown of senior high schools used as learning centers for face-to-face sections by universities should not be driven only by infrastructure quality (desk quality and classrooms) and its parity with that of conventional systems. The question of trainee-teacher instructional performance, according to the findings of this study, is not predicated solely on the quality of institutional infrastructure.

Any regulation, therefore, based solely on infrastructure quality and parity with traditional systems is at variance with a meta-analysis applying Simonson's Equity Theory, which has shown that, in DE, ensuring equity is what is relevant, not equality, which is impossible to attain (Egorov et al., 2021). Infrastructure, though very important, should not dictate the pace of interventions and policies aimed at improving trainee-teacher instructional performance in DE; rather, andragogical approaches and quality lesson evaluation and feedback by course facilitators should drive all targeted interventions aimed at improving teacher-trainee instructional performance.

5.1. Study Limitations

The study should have included all final-year distance students (education and business trainees), but this was not done. The limited area of study (teacher trainees) indicates that the findings cannot be generalized beyond the 34 education study centers.

The study would also have been more all-encompassing if a sample of private universities had been included to facilitate effective comparative analysis. This would have promoted in-depth knowledge and understanding of trainee

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teachers' instructional performance. Therefore, the results of the study can best be generalized to the target population of the study only. Any generalization of the findings of this study to other groupings with similar characteristics must, therefore, be done with caution.

5.2. Implications for Policy and Practice

It is anticipated that the outcome of this study will serve as a blueprint for universities mandated to train teachers via DE. It would also enlighten stakeholders on issues affecting the quality of learning and instruction in the delivery of distance education in developing economies. It is further hoped that the outcome of this study will inform both governmental and institutional policies on the direction, prospects, and future development of the quality of DE by creating quality andragogical evaluation systems comparable to those of conventional systems to ensure equity and a high-performance level among teacher-trainees in DE. Also, designers and instructors of distance education may benefit from using this research to create more effective learning environments specifically designed to accommodate a variety of individual differences and ensure a high level of instructional evaluation quality and trainee-teacher instructional performance. Furthermore, this study would serve as a guide to planners and implementers of DE programs in formulating policies on structuring and reorganizing the content of their programs to meet the current and specific needs of their trainees.

6. CONCLUSIONS

The study revealed that facilitators' instructional evaluation and andragogical strategies significantly predicted trainee-teacher performance. The findings imply that trainee-teachers will consistently demonstrate high levels of professional competence in lesson objectives and core point statements in lesson plans, teaching methodology, and delivery, so long as course facilitators offer efficient, quality evaluation and feedback to trainees and demonstrate a high level of andragogical skills in instruction.

The result also shows that infrastructure quality minimally predicted the instructional performance of trainee-teachers. The study, therefore, concludes that distance educational institutions should consciously and consistently organize periodic seminars and workshops to update the andragogical skills and instructional evaluation capacities of facilitators to be commensurate with current trends, enabling them to remain competitive and relevant worldwide.

7. RECOMMENDATIONS AND SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

The findings that emerged from the study indicated that a significant andragogical approach was the best predictor of trainee-teacher instructional performance, followed by lesson evaluation. However, there was no statistically significant correlation between infrastructure and trainee-teacher performance.

This means that trainee-teachers are satisfied with the teaching techniques that facilitators employ to teach and train them. Universities offering DE should, therefore, motivate their course facilitators to continue the good work they are doing in quality evaluation and their andragogical approaches to equipping trainees with quality instructional skills. Also, the study recommends that institutional infrastructure, though it may be very important, should not dictate the pace of programs aimed at improving trainee-teacher instructional performance in DE; rather, andragogical approaches and facilitator-led lesson evaluation and feedback should drive all such targeted interventions. Furthermore, this study adopted a descriptive design and thus failed to establish a causal relationship between the studied variables.

Future researchers, therefore, should employ longitudinal studies and experimental designs to explore causal relationships between the studied variables over time.

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Institutional Review Board Statement: This study was approved by the Institutional Review Board of the University of Cape Coast, Ghana under protocol number (CES/ERB/CR/VoI1/004), in December 2023.
Informed Consent Statement: Written informed consent was obtained from all participants through signed consent forms prior to data collection. The ethical considerations addressed in this study included voluntary participation, informed consent, anonymity, and confidentiality. All participants were informed of the study's objectives and how the findings would be used. To ensure participants' anonymity and confidentiality, no names or personally identifiable information were collected through the research instruments, thereby ensuring that individual responses could not be traced back to specific participants.
Transparency: The authors state that the manuscript is honest, truthful, and transparent, that no key aspects of the investigation have been omitted, and that any differences from the study as planned have been clarified. This study followed all writing ethics.
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