

# MUSTER

Multi-Site Teacher Education Research Project

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**Discussion Paper**

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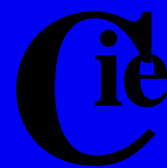
Learning to Teach in Ghana:  
an Evaluation of Curriculum  
Delivery

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South Africa  
Trinidad &  
Tobago



## **Multi-Site Teacher Education Research Project (MUSTER)**

MUSTER is a collaborative research project co-ordinated from the Centre for International Education at the University of Sussex Institute of Education. It has been developed in partnership with:

- The Institute of Education, University of Cape Coast, Ghana.
- The Institute of Education, The National University of Lesotho.
- The Centre for Educational Research and Training, University of Malawi.
- The Faculty of Education, University of Durban-Westville, South Africa.
- The School of Education, The University of the West Indies, St. Augustine's Campus, Trinidad.

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MUSTER is focused on generating new understandings of teacher education before, during and after the point of initial qualification as a teacher. Its concerns include exploring how new teachers are identified and selected for training programmes, how they acquire the skills they need to teach effectively, and how they experience training and induction into the teaching profession. The research includes analytical concerns with the structure and organisation of teacher education, the form and substance of teacher education curriculum, the identity, roles and cultural experience of trainee teachers, and the costs and probable benefits of different types of initial teacher training.

MUSTER is designed to provide opportunities to build research and evaluation capacity in teacher education in developing countries through active engagement with the research process from design, through data collection, to analysis and joint publication. Principal researchers lead teams in each country and are supported by three Sussex faculty and three graduate researchers.

This series of discussion papers has been created to provide an early opportunity to share output from sub-studies generated within MUSTER for comment and constructive criticism. Each paper takes a theme within or across countries and offers a view of work in progress.

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## ABSTRACT

This paper reports research into the question: what kind of trained teacher emerges from the initial teacher training system and what areas and aspects of training do graduating student teachers value the most and the least? Using both qualitative and quantitative methods, this paper explores exiting trainees' experiences of training and the curriculum as it is delivered and what they value. Also, in an attempt to understand the instructional practices in the colleges, tutors' lessons were observed and followed by interviews. The main findings were as follows. Despite a range of practices used by tutors, the model of teaching is fundamentally one of transmission. Copying notes and taking exams are central to the learning experience. Tutors felt trainees' content knowledge was weak. There was a general lack of engagement with practical learning experiences and contextualised learning in general. The paper suggests that there is a need for tutors to have more relevant professional development, make use of a wider repertoire of resources and make more use of teaching practice, which is the most valued part of training from trainees' perspective. In general, supervision of teaching practice was primarily understood in terms of the application of methods rather than an opportunity for problematising and contextualising teaching. In this context the attempt to introduce child-centred approaches to teaching needs careful consideration.

# CHAPTER 1

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Overview

In Ghana, the issue of improving teacher quality is fast becoming a key concern in the search for ways to improve education at the primary and junior secondary levels. Within the framework of the Free Compulsory Universal Basic Education (FCUBE) reform programme, new teacher education policies have been put forward in an attempt to improve the quality of trained teachers to effect positive changes in the school system (GES, April 2000). There is the belief that recently trained teachers often lack important skills and qualities that would make them better prepared to handle the new directions of curriculum reform and practice (MOE, 1994). In fact, some head teachers have questioned the calibre of teachers recently produced from the country's training colleges, arguing that they lack the commitment and skills that would otherwise make them into successful teachers.

Underpinning all the concern and remarks about teacher quality in Ghana is perhaps the important question: "What kind of teacher does the school system expect and what kind are the training colleges producing?" Or, to put it in more researchable terms:

- *What kind of trained teacher emerges from the initial teacher training system and what areas and aspects of training do graduating student teachers value the most and the least?*

In this paper an attempt is made to address these and other related questions through a retrospective evaluation of exiting trainees' experiences of training and of the training curriculum as it is delivered. In particular, we seek to understand what value graduating teachers attach to their training in relation to developing their skills and competence as teachers. Also, in an attempt to understand the kinds of instructional practices occurring in the training process, we observed lessons across three training colleges followed immediately by interviews. Our aim was to explore college tutors' instructional practices and the implications they might have in shaping the teacher produced from the training colleges in Ghana.

Using all of these data sources we draw some preliminary conclusions about the quality and effectiveness of initial teacher training in Ghana.

### 1.2 Initial Teacher Training in Ghana: Critique of Focus and Purpose

Recent policy documents and pronouncements by education officials in Ghana indicate that the main objectives of teacher training programmes are: to raise the academic level of student teachers, to increase exposure to classroom experience, and, through specific education courses, make them aware of teaching strategies based on pedagogic principles. Thus, the thrust of initial teacher education in Ghana appears to

be to develop a teacher knowledgeable in the subject areas, and equipped with some fundamental skills of teaching - in effect, a teacher who possesses a critical mass of pedagogical content skills and knowledge which are considered essential to the promotion of children's learning in classrooms. This purpose and focus of initial training is illustrated by the major topics of the methodology courses of the training programme which focus mainly on the following:

- (i) Approaches in the teaching and learning process
- (ii) Techniques of teaching – generic skills and primary practices
- (iii) Planning of schemes of work and lessons
- (iv) Choice and preparation of teaching and learning materials

Again, emphasis is placed on linkages between the development of teaching skills suitable for the teaching-learning environment in the classroom, and on trainees' knowing and understanding the content of the subjects that they have to teach in the primary classroom (Awuku, 2000). Although references are made to the development of processes of teaching and learning and the facilitation of children's learning experiences and processes, curriculum documents are not explicit on the actual processes involved. Rather, the emphasis of initial teacher training in Ghana appears to reflect a *'technical, or knowledge and skills model'* (Calderhead & Shorrocks, 1997: 13) as the dominant model of training. Learning to teach appears to be based on a conception of teacher education in which prospective teachers are taught specific strategies or skills of teaching, often through separated courses, where theory is presented without much connection to practice (Korthagen & Kessels, 1999). This approach to teacher education is about adding to the prospective teacher's store of teaching approaches. Schon (1987) calls this the "technical-rationality model".

What appears missing is an emphasis on the role persons and settings play in the development of the teacher (Feiman-Nemser & Buchmann, 1989) and the overt problematisation of teaching to reflect it as a complex problem-solving task. At the core of the Ghanaian training approach, it would seem, is the epistemological stance that learning to teach is a responsibility requiring the teacher to know and apply an appropriate set of teaching strategies to promote children's learning. It presents teaching as "delivering" knowledge in a mechanical way and reflects a transmission model of teaching (Jessop & Penny, 1998), with little room for the kinds of exploration and reflection on professional practice that could lead to the development of empowered teachers. Moreover, the Ghana teacher education curriculum fails, it would seem, to recognise that learning to teach is a hugely complex task and that the acquisition of specific pedagogical skills and knowledge, although of importance in learning to teach, has little practical value unless adequately integrated into the context of real classrooms and the idiosyncrasies of children's learning. Besides, it is important to note that professional action is often influenced by teachers' own experiences, the institutional setting and the occupational culture within which they find themselves (Helsby, 1996), yet this receives no emphasis.

However, the recent calls for situating teacher training more in the context of classrooms in Ghana reveal the recognition of the role classrooms play in teacher learning and development. Again, what is not clear or explicit, however, is how this shift could lead to practices that will promote the positive interaction of theory, learnt in college, with classroom practice. In effect, there needs to be a clear

conceptualisation of the link between classroom practice and theoretical knowledge acquired at college. Although the model of teacher education in Ghana appears to make reference to the two as working together, the conceptual framework for its integration is not clear.

Another dimension to the issue of the improvement of teacher quality is the important role beliefs play in professional practice. Indeed, research shows that teachers translate their subject knowledge and pedagogy into practice through the filter of their beliefs about teaching (Swafford, 1995). Citing similar evidence, Akyeampong & Stephens (2000) have argued for training programmes to provide more professional learning opportunities relating to the challenges and conflicts that confront student teachers on teaching practice, and to use that as a basis for engaging them in critical reflection on their developing skills and knowledge of teaching.

An argument that is often made regarding developing teaching competence, relevant to the discussion of initial teacher training in Ghana, is that a sound knowledge base and a repertoire of teaching strategies is fundamental to the challenges of producing an effective teacher (Darling-Hammond, 1996). An investigation of the relationship between a teacher's knowledge of a discipline and its lesson structures and teaching routines, conducted in the USA by Leinhardt & Smith (1985), revealed that teachers' lack of exposure to a rich subject knowledge base resulted in their inability to make coherent connections among different topics taught. However, Darling-Hammond recognises the constraints of school conditions on the operationalisation of specific teaching skills and knowledge. Thus, the issue it appears, is not that pedagogical skills and knowledge are of little significance, but that even more crucial are the *processes* through which they are developed and the "hidden" messages they send about what teaching entails. Ultimately, this has implications for the design and operationalisation of initial teacher training programmes.

Improving teacher quality and effectiveness in Ghana needs to take into consideration much broader issues relating to learning to teach, synthesising what is relevant to evolve a model of training that is more responsive to the context and culture of education and schooling in Ghana. The starting point for this is research in teacher education in the Ghanaian setting and this study is a small contribution to this call.

### **1.3 Purpose of this Study**

According to Calderhead & Shorrocks (1997: 5), "any improvements in the quality of teacher education require a clearer understanding of the processes involved and how they are most appropriately facilitated". In this study we aim to provide an understanding of what happens in training, in terms of training resources, processes, and the value attached to them by student teachers. The intention is to use such understandings to reflect on the current ways, as discussed above, of improving teacher education in Ghana. Often the experiences and views of those who are the direct beneficiaries of training are seldom given voice in the consideration of programme restructuring or reform. In this study, we have sought to represent their views and feelings using a survey questionnaire that produced a summary evaluation of the training, and in-depth interviews of exiting trainees that yielded deep insights into the value attached to training. Finally observations of trainers' instructional



approaches were used to indicate the kinds of teaching strategies tutors used in the delivery of the curriculum. Our intention was to examine the interrelation, if any, of espoused principles of learning to teach, as advocated in policy statements and curriculum documents, with tutors' instructional practices.

The data collection and analysis at the exit level (in the third and final year of training) was therefore intended to provide insights into the processes involved in teacher preparation; what trainees value most and what they value least and why, and what college effects impinge on the training process. The study also explored the theory-practice links in curriculum delivery and the factors influencing this relationship.

## CHAPTER 2

### METHODOLOGY

#### 2.1 Approach

In attempting to understand comprehensively the value of training as presented in the exit trainees' experiences of the training process, we adopted an approach that combines survey analysis with interview and observation data; the latter was included to provide more in-depth understanding of what is valued in training and why. The two approaches under one study design may be criticised by some as incompatible because of their different epistemological and ontological bases and initially, we did not intend to combine them in this way. However, upon reflection on what we believe are peculiar and significant socio-political values that appear to have influence on how our respondents relate and respond to formal research inquiry, we thought it wise to draw on the two approaches to build a "true" understanding of the issues under investigation. Moreover, we wanted to point out the danger of simply relying on a survey questionnaire to build broad generalisations of phenomena and experiences within certain world contexts. We would argue that often the socio-political values of African societies and the attitudes they promote present those researching into the lives and experiences of its people with a different set of methodological challenges. This reality required the picking and choosing of a combination of research approaches, across what is often seen as the methodological divide of qualitative and quantitative research, in response to the particular purposes and intents of different parts of our research to enhance the validity of findings and their interpretation.

For example, most respondents in our survey responded to certain questions about the curriculum that suggested that they found almost every aspect of the training and the curriculum beneficial. Our insider perspective alerted us that this could not be entirely so. In fact, during focus group interviews it emerged that there were clearly areas about which they had strong feelings and towards which they expressed general discontent. A possible explanation of this is that often our respondents saw questionnaires as "official" instruments, no matter what assurances were given to the contrary, and this generated feelings of "not letting down" those in authority an attitude often interpreted as respect for elders or those in positions of authority. In effect, power relations appear to have a much stronger influence on how our respondents related and responded to our research question items. We need to point out though, that this was not restricted to the use of survey questionnaires alone. In fact, focus groups were used instead of one-on-one interviews for similar reasons, and even in focus group interviews there was often the need to challenge rhetoric to provide insights into what was really going on.

#### 2.2 Sample

In all, 300 final year students randomly selected from 4 teacher training colleges (TTCs) responded to questionnaires covering bio data, college and curriculum issues,

and opinion items on teaching and the teaching profession. The sample was made up of 75 students from each college. There were 184 males and 116 female students.

The survey questionnaire focused on the exit students' background characteristics, their views about teachers, teaching and teacher training experiences, elicited from their response to structured statements. The first part of the questionnaire covered such items as age, parental education and occupation, respondents' ethnic group and language spoken at home. The second part covered items on college curriculum with greater focus on teaching practice. The third section consisted of 20 structured statements, which covered three main categories, viz. the trainees' perception about teachers, teaching and the training college experience.

The focus group interviews involved 6 students made up of 3 males and 3 females in each session. In all 18 student teachers participated in the interviews. The interviews sought to provide understanding as to what the exit trainees felt they had benefited from most in training and what was least beneficial. For example, questions were asked about the aspects of classroom teaching they felt least prepared to handle and what they liked most about their training.

A classroom observation guide was developed for the college tutor observation. No explicit structure was imposed on the observation. Two observers sat through lessons and produced as detailed as possible notes on the lessons and how they unfolded. No attempt was made to make judgements in the recording of lessons. The two researchers later discussed the written record of the lesson to reconcile details and explore emerging issues. The analysis of observation lessons was guided by two salient questions:

- (i) What kind of teaching and learning activities take place in college lessons?
- (ii) What underlying pedagogical principles appear to inform the instructional practices of college tutors?

Interviews with the tutors immediately after teaching provided further data that enabled us to address issues relating to the second question.

### **2.3 Research Questions**

The key research questions around which the study was organised were as follows:

- (i) How does the college training shape trainees' perceptions of the teaching profession?
- (ii) What is most valued and least valued by exiting trainees and why?
- (iii) How prepared for beginning teaching do exiting trainees feel and how do they explain this?

The rest of the report provides some preliminary answers to these questions. Section 3 provides a profile of the exiting trainees from the survey data. Sections 4 through 8 look at the curriculum as perceived by the students and as delivered in the college, including a study of Teaching Practice and some discussion of trainees' perceptions of the teaching profession. These findings come from three main data sources:

questionnaire survey, focus group interviews and classroom observations followed up with interviews. Section 9 synthesises the findings and draws the relevant conclusions.

## CHAPTER 3

### PROFILE OF EXITING TEACHER TRAINEES

#### 3.1 Who is doing the learning?

In any discussion of learning to teach it is important to bring up the issue of "who is doing the learning" (Feiman-Nemser & Remillard, 1996). Who prospective teachers are in terms of their background characteristics and experiences is important for understanding the domains of experience they bring, which could be useful for their training. Often, this is overlooked or trivialised in the whole debate about models of teacher education.

The ages of the student teachers fall within the range of 18 and 34 years with a large proportion of them (68.3%) between 22 and 30 years. About 31% of the student teachers whose ages are between 18 and 21 years must have started primary schooling at the minimum age of 6 years, had a continuous schooling and entered TTC by ages 16 - 19 years. Only 1% are over 30 years old.

The majority of the students are Akans (84%) and speak the Akan dialects at home (85.7%). Akans constitute the predominant ethnic group in Ghana and generally represent people in the central and southern part of the country. The colleges used in this study fall within this geographical catchment area. This result indicates that the four selected TTCs cater mostly for the people in the localities in which they are sited. 3% of the student teachers indicated that they use English Language as the medium of communication at home.

Almost all the students are Christians (99%). Only two Moslems and one Rastafarian are among the sample. The results further indicate that about 58% of the student teachers belong to the traditional churches, namely Methodist (24%), Presbyterian (21%), Catholic (12%) and Anglican (0.7%). 2% of the students attend the Salvation Army and Baptist churches. Pentecostal church members are about 31%.

The majority of the student teachers received their primary education either in cities (36%) or in a big town (25%). Thus, 61% received their early education in urban communities. A minority, (39%), had their education in small towns (27%) or villages (12%). This information has implications for the type of family life background and early schooling experiences the student teachers enter training with. Limited exposure to rural living has implications for posting policy, orientation and induction programmes during teacher education. Since student teachers are more likely to be posted to rural communities to begin their teaching career, how trainees with a predominantly *urban* early school experience are prepared to teach in predominantly *rural* communities is an issue that needs consideration in the training process. A study by Hedges (2000) examined the importance of posting in becoming a teacher in Ghana, and revealed a profound fear among newly qualified teachers of the consequences of teaching in rural communities. This highlights the more modern outlook of many prospective teachers in Ghana who therefore may find it difficult to

understand the social needs of learners from rural communities and how to meet them. Such teachers may also not stay long in these communities because of the difficulties of fitting in. Obviously this is not an issue for training alone, but even more important for education policy makers.

78% of the student teachers are products of the new educational system (i.e. JSS-SSS graduates) and 22% products of the old education system, which means they went through the old middle school and secondary school system. Of the 64 students who are O/L or GCE holders, 86% spent the minimum 5 years at the secondary school and 14% spent 7-8 years.

Analysis of the student teachers' entering grade characteristics suggests that the TTCs admit students with very weak grades, with likely implications for their academic performance at the college level and their teaching performance at the basic level after training. The weak subject knowledge background evidenced from their grades is an added constraint on the starting points of initial training, as time and energy may be needed to improve the student teachers' content knowledge, before they can guide learning in that subject.

About 76% of the student teachers had weak senior secondary exit grades of D and E or 5 and 6 in English. In mathematics the percentage was 53%. Only about 6% and 24% respectively obtained grades of A and B or 1, 2 and 3 in English and Mathematics. The number of years elapsing before entering teacher training is further evidence, either that teacher training is not an immediate choice after secondary education, or that several attempts are made by some to improve their grades before qualifying for teacher training. In all about 47% had to wait between 1 to 4 years before gaining admission into a teacher training college, whilst 48% gained admission into training college immediately after their senior secondary education. The remaining 5% and 3.4% of the students made their grades in English and Mathematics respectively between 1989 and 1992. These students might have stayed at home for so long either because they had not decided early to train to be teachers or might have been unsuccessful in several attempts to enter TTCs.

### **3.2 Prior Teaching Experience**

About 80% of the exiting student teachers had never taught before entering training college. Only 15% and 4% had done some teaching at the primary and junior secondary levels respectively and 1% had a year's teaching experience at both levels. This means that most of them do not bring any practical experience relevant to the training, with implications for the content and model of training.

### **3.3 Family and Socio-economic background**

30% of the students' family members are teachers, with the breakdown as follows: 28% of uncles, 27% cousins, 23% of fathers and 22% of mothers. 18% and 17% of their brothers and sisters respectively were teachers. 54% of student teachers' mothers had no education at all or were educated up to elementary school level only. 29% of their fathers are also within this category. About 43% and 45%, of mothers

and fathers respectively have second cycle level education, that is: secondary school, O / A levels, teacher training, vocational technical and nursing schools.

The survey results reveal that more than half of the students' mothers are semi-literates and only a small percentage of the mothers (3%) and fathers (27%) have either first or second university degrees. The student teachers' parents' occupations are revealing and support the evidence of their educational background. About 61% of their mothers are engaged in various low-paying entrepreneurial jobs like petty trading and various forms of tradesmanship - baking, seamstressing, farming and fishing activities. Fewer of the fathers fall within this category, representing 35%. About 30% and 38% of the mothers and fathers respectively are in the civil service, which includes teachers, nurses and the security services. Bankers, accountants, managers, lecturers, doctors and surveyors were classified under one category as "other professions". Only 1% of mothers and 11% of fathers fell under this level of occupation. On the items relating to family assets the most difficult to possess is that of the car and perhaps a video deck. The two are therefore good indicators of the economic status of the student teachers' parents. The survey revealed that 28% of parents own cars and 45% owned video decks.

A World Bank report points out that poverty in Ghana is '*concentrated among two socio-economic groups – food crop farmers and self-employed*' (World Bank, 1995: 45). With about 61% of mothers' and 35% of fathers' occupation within this socio-economic classification, many student teachers can be described as coming from a relatively poor socio-economic background. The other evidence that about 43% and 45% of fathers and mothers respectively have second cycle education level, 30%-40% of parents have civil service jobs, and that about 28% own cars, also indicate a significant number of parents of a lower middle class background. Though they are relatively privileged if one compares them to the national figures, these parents, by Ghanaian living standards, could still be considered to be in a weak socio-economic position. Given the above figures, it is clear that only a small proportion of student teachers, would have parents with strong financial and economic backgrounds. This means that for many student teachers their immediate families may be unable to provide financial support at the early stages of their career, where such support may be most needed. In Ghana, the early stages of a teacher's career can be financially the most challenging since salaries are often delayed for up to a year due mainly to bureaucratic and administrative bottlenecks. When viewed against the backdrop of most early teaching postings being to economically deprived areas of the country this must be a big source of concern for the beginning teacher.

### **3.4 Discussion**

In conclusion, the profiles of the exiting student teachers reveal the following:

- Most had very little teaching experience prior to entering training college,
- Many generally possessed weak entry grades in English and Mathematics,
- Family socio-economic status reveals many of their parents in low-paying entrepreneurial jobs.
- Early schooling experiences for most was in more urban communities.

It is difficult to know how the profile status of the exiting student teachers will impact on their early years of teaching. Nevertheless it is reasonable to believe that certain aspects of this background profile will contribute to the development of their professional self-identity and image (Bullough, Knowles & Crow, 1991). For example, the fact that most Ghanaian student teachers are most likely to start their first teaching career in a rural community, when they lack a background of schooling and growing up in such communities, will present emotional and psychological challenges to them. Thus it is important for the challenges of the heterogeneity of Ghanaian school systems and societies to be reflected in the processes of learning to teach. Unlike Western education systems, where the rural and urban divide is not so clear, African societies with their sharp rural/urban divide present an additional and different set of challenges to the beginning teacher that will have influence on their commitment and teacher effectiveness. As our interview data showed, the exiting student teachers' concern is often more about their personal well-being and survival in rural school communities than their early performance as teachers, although that is recognised as important (see Hedges, 2000).

*You may be posted to a typical village where you don't even have a classroom and you have to sit under trees to teach ... but where you were sent to do teaching practice was not a village. And even some of us have never stayed in a village before ... this makes it difficult for us.*

*Before we came here [to college] we thought we are going to be trained ... and we would go out as good teachers and be posted to places where resources will be available so that it will make the teaching easier. Sometimes we see that our predecessors are posted to villages where they will not get the facilities or materials that they will need for their teaching. So all the training they have acquired becomes useless in some way.*

Yet, the initial teacher education curriculum remains overtly silent about issues relating to the development of survival and teaching skills for schools in rural communities. As Calderhead and Shorrock (1997: 18) point out, "*factors within the school, within the curriculum and within the individual ... could potentially influence the professional development of beginning teachers*" [our italics]. We would argue, in conclusion, that what is included in the curriculum needs to reflect who the trainees are, where they are coming from and where they are likely to find themselves teaching in the early years of their career.

Quite often the technical factors are the lenses through which one considers influences on teachers' practice, such as the material and physical resources available at college as well as the pedagogical strategies that teachers are exposed to at college. From the profile of the exiting student teachers we would argue the need for a teacher education curriculum that acknowledges the unique features of the system in which it operates and which responds to the essential profile characteristics of its student teachers. Policy-makers who control or can influence teachers' working conditions need to introduce measures that will, for example, help to alleviate the financial difficulties that many beginning teachers face at the early stages of their career since they may not be able to rely on family financial support. Being insensitive to this may result in



beginning teachers becoming disillusioned with teaching and opting out of the profession.

Coming into training with a weak academic background has the potential of making tutors feel they have a responsibility for raising student teachers' subject knowledge competence, particularly if they see that as central to effective teaching. Although subject knowledge competence is important to teaching, exclusive focus on it overshadows the other important professional learning experiences that prospective teachers need exposure to in their training. How training can achieve a balance in responding to the weak academic backgrounds of student teachers and at the same time exposing them to other important learning experiences is the challenge.

## CHAPTER 4

### CURRICULUM ISSUES

#### 4.1 Analysis of the Survey Results

Survey questionnaire items on the college curriculum focused mainly on resources related to teaching practice. Interview data provided more in-depth information about the content and process of training.

The survey analysis revealed that the student teachers had good *access* to school curriculum resources such as textbooks at the college and school level. However, few *owned* these textbooks (24%), with most either borrowing them from the schools where they did teaching practice (90%) or from the college (22%). Also, some trainees studied the basic school textbooks either in college before teaching practice (44%) or in the schools of practice before lessons (40%). Few trainees reported they did not see and study the basic school textbooks before using them for teaching practice. There was clearly a feeling that curriculum resource materials were in short supply in the training colleges. In particular, many felt more primary school textbooks (95%), college subject course books (94%), reference books (89%) and Education books (79%) were needed in the colleges. The picture painted by this result is that the colleges lack adequate supplies of books and materials for the TTC course in general and the practicum in particular. This is echoed in the comment of one exit trainee:

*Our library is not well stocked with books, that is, in terms of the materials we need in the primary school and JSS, this is just a handful. We also need to have more copies of the syllabus and other textbooks.*

It also appears that the payment of stipends to teacher trainees to encourage them to buy books useful for their training was not producing the desired result. Only 24% of the student teachers actually owned, for example, primary school textbooks.

The new proposals on initial teacher training policy in Ghana place emphasis on the study of the content of primary and junior secondary school subjects. This means that basic school textbooks and other curriculum materials should be readily available and used for training. It would appear that trainees do not experience a good exposure to the basic education textbooks before teaching practice (even though the TTC syllabus emphasises this). Again, even though the TTC curriculum advocates the provision of the link between theory and practice through the study of the basic education books, the shortages in books could undermine the achievement of this objective.

Trainees expressed the view that the curriculum was overloaded and they could not see the relevance of some aspects of the course. As one trainee put it:

*We are doing certain things that in no way we would be teaching the pupils in the schools. We've done so many things which I think are above the standard of children we will be teaching.*

When pressed to explain further, this student complained about the depth of subject content knowledge they were required to learn and wondered what purpose some of this served in learning to teach. It appeared that trainees felt training needed to focus closely on subject matter knowledge pegged at the basic school subject matter level, raising the debate in teacher education of what level student teachers should attain in subject matters in their preparation to become teachers. In Ghana, some teacher educators will argue that trainees' subject knowledge base should be sufficiently high, e.g. post 'O' level, to promote confidence in teaching school subjects. However, we consider that learning teaching requires that student teachers develop deep understanding of a subject's *fundamental concepts* and not necessarily more *advanced* knowledge of it, which can often lead to an overloaded curriculum.

Asked which subjects teachers felt least adequately prepared to teach did not produce a common list of subjects but revealed that this was seen as dependent on one key factor: whether or not the subject had been adequately studied at senior secondary school. Preparedness to teach a subject was thus seen more in terms of subject knowledge competence than any other type of professional learning experience. So, some trainees felt they were least prepared to teach those subjects they had not studied or developed sufficient competence in at senior secondary (e.g. Ghanaian language, Environmental studies). As one trainee explained:

*Imagine someone who did maths at the senior secondary and comes to teacher training and for the first time he is to do life skills and other subjects ... even though he manages to pass them, when he goes to the field he is supposed to teach life skills. I don't think he can teach it well.*

*Like environmental studies most of the times, when we go out we don't like teaching it because we don't do environmental studies here [that is in the training college].*

The feeling of confidence or not being confident, in teaching certain subjects, seems to have been promoted by the way in which the training had been designed. In the second and third year, trainees specialise in two subjects even though they continue to study other subjects more generally. It appears that subject specialisation creates the impression in some trainees that they are ill-prepared to teach those subjects outside their specialised subjects. Given the wide range of subjects primary school teachers are expected to teach, this is perhaps to be expected. However it raises the issue again of whether, in Ghana, learning to teach is being focused on simply acquiring "adequate academic knowledge to the neglect of the wide range of professional learning experiences that are equally important in teaching, particularly at the primary school level. For example, learning how to relate to children in the classroom, how to handle teaching with very little resources available, how to deal with multi-grade classes, and how to motivate people in a community and parents to contribute to children's learning and development, are some of the areas of value for professional learning and development.

The focus group interview did not generate very deep discussions about particular aspects of in-college training that were found to be beneficial or not, and why. Perhaps, the reason for this is simply that training itself does not provide opportunities for student teachers to consider certain deep issues about teaching. Instead, trainees kept returning to two main subjects:

- First, the exposure to subject-specific teaching methodologies (e.g. the concentric method in teaching social studies<sup>1</sup>, methods of teaching fractions etc). The interview data emphasised the value student teachers attach to the accumulation of teaching knowledge at the college level.
- Secondly, their experiences of teaching practice and how that has helped to shape thinking and attitudes towards teaching.

These two appear to be the most significant to them. The classroom observations provided us with more insight into the kind of learning experience trainees are exposed to and we discuss this in the concluding parts of this report.

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<sup>1</sup> The “concentric method of teaching social studies is an approach which uses the home context as the starting point for teaching, moving next to the school context, then to the immediate environment and finally to the wider world context.

## **CHAPTER 5**

### **TEACHING PRACTICE**

#### **5.1 Teaching Practice: General Organisation**

Teaching practice is composed of three segments each lasting one month, thus making up 12 weeks. A school attachment/observation programme for the first year trainees precedes actual teaching practice. This takes place during the long vacation; that is after the first year course and before the second year, and involves lesson delivery observation. This component of the practicum is not assessed. The aim is to provide first year students with an insight into the teaching-learning situation in schools and classrooms.

The District Director of Education grants permission for schools in a district to be used for teaching practice. Students are expected to experience teaching at the two levels of the basic school system – primary and junior secondary. A group of college tutors (normally five), with one as the team leader, is assigned to a cluster of schools in which students undertake teaching practice. Each student is expected to receive at least two supervisions a week.

#### **5.2 Teaching Practice: The Survey Findings**

The discussion of the teaching practice starts with a look at the survey findings and concludes with the additional findings from the focus group interviews.

The survey analysis indicates that the majority of trainees spent between 16 to 20 days (i.e. three to four weeks) on their last teaching practice. During this period about 3% of final year trainees reported not teaching at all; 26% taught between 1 and 4 lessons per week, 22% 5 to 10 lessons per week, 16% 11 to 15 lessons per week, 24% taught 16 to 20 and 9% taught above 21 lessons per week. Officially, on average, a primary teacher is expected to teach about 30-32 lessons a week. The statistics suggests that trainees are teaching fewer subjects when on teaching practice and therefore are not teaching the full range of subjects expected of a primary school teacher. Interview evidence indicated that because of lack of regular supervision, some trainees simply stayed in the school and did very little teaching.

The survey revealed the following general observations about teaching practice:

- The majority of trainees (82%) had their practicum in the primary schools. 18% had teaching practice in junior secondary schools and less than 1% taught in a kindergarten. Since learning to teach at the primary and junior secondary levels makes different professional learning demands on the beginning teacher, the focus on primary level teaching may disadvantage the development of certain important personal and professional skills for teaching in junior secondary.

- The main people who supervised student teachers on teaching practice were the college tutors. College tutors supervised about 86% of trainees on more than one occasion on teaching practice. 68% of the trainees reported that they received some supervision from teachers of the classes they were assigned to teach on teaching practice. The remaining statistics of people who observed them teach were as follows: teachers from other classes 43%, headteachers (42%) and education officers (15%). Although it would appear that trainees are getting supervision from a wide range of professionals, this was not always seen as beneficial. From the interviews, trainees felt that sometimes teachers' and head teachers' suggestions and advice were in conflict with those of their tutors, leaving them confused. In Ghana, no attempt is made to train regular class teachers as co-operating teachers and this may be the cause of the conflicting messages that trainees sometimes receive about their developing practice.
- The survey results regarding the preparations made before teaching practice paint a picture of support from quite a wide range of sources. 88% of preparation came from tutor notes, presumably methods notes that tutors give, 73% came from college micro-teaching activity, 71% school visits and 53% discussion with primary school teachers. Clearly, tutors' methodology notes feature prominently in teaching practice preparation and this reveals the emphasis on knowledge accumulation in teacher training. How all of the other preparatory inputs contribute specifically is not evident and will require much more in-depth study to determine their relative contributions and value in preparation for teaching practice.
- The survey results on what trainees found useful and not so useful in their preparation before teaching practice are not very conclusive as far as relative value to preparation is concerned. For example, about 94% and 89% respectively found discussion with tutors and tutors methods notes useful; this, however, adds to the picture that trainees see "methods notes" and tutors' discussion of learning to teach as perhaps the most significant in their learning to teach at the college level. It is important to point out that these trainees have to pass subject methodology exams before achieving qualified teacher status and that this may be the underlying reason for rating tutors' teaching methodology notes highly in learning to teach. School visits were valued by 83%, discussions with primary/junior secondary teachers were valued by 79% and college-based micro-teaching was valued by 76%. Project work was least valued in their preparation for teaching practice.
- Follow up activities after teaching practice constituted the following: assignments based on teaching practice (68%), individual discussion with class teachers (63%), individual discussions with college tutors (63%) and whole class discussions with methods tutors (56%). The results of the survey on follow up activities after teaching practice suggest that there is a good level of feedback on student teachers' teaching practice experience. This is an area that will require in-depth qualitative study to explore the quality of teaching practice feedback activity in the form of assignments, individual and whole class discussions.
- To improve teaching practice, trainees would want to see improvements in all aspects of teaching practice preparatory inputs. This is hardly surprising and is an

indication of more room for the improvement of teaching practice experience. The following results emerged as to what was needed more to improve teaching practice: more teaching/learning materials (95%), demonstration lessons by tutors (94%), preparation in college (93%), watching experienced teachers teach (90%), follow up discussions in college (86%), school teacher input (84%), micro-teaching (83%), headteacher inputs (78%), college tutors (76%) and number of days on teaching practice (51.3%).

The survey findings on teaching practice create four main impressions:

- (i) What we see is the importance attached to college training but also the need to make learning to teach more practical by providing more school practice context e.g. the opportunity to see experienced teachers at work.
- (ii) A big value is placed on teaching practice preparation in the form of methods notes, although other inputs are recognised as equally important. The trainees seem to be echoing the view that training should focus on more in-depth knowledge of pedagogy as the basis for teaching. This would appear to fit in with the model of teacher training in which emphasis is placed on learning information vital to teaching.
- (iii) Supervision for teaching practice is received from a wide range of education professionals, with the potential for conflict for trainees, especially since there is no attempt to co-ordinate their roles and support for teaching practice. Interview evidence shows that there are often conflicts between the kinds of advice about teaching that trainees receive from heads, school teachers and college tutors
- (iv) Trainee calls for more preparations for teaching practice may simply be an indication of their inability to clearly understand the relative value of each of the inputs towards teaching practice. Why do student teachers feel they need more of everything? Is it an indication of general dissatisfaction with the current inputs into their training? A possible explanation is that the model of teacher training in Ghana does not provide sufficient understanding of the value of different professional learning experiences for teacher development, and that the student teachers' call for more preparation is indicative of the need for a broader perspective on learning to teach. This approach to learning to teach would enable student teachers to place into proper perspective the different roles and values of professional learning experiences. This needs to be given more thought in teacher programme design in Ghana. For example, if trainees are to do projects how can the task be made to support the whole effort of preparing trainees to learn teaching – what should the projects be related to, professional practice or professional knowledge? The more challenging issue is whether all of the different preparatory inputs can be explicitly and satisfactorily developed with clear themes in mind to enrich the whole teaching practice experience.

As was pointed out earlier in this report, the interview data generated much more insights into trainees' experience of teaching practice and is discussed next.

## CHAPTER 6

### TEACHING PRACTICE: THE STUDENT TEACHERS' EXPERIENCES

#### 6.1 Gaps between Theory and Practice

The issue of the relationship between theory and practice and how that might be actualised in the training of teachers is at the heart of the debate about developing effective teacher education. The pressure towards more school-based programmes, or more teaching practice, is a sign that teacher educators and policy makers are appreciating more and more the value of the practical in learning about teaching. It is now recognised that a purely theoretical conception of teacher education, consisting of principles, methodologies and strategies presented without much connection to practice, is a fraudulent representation of real-life teaching. Teaching as an unproblematic activity in which teachers have to rely on theories of learning and communication, and apply proven methods of instruction, often creates dissonance with the real experience (see Kortagen & Kessels, 1999). As we discussed earlier in this paper, essentially the pedagogy of teacher education in Ghana consists of transmitting objectified methodologies that prospective teachers are thought to need to become effective teachers. The programme of teaching practice is therefore seen as an opportunity to apply the knowledge of teaching acquired during college training. This is where we often see the much talked-about gap between theory and practice; field-experience, when properly conceptualised, is expected to narrow the gap between theory (in-college learning of teaching theory and methods) and practice (school-based application of theory).

In Ghana, the teaching practice component of the teacher education programme is viewed as a critical opportunity to relate theory to practice. Thus, we were very much interested in how prospective teachers view this experience and, from their narratives, understand more clearly how we should, perhaps, conceptualise the linking of theory to practice in teacher education.

Student teacher trainees were unanimous in their appreciation of the value of teaching practice in the training. What seems to emerge from their accounts is the realisation that the theory learnt in college is quite meaningless without classroom experimentation. Teaching practice had, as one trainee put it, "exposed us to the type of job we opted for". She went on to explain further that:

*I quite remember my first teaching practice when I was teaching class six, that was the first day. I realised whatever I prepared to deliver in one hour, [ ... ] I will deliver it in 10 minutes. And so the class master told me to slow down [ ... ] He told me I need to ask them questions so that they give me feedback in order for me to know whether they have understood what I taught.*

Another trainee made a similar point:



*Like you just imagine teaching but when you go to the field you realise that it was a wrong thought that you made. You have to work, it is not like how you come to the class and say do this or you have to do that, but when you go out you realise it involves more.*

This latter statement points to some trainees becoming aware that teaching is not simply applying teaching knowledge acquired from college. Trainees therefore felt teaching practice had made them realise that learning to teach was more than possessing ideas about teaching strategies. In effect, they had become more aware that learning to teach requires them to engage in a lot of practical problem-solving, something that is not fully appreciated before teaching practice. Such accounts touch on the familiar debate about theory versus practice in teacher education. Teacher trainees in Ghana seem to be saying, in effect, that teaching practice brought to the fore the real issues about practice, and that this was more than applying theories and knowledge of teaching in real classrooms. Rather, it was about solving concrete and complex problems of teaching and children's learning. Kessels & Korthagen (1996), we believe, have conceptualised the issue of linking theory to practice in teacher education in a way that gives us better insights into hidden issues behind the messages of the student teachers about teaching practice. Kessel & Korthagen (1996:20) make a point which is key to our understanding of what our student teachers were saying, and which is that, "...insight (about teaching) cannot possibly be transferred ... (or induced, provoked, elicited) through the use of purely conceptual knowledge". In other words, conceptual knowledge about teaching is severely limited because it is essentially about hypothetical teaching in sanitised and unproblematic classroom environments. During the focus group interviews, the student teachers kept making reference to the problem of children who could or would not respond to their methods, children's behaviour that defied understanding in simple theoretical terms, and the lack of basic instructional facilities that limited the effectiveness of teaching.

This leads one to the question: how was theory about teaching presented and did it send any positive signals about teaching in real classrooms? What is important and yet appears missing at the college training level, are discussions about the engagement of theory with practice and the implications for actual teaching. College lesson observation revealed that learning about teaching is often presented as an unproblematic task with the whole process rid of contextual realities. This is partly a result of the didactic way in which college textbooks present pedagogical subject knowledge. There are no simple solutions to how one integrates theory with practice in learning to teach, but it seems that there is currently great divergence between the two, leading to an oversimplification of the process of learning to teach. It would appear from the trainees' accounts of teaching practice that there is a big gulf between theory and practice in learning to teach. There is further evidence of this from the emphasis given to the instrumental aspects of teaching, such as lesson notes preparation, teaching and learning aids preparation. There were hardly any accounts of interaction *with supervisors* on the challenges of using these instrumental tools of teaching. In fact, the language of instrumental materials dominated to the extent that the complex interactions of pupils and teachers, and how that leads to effective learning, was completely lost in the discussion of teaching practice with the Ghanaian teacher trainees. Instead, there was more focus on "getting the plan right" as is revealed in the following quotes:

*...our lesson notes are vetted and I think we were doing the right thing, because teachers who come to supervise us in the final teaching practice don't find anything wrong with the lesson notes we prepare*

*...with the teaching practice you go for vetting, vet your teaching aids, the master will tell you I don't like this colour of the flash card, why did you use it and you will be penalised.*

However, the conflicts encountered in "applying methodology", as has been pointed out, were not lost on them, but there seems to be too little dialogue with college supervisors on these conflicts. As this trainee related in his account of teaching practice experience:

*Sometimes when you are teaching you ask yourself, am I teaching the right thing, am I using the **right methods** [emphasis ours]. You see the children contributing towards the lesson but you are not driving at the objective of the lesson, so sometimes you have to sit down two or three hours on a lesson notes [presumably to get it right!]*

Clearly, this trainee felt if things were not going right it was probably because he had not got the method right and this meant going back to the lesson notes preparation to get it right. It is an example of the fixation on teaching as a mechanical performance with the emphasis on applying pedagogical strategies. In conclusion, "... what we need is not so much theories, and other conceptual matters, but, first and foremost, concrete situations to be perceived, experiences to be had, persons to be met, plans to be exerted, and their consequences to be reflected upon " (Kessels & Korthagen, 1996:21). This is what we believe will make "theory" relevant, particularly where it is not imposed as a lens through which one makes sense of the challenges of teaching, rather it is seen as *one* of the tools for helping the student teacher explore and make sense of teaching. There needs to be greater discourse on teaching as problem-solving where the teacher educator's task is to help trainees become more aware of salient features of their experience and not simply to teach a number of concepts or strategic processes. In addition, teacher educators need to help prospective teachers refine their perceptions about teaching from their experiences, and not simply to provide them with a set of general rules to apply (Kessel & Korthagen, 1996).

## **6.2 Teaching Practice Supervision: Tensions and Contradictions**

The interview data also revealed some of the vivid conflicts between what student teachers learn in college and what teachers or heads tell them to do, which underlines the uncoordinated nature of teaching practice supervision. The following interview transcript reveals this tension:

**Interviewer:** *what about teachers in the school would you like them to supervise you more often on teaching practice?*

**Trainee 2:** *Personally, I don't like them coming to supervise us*

**Interviewer:** *Why?*

**Trainee 2:** *Because the first time I was supervised by my headteacher I did not like it [Why?] The class was boring. When you do this, he will tell you not to do that in front of the children, which was not fine. That was my first time I taught in the classroom so she should have known that this was the first time.*

**Trainee 3:** *Sometimes when we prepare lesson notes the headmaster says that it is too long so we should shorten it. ... They should allow us to prepare our notes as we have been trained here [college] They [teachers/headmaster] say we should prepare the notes in such a way that when you are not there somebody can use it to teach so it must involve all the activities.*

**Trainee 4:** *Not all of them (school teachers) are trained teachers, so some even go contrary to what we've been taught here, others don't have their scheme of work. If we want the scheme of work to plan our teaching they will tell you they don't have any scheme of work, go and choose your own topic and teach*

These accounts reveal the lack of proper management of teaching practice to maximise the learning experience. We would argue that the centrality of a technical approach in the expectation and practice of teaching, as depicted in the accounts of the student teachers, is a reflection of the ethos of initial teacher training in Ghana. The image of learning to teach based predominantly on the application of "appropriate" procedures is probably a consequence of two factors. The first is the pedagogy of learning to teach as espoused in college textbooks and tutors' methods notes. The second, it appears, emanates from tutors' teaching approaches that are predominantly didactic. Classroom observations revealed an overemphasis on a transmission approach to learning about teaching. The external examination further legitimised this learning approach with its focus on standardised pedagogical knowledge. Missing in all of that is the problematisation of teaching which would lead to greater awareness of teaching as a problem-solving activity.

Some trainee experiences tell of difficult situations in classroom practice that are, potentially, a source of learning about teaching as a problem-solving activity. Unfortunately, this appears to be relegated to the background. Some of the difficulties recalled by the student teachers were centred on the following: problems of learning readiness, pupil absenteeism, lack of instructional resources etc.

In conclusion, it is clear that teaching practice more than anything else confronted the trainees with the realities of teaching. Judging from the trainees' discussion about teaching practice, we can conclude that although they perceive it as rewarding, more could be done to improve the benefits to their professional learning and practice. Practising teachers and college tutors need to clarify their roles in the support they give to trainees on teaching practice, and focus more specific discussions on pedagogical strategies and their implications for practice.

## CHAPTER 7

# STUDENT TEACHERS' BELIEFS ABOUT TEACHING AND THE PROFESSION

### 7.1 Introduction

Using a rating scale, an attempt was made to assess the final year student teachers' beliefs about teaching in order to understand what attitudes and knowledge of teaching they might have developed in the process of learning to teach.

In the questionnaire, student teachers were asked to respond to a four-point Likert-type scale with the following rating: "strongly disagree" (1), "disagree" (2), "agree" (3) or "strongly agree" (4) on statements about teaching and the teaching profession. The statements can be categorised into three main themes:

- (i) Perception of professional practice.
- (ii) Perceptions of the status of the teaching profession.
- (iii) Perceptions of teachers' personality traits.

### 7.2 Perceptions of Professional Practice

Generally most of the final year trainees agreed that:

- It is difficult to teach children of different abilities unless they are grouped by ability (82.7%);
- School children learn best in small groups (94.3%);
- Teachers can improve the academic performance of slow learners (87.3%);
- School pupils learn more from asking questions than listening (91.4%);
- The most important thing a teacher can do is to teach pupils the facts that they need to know (75%);

The trainees seem to be emphasising the essence of group work, while at the same time indicating that teaching and learning should be interactive. This is most likely to be the result of the emphasis on child-centred and activity-based pedagogies espoused in course textbooks e.g. Mathematics and Education textbooks, and college learning. It is quite difficult to draw any firm conclusions from this about their developing practice, as often what teachers say in an educational context does not correspond to what they do in the classroom (Keddie, 1971 in Jessop & Penny, 1998). Nevertheless, these student teachers show a clear inclination towards more interactive approaches to teaching and learning. Organisation of group work, however, poses challenges to the Ghanaian teacher due to the constraints of classroom space and instructional materials which tend towards teacher-centred teaching (Fobih, Akyeampong & Koomson, 1999). In other words, student teachers get messages about group work and didacticism from college, but group work is difficult to practice in school and

didacticism easy to practice. It is a classic case of the activity of learning to teach becoming dislodged from its sociological context.

Also, student teachers hold a strong sense of teaching as giving information, which is more likely a reflection of their professional self-image as teachers than an important objective of teaching. This contradicts their espousal of group-work and the activity-based approach to learning discussed earlier and raises a number of questions. Where does this strong transmission view of teaching originate? Is this a view carried into training or nurtured by training? What are these student teachers most likely to do in classrooms: activity-based teaching or teaching through transmission? More research will be needed to understand clearly how these perceptions play out in practice.

Other images of professional practice expressed by trainees include:

- Caning is necessary to maintain discipline (55.7%);
- Caning will not help children learn better (76%);
- It is not difficult to bring changes in school as a teacher (65%);

Cane use by teachers in Ghanaian schools is quite common even though official policy restricts its use only by headteachers under special circumstances. What is encouraging from the evidence of the survey is that student teachers generally do not see the cane as a tool for promoting learning, although a similarly firm conclusion can not be reached about cane use to maintain discipline (55.7%).

### **7.3 Images of the Teaching Profession**

As many as 73.3% of the trainees consider teaching to be more difficult than many other jobs they could do. This raises the question of their commitment to staying in teaching, and what contribution learning to teach makes towards developing this feeling. Committed teachers may find teaching more interesting, and interest in the job will most likely compensate for its difficult nature. However, increasing awareness of aspects of teaching, which had seemed unimportant at an earlier stage of training, or had simply not been considered, had led them to have doubts about teaching (Smithers and Carlisle, 1970).

Approximately 60% of the students think that being a teacher is the best job they can get. This statement seems to conflict with the earlier statement that teaching is more difficult than other jobs trainees could do. This perception is more likely based on their honest assessment of their chances to have entered other post-secondary institutions of training for other professions. The evidence from their bio-data indicates that most entered college with weak grades and as a result they may consider teaching as the best of other alternatives.

The teaching profession offers a readily available job for all graduates of training institutions in the country. Entry into TTC constitutes an automatic entry into the teaching profession and offers them job security, which might explain why as many as 67% of the students believe their friends think they are fortunate to be school teachers. 64% of student teachers did not share the view that teachers today are more respected than before. Roughly 58% of the student teachers wished they could get a higher

qualification and do a different job. All of this evidence leads to the conclusion that exiting student teachers are tentative in their feelings towards a career in teaching. It is an issue that we would argue should be considered in the curriculum of teacher education in Ghana

The difference between the positive and negative responses to the statement that "teachers are born not made" is not very great. The ratio is 55:45 for positive to negative responses. This result is slightly in favour of the belief that the qualities of a teacher are natural endowments. If this is so, then a model of teacher education that is developmental and based on a potential for professional growth may not seem very attractive. More research will be required to understand better the root of such conceptions and their implications for training and teacher practice. About 78% of the trainees maintain that both males and females are capable of teaching in primary schools thus indicating that primary teaching is not considered a gender-related profession.

## CHAPTER 8

# CURRICULUM DELIVERY: PRACTICES, PERCEPTIONS AND SHAPING FACTORS

### 8.1 Introduction

In this study it was important for us to observe how college tutors delivered their lessons in the hope of understanding the intent and focus of instructional practices. Observing some tutors teaching, and interviewing them afterwards, provided rich insights into how the curriculum was being delivered and the meanings attached to particular practices. The intention was not to generalise about instructional practices in use in the colleges but to develop deep insight into the kinds of learning experience student teachers might encounter in their training. Nevertheless, they feel the portraits of instructional practices provide a fair picture of many tutor practices, given the constraints of classroom space and examination demands, which we discuss in more detail later.

### 8.2 Methodology

Naturalistic observation in which observations are recorded in field notes to form a comprehensive and comprehensible account of what happened in the classrooms was used (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2000). Classroom observations required the researcher to record the lesson as it unfolded and produce detailed accounts of the lesson in progress. Two researchers were involved in each classroom observation. Afterwards, they attempted to reconcile their field notes and engage in tentative ongoing analysis and interpretation, keeping in mind two questions: what are the patterns of tutors' instructional practices? Secondly, how are student teachers engaged in learning?

In all nine (9) lessons were observed in three (3) colleges – 7 male tutors and 2 female tutors. We need to point out the high probability of tutors' classroom practices being influenced by our presence as we only observed them once. Interviewing immediately after each lesson gave us more opportunity to explore reasons for particular actions and thereby enhanced the validity of our analysis and findings.

Of the nine- (9) lessons five were subject content lessons and the remaining four were "methodology" lessons.

### 8.3 Teaching Subject Content

The teaching of subject content can be put into three main categories, although these overlapped in the lessons observed. The tutors used a mixture of these approaches in the delivery of their various lessons but one of the categories dominated. The categories are:

A *Transmission of Knowledge*

Tutors told students almost everything that they thought students needed to know, with students hardly engaged in active participation except for a few questions for clarification. It was the predominant instructional approach adopted by the tutors, although it varied in terms of degree to which students were asked questions or asked questions on their own volition to clarify the knowledge being presented.

B *Discussion Method/Constructivist Teaching*

Tutors discussed the main ideas and issues with students and the latter were encouraged to contribute to the lesson. Students engaged in debates about the issues with the tutor coming in only when there was a deadlock. Only one female tutor used this approach (almost exclusively).

C *Question and Answer Approach*

Tutors asked questions and used students' answers to ask further questions. Questions were put to different students in an attempt to involve as many students as possible in the lesson. Tutors who used this approach most of the time (one female and one male) explained later that it worked because they had earlier asked students to read material connected with the topic.

Regarding the first approach, often the tutor assumed that students had little or no idea about what was being taught. A good example is the case of the tutor who was teaching "construction of triangles". The tutor told students what to do when bisecting a line; showed how to construct various angles; showed students how to construct triangles (given different conditions); and finally assigned students specific tasks whilst he went round inspecting their work. In other lessons, teachers gave out information and occasionally asked for inputs from students. From the interviews, tutors who used this approach predominantly explained that it ensured good coverage of the syllabus for the certification examinations.

Teachers who used more discussions in their lessons claimed that they were teaching for understanding, since discussions require students to demonstrate understanding through their contributions. They reasoned that involving students in producing, creating or extending knowledge allowed them an opportunity to express themselves in their own way, thus achieving something rather different than merely replicating previous tasks or knowledge. An example of this showed the tutor leading students to debate different types of need in a lesson on "Motivation". Students engaged in very long arguments about what constitutes "safety" when determining safety needs. Later the tutor explained that she often used a discussion approach because it generated limitless information about topics and made lessons interesting. Further interviewing revealed also that she sometimes dictated notes at the end of such lessons because of pressure from some students, as the following extract from our field notes reveals:

*The impression we get from this tutor is that students enjoy her open-ended style of teaching, but at the end of the day expect some more definitive knowledge dictated as notes.*



The two tutors who used the discussion approach explained that they had come to like it because of how a lecturer had used it, and because it had had an impact on their own learning during their training at the university.

In both of the approaches, lessons would often end with tutors dictating some notes for students to write; these were either as short or copious summaries of the main ideas. Interview evidence revealed that this practice emanated from the pressure of external examinations.

Basically, the tutors who used the question and answer method (one more than the other) explained that they expected students to have read about the topic and to contribute to its development. The questions were therefore designed to bring out those ideas and relate to them in the lesson. One of the tutors who used this method in a science lesson asked as many as forty-seven questions in a 40-minute lesson. In addition to this students asked questions of their own volition. One of the tutors later explained that she learnt this approach to teaching from her science methods course in the University when she was training to be a teacher.

#### 8.4 Teaching learning to teach

The main approach observed fits category A, which can be described as: telling trainees how to teach pupils and what to do in different classroom situations. The lessons are tutor-led and students participate by answering questions occasionally put by the tutor, or through demonstration activities in which students may participate. All the four methodology lessons observed illustrated in part or whole this approach. Part of a lesson extract illustrates this more vividly:

[Subject: Religious & Moral Education; Topic: Good Primary Practices]

**Teacher (T):** *What is the first factor when we are to teach religious and moral education?* [Teacher does not wait for answer and writes on chalkboard: textbooks, syllabus, and manuals]. Teacher points out that these do not exist in the primary school so students have to be resourceful.

**(T):** *You can use the Bible, Koran and Traditional Sources.* [Teacher does not explain what traditional sources are]

**(T):** *What other things can you use to teach?*

**(Ss):** *Concrete Materials* [This comes as a chorus response from class]

**(T):** *Why do you students always like saying concrete materials, it is teaching and learning materials, not concrete materials, ... for example maps.*

**(T):** *What strategies can we use for teaching, I mean methods of teaching?*

[Here students provide several answers: e.g. discussion, narration etc.]

**(T):** *At what time do we select a particular method for teaching?*

**(S):** *We select it to suit the topic*

**(T):** [Short lecture] [Field Notes: Teacher provides an example, explaining that for teaching at the primary level the lecture approach is not effective and asks class why?]

**(S):** *Some of the students will know the story and will not pay attention.*

**(S):** *Discussion is good because they already know the story*

[Field Notes: Tutor asks further questions about when it is appropriate to use other methods, such as drama and demonstration. He explains after a few

attempted responses from students the main difference between the two. He explains that they are teaching the subject for a very important reason, that is, not to convert the pupils.]

**T:** ... *teach without value judgement, do you understand?*

**Ss:** *Yes sir,*

**T:** *You should teach using the passive voice and the children should not even know your religion, remember avoid value judgement).*

This tutor later explained that his methodology lessons are often in two phases, where he takes students through the basic methods typified in the lesson we saw. Later he does a few demonstration lessons to illustrate some of the methods he has taught. The final stage is for them to go out and practice it on their teaching practice.

In another methods lesson observed, this time mathematics, a similar approach was used, but in this case the tutor demonstrated the use of a specific teaching and learning apparatus - use of the “multi-base blocks” to teach the place value system to primary pupils. The lesson followed a three-stage process:

- Tutor demonstrates technique using the structured apparatus e.g.  $24+35$ ,  $38+45$ ,
- A few students are asked to demonstrate similar addition problems using the structured apparatus whilst tutor and rest of students look on and discuss the process
- Tutor poses several two-digit addition problems and the class is asked to illustrate their answers diagrammatically in their notebooks. Their answers are therefore both conceptual and symbolic representations of school addition problems.

Later in an interview the tutor explained that it was important for linkages to be made between what he taught in the college and the school curriculum requirements. However, constraints of time and material resources made it difficult to achieve this in practice:

*I have seen that there are a lot of topics in the primary school syllabus but [...] left to me alone, after we have treated place value then we take the teacher handbook and the pupils text book [...] we will then teach them how to go about it.[...] But, what I am saying is there is not enough time to do that.*

This tutor felt that without taking student teachers through the various units in the primary textbook and illustrating how to teach them, student teachers would face difficulties in their school practice

**Interviewer:** *So you think, for example, what you taught today - place value, if they are to pick the P3 course book...You think it will be difficult for them to teach?*

**Tutor:** *Yes, because there they have to consider a lot of activities so because we haven't considered all of these activities like the guy said, you escape some of the units. So if I am able to take them through this one they will be able to treat or cover all aspects.*

**Interviewer:** *So you are suggesting they have to go through everything as laid out in the primary school textbook?*

**Tutor:** *Yes, for example when we are talking about place value, we take P1 to P3 and consider all aspects of place value under that. When we finish with that we take P4 to P6 and discuss with them.*

This conversation illustrates the point that, for this tutor, learning to teach requires teachers to have a store of pedagogical knowledge and skills linked to topics in the primary school textbook. It buttresses the point that learning teaching was, as pointed out earlier in this paper, seen as an additive process – accumulating specific strategies that one uses to teach specific aspects of school curriculum. The lack of "good practice" was reasoned to be because this process was not taking place too well at the college training level.

*Even a friend of mine working with USAID, came here and went to a village called Akunyase and somebody was teaching science and when they asked him why he escaped [omitted] some of the topics, they asked him whether he has been using the teachers handbook. He said because he has been having problems with some of the topics so even if he uses the book [handbook] he won't get the understanding. So as you have seen it is important that we start with them here [college] so that after completion they can handle the books [material in primary textbook].*

Although, we did not witness a demonstration lesson in which student teachers acted as pupils and the tutor as a primary school teacher, two of the tutors talked about it as one strategy they use. Although some tutors do demonstration lessons to illustrate the process of teaching, it appears it is not common practice. The following quote illustrates how one tutor explained its rationale and the sequence it followed.

*What I did today [Religious & Moral Education Lesson] was to help them plan, not to write out lesson notes but, for what ever you are going to teach, all the material put together, factors like the level of the children. I mean all the preparation, which have been done mentally before you even set out to write notes. ... Later I prepare and give them a demonstration lesson based on this kind of discussion, then later, we would have on campus teaching practice, my demonstration lesson would be the basis for their teaching practice. [Religious & Moral Education Tutor]*

Although certain practices emerged from the observations, as recognisable patterns of tutors' instructional practices, this did not appear to be underlined by a common understanding of any particular model of training which they were trying to implement. Each tutor felt he or she was contributing to the development of teachers through their lessons in unique ways that reflected the value they placed on certain aspects of learning to teach. For some, it was a question of attempting to relate theoretical pedagogic knowledge to curriculum requirements of schools, and while for others it was a question of how to ensure students were knowledgeable enough to deliver a lesson. There was a lot of rhetoric about *activity-based* approach or *student-centred* learning but often these were perceived as simply allowing more student

participation in a teacher-centred lesson. Thus, asking students a lot of questions just for them to tell or explain facts was equally seen as activity-based or student-centred teaching.

From the observations in the four colleges, we could infer that for student teachers the main type of professional learning experience they encounter is professional knowledge taught as essential "tools for teaching". In all the lessons observed and interviews with tutors there was very little sense of learning to teach as a complex task, or that it was about the conflicts and tensions of implementing learned strategies. Learning to teach is simply situated around strategies for fulfilling what the school curriculum requires. As far as most of the study tutors were concerned, their job was done if, as a tutor put it, "when we go on teaching practice we find out whether they are doing the things we taught them". Another tutor echoed this rather simplistic view of learning to teach as students possessing a satisfactory level of content and method knowledge that enabled them to function as teachers:

*I am very hopeful that they should be, [able to teach well in the primary schools] because even though I said I am teaching the subject for the very first time, but I know that they have this academic study the first year so they have the stuff and when they are taken through the methods of teaching then obviously they should be able to link the content with the whole thing to be able to teach the kids [Education tutor]*

Such views, we would argue, indicate a shallow understanding of the realities of teaching, but they also raise questions about the training of teacher educators in Ghana. The lack of reference to *performance learning* (Calderhead & Shorrocks, 1997), i.e. learning to teach being centred on actual teaching experience as a critical element in making sense of pedagogical knowledge and skills, is perhaps a reflection of the difficulty that teacher education programmes have in conceptualising the integration of college and school training. It is also about the sequencing of training and how professional learning can be coherently captured, with all its complex features, in one model that engages equally and intensely pedagogical knowledge, performance learning and the assimilation of the two.

In conclusion, the tutors' understanding of professional learning in relation to learning to teach has a lot to do with what learning experiences they provide their students. Where this is simplistic, as the evidence shows, then it also leads to a simplistic programme of training.

## **8.5 Curriculum Delivery: Factors influencing Practice**

From interview, observation and other field data (staff teaching load) three factors could be inferred as contributing to how the curriculum was delivered in the training colleges.

### 8.5.1 Examination Requirements

First of all there is the influence of *external examinations*, which shape students' expectations of learning and add to the pressure on tutors to conform to certain instructional practices. Although none of the tutors directly said they taught the way they did because of the examinations, nevertheless it could be inferred that this was having an impact on their attitudes and actions.

In one instance, it had to do with a perception that allowing collaboration could lead to students copying in the exam. This appeared to influence the kind of learning experience a particular tutor was willing to provide, as the following interview transcript reveals:

**Interviewer:** *Do you encourage students to compare their work? [Why?]*

**Tutor:** *I don't, after I have finished teaching I give them exercise which they exchange and mark.*

**Interviewer:** *So you are saying that during the work they don't do any collaboration. So everybody works independently*

**Tutor:** *When we allow that, when they go to the exam room they will try and copy.*

**Interviewer:** *You believe they must work independently*

**Tutor:** *Yes, especially when I am around*

Time and again during the interviews the tutors alluded to the 'hidden' or sometimes open pressure from students to work in a certain way to reflect examination expectations. In the next transcript interview, we see how a mathematics tutor explains the impact of exams on his approach to teaching. This conversation was in the context of the tutor reflecting on a lesson he had just taught and explaining why he had not provided an assignment and used it as a basis for his teaching.

**Interviewer:** *So why don't you do that, I mean give them an assignment*

**Tutor:** *That is what I am saying the problem is, the time factor. What we did this morning if we want to do that, because of the nature of the exams the students will say "dieba dieba"*

**Interviewer:** *What does that mean?*

**Tutor:** *What will come, [in the exams] so if you are doing anything they will feel you are wasting their time ...*

**Interviewer:** *You think the examination is contributing to that*

**Tutor:** *Very good, because if I am teaching, I will look for, like they are saying "dieba, dieba", so that I will teach them and they will also look for "dieba, dieba" and learn ... so that we would get time to prepare them. If I ask them to do demonstration [using multi-base blocks to demonstrate addition of two digit numbers] without the sketches in their books, you see they won't get anything and the examination they will fail.*

From the last quote there is a hint of the effect of the actual demands of the examinations on the tutor's instructional practice. By ensuring that the students can produce a diagrammatic representation of the demonstration, the tutor felt his students

stood a better chance of answering questions which required them to demonstrate their understanding in this way.

In his 1997 study, Akyeampong found access to, and use of, learning aids and materials in the TTCs to be often non-existent. Many tutors he interviewed explained that providing more activity-based learning experiences was time-consuming and more demanding than the "chalk and talk" approach. Since students pass their examinations via the "chalk and talk" approach they see little reason to change their teaching methods. In conclusion, it would seem that the examination system is a disincentive for tutors to provide other rich learning experiences in their instructional practices even though most of them believe in the benefits.

### *8.5.2 Time Constraints*

One issue that was often raised by the tutors was the constraints of time on what they could actually do. With looming examinations in mind, as well as the overcrowded syllabus and extracurricular activities, there was very little time, in their view, to engage in learning activities that required extensive exploratory work by students. This had the effect of compelling them to resort to lectures and note-taking. One of the things we noticed in the colleges was the interest in pamphlets that had been written by tutors for sale to students. The pamphlets were in actual fact lecture notes using past examination questions as examples and were very popular.

### *8.5.3 Tutors' teaching load*

The way in which teaching is organised has important implications for curriculum delivery. In the training colleges almost all the teaching is organised in a classroom and scheduled according to subject specific contact hours with tutors. This means that often a tutor's teaching load is viewed strictly in terms of fixed contact time with students. A common complaint from tutors is that their teaching load was excessively high and that this made it unrealistic to expect them to provide learning experiences that would potentially increase their teaching workload. It raises all sorts of questions for curriculum delivery in the colleges.

For example, if for reasons of providing rich professional learning for students, tutors are encouraged to provide a wider range of learning opportunities, what are the implications of this for their teaching load? How should we conceptualise teaching load? Is it possible, or indeed reasonable to reduce tutor-student contact hours and increase student group work vis-à-vis projects, investigations, reflective assignments and individualised study, to take advantage of the possibilities these offer for improving learning to teach? We feel that addressing these questions is important because of their direct implications for improving learning to teach, and for this reason the issue is described in detail below.

## **8.6 College Organisation for Staffing and Workloads**

During the fieldwork we undertook an analytic evaluation of tutors' teaching load in two colleges, to ascertain whether the much referred-to impact of teaching load on instructional practice reflects lack of management efficiency or was an incontrovertible college organisational problem. The teaching loads of tutors in two

of the study colleges, WTC and ATC, are discussed in more detail. The distribution of students on each of the programmes in the two colleges used for this analysis is shown in Table 8.1.

The overall staff student ratio is as follows: WTC – 1:15, ATC – 1:21. WTC and ATC run slightly different programmes

**Table 8.1: Tutors and Student Distribution by Number in Each Programme for 1999/2000**

College	No. of tutors*	Programme/Number of students			
		GTTP	PTP	SSP	Total
WTC	45	500		197	697
ATC	35	470	256	-	736

(Notes: \*Number of tutors excludes Principals of the colleges; GTTP – General Teacher Training Programme, PTP – Primary Training Programme, SSP – Subject Specialist Programme)

### 8.6.1 Official Teaching Load

The Ghana Ministry of Education (MOE) policy on staff recruitment stipulates that staff-student ratio should be 1:15 and in addition tutors should teach between 32 – 36 periods a week (a teaching period is equivalent to 40 minutes). It is believed that this arrangement allows for more effective and efficient management and delivery of curriculum in the training colleges. Based upon this policy, ATC has a high staff-student ratio 1:21 and WTC a ratio of 1:15 which satisfies the official requirement.

If one makes the assumption that a tutor teaches *different* student groups of 15 for each period, the following results can be deduced. For a staff-student ratio of 1:15, then a tutor has to be in classroom teaching contact with a minimum of 480 students (15 students per period x 32 periods) and a maximum of 540 students (15 students per period x 36 periods) a week. This actually results in an official teaching load in *student-hour* terms ranging from 320 per week to a maximum of 360 student-hours per week.<sup>2</sup> . What is the actual teaching load in the colleges and how do they compare with the official figures?

### 8.6.2 WTC

Using *actual* teaching loads data and following similar calculations it is seen that the average teaching load in student-hours for WTC is 458. The estimated contact time with students is 12, the average number of periods per week is 17 (ranges from 3 –18) and, on the average a tutor is engaged in teaching in a week 278 student teachers. Thus, although WTC tutor-student ratio falls within the MOE stipulated figure, it appears that a tutor in this college has a bigger teaching load. However, the number

<sup>2</sup> Student-hours appears to provide a better picture of workload. Each period of 40 minutes for a 32 or 36 period schedule works out to be a minimum of 21.3 contact hours and a maximum of 24 contact hours respectively. In student-hours terms this is between 320 – 360. (i.e. 21.3 x 15) Therefore the higher the value of student-hours the greater the work load because of the number of students to deal with and its implications for the organisational demands of student learning.

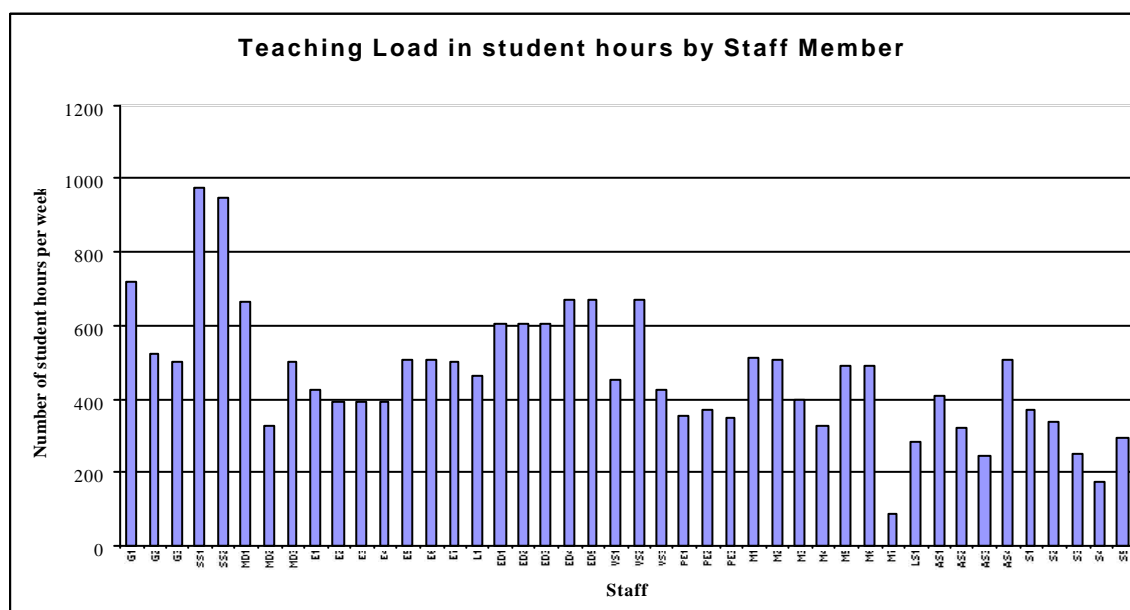
of periods suggest that tutors have much fewer periods than the expected MOE figure and teach on average a student class size of 40.

The real picture emerging from an analysis of individual teaching load reveals that some tutors carry heavier teaching loads than other tutors do. In effect, the teaching of such large class sizes, and often *different level* classes (almost all tutors teach both students in the first and second years and therefore have at least two different group levels to teach) has workload implications. To provide, manage and monitor professional learning, using a wide and varied range of instructional strategies will make extra demands on the tutors' time and effort.

Further analysis reveals that even though tutors in WTC do not make the minimum MOE teaching requirement of 21 hours a week (on the average they make 12 hours), 71% of them have teaching loads above the maximum requirement of 360 student-hours a week. The teaching loads of WTC are plagued with inefficiencies in the number of periods allotted to tutors as well as the number of tutors engaged to teach. For, example, in the social studies department increasing the number of tutors from the current 2 to 3 reduces contact period from 23 hours to 15.5 hours. In order to reduce such teaching loads, classes must either be combined or more tutors engaged to teach social studies. The disadvantage of combining classes is that the lecture method comes to be regarded as more attractive and where learning experiences being developed do not lend themselves to that approach, then it undermines effective learning to teach.

Figure 8.1 below shows the staff teaching loads in terms of contact hours and student teaching hours delivered by the teaching staff (excluding the Principal and Vice-Principals) in the subjects offered in WTC.

**Figure 8.1: Teaching load in student hours by staff member**





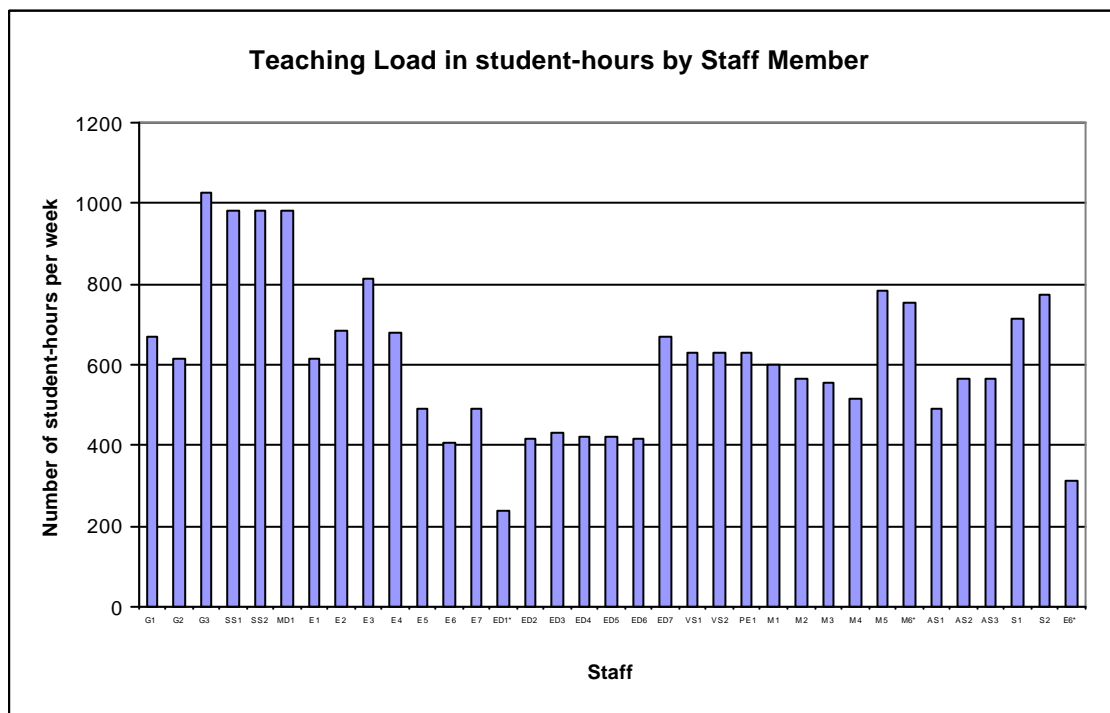
### 8.6.3 ATC

In ATC none of the tutors is able to meet the MOE minimum teaching load of 32 periods a week. Also ATC's tutor-student ratio exceeds the official requirement.

Figure 8.2 below shows the staff teaching loads in terms of contact hours and student teaching hours delivered by the teaching staff (excluding the Principal and Vice-Principals) in the subjects offered in ATC.

The *actual* teaching load analysis for ATC reveals the following information. The number of student teachers a tutor is in contact with in a week ranges from 51 to 736. The average is 363 student teachers a week, a figure much higher than that of WTC. Tutors teach on average 7 classes in a week and most likely at least at two different levels. The average class size is 52. The teaching load in student hours a week of 614 is considerably higher than WTC. By the MOE requirements however, ATC tutors do not have sufficient student contact hours. On average it is 12 hours (MOE minimum based on a staff-student ratio of 1:15 is 21 hours). However, in *actual* contact hour terms the majority have teaching loads far above the maximum of 360 student-hours a week (71% in WTC and 97% in ATC). This means that the majority does indeed have a heavy workload when this is viewed in student-hour terms.

**Figure 8.2: Teaching load in student-hours by staff member**



(Notes: E6 belongs to two different departments; E1 and M6 are Vice-Principals of the College)

#### 8.6.4 Some policy implications

Recruitment of staff is done exclusively by the Principal of a College whose only guiding rule is to keep within the officially recommended staff-student ratio of 1:15. This leads to situations where some departments are understaffed and overburdened whilst others are overstaffed and under-utilised. For example, although WTC has the full complement of staff (using the 1:15) ratio, the Social Studies department has only two tutors teaching a total of 70 periods a week, whereas the Science department has five tutors teaching a total of 48 periods a week. The Physical Education department has three tutors sharing a total of 27 periods a week. It would appear from the analysis of teaching load in the two colleges that the problems emanate from both organisational and curriculum demand and that both policy-makers and college administrators have a role to play in improving the situation.

Issues about staff-tutor ratio and tutors' workload are complex and their resolution may not be simple as they raise a lot of challenges that touch on policy, politics and practice. Nevertheless, any serious attempt to improve curriculum delivery so as to yield positive professional learning outcomes will need to face the challenges it presents. Certainly more research into this is required, particularly analysing data from all the 38 teachers' training colleges in Ghana to see the patterns that emerge, which colleges are managing better and why. Even more useful will be to undertake a comparative analysis of different models of staff-student ratios based on scenarios of the *ideal* and *typical*.

The issue of tutors' efficiency and effectiveness in delivering the curriculum cannot be detached from the issue of teaching load and its implications. For example, forms of assessment such as short essays, group/individual reports, term papers, and projects, which reflect the wide range of professional learning experiences, that training would want to foster, would be very difficult to achieve. Again, the large numbers of students as well as the possibly different classes tutors teach makes it difficult for more one-to-one or small group learning situations to be encouraged.

## CHAPTER 9

### CONCLUSIONS

#### 9.1 Reflections on Learning to Teach in Ghana

Learning to teach involves a whole range of professional learning experiences, which begin at the initial training phase and continue well into the teacher's professional career. In this report we have been evaluating the training process in Ghana from several angles, examining the background characteristics of exiting trainees, their views and experiences of college training and teaching practice. We have also reported on the instructional practices of some tutors, and finally an analytic evaluation of tutors' teaching load in two colleges.

Pulling together all of the evidence from this range of data sources, the following issues appear critical to the debate about improving teacher quality in Ghana. The study has revealed that the model of training is fundamentally a *transmission* model with emphasis on acquiring teaching knowledge and skills considered essential for teaching. The tutors we observed used a variety of teaching approaches, some of which reflected images of good practice from their training. Their apparent assumption was that the more students "got involved" in the lesson the more effective the learning. However, underlying their practices was the focus on *knowing* which led to tutors often giving notes for students to copy. Copying notes was a central part of the learning experience of students and this was fostered by the examination system. Learning to teach was seen essentially as possessing some adequate level of subject matter knowledge and the pedagogical strategies to transmit this knowledge. However, tutors were aware of other approaches to teaching but felt the constraints of time; having "to finish teaching the syllabus" and prepare students for external examinations, made it unrealistic to experiment with other, more exploratory, learning approaches e.g. learning based on assignments, projects etc. Overall, tutors felt that students' content knowledge base was weak and saw this as a weakness in learning to teach.

The college training clearly compartmentalises learning to teach and does not engage sufficiently with the other important aspects, such as practical learning experience, by situating developing knowledge and skills in that context. This may appear to some Ghanaian teacher educators as a sophisticated approach to teacher training and will most definitely have implications for the way in which tutors are trained. At the moment, the training most tutors receive is not specific to teaching in a training college (Akyeampong & Furlong, 2000) and therefore tutors may lack a broad conceptualisation of training teachers that involves providing a wider range of professional learning experiences.

The main resources for learning about teaching are school textbooks, college textbooks and tutors' notes in the form of pamphlets. The survey evidence, in particular, suggests that the majority of students have access to school textbooks from the schools in which they practice or the college library. Most feel however that more

textbooks, especially primary and junior secondary textbooks, are needed in the colleges for easy reference and use. We think it is important for a wider range of resources, such as audio video equipment and improvised equipment, as exists in some teacher resource centres, be made available in the colleges to improve the quality of professional learning.

Student teachers' most valued experience of training was teaching practice in which they became more aware of the gap between theory and practice, "Teaching practice has exposed us to the type of job we opted for – at first we didn't know". This quotation raises for us the question of how much training could do to bridge this "at first we didn't know" realisation gap. Even when we suggested that the introduction of micro-teaching in the colleges could help in preparing them to face the real task, although there was acknowledgement of its value, the importance of performance learning was still stressed as the most crucial.

*I think the outside one [off-campus teaching practice] is more needed than the micro-teaching because I can pretend to be a class one pupil but no matter the situation will ask questions which a class one pupil will not ask. So I think it is not the best idea to do the teaching among ourselves. The best is we go out and meet the people that we are going out to teach, then we deal with them. And we would know their behaviour, the way they ask their questions and if you are teaching then you will know how to do that.*

*Then also if you are someone who is not able to control his temper when you go out and meet the children you will control your temper because sometimes the thing they do in the classroom, if you are not careful you would do something which will break the law.*

These views emphasise the fact that the use of micro-teaching still focuses on the application of methods and that what is needed is more opportunity of learning to teaching through being and not merely doing (Calderhead & Shorrock, 1997).

The interview evidence shows that supervision of teaching practice focuses almost entirely on how well methods are being applied. In relation to the concerns of the student teachers on teaching practice, it will be important to focus support on the problematisation of teaching, but this will depend on whether tutors, teachers and head teachers understand what this means.

The issue about improving the quality of teacher training in Ghana cannot overlook the impact of examinations and tutor teaching load on tutors' instructional practices and students' professional learning. Clearly, the issue of tutor load should be looked at in terms of student-hours. This gives a better picture of load. The rhetoric about reflective, child-centred, activity-based pedagogies for training often reflects a naïve view of learning to teach in a developing world context (see Jessop & Penny, 1998). Teacher education policy makers need to contend with these difficulties that have been identified.

In summary, in the attempt to improve the quality of trained teachers there are a number of key issues that need to be considered. These relate to: resources, the

examination system, classroom space and tutor's own training, the culture of learning in schools and the perceptions, values and practices of teachers in schools.

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