

Challenges of Teacher Education: Implication for Basic Schools in Ghana

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Abstract

Stakeholders of education see Basic Education as the foundation of development and progress in an ever growing Ghanaian society. However the quality of teachers who are to ensure the realisation of the aspirations the societies hold for their children appears to have fallen below expectations. This study thus investigated the entry behaviour and qualifications and reasons why pre-service teachers would want to enrol in Colleges of Education in Ghana. The study adopted a descriptive survey design approach. A sample of 3000 students across levels 100 – 300 were selected through simple random and stratified sampling techniques from 10 colleges of education in Ashanti and Brong-Ahafo Regions of Ghana. Data collected through questionnaire was analysed using frequency and percentage counts and a t-test. The results revealed that most of the student teachers are not ‘good materials’ for teacher education and that only a few of them really have the genuine desire to become teachers. It is thus recommended among others an upward review of entry requirements into colleges of education and interest of applicants ascertained through interviews before admission.

Keywords: Challenges, Teacher Education, Entry Requirement

Introduction

The single most important process that defines life, values, political culture and economic power of a nation, through which its human resource capacity is developed, harnessed and deployed without which a nation has no future is Education (Akinbote, 2004). Education as an instrument of change and national development is a process and the medium for the acquisition of relevant knowledge, skills, and attitudes for survival in a changing world (Bediako & Asare, 2010). Education has thus become one of the most powerful tools known for reducing poverty and inequality in modern societies as it is used for laying the foundation for a sustainable growth and development of any nation.

Basic education is the level of education in Ghana that spans 2 years of pre-primary, 6 years of primary education and 3 years of junior high school (Anuamuah-Mensah Educational Review Committee Report, 2007). It is designed to expose children to a wide variety of ideas and skills and instil attitudes that will help them cope creatively with their environment and stimulate them to be an asset to their country. It is also aimed at developing in the individual the capacity to read, write and calculate. In other words, it helps to eradicate illiteracy, which is one of the strongest predictors of poverty (Bruns, Mingat & Rakotamalala 2003). Thus, basic education is the only level of education that is available in most of the developing countries as well as in urban and rural areas (Akyeampong, Djangmah, Oduro, Alhassan, & Hunt, 2007). This explains why basic education is the largest sub-sector of any education system and offers the unique opportunity to contribute to the transformation of societies through the education of the young ones (UNESCO, 2001).

Effrim

In realising the fact that unequal access to educational opportunity is one of the strongest correlates of social inequality, the Government of Ghana embarked on an educational reform to among others improve the quality of learning and teaching as well as improving access to basic education. The 1987 Educational Reform Programme (ERP) and Anamuah-Mensah led committee in 2002 were aimed at making basic education accessible to all children of school going age irrespective of their social, economic, cultural or geographical backgrounds. The outcome envisaged, is that there has also been a corresponding expansion of senior high schools and tertiary education including colleges of education in Ghana.

The quality of Basic Education has however not kept pace with the expansion in enrolment. This according to UNESCO (2001), continues to be a global concern, yet it is the general belief that the competence of teachers is paramount to the education of the young ones who are the future leaders of every country. It cannot be disputed therefore that, what constitutes competence in teaching is intimately connected with the type of teacher education programmes available for preparing basic school teachers. Judging from the trend of pupils' performance from Basic Education Certificate Examination (BECE) in Ghana, one of the problems of teacher education for basic schools in Ghana is the poor quality of teachers produced from the Teacher Training Colleges, now Colleges of Education, (Asare & Nti, 2014). Acheampong (2003) and Asare (2011) had indicated that Ministry of Education had suggested that teacher quality development at pre-service and professional working environment of teachers require most attention.

Teacher education refers to the policies and procedures designed to equip prospective teachers with the knowledge, attitudes, behaviours and skills they require to perform their tasks effectively in the classroom, school and wider community.

The Diploma in Basic Education Certificate (DBE) awarded by the Institute of Education, Cape Coast has now become the minimum teaching qualification for teachers at the basic school level in the country. This implies that no basic school teacher in Ghana is expected to possess a teaching qualification lower than the DBE. This could be regarded by no mean achievement as a bold attempt at improving the quality of teachers who will be able to help achieve the aspirations the nation hold for its young ones, the future leaders. In order to achieve this, the then Teacher Training Colleges have been upgraded to Colleges of Education with Master's degree as the minimum qualification for the tutors in those Colleges of Education. In addition, the intake of the would-be teachers have also increased from 9125 to 14685 as at 2016 (Teacher Education Division, 2010). This has led to a mass production of DBE teachers for basic schools. One is therefore hopeful and has the conviction that quality has not been compromised for quantity in our effort and desire to have DBE teachers for all basic schools Ghana.

The entry requirement for admission into colleges of education in Ghana between 2006 and 2008 was aggregate 24 for WASSCE. In his address to International Conference on Teacher Education in the Sub-Saharan African on July 23, 2008 hosted by the Faculty of Education, University of Cape Coast, Cape Coast, Ghana, the director of Institute of Education, Professor J. K. Aboagye called for an upward review of the entry requirements into Colleges of Education from aggregate 24 to 22, (Aboagye, 2008a). This concern was echoed by the Deputy Upper Regional Minister, Mr. Daniel A. Syme, who in his opening address to the 4th Quadrennial Regional Delegate Conference of GNAT on August 28, 2010, called for upward adjustment in the entry requirement for admission into Colleges of Education in order to ensure highly qualified trained teachers are produced to teach and nurture the multitude of Ghanaian students. This, he claimed will bring dignity and respect to the teaching profession, (Owusu, 2016). Currently, the entry requirements for admission into colleges of education stands at aggregate 36.

The poor quality of products of Colleges of Education among other things is attributed according to Effrim (2010) to the quality of students admitted into the colleges. According to him, the lowering of the admission requirements for whatever reasons, has not only affected the quality of the products of the colleges but also the image and prestige of the teaching profession. His position agrees with the earlier assertion of Cockran-Smith

and Zeichner (2005), Darling-Hammond (2006), Imig and Imig (2007) and Rice (2003), that the quality of the entry qualifications of recruits into a profession is bound to affect not only their efficiency and effectiveness but also the prestige of the profession.

Teaching profession in the world including Ghana has suffered disdain among the other professions in the world because it is seen as the last resort for job engagement in societies. In a study that examined student teachers' attitudes to teaching, Talabi (2002) concluded that 87% of undergraduate student teachers in the Faculty of Education in one of the first generation Universities in Nigeria would not like to teach at the basic school level. He maintains that, the would-be teachers see basic school level as lower than their aspirations. Similarly, he found out that among those who would like to teach at all, 88% would not like to remain in teaching for a long time. Through the author's interaction with students of Faculty of Social Sciences of the University of Education, Winneba, it emerged that majority of the students upon completion will leave the teaching profession within 3 years. Should such decisions executed among education students, one can imagine what will happen to students in the other faculties. These observations had earlier been echoed by Acheampong (1995) that majority of graduates would not want to remain in teaching because society perceives the profession as belonging to poor and disappointed visionaries.

Parents, renowned educationists, religious and political leaders are seriously worried about the appalling performance of their children in the Basic Education Certificate Examination (BECE) results country-wide and have cried for the assessment of the calibre of teachers who enrol into colleges of education and on passing out, teach these children.

It is perceived by the Ghanaian society that those who gain admission into colleges of education are the rejected candidates from the universities, polytechnics and other tertiary institutions. They are described as the "left-overs" who do not have interest in the teaching profession. Increasing the entry requirement into colleges of education will impact positively on the quality of products that graduate from these teaching institutions.

Since one of the causes of the poor quality of products of the Colleges is the low entry qualification it has thus become necessary to investigate it. The purpose of the study was investigate the challenges of Teacher Education in Ghana face and ascertain their implications for Basic Schools. Specifically, this study investigated current entry qualifications, entry behaviour and reasons why students enrol in Colleges of Education in Ghana.

Research Questions

The study was guided by the following research questions and the hypothesis.

1. What are the entry qualifications of College of Education Students?
2. With aggregate do pre-service teachers enter Colleges of Education?
3. What is the entry behaviour into the Colleges of Education?
4. Why do students enrol in Colleges of Education?

Research Hypothesis

H_0 : There is no significant difference between male and male students on the reason why they enrol into colleges of education.

Methodology

This study adopted descriptive survey research design. Survey entails a careful collection of data from a representative sample of subjects on some behaviour characteristics or activities. The behaviour of interest in this study is the recruitment of pre-service teachers and it is considered that obtaining information from a representative sample of colleges of education could give a good description of the nature of the variable in Ashanti and Brong-Ahafo Regions of Ghana. The population under study comprised pre-service teachers in the colleges of education in Ashanti and Brong-Ahafo Regions of Ghana. Ashanti and Brong-Ahafo regions were selected because Ashanti Region is a cosmopolitan area exhibiting almost all the characteristics of the regions in

Effrim

the southern and central part of the country whilst Brong-Ahafo portrays most of the activities of the regions in the northern part of the country. The two regions have total a number of 10 colleges of education representing 26% of the 38 colleges of education in Ghana. The two regions used for the study are considered a representative of all the colleges of education in Ghana because they run all the programmes done by all the colleges of education in Ghana. All the pre-service teachers in the colleges of education in the two selected regions constitute the student population for the study. Of the ten (10) colleges of education in Ashanti and Brong-Ahafo Regions eight (8) are public and two (2) are private. Three thousand (3000) students were selected by stratified and simple random sampling methods across level 100 - 300.

Instrumentation

A 25 item questionnaire was developed and used to gather information for the study. This questionnaire was developed by the researcher based on the available literature and research questions/hypothesis. The questionnaire had two parts A and B. Part A which had five (5) items was designed to elicit background information from the respondents while part B consisting of twenty (20) items sought to gather information on the reasons why respondents chose to enrol into Colleges of Education. The Likert-type of scale with a four point response format ranging from Strongly Agree to Strongly Disagree was adopted.

Procedure

A pre-testing of the questionnaire was done using one hundred (100) pre-service teachers from Foso College of Education in the Central Region of Ghana. The pre-service teachers and the college used for the study had similar characteristics of the participants studied. The purpose of the pre-test was to help the researcher have the first hand information on some of the problems envisaged by the respondents about the instrument. It actually helped the researcher to make all the needed adjustments about some of the items on the questionnaire. The pre-testing of the instrument also helped the researcher to determine the reliability of the instrument. A test retest method using Cronbach Alpha reliability coefficient yielded 0.89 after the instrument had been administered within two weeks interval. With the assistance from other colleague researchers in Assessment and Evaluation, the instrument was validated. Percentages and student t-test were respectively used to answer the research questions and test the hypothesis.

Results and Discussion

All the 3000 sampled respondents for the study returned validly completed questionnaires. Of the total number of 1500 pre-service teachers 900 (60%) were males while 600 (40%) were females.

Research Question 1: What are the entry qualifications of College of Education Students?

Table 1: Distribution of Pre-Service Teachers by Qualification

Qualification	Frequency	percentage
SSCE	600	20
WASSCE	2400	80
Total	3000	100

Table 1 shows that of the 3000 pre-service teachers used for the study majority 2400 (80%) of them had West Africa Senior Secondary Certificate Examination (WASSCE) qualification with the rest 600 (20%) having Senior Secondary Certificate Examination (SSCE) qualification.

Research Question 2: With what aggregate do pre-service teachers enter Colleges of Education?

Table 2: Distribution of Pre-Service Teachers by Aggregate of Result

Aggregate of Result	Frequency	Percentage
12	100	3.3
18	200	6.7
24	240	8.0
36	1600	53.3
More than 36	860	28.7
Total	3000	100

Table 2 shows the distribution of pre-service teachers by the aggregate of the results from either WASSCE or SSCE. It is observed that majority 2460 (82%) of the pre-service teachers are admitted into Colleges of Education in Ghana with aggregate 36 and more with minority 540 (18%) enrolling with aggregate 12 - 24. This implies that most of the pre-service teachers admitted into Colleges of Education are of inferior quality or the rejected candidates by the polytechnics and other Universities.

Research Question 3: What is the mode of entry into the Colleges of Education?

Table 3: Distribution of Pre-Service Teachers by Entry Mode

Entry Mode	Frequency	Percentage
Direct	2790	70
Entrance Examination	210	30
Total	1500	100

Table 3 shows that pre-service teachers enter Colleges of Education selected for the study either by direct entry or through entrance examination. Out of the 1500 pre-service teachers used for the study, 2790 (70%) entered College of Education by direct mode whilst the rest, 210 (30%) did so via entrance examination.

Research Question 4: Why do students enrol in Colleges of Education?

Table 4: Distribution of Pre-Service Teachers by Reasons for Enrolling into College of Education

Reason for enrolling into College of Education	Frequency		Total	Rank
	Male	Female		
To satisfy my parents wish	60(2.00)*	100(3.33)	160(5.33)	5
No University/Polytechnic offered me admission	350(11.70)	300(7.0)	650(21.67)	2
It is my personal desire to become a teacher	100(3.33)	300(10)	400(13.33)	3
Pressure and encouragement from peer/friends	82(2.70)	350(11.7)	432(14.40)	4
Use college of education as a spring board for better job in future	1100(36.70)	258(8.57)	1358(45.27)	1
Total	1692(56.4)	1308(43.6)	3000(100)	

*percentages in parenthesis

Results from Table 4 revealed that as many as 1358 (45.27%) of the pre-service teachers found their ways into Colleges of Education with the intention to use college of education as a springboard to further their studies or get better jobs in future. Of the number whose intention was to use teaching profession as a spring board, majority, 1100 (36.7%) were males whilst 258(8.57%) were females. Again, 650(21.67%) claimed they enrolled into college of education because the various polytechnics as well as other universities in Ghana could not offer them admission. This category of people was made up 350(11.70%) and 300(7.0%). Conversely, only 400 (13.33%) enrolled into Colleges of Education as a result of their personal desire and aspiration to become

Effrim

professional teachers. This 'real would-be professional teachers' comprised 300(10.0%) females and 100 (3.33%). It can thus be inferred from the results above that as many as 86.67% of all the pre-service teachers in colleges of education in Ghana sampled for the study are either not good enough for other institutions or chose to engage themselves to teach in the interim.

Hypothesis: There is no significant difference between male and male students on the reasons why they enrol into colleges of education.

The mean scores of the male pre-service teachers on the questionnaire were compared with those of females using t-test as the statistical tool and the results are presented on Table 5.

Table 5: t-test Summary of Reasons for enrolling into college of education by Gender

Gender	N	M (\bar{X})	SD	Df	t-value	Sig. Value
Male	1800	128.75	3.54	2998	12.86	0.015
Female	1200	88.23	1.89			

A test for differences using the independent sample t-test was used to determine if there was any statistically significant difference between males and females regarding reasons for enrolling into college of education. The descriptive statistics obtained, as shown in Table 5, indicate that male college of education students are indecisive and the variation of their reasons not to stay on the job was enormous as shown by (M = 128.75) than female students (M = 120.23). The Levene's Test for Equality of variances was used to determine whether the difference between males and females regarding the reasons for enrolling in college of education was significant. The test indicated that the variances for the two groups: male and female students were equal (F = .092, sig. > 0.05).

From Table 5, the mean of male college of education students (M = 128.75, SD = 3.54) is statistically significantly higher ($t_{(2998)} = 12.86$, $p = 0.015$) than the mean of female (M = 120.23, SD = 1.89) college of education students. This implies that there is a significant the difference in the reasons why they want to enrol into colleges of education to become professional teachers. As captured in the Table 5, the difference was in favour males, meaning that they will want to look elsewhere for better jobs that teaching. The conclusion is that females are sincere to become teachers than males. This is consistent with earlier studies by Bible, Simkin and Kuechler (2008) and Delaere and Everaert (2011).

Implications

The implications of this findings for teaching and learning at the Basic Education level are serious and many. The findings that 1200 (40%) of the pre-service teachers are females is not good enough because according to the Housing and Population Census conducted in 2012 in Ghana, there are more females than males and so if 50:50 male - female is to be achieved then females should be encouraged to enrol in all educational institutions in the country.

The finding that only 18% of the pre-service teachers had aggregate 12 to 24 implies that the Ghana Education Service and Ministry of Education's policy to have only the good products of our senior schools admitted into the colleges has not been met. It seems educational planners and policy makers have to attract the best brains into the teaching field to help in the education process, to prepare the future human resource of the country and to improve upon the existing practices.

It is very appalling and disheartening to find Basic Education graduates who cannot express themselves in English Language or phantom what basic numeracy is all about, Sakyi (2015). Amoah, (2008) could not have put it better when he opined that disaster is almost here and now as majority of the products of our basic schools are neither sufficiently literate nor numerate to be useful to themselves and the society.

Another major finding from the study is that only 400 (13.33%) of the pre-service teachers were in the Colleges of Education as a result of personal desire to become professional teachers. This finding should be examined carefully by the stakeholders of Ghana's education. The reason is that majority of the pre-service teachers in the Colleges of Education are those who only go to colleges of education with the sole aim of earning a living out of teaching. Even those good ones who account for 1358 (45.27%) and want to use teaching as either a spring-board or a stepping-stone to get a better job, do not stay for long in the teaching field as reported by Essel (2006).

It is believed that, as is the school so is the society, and as is the teacher so is the school (Aboagye, 2009). This is interpreted to mean that the teacher is the most important human resource needed to develop other human resources in any given society. The founding fathers of education in Ghana once suggested that, only the good products of our schools should be admitted into Colleges of Education. The poor quality of teachers in our schools culminating with abysmal performance of students at the Basic Education Certificate Examination (BECE) levels in recent years has been traced among others, to the quality of entrants into the teacher education colleges (Duodu, 2005). There had been some suggestions on the need to raise the entry requirements into the Colleges of Education so as to improve not only the quality of the products of the colleges but also the image of the teaching profession (Aboagye, 2008a). The quality of the entry qualifications of recruits into a profession often affects not only their efficiency and effectiveness but also the prestige of the profession (Cockran-Smith & Zeichner, 2005; Darling-Hammond, 2006; Imig & Imig, 2007; Rice, 2003).

Conclusion

The early school years are very important in every child's intellectual development. Therefore all Basic School teachers should be adequately prepared to teach the students with diverse interests, and capabilities. It is not enough to fill our classrooms with students who have passed through teachers' college or the university though, with low grades. High quality teacher preparation is necessary for all Basic School teachers.

One important step in this direction is the recruitment of good senior high school products into our teacher education programmes particularly at the Colleges of Education level. This will ensure that only good materials go into the teaching profession.

Recommendations

In order to encourage the good ones to go in for the teacher education programme for Basic schools, the following recommendations are made:

1. That there should be an upward review of admission requirements into the Colleges of Education and all teacher education institutions.
2. In addition to raising the admission requirements to six credits at WASSCE level, there should be oral and written interview for the prospective candidates into Colleges of Education.
3. Special scholarship/Bursary awards should be made available for such good candidates who wish to specialize in Basic Education. This should cover tuition, books and accommodation for the duration of the programme.
4. Appointment to teach at the Basic school level should be preceded by both oral and written interview to really ensure that only the good and willing teachers are recruited to teach the young ones.
5. Further, the Teachers' Registration Council must license the individual before being offered an appointment.

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Effrim

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