

Student Teaching Internship: A Critical Component of Initial Teacher Training in Ghana

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Introduction

Evaluations of Ghana's teacher education programmes revealed that they were inadequately preparing teachers who will be effective in the classroom. (Ministry of Education, 1993; The Republic of Ghana, 2002; Lewin & Stuart, 2003).

Introduction (Cont'd)

The major deficiency identified was a gap between theory and practice. Much of the gap between theory and practice in Ghanaian teacher education institutions was attributed to the fact that undergraduate teacher education programmes for the past four decades had been based on a model of teacher education which focused attention on the theoretical aspects of teaching and less attention on developing practical knowledge in School.

The State of our Teacher Education Programme



Introduction (Cont'd)

There was, therefore, the need to change the pedagogy of teacher education to for the integration of theory and practice and to make the training responsive to contemporary demands of the teaching professions (Ball, 2000; Leibbrand, 2001)

What about an alternative to the conventional approach?



Introduction (Cont'd)

This led to systematic efforts to reform teacher education in Ghana. The most radical, in terms of locating a relatively greater part of training in schools, and using experienced teachers (mentors) to develop pre-service teachers' knowledge and skills of teaching has been the internship model of teacher education at the University of Education, Winneba (UEW).

The New Teacher Education Programme At UEW

1. 3-Year Campus-based studies
 - i. Content
 - ii. Educational Studies
 - iii. Personal Development Studies
 - iv. Pre-internship preparation

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2. One academic year school-based

During this period, they have the opportunity to teach under the supervision of a more experienced teacher (mentor) and a University supervisor; to take part in all the activities and routines of school life; and to contact its different members (pupils, parents, and other school staff).

- i. Action research
- ii. Reflective writings
- iii. Statement of teaching philosophy
- iv. Preparation of a teaching portfolio

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3. 4 weeks face-to-face

Panel assessment of:

Portfolios
Reflective writings
Philosophies of teaching
Action Research

Objectives of the SIP

The intention is to expose student teachers to the realities of the demands of the teaching profession. The assumptions that underlie the programme are that it will

- ensure attention to the theoretical as well as the practical aspects of teaching
- 'create learning opportunities that are both different from and richer than the opportunities either the school or the university can provide alone' (Cochrane-Smith, 1991:109),
- achieve simultaneous change and renewal in both schools and universities (Rice, 2002).

Achievements/Benefits

- Currently, the University has established partnerships with over 700 schools and trained about 3,500 teacher mentors.

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COLLABORATION

The internship has offered a great opportunity for the University and schools, as well as the related communities to come together in a close working partnership to break down the traditional barriers that have existed over the years.

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• **TIME FOR REFLECTION, EXPERIMENTATION**

The yearlong internship as opposed to the four weeks traditional teaching practice offers student teachers time to reflect, develop and improve. It also gives them time to experiment, discuss and make decisions about future actions and to complete their action research projects in the schools.

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SCHOOL RENEWAL

Opportunities for school renewal and school-based teacher mentors' professional development have also been reported. In some instances mentors have become change agents within the schools as a result of the acquisition of new attitudes and skills directly arising from the internship programme

The way forward

INSTITUTIONALISATION OF MENTORING

Mentor training will be institutionalised by offering accredited courses leading to the award of a Professional Diploma in Mentoring. This will be by distance education, using multi-media packages.

Thank you