

Challenges Faced by Teacher Trainees of Kibi Presbyterian College of Education on “Out- Segment” Programme

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Abstract

The study examined the out-segment component of the 3-Year Diploma in Basic Education Programme offered in Colleges of Education with the intent of identifying its challenges. The descriptive survey method involving the use of questionnaire was used to collect data on views on the “out-segment” as perceived by some stakeholders namely; teacher trainees, head teachers, teachers, tutors. A sample of (50) stakeholders comprising (10) tutors, (10) teachers, (10) head teachers, (20) teacher trainees were selected through purposive and random sampling techniques. The study found that in spite of challenges facing the “out-segment” programme (namely: financial problems, inadequate material for preparing teaching/learning materials, inadequate mentor supervision, lack of motivation for link tutors, lead mentors and mentors, poor method of vetting lesson note, mentees, mentors and link tutors dual role performances) majority of stakeholders perceived it as a more effective approach to the training of teachers in the colleges of education. The study concluded that the “out-segment” programme is in order and hoped it will help to build the standard of education in the country. It is recommended that, the planners of this programme must ensure that there are enough material for preparing teaching/learning materials at the Basic Schools to enhance teaching and learning. There is also the need for regular workshops for lead mentors and mentors to update their skills

Keywords: Challenges, out segment programme, teaching and learning, Teacher trainee

Introduction

The improvement of quality of products or services in any country depends greatly on the quality of human resources available to the economy. The school as an organization in an economy is a core agent in the development of human resources that exploit other factors of production in the economy. The teacher too is the most essential factor in the school because when curriculum is planned, infrastructural needs met and children assembled, it is the teacher who nurtures the children to achieve the goals and objectives of the planned curriculum. The success of any educational reform depends largely on the teacher and therefore the nature of training received by teacher trainees would have impact on the children who form the source of human resources of an economy. Macwilliam and Kwamena-Poh (1975) reported that Andreas Riis, the head priest at the Elmina castle and his successors recognized that any thorough system of education depends on the supply of trained teachers. They therefore took advantage of available opportunity to train catechists and teachers, as far back as 1848 in order to get competent personnel to educate the indigenous people to read and write.

A search from the internet indicate that, the most effective way to raise educational quality is to modify initial teacher education, and to develop the means to train teachers. This is because; it is the classroom teacher who has to turn into reality, the plans that have been put down to improve the quality of education. At the beginning of each academic year, third year students of Kibi Presbyterian College of Education go on attachment in the basic school at Kibi and its environs for practical experience in the classroom. As part of the preparation, they are given orientation on skills, methods of teaching and good relationship with communities and schools. The students are assigned to basic schools according to the request of the schools and the students’ subject areas. Few days after their departure to their schools of attachment, orientation is given to lead mentors and mentors in the attachment schools. Teachers who qualify to be mentors are professional teachers with two years and above teaching experience. They participate in professional development that includes mentoring skills, teaching and the assessment procedures etc. Students on “out-segment” are given two weeks for observation, after which they are assigned to subject areas to teach and write project work using action research method in the subject areas they teach. Link tutors from Kibi Presbyterian College of Education visit schools of attachment and assess students’ performance in teaching and attitudes from time to time.

Lead mentors and mentors are assigned to assist in evaluating students’ field experiences and competency levels and provide data for programme improvement. Teacher trainees are to prepare lesson notes, vet by lead mentors and use them to teach under the supervision of either the lead mentor or the mentor. The rule is that teacher trainees attend lectures at College of Education every fortnight (face to face) for preparation on end of year examinations, mark project work with their supervisors and meet after school every day for study circle on their modules. After the “out-segment” teacher trainees go back to College to write their final examinations. Lead mentors and mentors give report on teacher trainees attached to their schools. The report given on the teacher trainees determine their success or failure in teaching practice which is one of the requirements in third year.

Kibi Presbyterian College of Education, where the research was conducted is situated in the East Akim Municipality in the Eastern Region of Ghana. The College was established on the 10th October 1963 as a female only institution with Miss Martha Baehler as the first Principal and with five teachers, 80 students and 10 non-teaching or supporting staff. In 1976, the College became co-educational with the admission of 16 male students. Kibi, where the College is situated is a town in Eastern Region of Ghana and it is the capital the East-Akim Municipality. The population of Kibi township is about eleven thousand four hundred and eighty eight (11,488). The major occupation of the people in the locality is farming and small scale mining (galamsey).

Occasional visits to schools of attachment for supervision of teacher trainees and informal interactions with teacher trainees and link tutors from Kibi Presbyterian Colleges of Education who go to the schools of attachment for supervision seem to suggest that the teacher trainees who go out on the 'out-segment' are faced with some challenges which no one and or no research has taken note of. For example financial problems, inadequate material for preparing teaching/learning materials, inadequate mentor supervision, poor method of vetting lesson note, mentees dual role performance and female mentees who become victims from refusal of intimate relationship. The small-scale study which culminated in to this paper sought to explore the challenges faced by teacher trainees of the Kibi Presbyterian College of Education on the 'out-segment' programme. It is based on the above that the study seeks to explore the challenges faced by teacher trainees of Kibi Presbyterian College of education on the 'Out segment' programme and also examine how teacher trainees manage their dual roles of teaching and their academic work (e.g distance learning materials (DLMs), writing of project work and attending lectures sometimes during the weekdays and weekends). Therefore, the purpose of the study is to explore the challenges teacher trainees faced on the out segment programme at Kibi Presbyterian college of education.

Research questions

1. What challenges do second and third year teacher trainees faced during their out segment programme?
2. Are there enough teaching and learning materials and if trainees are able to allocate enough time for their academic work whiles teaching?

Methodology

The researcher adopted the descriptive survey design for the study which culminate to this paper. Some writers including Fraenkel & Wallen (2000) and Gay, (1992) point out that a descriptive survey involves the collection of data through the use of questionnaire, interview or ability test. They further stated that the descriptive survey enables respondents to answer questions concerned with the study. Again, Cohen & Manion (1991) affirm that descriptive surveys involves gathering data at a particular point in time with the intention of describing the nature of existing conditions, identifying standards against which existing conditions can be compared, or determining the relationship that exist between specific events (p.51). Descriptive survey was chosen because it has the advantage of producing good responses from a wide range of people. At the same time it provides a meaningful picture of events and seeks to explain people's opinion and behaviour on the basis of data gathered at the time of data collection. Participants of the study included link tutors; (i.e. tutors from Kibi Presbyterian College of Education) lead mentors; (i.e. head teachers of the attachment schools) mentors; (i.e. classroom teachers from cluster of schools around Kibi Municipality) and teacher trainees from Kibi Presbyterian College of Education on "out-segment" in the various schools around Kibi and the surrounding suburbs). The participants were chosen using purposive sampling technique.

Cohen & Manion (1991) state that: Purposive sampling is a process whereby the researcher handpicks the cases to be included in his sample; on the basis of his judgment of their specialty and typicality...with this the researcher builds up a sample that suits his or her specific needs (p.69). Purposive sampling technique was used to select the groups, because the researcher has belief that she would get the information needed from the group. The lottery method, of writing names and randomly picking, was used to select the members of the groups. In order to ensure fair and equitable representation of the groups and sexes, a sample size of 50 made up of 10 link tutors, five males and five females, 10 lead mentors all males, 10 mentors all females and 20 teacher trainees also made up of 10 males and 10 females, making the total number of participants 50, 25 males and 25 females were selected. At a glance the information represented in Table 1 below show an even distribution of sexes among the respondents.

Table 1. Gender Distribution of respondents

Groups	Male	Percentage	Female	Percentage	Total	Percentage
Link tutor	5	10%	5	10%	10	20%
Lead mentor	10	20%	-	-	10	20%
Teacher Trainees	10	20%	10	20%	20	40%
Mentor	-	-	10	20%	10	20%
Total	25	50%	25	50%	50	100

The main instrument for collecting data for the study was the questionnaire. Cohen & Manion (1991) state that the questionnaire as a survey instrument, tends to be more reliable, while its anonymity encourages a greater degree of honesty. The researcher prepared four sets of questionnaires comprising a combination of both open-ended and closed-ended items to enable the researcher obtain as much detailed information as possible from the respondents. The closed-ended items had options from which respondents could choose those that apply in their schools. The open-ended items did not have pre-determined set of responses and thus the respondents are at liberty to supply the information he or she deemed fit. The closed ended items, apart from reducing completion time, also make it easier for data analysis and processing. Thus, open-ended items were to ensure a wider variety of responses that reflect opinions of respondents. In the views of Fraenkel & Wallen (2000) open-ended items allow more freedom of response, they are easy to construct and permit follow-up by the researcher.

Also, a combination of both open-ended and closed-ended questions was to make it relatively easy for respondents to respond to the items and not to become bored. The researcher, however, used the combination, as it is quite easy and quick to analyze data from such questions. It is also in line with Fraenkel & Wallen's (2000) view that the close-ended item enhances consistency of response across respondents and makes it easier and faster to tabulate and is more popular with respondents (p.44).

The researcher sought permission from the head teachers and Principal of Kibi Presbyterian College of education to administer the questionnaires to the respondents in their schools. With the permission granted, the researcher craved the co-operation of the participants, that is, the link tutors, the lead mentors, mentors and the teacher trainees. The questionnaires were administered personally by the researcher to 50 respondents. This helped the researcher to establish cordial relationships with the respondents. The data was collected within three weeks period and the entire questionnaires distributed were retrieved.

Descriptive statistics were primarily used for the analysis. The data obtained were computed and analyzed, using percentages and frequencies. The data analysis was aided by the use of the data analysis programme known as the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS version 15.0). In the analysis of data, responses given by respondents were tallied, frequencies obtained for the responses for each item and options were converted into percentages in order to determine the different responses given by specific proportions of the study sample. With the close-ended questionnaire items, the researcher coded and entered them into the computer using the SPSS software programme. The results that were obtained (as data output) from the SPSS were analyzed and interpreted to describe the issues. Because open-ended items cannot be easily coded (Creswell, 2003), similar responses to the items were grouped together according to common ideas expressed by the respondents.

Emerging issues

The study examined the "out-segment" component of the 3-Year Diploma in Basic Education being offered in the Colleges of Education with the intent of identifying its challenges. The survey method involving the use of questionnaires were used to collect data on views on the "out-segment" as perceived by some stakeholders namely; teacher trainees, lead mentors, mentors and link tutors. The study found that in spite of challenges facing the "out-segment" programme (namely financial problems, inadequate material for preparing teaching/learning materials, inadequate mentor supervision, poor method of vetting lesson note, teacher trainees dual role performance,) majority of stakeholders perceived it as a more effective approach to the training of teachers in the colleges of education. However, other stakeholders, in the minority were of the view that the workload of most of the implementers (link tutors, lead mentors and mentors) is very heavy for them and there are no incentives to boost their morale.

It was also found that some of the mentors leave their classroom work to mentees to do and scarcely mentor them as they should. Again, it was observed that the teacher trainees, through school activities and other extra curricula activities such as cooking after school, do not have ample time to study their books as they did when they were in college and this is making some of them lackluster.

The study further revealed that it was a daunting task for both link tutors and mentors to combine their split roles of classroom teaching and other school schedules with effective supervision and monitoring of teacher trainees. The link tutors and mentors appeared to be participating not because they were committed but that they had no option rather than to oblige to the Ghana Education Service directive.

Again the study indicated that some of the attachment schools could not provide materials such as manila

cards, felt pens etc. for the preparation of teaching learning materials (TLMs) by the teacher trainees this as a result put financial burden on teacher trainees.

Additionally, the study illustrated that teacher trainees found it challenging to cope with their roles in the “out-segment”. The reason was that owing to their daily schedules in the “out-segment” programme, teacher trainees do not have time to continuing their academic work in college. For example, teacher trainees could neither have time to hold study circle meeting nor work on project work. They find it very difficult preparing lesson plans or setting and marking exercises. Thus the study depict that teacher trainees were so much pre-occupied with their daily schedules of the “out-segment” that they cared very little about their own private studies. The study concluded that teacher trainees sacrificed the content component of their training for the practicum aspect of it.

Discussions

The findings of the study which this paper reports on suggest that although the college had schedules for school visits, not all the link tutors were able to apportion time appropriately for the performance of their split roles. Consequently, the first and second year trainees on campus were somehow denied the tuition due them. For example, while small percentage (20%) of link tutor could hold classes with teacher trainees still on campus (first and second year trainees), the rest (80%) also disagreed to being able to hold classes with teacher trainees still on campus. The findings can be seen in table 2.

Table 2

Responses of link tutors in indicating if the link tutors are able schedule teaching for the teacher trainees whiles on the out segment programme.

Items	Response				Total (%)
	SA (%)	A (%)	D (%)	SD (%)	
College has a schedule for visit and it is followed strictly	8 (80)	2 (20)	-	-	10 (100)
Hold classes with teacher trainees who are on campus regularly	4 (40)	6 (60)	-	-	10 (100)
Link tutorship roles are in conflict with my other official schedules	-	2 (20)	8 (80)	-	10 (100)
Lead mentors are able to vet/study the lesson plans of teacher trainees	1 (10)	4 (40)	4 (40)	1 (10)	10 (100)
Enjoy the support and co-operation of teacher trainees	2 (20)	8 (80)	-	-	10 (100)

The result in the table above illustrates that link tutors perceived combining the teaching of first and second year teacher trainees with supervision of third year teacher trainees on out-segment as challenging. This situation seems to reflect the alleged non-performance of some teacher in the colleges of education. Link tutors are expected to demonstrate commitment to their professional calling and thereby cause their students to be positively influenced. This way, quality teacher training and the resultant teacher quality can be assured. This resonates with Akyeampong (2002) and others’ advocacy for stringent measures to be instituted to improve teacher quality in Ghana.

With regards to preparation and vetting of teachers trainees lesson plan, a response by link tutors revealed that detailed and well-sequenced lesson plans were prepared. However, lead mentors were not meticulous enough in vetting the notes as avoidable grammatical errors were left unidentified for correction. Again it was evidence from the feedback from teacher trainees that they prepare detailed lesson notes for teaching.

Concerning vetting of lesson plan, a larger number of lead mentors and mentors indicate that, they were able to study and vet the teacher trainees’ lesson plan. That notwithstanding, the apparent small number of respondents who accepted they could not vet lesson plans, this gives a hint of inadequacy in the discharge of this aspect of the “out-segment” programme.

The vetting of lesson plans is an essential aspect of the mentorship component of the “out-segment” programme as spelt out in the GES/TED policy document (2001). Lead mentors, in particular, are requested to vet the lesson plans of teacher trainees daily.

Preparation of instructional materials for teaching and learning (TLMs). With this items teachers trainees were asked to indicate whether instructional materials and equipment were adequate. The respondents point out that the schools do not have enough materials for preparing teaching learning materials. They use their own money from the scanty allowance to buy materials for preparation of (TLMs) and this put financial burden on them.

Table 3
Responses of teacher trainees regarding the preparation of teaching and learning materials, teach and being able to allocate enough time to study their own course materials

Items	Response				
	SA (%)	A (%)	D (%)	SD (%)	Total (%)
Able to devote time to the preparation of lesson plans	6 (30)	14 (70)	-	-	20 (100)
Able to devote time to the preparation of teaching/learning materials (TLMs)	6 (30)	14 (70)	-	-	20 (100)
I am able to set and mark pupils exercise	10 (50)	10 (50)	-	-	20 (100)
I am able to participate in co-curricular activities	8 (40)	12 (60)	-	-	20 (100)
I am able to devote time to study Distance Learning Materials (DLMs)	9 (45)	10 (50)	1 (5)	-	20 (100)
Stay and supervise teacher trainees in the classroom	-	2 (20)	4 (40)	4 (40)	10 (100)

Again, teacher trainees indicated that they do not have enough time to prepare TLMs. With this, the GES/TED policy document (2001) stated otherwise that apart from after classes on school days, teacher trainees should devote part of their weekends to private study and preparation of lesson plans and TLMs. The policy document concluded that poor performance of academic work could be attributed to inadequate teaching and learning materials and equipment. Ayot & Olembo, (1984) also stated that the inadequacy of teaching/ learning materials affects the quality of education and subsequently learner's performance.

In addition, Gogo (2002) recommended that in order to provide quality education, the availability of relevant teaching /learning materials is crucial. In this consideration, Maundu (1987) asserted that good performance demanded that every learning institution be equipped with relevant and adequate teaching materials. Mbiti (1974) strongly feels that when equipment supplies delayed, the policy implementers cannot work properly. According to Muthamia (2009), teachers can only be effective and productive in their work if they have adequate and relevant facilities. In addition, Makau (1986) stated that instructional materials and equipment for both teachers and students are key variable in student's learning and performance at all school levels. Furthermore, Maundu (1987) stated that instructional resources play an important role in explaining the wide variation in academic performance among the students. On the issue of teacher trainees apportioned time to attend to study circles to study their DLMs, a large number of teacher trainees apportioned time to study but few of them could not do so. Again the GES/TED policy document (2001) stated that between two – three hours shall be set aside each day after normal classroom teaching for private study within a study circle or study group.

The policy document further stated that during such meetings, trainees are expected to engage in studying DLMs and working on assignments therein. In the light of this elaborate provision one is surprised to realize that some of the teacher trainees could not find time to study their DLMs. Meanwhile, studying the DLMs is continuation of the academic aspect of preparing trainees. This, as highlighted in the scholarly works of (Adentwi, 2002; Agyeman, 1993; Pecku, 1998) and others. The implication is that this category of trainees may be non-performers on graduation. They may not be adequately effective and efficient on the job. In such a situation, the criticism of the public about the lackadaisical attitude of most teachers toward their professional calling and the attribution of poor educational outcomes at the basic school level to them hold true.

It is also raises eyebrows about how such caliber of students who got recruited for training. For, as Adentwi (2002) observes, the quality of education that young people receive is inextricably linked to the knowledge, intelligence, professional skills and competencies of teachers. It means, therefore, that teachers should be properly selected, trained and prepared for the task of teaching.

With regards to effective supervision, teacher trainees were asked to indicate whether mentors stay in school and supervise their teaching and monitor their classroom activities. Majority were strongly disagreed to this item, only 20% of the trainees agreed that their mentors stay and supervise their teaching. Commenting on this issue, (Kadushin, 1992) asserts that supervision has been recognized as an integral part of social work since the early1900's.Again, McGuinness (1993) recommended that newly qualified staff should have additional support and supervision when working in this area as teacher trainees. (p.113). Gray (1984.p.20) shares the same view with Kadushin that supervision is very important instrument, which helps to ensure that facilities are effectively used to enhance teaching and learning.

Conclusion

The results of the study have led to the following main conclusions: The general impression given by the results of the study with regard to the performance of teacher trainees on out-segment was that, much has to be done so that teacher trainees measure up to their tasks and demonstrate career efficacy in the out-segment. For instance, the study revealed that although mentors seemed to be regular and punctual at school, there was evidence of laxity in their staying in the classroom to supervise teacher trainees and thereby promote their professional competence.

With regard to the challenges faced by teacher trainees of Kibi Presbyterian College of Education on the “out-segment” programme. A general conclusion that was drawn from the study was that, indeed the “out-segment” of teacher trainees in the Kibi Presbyterian College of Education was bereft with some challenges which must be addressed in order to ensure the success of the programme.

Firstly, there was the need to have a second look at the duration of the out-segment so that undue attention would not be given to practice at the expense of content in the preparation of teacher trainees for the teaching field. It is proper to give equal attention to both practical teaching and academic work because both contribute to making teachers competent.

In addition the study observed some shortfalls in the performance of teacher trainees on out segment programme. These need to be addressed to ensure that mentors demonstrate healthy work habits for teacher trainees to emulate as they are supposed to be their role models.

Similarly, the study observed that it was daunting for teacher trainees to cope with their dual roles of being practicing teachers and teacher trainees during the programme.

With the above explanations the programme needs modifications before its proper implementation could be achieved. On the whole, it has been accepted that the “out-segment” programme is in order and hoped it will help to build the standard of education in the country as it is producing more proficient teachers for the basic schools as was the general consensus of the respondents.

Finally, the researcher suggested that during orientation programme for lead mentors and mentors, the organizers should touch on mentor/mentee relationship during “out-segments”.

Implication for Theory and Practice

The following implications were made based in the light of the findings of the study and the conclusions drawn from it. There should be a systematic approach to the supervision and mentoring of the practical teaching of teacher trainees as we prepare them for the field. This way it is hoped that we would be producing competent teachers for our basic schools and thereby get active educational outcomes. Teachers are professionals and their supervisory, role in the out-segment of teacher trainees should be seen as a consulting service; not a continuation or part of their normal professional responsibilities as it is being regarded currently. In this regard, link tutors and mentors should also demonstrate evidence of professional effectiveness in the discharge of their responsibilities in the out-segment programme.

Again, there is the need to resource attachment schools with experienced, competent disciplined and resourceful teachers and teaching-learning materials in a way that can make the schools a sort of modest models schools in the catchment area of the college. This would enhance effective mentorship and thereby challenge and encourage both regular classroom teachers and teacher trainees to put up better professional competencies

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