



MANAGING THE PARADIGM SHIFT IN TEACHING PRACTICE BY PROVIDING AN IMPACT-DRIVEN SUPPORTED TEACHING IN SCHOOLS (STS) PROGRAMS FOR WHOLISTIC DEVELOPMENT

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Abstract

Entering into the teaching profession requires teacher's interest and adequate preparation. The preparation involves the acquisition of skills and knowledge to be well-prepared and be able to cope with the responsibilities at the school to which they will be posted after they graduate. Student teachers need to master all pertinent theories as well as how to put them into practice. Teaching practice exercise is converging point where the relationships among the three major players: university supervisor, host teacher (mentor), and student teacher interface to determine the quality of experience the student teacher will take away. It becomes the foundation on which the student teacher once certified and posted builds his/her professional identity. It is therefore necessary the student teachers are assigned to competent, qualified, knowledgeable and concerned assessors and mentors during the on-campus and off-campus exercises respectively, to help them assume the full range of duties of a teacher. This will require a change in the teaching practice paradigm. This study is to ascertain the impact of professional teaching practice, industrial attachment and practicum programs on students' formation and community development. To achieve this objective, the study examines the activities of Professional Educational Practice Unit (PEPU) of the University for Development Studies, which is under the Directorate of Community Relations and Outreach Programs (DCROP), to ascertain the impact of teaching practice activities on teacher education.

Key words: Paradigm shift; impact-driven; teaching practice; supported teaching in schools; wholistic development.

INTRODUCTION

The traditional teaching practice In order to become effective, teachers need to be professionally prepared (Harris,2002). Supported Teaching in Schools (STS) is an opportunity for aspiring teachers to understand the role and operation of how the business of schooling is done. This field experience offers a challenging yet rewarding opportunity of working with students in actual classrooms and acquiring professional competence. Such experiences will include among other things, their ability to assume the various responsibilities of the classroom teacher. This involves planning, organizing, managing, collaborating, interacting, assessing, demonstrating a sense of self-confidence, providing a conducive teaching and learning environment, and reflecting on daily practices. Looking at the teaching practice component of teacher preparation at the University reveals a "Student Teaching Triad" whose third prong needs to be extended and emphasized. The triad is made up of the University

Supervisor, the Student -Teacher and the School of Practice. The fundamental philosophy of teaching practice is that "Good teaching is a key influence on student learning: a desired outcome and primary goal of educational institutions (Aglazor, 2017). Supported Teaching in Schools is the most important experience in teacher education program and is generally based on the country's National Education Policy. Teaching practice is compulsory for all student teachers admitted to Colleges of Education in Ghana. It is six months in duration usually lasting from the beginning of the First Trimester of the final year of students' training. During this period the program focuses on: instructional planning, instructional technology, Micro-teaching mentoring (model teaching, assessment, feedback,etc), and teaching methodologies. Teachers need to be trained and must experience continuing professional development so as to become more effective (Harris, 2002). According to Hargreaves, 1994; Harland & Kinder, 1997), one of the ways to maintain and enhance the quality of teaching and learning



in schools is through professional development. Hill and Brodin (2004) indicate that for pre-service teachers, teaching practice is one of the key elements in their training. For Kennedy (2006), it provides student teachers with experience in teaching and learning in and outside the classroom as well as to enhance the development of their character so as to become ethical and professional. Some past studies have proven that teaching practice helped pre-service teachers to have better discussions with lecturers and mentors, and thus managed to help pre-service students to determine the approaches to use and their implications in teaching (Botha and Reddy, 2011; Agbo, 2003).

With the advent of different pathways to teaching in Ghana, a number of concerns have come to the fore. These include the following: First, with teacher education institutions using different curricular in preparing teachers to teach, are the competencies and knowledge being acquired by the graduates of these institutions comparable? Second, are these curricula such that they conform with a national vision of who 'a good teacher is, assuming such a vision exist? Third, can there be a national consensus on criteria on quality teacher indicators without sacrificing academic freedom to innovate? In an attempt to address these concerns as mirrored in the persistent and continuous underachievement of pupils in the Basic Education system, the Ministry of Education (2017), in collaboration with UKAid, initiated a project called Transforming Teacher Education and Learning (T-TEL). The aim of the project is to 'transform the delivery of pre-service teacher education in Ghana by improving the quality of teaching and learning through support to all public Colleges of Education and Universities that have teacher education programs' This has led to the development of National Teacher Education Curriculum Framework (NTECF) and National Teachers' Standards (NTS) to guide the development of teacher education programs across the country and also to set minimum professional competencies in teaching profession. These two documents, NTECF and NTS, are expected to be used in developing new curricula to replace the current curriculum which has been in place for nearly two decades.

The NTECF has four pillars constituting the knowledge leading to the initial teacher qualification with accompanying proposed weighting. The four proposed pillars are: Subject and curriculum knowledge (K-P3 {25}; P4-6 {25}; JHS {40}; SHS {60}); Pedagogic Knowledge (K-P3 {25}; P4-6 {25}; JHS {20}; SHS {18}); Literacy Studies: Ghanaian Language and English (K-P3 {20}; P4-6 {20} JHS {10}; SHS {5}); Supported Teaching School (K-P3 {30}; P4-6 {30}; JHS {30}; SHS {17}); Total= 100 each). The NTS is grouped into three domains, each with its own subgroup: a) professional values and attitudes. The subgroups are 1) professional development and 2) community practice b) professional knowledge with subgroups being 1) knowledge of educational framework and curriculum, and 2) knowledge of learners c) Professional practice with sub-divisions being 1) managing the learner and learning environment 2) teaching and learning 3) assessment.

The introduction of T-TEL which took effect in 2018 with the intake of the first batch of 4-year degree students in the Colleges of Education has led to a number of changes in the teacher development programs. First is the introduction of specialism at the pre-tertiary level – Early grade (KG-P3), Upper Primary (P4-P6), JHS and SHS. There is a marked change in how teachers have been prepared over the years. In the years before T-TEL was introduced, prospective teachers from the Colleges of Education were categorized into three groups namely: generalists who were expected to teach all school subjects at the primary school, the specialists including mathematics and science teachers, and Early Childhood teachers. Currently, the introduction of the four areas of specialism means that prospective teachers, ultimately, will be licensed to teach at very specific grade-bands within the elementary and middle school levels. Some of the good things about such a move are 1) it enables prospective teachers to acquire deep knowledge within a specified grade-band; 2) it provides extensive knowledge and experience within the chosen grade-band or specialism (MoE, 2017)

Second, the minimum entry requirement for teaching is Bachelors in Basic Education and no longer Diploma. This move has helped to address the concern relating to adequacy of the content knowledge teachers possess as well as the quality of teaching. Actually, it has set a clearly defined teaching standards to help bench-mark the quality of teaching. Again, the NTECF is intended to guide all universities offering teacher education in their development of programs so there is shared vision of the kind of teacher Ghana needs. Third, there is a change in how teaching practice is organized. In the new teacher development model, prospective teachers are to engage in what is referred to as supported teaching in school (Pillar 4 throughout the eight semesters of study. This means that prospective teachers are to familiarize themselves with the professional aspect of teaching while taking various courses at college. This implies that student teachers, right from the first year, first semester, will start to acquire teaching experiences through regular school-based practicum to observe and also co-teach with more experienced in-service teachers. This is in sharp contrast with the old model of teacher development where supported teaching (practicum), the on-campus segment happens for a semester during the second year of the three-year program with the off-campus occurring for the whole of the third year, which is the final year. Fourth, assessment strategies have also changed. In the new framework, there is strong emphasis on formative assessment to support learning. Consequently, many teacher education programs around the globe, have shifted to criterion-based forms of assessment and use professional standards and rubrics as a basis for formative assessment in teacher education due to standard-driven reforms (Conner & Sliwka, 2014). Portfolios in which prospective teachers document and reflect upon their own learning, have become more common. Fifth, the National Teaching Council (NTC) has also commenced the licensing of the teaching profession. Once student-teachers have completed their 4-year Bachelor degree, they will then spend one year teaching in the basic schools

(pre-tertiary level, after which they will receive their license to practice and achieve qualified teacher status.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Kuhn (1970) initiated the process of paradigm change or shift in the sciences. He argued that change in a scientific field does not occur as a step- by- step, cumulative process. Instead, new paradigms emerge as the results of traditional shattering revolutions in the thinking of a particular professional community. These shifts involve the adoption of a new outlook on the part of the researchers and others in that community. Well- known examples of paradigm shift in the physical sciences cuts across Copernican astronomy through the Newtonian era to quantum physics. Within the social sciences, paradigm shifts have also occurred in sociology and the humanities. Since the early 1980s, the term “paradigm shift” has been used as a means of thinking about change in education. This shift, however, has not been implemented as widely or as successfully as it might have been because educators and other stakeholders have tried to understand and implement the shift in a piecemeal rather than a holistic manner. The term “paradigm” is another word for pattern. Pattern forming is another way of attempting to make meaning from our experiences. When a paradigm takes place, we see things from a different perspective as we focus on different aspects of the phenomena in our lives (Darling-Hammond, 2000). Twentieth century paradigm shifts across a wide variety of fields can be seen as part of a larger shift from positivism to post- positivism (Darling-Hammond 2006).

Asare, et al (2014) argue that while traditional colleges and universities have offered enormous contributions towards student preparation for the work place, a paradigm shift must be considered as an enabling friction through which members of the profession can speculate on better ways to teach students. Their assertion is not far from Hargreaves’(1994) earlier contention that a serious consideration should be given to renaming and reorganizing the traditional paradigm that governs the organization and implementation of undergraduate and graduate teacher education programs. Relating to the effects of delays on shifting paradigms, the IEA (2012) notes that perhaps some public schools are failing because they still provide a classical rather than an applied education that prepares students for the real world beyond high school. It places emphasis on the global imperatives for an education paradigm shift and stressed the need for colleges and universities to recognize a new social paradigm that will take education across traditional boundaries through the human services professions. It described a college or university structure that is made up of interdependent human service professions which prepares personnel responsive to an interdependent world paradigm. Cheng (1990) contends that accepting a paradigm shift by universities means learning to respect culturally diverse students and recognizing cognitive style differences. He argues for systematic change in colleges and universities to redefine themselves as culturally pluralistic. He further contends that educators must develop a cultural communicative competence for effective instruction of ethnic minorities.

Ali (2012) established the significance of paradigm shift from traditional and old management concept towards the very innovative concept of leadership and advised that every manager has to learn some requisite competencies to transform from him into a leader. Alexander (2014) explores and evaluates rapid decarbonizations strategies, and social, economic and political implications of such strategies from various disciplinary and interdisciplinary perspectives. Ali (2012) asserted that paradigm shift in education is a global imperative. Colleges and universities need to recognize a new social paradigm that will take education across traditional boundaries through series of human professions. They describe a college or university structure that is made up of interdependent human services professions which prepares personnel responsive to an interdependent world paradigm. According to Bell (1995), while traditional colleges and universities have offered enormous contributions towards student preparation for the work place, a paradigm shift must be considered as an enabling friction through which members of the professional can speculate on better ways to teach students.

Bauer (1985) hinted that a serious consideration should be given to renaming and reorganizing the traditional paradigm that governs the organization and implementation of undergraduate and graduate teacher education programmes. For Borelli (1995), most public schools are failing because they still provide a classical rather than an applied education that prepares students for the real world beyond high school or college. Consequently, Baldwin & Von Hippel (2009) intimated that the idea of a transition from producer innovation to open single user and open collaborative innovation is desirable in terms of social welfare, and so worthy of support by policy makers. In the view of Cheng (1990) accepting a paradigm shift by universities means learning to respect culturally diverse students and recognizing cognitive style differences. He argues for a systematic change in colleges and universities to redefine themselves as culturally plural. He contends that educators must develop a cross- cultural communicative competence for effective instruction of ethnic minorities. Universities should have adopted a new way of thinking, a new institutional “culture” where all education is viewed as a contribution to lifelong learning (Kalman ,2013;). For Ealor (1996), the boundaries which shape our thoughts or our “paradigms” from the part sometimes prevent us from seeing new trends and knowledge which do not fit the old ways of thinking.

According to Fang (1995), preparing workers for the 21st century requires training them in five areas: basic skills; functional professionalism; (management, teaching, marketing, human resources, research); learning levers (how to learn); people power (how to succeed with other people); and awesome thinking (how to think). This will require a shift from the traditional way of doing things to a more practical oriented way of doing things. Addressing the issue about what to do about misconceptions with regard to knowledge transmission, Geddis (1991) notes that there are three central factors in helping students move from their common sense

methodology to a scientific one. First, students need to be skeptical about what seems evident. Second, they need opportunities to imagine alternative possibilities. Third, they need practice in employing some of the criteria used in science to validate their alternative ideas. It is only a shift in the teaching and learning paradigm that can bring this about. There has, however, been an impressive transformation in paradigm shift of education in recent years, owing to the use of technology (Chomal,V.S, & Saini J.K.R ,2013). Nevertheless, the expected changes towards sustainable development are slow. Every change starts with changes in understanding of the subjects matter. If sustainable development is the aim, it should starts with changes in understanding (Astrom ,2013). Jacobs,G.M & Farrell,T.S.C (2001), indicate that we can better understand and implement change in second language education if we look for connections between changes. The concepts of paradigm shift offers one means of making such connections. They go on to describe eight changes that fit paradigm shift in second language education: learner autonomy; cooperative learning; curricular integration; focus on meaning, diversity thinking skills; alternative assessment and teacher and co- learners

METHODS, MATERIALS AND STUDY AREA

This study is based on the assumption that school or organizational improvement is most surely and thoroughly achieved when and practitioners engage in frequent, continuous and increasingly concrete talk about practices and become capable of distinguishing one practice and its virtues from another. Currently, the state of Teaching Practice, Industrial Attachment, and Practicum at the University for Development Studies, which has been abbreviated in this article as TPIAP, can be categorized into five steps. These are: random assignment o teacher trainees to mentors and assessors; selection of schools and organizations for practice; orientations for mentors, lead mentors, assessors, and student trainees; Practicum (school observation, Supported Teaching in Schools [STS], On-Campus, Off-Campus, Industrial Attachment [Organizational Experience]; and Reporting. The challenges with the prevailing method of preparing pre-tertiary teachers include: deciding what criteria to use for assigning teacher training and mentors in the light of the huge number of students and few qualified mentors; selecting schools and organizations of practice- should it be need-based, out of convenience, or willingness?; orientations- what should be the nature and type?; preparing teacher-trainees adequately for teaching practice; preparing mentors and lead mentors adequately; and selecting long –term goals for making teaching practice and industrial attachment impact-driven experience so that it will positively influence the students, school of practice, as well as the community or organization of practice.

The study focused on the 2022-2023 level 300 students in the Faculty of Education, Department of Basic Education Studies. It employed the qualitative methods of interviews, focus groups, observations, document reviews (e.g. PEPU documents, students reports), and surveys of the entire level

300 class several times during the year. Data included in the study are from individual interviews with 16 case study mentors in May and June 222, 2 each from 8 selected districts within the Tamale Metropolis of the Northern Region of Ghana. All the sixteen participants have been previously involved in mentoring University for Development Studies Students through the Supported Teaching in Schools (STS) program. The focus group was made up of 32 level 300 students from 16 schools (2 each) randomly selected. In addition, 16 assessors (2 each from the 8 selected districts) were observed.

Research Questions

Three primary research questions were explored in this study: Research Question 1: What do students learn through their participation in the Supported Teaching in Schools (STS) program; Research Question 2: How does the Supported Teaching in Schools (STS) program impact on the school/or communities of Practice?; Question 3: What features of the Supported Teaching Schools (STS) program can be reviewed so that it can be more impact-driven and lead to a wholistic development?

DATA ANALYSIS

Individual and focus group interviews were transcribed and coded. The interviews were analyzed in relation to each of the three questions using open coding and then identifying specific patterns within data for each question. The findings reported below represent the central themes that emerged related to what students learn from the Supported Teaching in Schools (STS) program. Findings related to students' learning across interviews, STS reported a shift in students' understanding about teaching and learning. This is consistent with Aglazor (2017) who asserted that teaching practice does not only provide a conducive environment for teaching , learning and reflection, but it also forms a “student Teaching Triad” with a prong parts (Supervisor, student mentor),playing critical collaborative roles to produce effective and efficient teachers. This “paradigm shift” has enabled prospective teachers to acquire deep knowledge within a specified grade-band or specialism (MoE, 2017). Again, it has helped student-teachers to conform to standards, familiarize themselves with the professional aspect of teaching through the gradual acquisition of teaching experiences. With regard to assessment strategies, the modalities have changed. There is more emphasis on formative assessment to support teaching. Globally, there is a shift to criterion –based forms of assessment and the use of professional standards and rubrics as a basis for formative assessment (Conner & Sliwk, 2014). Development of Potfolios in which prospective teachers document and reflect upon their own learning, have become more of a common practice. Finally, the licensing of teachers is another “paradigm shift” that has come to augment teachers' professional attitudes even though its implementation has sparked off numerous debates.

Findings related to the involvement of schools/or communities of practice in teacher preparation indicated that

despite the fact that there are many studies backing the rationale for inter professional and community-based learning in preservice teacher education, knowledge about students' lives, their neighborhoods, and the community-based agencies that connect with schools, receive little mention in most teacher preparation programs (Darling & Ward, 1995; Koerner & Abdul-Tawwab, 2006). Evidently, there is the need for teachers to work effectively within communities (Benson, Scales & Manner, 2004; Porfeli, Chuang, Audette, McColl, & Aglozzine, 2009; Smith, 2008; Darling –Hammond, 2000). One notable exception is Cooper (2007, p. 254) who concludes that “if institutions of teacher education want preservice teachers to teach all children, they should consider incorporating community-based learning into the formal preparation process”. Consequently, Bradbury & Reason (2003; Deppler (2006); Love (2009; Slavin (2007); Marvin (2007); Price (2001); Shultz & Mandzuk (2005); Martin-Kniep (2000) propose a collaborative inquiry approach to connecting preservice teachers to communities of practice.

In terms of findings related to making Supported Teaching in Schools (STS) an impact-driven experience, while participants agreed that engaging schools/or communities of practice is essential, they could, however, not draw a connection between the STS program and the involvement of the schools or communities of practice probably because the Transforming Teaching and Learning (T.TEL) program has not yet taken root in the teacher education programs in Ghana. On the contrary, one cannot defend the lack of influence of Teaching Practice on communities of practice since it has been going on from the time Training Colleges (Colleges of Education) were established. Literature is replete with attempts at identifying a between Teacher Preparation and Communities' involvement (Fraser, 2007; Zeichner, 2014; National Research Council, 2010; Grossman & Loeb, 2008) as several studies (Bryk & Schneider, 2002; Cuban, 1969; Hyland & Meacham, 2004; Graue, 2005; Murrell, 2001; Zerchner, Bowman, Guillen, & Napolitan, 2015) have suggested the implementation of community –Based learning which has been working very well in some developed countries.

IMPLICATIONS FOR TEACHER PREPARATION

Following the introduction of T-Tel four years ago there has been a constant call by the Ministry of Education and the Ghana Education Service for a “change” in the way teacher education programs prepare our future teachers (MoE, 2018). Data from the preservice teachers from the University for Development Studies involved in the STS in the Tamale Metropolis indicated that their school-based experiences did indeed help them to develop knowledge and skills outlined in the Teacher Education Professional Standards. This means the preservice teachers in this sample, gained knowledge in understanding about teaching and learning. This may enhance the collaborative effort being made by T-Tel, NTECF; and NTS to guide the development of Teacher Education programs across the country and also to set minimum professional competencies in the teaching profession.

Another serious implication of the data collected from this study is that the content of the Supported Teaching in Schools (STS) program should be extended to involve school/or communities of practice. What exists now is a system that welcomes preservice teachers for a period of one trimester or two trimesters without any continuity. In most cases, preservice teachers are assigned to schools different from where they did their school observation and the first STS experiences. The final implication of the study is that, in order that the STS would be effective, it has to be impact-driven. This means that both the preschool teacher and the schools/or communities of practice should benefit from the program. So far, this has skewed in favor of preservice teachers who go to the schools to gain knowledge and skills. For the schools/or communities of practice, the benefits are minimal, and sometimes non-existing.

CONCLUSION AND POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

Prior to the observations, interviews, surveys and findings of this study, the concern was that the Supported Teaching in Schools (STS) program must be looked at, and necessary modifications and adjustments must be carried out to ensure quality teacher preparation for the overall education delivery in Ghana. The study advocates that teachers must be trained by Education universities and Colleges of Education and that the government must setup an accreditation system for teacher preparation that gives maximum assurance of quality. There is also the need for a concerted effort of stakeholders in Teacher Education such as Transforming Teacher Education and Learning (T-Tel), National Teacher Education Curriculum Framework (NTECF), National Teaching Council (NTC), National Teachers' Standards (NTS), Teacher Education Division (TED) of the Ghana Education Service (GES), as well as agencies and departments in the schools/or communities of practice, to re-examine the content of the Supported Teaching in Schools (STS) program to ensure active involvement of schools/or communities of practice in the teacher preparation processes. This will make it more impact-driven for both sides- preservice teachers and schools/or communities of practice-to benefit. Preparing teachers to work in respectful ways with different schools and communities requires a wholistic approach program that sees the schools/or communities of practice as important components. Although mentors and assessors have been doing their best in the STS program, there is need to extend its boundaries to include the social communities. This will require bringing on board best practices in community engaged teaching. The following could be done to make the Supported Teaching in Schools (STS) program in the University for Development Studies in the Tamale Metropolis an impact-driven experience so that it will positively reflect on the students, schools/or communities of practice: First, create a continuum in the teacher preparation process. Beginning with School Observation, preservice teachers should be attached to a particular school which will be the same school for the STS experience. Second, adopt a Teachers' Community of Practice Approach to the STS

program. This will imply creating a links between students and members of the community of practice. Third, build relationships between teacher –trainees and members of communities of practice through regular interactions to enable them learn from each other. Fourth, Engage teacher-trainees and members of communities of practice in joint activities and discussions, to help assist in the sharing of information. Fifth, design ‘a shared practice’ strategy-develop a shared repertoire of resources, experiences stories, tools, ways of addressing recurring problems in the communities of practice.

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