

PROMOTING SCHOLARSHIP IN COLLEGES OF EDUCATION, THE WAY FORWARD

A presentation at the maiden
joint International Educational
Research Conference at
Komenda College of
Education, 26-28 October
2022

Speech by Prof. Jophus Anamuah-Mensah

Chair for this session, Director, ITECPD, UEW
Prof. Mohammed Salifu, Director-General, GTEC
Principal, Komenda College of Education, Rev. Dr. Kwesi Nkum Wilson
Principal, Wiawso College of Education
The Guest Speaker, Prof. Francis Godwyll, Dean College of Education, Illinois
State University, USA.
President of PRINCOF, Dr. Emmanuel Nyamekye
The Local Organising Committee
Tutors and Students of CoEs
Distinguished Participants
Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen,

To God be the Glory, Great things He Has Done!

Our sincere thanks to the two forward looking Principals – Rev. Dr. Kwesi Nkum Wilson of Komenda and Dr. Emmanuel Carsamer of Wiawso - who had a foresight in organizing this conference to change the status quo and to bring to the attention of the Teacher Academy to what has been missing or unattended to over the years. Inviting us to be part of this event is I believe for us to buy into your vision and to partner you in your transformational journey. Indeed, I am happy to join you but in future send the invitation not a few days before the conference.

Introduction

The theme for this gathering – **“Delivering Quality Teacher education in the 21st Century: Challenges and Prospects”** is a perfect fit for examining the upheavals - the upturns and downturns facing the teacher education system in the country. We all have our own perceptions of quality but I think this has been adequately deliberated on during the conference.

Our topic for discussion this afternoon is: **Promoting Scholarship in Colleges of Education, the Way Forward**. My colleague, Robin Todd has already shown some of the rich data which exists from GTEC and T-TEL’s annual teacher education evaluation surveys which are publicly available to download from T-TEL’s Knowledge Hub and which I am sure will provide a valuable starting point for future research.

Before proceeding with the topic, I would like to first try to take you through what I consider to be a strong rationale drawn from the expectations of the Colleges of Education. Why is it necessary to talk about scholarship in the

colleges? Are we doing this only for the promotion of academics into the higher ranks of the academic ladder in colleges or is it a question of attracting prestige in sharing ones findings with others?

In this presentation, I would refer to Colleges of Education, collectively as Teacher Academy and that is what they are. I will therefore use the term Teacher Academy interchangeably with colleges of education.

My presentation will focus on the Teacher Academy and its responsibilities, followed by a brief discourse on scholarship or knowledge production, a brief look at key findings of research on teaching, research and community service, and proposed practices that can be implemented to support scholarly engagement of academic staff and students.

The Teacher Academy and its Roles

The Colleges of Education attained tertiary status with the introduction of diploma programmes to continue with the professional training of teachers at a much higher level. In 2018, the colleges went through structural, curricular, pedagogic and leadership transformation to mount Bachelor of Education programmes in early grade, upper primary and junior high school to train professionals in these areas.

As tertiary institutions for the professional development of teachers, these institutions are expected to have a strong foundation in teaching, research and community service, the three key functions of higher education. While in general, teaching and community service involve transfer of knowledge, research involves scholarship or knowledge production (Anamuah-Mensah, 2014, 2020). Furthermore, research helps to build the body of reason and rational thought while teaching infects others with rational thought and skills. Community service on the other hand allows the application of this body of reason to address developmental issues.

The professional responsibilities of colleges of education as professional schools, and like any other profession such as the medical and legal profession, is to carry out systematic study and teach about the profession (the standing, practice and methods of a professional). This is clearly alluded to in the National Teachers' Standards (2017 p.10) which spells out among other things what teachers are expected to know and be able to do. There is however a disjunction or missing link between this laudable ideal and what the Teacher Academy does in terms of the teaching profession it is supposed to serve. This

failure may be traced to the genesis of colleges of education as teacher training colleges awarding certificate B, certificate A to colleges of education awarding diploma and finally bachelor's degrees. From that time the Academy has focused essentially on teaching to the extent that its commitment to researching and teaching about the teaching profession is nonexistent as at now. The main focus of the Academy has been on preparing teachers to develop the skills to teach well in the classrooms to ensure better learning outcomes for pupils. In most cases, it is believed that the Academy becomes oblivious of its wider mandate of promoting the teaching profession by ensuring the inclusion of all the components of the profession or key stakeholders in all discourses. These components are:

- the colleges of education (the Academy)
- the pre-service teachers
- the practitioners including those involved in policy making
- teacher organizations and associations
- the general public

These key players are looking up to the Academy to provide the needed information to strengthen the teaching profession. Indeed there seems to be a silent, unwritten social contract between the Academy and the other groups to provide graduates who uphold the tenets of the National Teachers' Standards and the Academy's own mission.

The Failure and its Consequences

Following David Wilkins (1999)¹ essay on legal education, I propose that the failure of the Teacher Academy to look beyond current practices is due to CoEs systematic and pervasive failure to both study and teach about the teacher profession. This failure is not only a pedagogical oversight, or a scholarly shortcoming or infrastructural and resource inadequacy (Wilkins, 1999); it is actually an ethical failure by the CoEs as teacher academy to meet the legitimate needs of their principal stakeholders -students, the teaching profession, and society.

The teacher academy's failure to study the profession has created a knowledge vacuum of great magnitude. This is becoming more evident at a time when major reforms are being implemented in the colleges and at the pre-tertiary level. These changes include focus on contemporary teaching practice,

¹ Journal of Legal Education, Volume 49, Number I (March 1999)

standards-based curriculum, integration of technology in education, gender and inclusion, and pedagogical changes at the pre-tertiary level, core curriculum, leadership in schools and at national, regional and district levels, and introduction of the National Teachers' Standards (NTS). Are we confronting these in our studies to inform us of best practices? In addition, the academy has also ignored issues about past graduates' performance and views of the profession, as well as the profession's institutions, organizations, norms and practices. By failing to study the impact of these changes in any systematic way, the Academy is depriving students, teacher practitioners and the public of information badly needed to make intelligent decisions – about structures and practices that will affect their lives and lives of future generations as well as “the analytical and conceptual tools that might help them to make sense of these experiences” (Wilkins, 1999) and issues. These stakeholders are therefore left in the dark about pertinent information they need. This is an ethical issue that will require a strong adherence to scholarship to bring light into this knowledge void.

We really do not know much about the academy, students, past students, teacher organisations, school leadership and the policy-making machine at the Ministry of Education. There is the need to develop scholarship in these areas to strengthen the profession.

What is Scholarship?

Scholarship brings enlightenment into places of darkness and is usually defined in terms of research or the knowledge produced through academic study (e.g., Merriam-Webster.com; OxfordDictionaries.com; TheFreeDictionary.com). Webster's New World College Dictionary defines it as “the systematized knowledge of a learned person, exhibiting accuracy, critical thinking and thoroughness. Boyer (2000) in echoing this view, states that to be “scholarly” one has to be “engaged in research and publication”, that is, knowledge production and distribution. He identifies four types of scholarship namely, discovery, integration, application, and teaching. According to Boyer (2000), the scholarship of discovery contributes to knowledge and the intellectual climate of higher learning. The scholarship of integration involves making appropriate connections across disciplines, placing concepts in context, and elucidating research findings. The scholarship of application, involves engaging knowledge in consequential problems of the world, thereby making knowledge helpful to individuals, institutions, and society. The scholarship of teaching maintains that academic work becomes consequential or important only as it is understood by others (Boyer, 2000).

Academic staff in the colleges of education have by their appointment, time and freedom to pursue scholarship about how teachers can best serve the public interest that the teaching profession has promised to deliver. The productivity or scholarship of academic staff is demonstrated in published articles or creative works in journals, books, chapters in books, monographs, grants, presentations, and artifacts.

What Research Says About Research, Teaching and Community Service

Research has shown that balancing teaching and research is a challenging issue for many tertiary education teachers (Turnbull, 2010, Santo and Associates, 2009). Studies have found that both teaching and service have negative impact on research productivity. One study (Taylor, Fender and Burke, 2006) found that teaching a 3-credit course reduces research productivity by 9.6%. All types of service were found to have negative impact on research productivity. For example, participating in a committee assignment reduces research productivity by 7%; being a committee chair was associated with 17% decrease; similarly being a department chair or programme director were found to cause substantial decreases in productivity.

Balancing Research, Teaching and Community Service

However, despite the above issues, these three pillars are vital to the functioning of CoEs as a teacher Academy. To function well, conditions must be created for integrating teaching, service engagement and scholarship – a balance need to be achieved to ensure a harmonious relationship among them. This would involve institutional structural and policy changes. How many hours do we spend on teaching? Service? and research? Many academic staff teach more than what is institutionally mandated. There are many others who engage in community services as heads, coordinators of various units in the institution. While these various activities are important, they should not interfere with building a culture of scholarship in teacher Academy. There is also the need to guard against the temptation of researching on mundane problems which are quickly carried out without linkage to an overall research programme.

Challenges to cultivating a culture of scholarship

- Difficulties in balancing workloads between research, teaching and service

- Lack of policies for the protection of Time to do research: heavy service and teaching commitments preclude opportunities for independent and collaborative work.
 - Lack of strong decisive measures to protect time and minimize interruptions;
 - Lack of policies on effective use of meeting time; eg, some meetings may take more than 4 hours.
- lack of professional development in methodological skills and project management skills
- Inadequate staffing and resources for supporting research management
- Low student/staff interaction in colleges of education (Carini & Kuh, 2003).
- Lack of critical mass of academic staff with strong research expertise
- Lack of external or governmental research funding,
- Poor staff skills in mentoring and supervision of students
- Lack of mentoring infrastructure in the Academy
- Limited or absence of mentoring infrastructure in the Academy.

Proposed Strategies for promoting a culture of scholarship (adapted from DeHart, 2015)

(Provide opportunities for staff and students to grow professionally by engaging them in scholarly activities)

A. Protect Time for Research

(Protecting time helps in building scholarship)

- Block all committee meetings to specific days of the week
- Create WhatsApp or email group and use them judiciously
- Encourage academic staff to schedule protected time for writing and research
- Use meetings effectively with clear agendas and pre/post tasks
- Streamline committee membership to avoid overloading
- Minimize labour-intensive duties for junior academic members
- Reduce teaching loads
- Recognize and reward achievements in research, teaching, and service

B. Build Staff Supports

(This helps to ease academic staff workloads when dedicated staff provide specialized expertise)

- Assist in identifying funding opportunities

- Gather letters of support
- Assist in budget development
- Assist in assembling and formatting proposals
- Assist in translating research reports into user-friendly formats
- Assist with statistical analyses
- Provide regular software updates
- Set up of video/audio conferences to share ideas with other professionals
- Set up research advisory committee with senior researchers with PhDs and mentorship track to oversee and evaluate research in the Academy
- Establish institutional mock review to improve the quality and success rate of grant application submissions.

C. Engage Students in Academic Staff Research

(this enables academic staff and students expand and reflect on their knowledge and experiences and helps to integrate their knowledge through collaborative work)

- Recruit students whose interests and skills align with academic staff through allowing students to identify their research areas of interest
- Identify funds for sponsoring students on academic staff projects
- Provide training sessions on research and publication
- Engage in joint publications with students.

D. Develop Research Resources

(Research resources serve as tools and models for supporting scholarship)

- Keep sample proposals and review criteria on a shared drive
- Develop models for budgets, capacity, etc.
- Create tip sheets for budget figures
- Develop sample letters of support
- Create timelines for grant development
- Develop protocols for organizing peer feedback or mock reviews
- Create visual tools for setting goals and mapping progress of individuals

E. Cultivate Professional Growth & Discourse

(This involves engagement of academic staff and students in discussion about different aspects of research including networking and student and faculty research)

- Schedule brownbag presentations

- Display research posters in common areas
- Link articles and presentations to college websites
- Host workshops for collaborative development of scholarly products
- Host group meetings mentoring for new staff, professional development workshops
- Provide opportunities for ongoing professional development
- Recruit academic staff at varying ranks with overlapping interests
- Recruit those with strong writing & teaching skill, and quantitative and qualitative research skills
- Encourage collaboration between faculty and their mentors, students, peers
- Promote mentoring at all levels
- Provide support for both academic staff and students to share their knowledge through conference attendance and presentations,
- Encourage networking with other professionals,
- Encourage students and staff to become members of professional organisations,
- Encourage them to participate in annual meetings of the organisations

F. Publication

- Support staff and students to engage in scholarly publication of their works through:
 - Organization of workshops for preservice teachers on publishing
 - Engagement in collaborative publishing with the academic staff
 - Preparing a resume (Sanchez, Olsen-Pacheco, Grosso & Hankey, 2008).
- Identify possible forums for publication
- Study publication guidelines
- Encourage students to produce manuscripts following publication guidelines
- Edit articles with students until ready for submission

Conclusion

A missing link in teacher professional development is the Academy's inability to provide a strong research support for the teaching profession. The profession is fraught with many challenges making it unattractive as the first choice for many people. It is time now for the Academy to rise up to cultivate a

culture of scholarship to support the profession to ensure that the dark places of ignorance can be lighted to provide knowledge. The Academy must prepare itself to engage in knowledge production or research and teach the profession. It needs to be emphasized that the undergraduate students of the Academy need to be immersed in this culture; they will need it as they pursue their teaching career. It is noteworthy that the medical profession is sustained through intensive research.

It is hoped that the implementation of the strategies outlined earlier will help to build a strong culture of scholarship in the Academy in order to bring about the needed change in the teaching profession. The mentoring universities would be expected to play a critical role in this in bringing the academic staff to a level that they can support their students. Our students, teacher practitioners and the public cannot continue to wait indefinitely; they want to see change, and change can only come through scholarship.

Now let me end this with a quote from David Wilkins:

“ As educational institutions dedicated to the pursuit of knowledge, we can ill afford to allow those who nurture and support us, and who depend upon us to safeguard some of their most vital interests, to believe that we would ever choose darkness because we are afraid of what we might see. It is high time we started turning on the lights.” David Wilkins (1999)

Thank you for your patience and God bless you all.

References

- Anamuah-Mensah, J. (2014). The Dilemma of Postgraduate Education in Ghana: The Remedying Directions. A guest speaker's speech at the GRASAG Annual conference.
- Anamuah-Mensah, J. (2022). Postgraduate Research and Knowledge Production in Ghana: Revisiting the Dilemmas of Funding. Guest Speaker's speech presented at the Samuel & Emelia Butler GRASAG-UCC Research Fund Awards.
- Boyer, E. (2000). Scholarship reconsidered: Priorities of the Professoriate. NY: Carnegie Foundation.
- DeHart, D. (2015). Promoting a Culture of Scholarship in Higher Education, *Global Journal of Human Social Science: Linguistics and Education*, 15(11), 29-38.

Sanchez, C., Olsen-Pacheco, A., Grosso, L., & Hanley, E. (2008). Promoting Student Engagement through Scholarship in a Teacher Preparation Program. *Journal of the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning*, 8(2), 62-74.

Wilkins, D. B. (1999). The Professional Responsibility of Professional Schools to Study and Teach About the Profession. *Journal of Legal Education*, 49(1), 76-95.