

REVIEW OF THE CURRICULUM FOR THE DIPLOMA IN BASIC EDUCATION - Where are we now and what needs to happen next?

“IF WE TEACH TODAY AS WE TAUGHT YESTERDAY, WE ROB OUR CHILDREN OF TOMORROW”

JOHN DEWEY

INTRODUCTION

It is agreed amongst education professionals in Ghana, that the current curriculum for the Diploma in Basic Education (DBE) needs reviewing and updating, so that it can better prepare quality teachers for Ghana's school system.

On March 31st 2016 the National Council of Tertiary Education (NCTE) hosted a forum for stakeholders regarding the review of the pre-service teacher education curriculum for the Diploma in Basic Education (DBE). This followed a review in 2014, which looked at problems relating to the structure and the content of the 2005 DBE curriculum being run by the Colleges of Education.

The purpose of the meeting was to **build consensus amongst stakeholders on the creation of a broad framework, the Teacher Education Curriculum Framework, against which the current and future teacher education curriculum can be designed.**

This new framework will incorporate all the elements required to ensure student teachers receive the best possible preparation for their chosen profession, in alignment with the newly developed National Teacher Standards (developed in collaboration between T-TEL and the National Teaching Council (NTC), and the Ministry of Education's vision for equipping young Ghanaians to play their part in the country's social and economic development.

Following this meeting, a Technical Committee was put together to drive the review process, and this committee met from the 3rd-6th May 2016, to discuss the key elements for the Teacher Education Curriculum Framework, concentrating on the professional knowledge, skills and value dimension of teacher education. It was agreed that the framework should include:

- The vision for initial training of teachers
- The critical elements of teacher education
- Headline content for all teacher education programmes

This policy brief sets out the main points and issues identified ahead of securing consensus around the framework during the next National Policy Forum, scheduled for June.



The new Teacher Education Curriculum Review Framework must ensure that:

ALL NEW TEACHERS MEET THE NATIONAL TEACHERS' STANDARDS, AND ARE PREPARED TO TEACH THE KEY AREAS OF THE BASIC SCHOOL CURRICULUM

The curriculum must equip new teachers to be effective and inspirational through receiving a high quality teacher education, delivered through four key elements:

- Subject and curriculum knowledge
- Pedagogic knowledge
- Knowledge of literacy: Ghanaian and English
- Supported Teaching Practice in schools

The committee will further discuss and make suggestions to the Ministry of Education on whether there should be separate specialist pathways for early, primary and JHS teacher education.



MERGING OF CONTENT AND PEDAGOGIC KNOWLEDGE IN TUTOR PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND EDUCATION OF STUDENT TEACHERS

Pedagogical skills should cut across all tutor competencies when educating student teachers, with student teachers being equipped with a variety of teaching methods to support both generalist and specialist teaching. Emphasis should be placed on pedagogical content knowledge (PCK), which brings together subject knowledge (content) and pedagogic knowledge (methodology) to bring about better learning on the part of the student teachers.

Due to children's different developmental stages, the curriculum must include varied instructional strategies for educating pupils at different levels e.g. Kindergarten to Primary 3; Primary 4 to Primary 6; and Junior High School.

STUDENT TEACHERS ARE PREPARED TO INSTRUCT IN GHANAIAN LANGUAGES (LITERACY)

As language is the key to a good education we need teachers who are very competent in:

- L1 and L2 (Home / Ghanaian language and English)
- Teaching children in L1 and L2
- Developing young people's language
- Teaching using L1 and L2 as language of instruction for different subjects

Making Ghanaian languages a core subject at Senior High School would also help to fill the gap in language studies from JHS to Tertiary. A socio-linguistic survey is due to be conducted in primary schools to establish the number of languages represented in one classroom and the languages used by teachers, in order to comprehend the requirements of specific schools and educate and post teachers appropriately.

DEMONSTRATION SCHOOLS SHOW HIGH QUALITY AND THEIR ACTIVITIES ARE INTEGRATED INTO THE CoE CURRICULUM (PRACTICAL TEACHING)

Other schools in the community should also be considered for Teaching Practice (TP). The effectiveness and performance of demonstration schools must be compared with other schools, so we know where else TP sessions could take place.



STUDENT TEACHERS ARE TRAINED IN EQUAL AND INCLUSIVE METHODS OF TEACHING, THAT REPRESENT THE DIVERSITY IN GHANA

Student teachers must be prepared to teach equally and inclusively in the classroom. They must be given opportunities to teach effectively in different contexts; with the skills, knowledge and understanding to recognise and plan for social, cultural and linguistic differences in the children they teach.

Materials in the new curriculum could draw together examples from a range of different contexts and environments in the country.

THE PROFILE AND PRESTIGE OF TEACHERS IS RAISED TO HELP CLOSE THE GAP BETWEEN THE STANDARDS AND QUALITY EXPECTED OF GHANAIAN TEACHERS AND THE LEVELS WE CURRENTLY SEE IN SCHOOLS

At the moment, CoEs are not attracting top quality students. To address this, On top of the general entry requirement, there could be a tailor-made exam that tests the content knowledge, interests and initiatives of students.

Policy-makers must help increase awareness of the current situation and support efforts from teacher education stakeholders and institutions to raise the profile of being and becoming a teacher, so we ensure the right people go into the profession.

IN-SERVICE TEACHERS MUST BE SUPPORTED TO INCORPORATE MENTORING OF STUDENT TEACHERS INTO THEIR REGULAR CLASSROOM DUTIES.

Preparing in-service teachers as mentors is a rigorous process, leading to the creation of the Post Graduate Diploma in Mentoring in Universities across the country. In addition, mentorship could be incorporated into the Continuous Professional Development (CPD) of teachers to prepare them to mentor student teachers. Key people in the community could also be identified to mentor student teachers. Extra remuneration for mentors should also be considered for motivational purposes.



THE NUMBER OF TUTORS SHOULD BE HIGH ENOUGH TO ACCOMMODATE STUDENT TEACHER ENROLMENT IN CoES.

The curriculum cannot be taught effectively if student teacher/tutor faculty ratios are beyond standards set by NCTE. Student teachers must receive pedagogical training themselves in managing large classes, to prepare them for different class sizes and environments in schools.



ASSESSMENT AND CONTINUOUS PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT (CPD) SHOULD MOTIVATE STUDENT TEACHERS TO LEARN MORE

Values, attitudes and beliefs should be incorporated into assessment processes and student teachers should be assessed on their performance over the 3-year period of study at colleges. Such assessment should cover practical skills.

CPD activities should include the use of ICT. Participation in CPDs should be incorporated into promotion and retention systems.

NEXT STEPS

The following next steps will be taken:

- Collating and summarising viewpoints from stakeholders for the curriculum review framework Technical Committee.
- Presentations from the Technical Committee at the next National Policy Forum on teacher education, scheduled for 9th June, 2016.
- Achieving agreement on a draft curriculum framework for teacher education at the forum.
- Approval by NTC, NCTE and finally by MoE to make it a National Curriculum Framework for Teacher Education.
- Develop a work plan with UCC to design a new DBE curriculum based on the Teacher Education Curriculum Framework.

