

## Curriculum and assessment

Aspects of the curriculum and assessment currently used for training teachers are constraining the effectiveness of pre-service teacher education. The principal limitations in the curriculum and assessment are the prioritisation of subject knowledge over teaching skills, the lack of professional development opportunities for tutors, and the disconnect between the subject matter taught to trainee teachers and that used in Primary and Junior High Schools.

This briefing summarises these challenges and identifies measures to address them. It is based on a desk audit of the curriculum and assessment model, interviews with College of Education Heads of Department and Assessment Coordinators, a multi-stakeholder event and a four-day workshop conducted for T-TEL. A full report of the findings of the research is available.

### Introduction of new curriculum

A new curriculum and assessment process for the pre-service Diploma in Basic Education (DBE) was introduced in August 2014. For the academic year 2014-15, this curriculum applies only to Year 1 students. Subsequently it will be extended to Year 2 and 3 students.

The research conducted for T-TEL has identified several ways in which this new curriculum and assessment process may be constraining the effectiveness of teacher education:

### Curriculum and assessment prioritise subject knowledge over teaching skills

The emphasis of the DBE curriculum is on knowledge of the content of subjects, rather than on pedagogy and practical classroom skills. Of the 65 credits required to complete the course, only 9 are attainable through teaching practice. The curriculum does not facilitate clear progression in learning to teach effectively. Examinations are also principally focused on assessing knowledge rather than assessing understanding or teaching skill.

### This challenge is increased by the breadth of the curriculum

Trainees are required to learn material for teaching a nine-year age range for any foundation subject. This limits the time available for learning year-specific teaching methods, for example appropriate to P1 or JHS3. Similarly, examinations greatly reducing the time available for other forms of learning.

### Subject content does not always correspond with school curricula

Significant aspects of the DBE curriculum do not relate to content that is taught at Primary or Junior High School (JHS) levels. For example in Year 1, trainees study topics that are taught at Secondary High School. There is feedback between colleges, the University of Cape Coast (UCC) and the Ghana Education Service about the development of the DBE curriculum and its relationship with school curricula.

### Tutors have limited opportunity for professional development

There are few opportunities for tutors in Colleges of Education to develop their professional skills. Tutors are often isolated in their department, with little sharing of skills or combined teaching. There are limited resources for formal skills development. Tutors also generally have little time that can be allocated for learning, as breaks between terms and semesters are typically used for teaching external students, and many tutors use their spare time to engage in external work. However, there appears to be significant interest among tutors for in-house professional development and, among experienced tutors, taking on subject-specific coaching roles.

**“of the 65 credits required to complete the course, only 9 are attainable through teaching practice”**

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## Access to learning resources is limited for many trainees

Although teaching and learning materials are integral to the DBE course, many trainees have little access to these resources. In some cases, the materials are prohibitively expensive, particularly those published outside Ghana. Online resources are also often inaccessible for trainees, particularly due to poor internet connectivity in colleges. Library facilities vary between colleges, with some libraries reported to be locked during their official opening hours.

## “There are limited resources for formal skills development”

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### Next steps

T-TEL has identified measures that have the potential to address these challenges and improve the effectiveness of teacher education:

#### Professional development of tutors at Colleges of Education

Subject-specialist coaching can be central to tutors’ professional development. T-TEL will enable this through the training and development of regional coaches, who will then conduct workshops with college tutors and make regular coaching, coordination and monitoring visits to colleges. These workshops need to be carefully scheduled to ensure maximum participation, and the coaching college visits should be built into college timetables for 2015-16, 2016-17 and 2017-18.

## “Professional development of teachers in schools should become a joint responsibility of CoEs, NTC and affiliated universities”

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A further key element of improving teacher education is the development of new materials. T-TEL is developing materials that focus on pedagogy, with an emphasis on Primary and JHS levels, within the context of the DBE curriculum. This will cover three types of resources: practical teaching materials; a guide for tutors to explain how to use the teaching materials; and a manual to guide coaches who are leading workshops and the in-college coaching of tutors.

## Further development of DBE curriculum and assessment

T-TEL is supporting the Institute of Education of UCC to undertake a comprehensive review of the DBE curriculum. These review will take into account, the constraints that have been identified by the T-TEL team and the new competencies and skills framework for pre tertiary teachers, being formulated by NTC.

