

UNIVERSITY OF EDUCATION, WINNEBA: AN ASSESSMENT OF THE ONE SEMESTER DURATION OF THE UEW INTERNSHIP PROGRAM

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ABSTRACT: *Field internship is often suggested to be a strong tool in the process of preparing pre-service teachers for teaching profession. Debates remain, however, on whether;*

- *pre-service teachers are satisfactorily equipped with the pedagogical content knowledge required for teaching and learning with the one-semester duration field internship program;*
- *duration change has emotional impact on pre-service teachers' preparation towards the teaching professional job; and*
- *first semester is pleasant for a one-semester duration field internship program.*

A study conducted in the University of Education, Winneba (UEW) was designed to gain insight into the structure of the field internship program in the Centre of Teacher Development and Action Research (CETDAR). To report on the effect of changes made to the Student Internship Program (SIP), the study focused on the period and duration of the field internship. Data collected through observation and document analysis were analysed by means of the mixed method. By examining the characteristics of participants' approaches in the changed duration, a study of the critical role that duration plays in constructing pedagogical content knowledge in students reveals that, the change has strictly weakened the competency of pre-service teachers towards the teaching and learning skills after training. Despite the fact that teaching vacancies exist for pre-service teachers in both semesters, the first semester was not found pleasant for the one semester duration field internship program. The need of the hour is to choose, for the field internship program, a vital period and duration that will help pre-service teachers acquire the pedagogical content knowledge required for teaching and learning adequately, before service. And making pre-service teachers' acquisition of pedagogical content knowledge a 'felt need' of the field internship program, is a vital step in renovating the duration of field internship program.

KEYWORDS: Field internship program, One-semester duration, Pedagogical content knowledge, Pre-service teacher, Teaching professional job.

INTRODUCTION

Education is what begins when one leaves school (Oscar Wilde, cited in Lawton, 1986). According to McWilliam and Kwamena-Poh (1978) the main purpose of education, whether formal or informal, has been to produce a person who will be a useful member of society. The activities and experiences being formal or informal that help to qualify a person or a student to assume the responsibilities of a member of the teaching profession and to discharge his responsibilities more effectively is classified as teacher education (Amissah, Sam-Tagoe, Amoah & Mereku, 2002).

According to McCormich and James (1983) unlike the basic and secondary levels where all the schools use the same curriculum and syllabus designed by Curriculum Research and Development Division (CRDD) in their educational system, the degree of political control over teacher education varies. As a result, different institutions have alternate certification programs that can move a student into the classroom setting while he / she works towards certification.

For the past twelve years University of Education, Winneba (UEW) had been using the internship technique to train prospective teachers. This internship technique of training is well-known as “Student Internship Program” (SIP) in the teacher education system of UEW. The SIP is a practical component in the UEW’s Bachelor of Education (B Ed.) degree program which pre-service teachers must accomplish as requirement for reward of degree in order to progress in their graduation. The purpose of SIP is to make pre-service teachers develop in skills, what they have learnt in theory.

Beforehand, the duration of SIP of UEW was one academic (final) year. Currently, UEW’s SIP duration is one semester, specifically, the first semester of the final year of UEW’s B.Ed. degree program. This research therefore aimed at determining the effect of the change in duration for UEW’s SIP on pre-service Teacher Education in UEW.

Statement of the Problem

Teaching is so complex a profession because, apart from the classroom teaching, professional teachers have many other specified duties including preparation of lessons, marking students’ work, curriculum development and in-service meeting, as well as essential administration to maintain the organization of the school (Campbell & Neill, 1994). Further, Boreham and Gray (2009) posit that teachers’ identities emerge more gradually on the basis of their embeddedness in concrete work situation. Boakye (2004) also emphasised that one of the ways of ensuring that people work effectively after training is by giving them the opportunities to practise during their training.

These presumptions explore the essence of real and practical work situation in the training system of pre-service teachers in an adequate period of time. In this regard, the researcher wished to look at how the reduced duration of UEW’s SIP is influencing prospective teacher preparation in UEW.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to investigate the influence of the change in duration of UEW’s SIP on pre-service teacher preparation in UEW.

Research Questions

The study was guided by the following three research questions. Pertaining to the one semester duration for internship program in UEW;

1. How long in practical terms do UEW interns engage in classroom activities?
2. What is the effect of the reduced duration of UEW internship program on UEW interns’ Pedagogical Content Knowledge (PCK) acquisition?
3. Are UEW pre-service teachers highly put in “the field” after internship?

Significance of the Study

The result(s) from this study will influence the UEW academic board to come to a decision on the one semester duration of SIP.

Limitations

Even though, a study of this kind calls for a wide sampling of data from all participants (past and present students of UEW who has participated in the SIP, Heads of Institutions in partnership to the UEW SIP, mentors and supervisors) of the UEW SIP by considering the B.Ed degree program. The study is limited to participants in the 2015 / 16 academic year.

Delimitations

Though, some studies have been done about the teacher education program, it is indicated that, the internship course in the pre-service teacher education system in various institutions or organizations differ in both quality and quantity. Yet, this study focuses on only the internship in UEW's pre-service teacher education system in Ghana.

So the condition that the study looks at only pre-service teachers education in UEW, tells that it is delimited to the UEW in Ghana.

(Despite these limitations and delimitations, the researcher hoped that this study is of heuristic value to readers).

REVIEW OF RELEVANT LITERATURE

In every country throughout the world, the school has a role to play in educating and training the young (Desmond, Oke & Nacino-Brown, 1992). Badu and Amoah (2010) reiterate this same notion that our learning institutions are key centres for developing and fostering the necessary manpower needed to achieve a better society.

In Ghana, there are two main types of institutions responsible for the training of teachers. These are the Colleges of Education and the Teacher Education Universities (TEUs). These universities are mainly University of Education, Winneba (UEW) and University of Cape Coast (UCC). (In UCC, only the faculty of education is involved in Teacher Training). It can therefore be justified that, the UEW mandated by Acts of Parliament to be a Teacher Education University (TEU) in Ghana since 2000, has a vital role to play in the training of prospective teachers in this country. The University of Ghana had until 1952 been the main source of graduates in Ghana, the bulk of whom preferred to go to the secondary schools to teach students in the classroom (McWilliams & Kwamena-Poh, 1978). This means, the University of Ghana, which is not a TEU was the main source of graduate non-professional teachers in Ghana. It was with the establishment of the UCC in 1962, that an additional source of graduate, but this time, professional, teachers was provided in Ghana (McWilliams & Kwamena-Poh, 1978).

Leinhardt & Greeno (1986) considered skill in teaching to rest on two (2) fundamental systems of knowledge: Subject matter and Lesson structure. The first considered as the primary knowledge of teachers is the knowledge of the content to be taught. This system of knowledge is usually called Content Knowledge (CK). And the second knowledge system which is also

called Pedagogical Knowledge (PK), is the knowledge required to construct and conduct a lesson.

The content knowledge of a teacher is the amount and organization of a subject per se in the mind of the teacher (Tsang, 2005). Teacher's knowledge of content refers to the breadth and, more importantly, the depth of the subject matter knowledge possessed by the teacher, partially, their ways of understanding and ways of thinking (Harel & Lim, 2004). Generally speaking, a way of understanding refers to either one's meaning and interpretation of a term or sentence or solution to a problem, or justification to validate or refute a proposition, and a way of thinking refers to "what governs a person's ways of understanding, and thus expresses reasoning that is not specific to one particular situation, but to a multitude of situations" (Harel & Lim, 2004).

Pedagogical knowledge on the other hand, is that kind of knowledge from where teachers draw ideas on how to teach a lesson, how to relate to students, how to manage a class, and how to prepare a test (Vistro-Yu, 2010). Pedagogical knowledge is the ability to convert subject matter knowledge in lessons for a wide range of students (Mewborn, 2001). This means that the knowledge of pedagogy refers to teachers' understanding of how to teach in accordance with principles. Pedagogical knowledge can therefore be defined as the Theories and Methods of Teaching.

Pedagogical knowledge accordingly, is that kind of knowledge that teachers should hope to perk up when they say they want to become better teachers, for the reason that, this is where they draw all the "tricks" that can muster to make their students' learning experiences valuable. But Shulman (1986) stressed that in teaching, without content knowledge (CK), pedagogical knowledge (PK) is useless, likewise without pedagogical knowledge (PK), content knowledge (CK) is irrelevant and shallow. So this calls for the integration of the first two knowledge bases called Pedagogical Content Knowledge (PCK).

Pedagogical Content Knowledge refers to the ability of the teacher to transform content into forms that are pedagogically powerful and yet adaptive to the variations in ability and background presented by the students (Turnukly and Yesildere, 2007). The manner in which teachers relate their subject matter knowledge (what they know about what they teach) to their pedagogical knowledge (what they know about teaching) and how subject matter knowledge is a part of the process of pedagogical reasoning are seen as integrants of pedagogical content knowledge (Cochran, DeRuiter & King, 1993).

From the definitions and explanations given, the researcher can say that the one who wishes to become a high-quality competent subject teacher needs to have PCK in teaching that particular subject. Because, if a teacher has mastered in content but does not have pedagogy, *how* is he or she going to deliver his or her subject matter knowledge to learners and if a teacher has no content knowledge but has the pedagogy, *what* is he or she going to deliver to learners. Students' learning depends on the teachers' actions, which are, in turn, dependent on the teachers' knowledge base (Harel & Lim, 2004). Hill, Rowan and Ball (2005), also accessed that, teachers' knowledge is often suggested to be a strong indicator of students' opportunities to learn deep subject content.

For the past 45 years, UEW and the faculty of teacher education in UCC have been using the traditional model to train prospective teachers. In this style of training, assessments of student teachers' teaching performance during the off-campus teaching practices were done by only the university supervisors. However, there was little or no involvement of the staff

(particularly, the teaching staff) of schools and colleges that prospective teachers do their teaching practices, in it (CETDAR, 2009). At present, both university supervisors and staff of partnership institutions assess student teachers in their off-campus teaching practice. And this practice of trainees or concrete work situation that leads to the creation of network of contacts between institutions is termed 'field internship' in the higher level of education. Then, what is field internship?

Internship is a practical training similar to apprenticeship which exists in various settings like medical and engineering in various countries such as Spain, France, UK and Italy (FAQs, 2010). This means, internship is a validated work experience opportunity as part of a degree program.

Further, field internship is the process of working or training in one's chosen profession under the guidance of an expert or teacher (mentor). The field internship essentially puts people in "the field", meaning participants will be getting practical experience before working on their own (Levin, 1991). This means field internship is strong-minded for job learning rather than evaluation.

Mentoring is a one-to-one learning relationship between an older or more experienced person and a younger or less experienced person that is based on modeling behaviour and extended dialogue or conversation between them. It is also a form of professional socialization whereby a more experienced individual acts as a guide, role model, teacher and patron of a less experienced protégé (Levin, 1991).

Teacher education internship takes place in basic, secondary and other higher level schools / institutions and lasts for a period less than one academic year (CETDAR, 2009).

Any matriculating student is eligible for an internship provided that he / she meets the criteria established by the college or university and by the departments for participation, and has academic department approval and satisfactorily completed a pre-internship seminar. Since internship is career specific, students or trainees are often allowed to choose internship based on their major at the university or college level. During internship, interns are supposed to put into practice the things they have learned at college or university.

From the review of literature above, teacher's knowledge acquisition is the critical issue in Teacher Education. The various teachers' knowledge are Content Knowledge (CK), Pedagogical Knowledge (PK) and Pedagogical Content Knowledge (PCK).

Teacher education is the critical work in producing competent teachers. Practical ... is the critical activity in acquiring PCK in teaching. The various practices in teacher education are off campus teaching practice and internship but in UEW, internship is mainly used for preparing pre-service teachers. There had been two durations experienced in UEW Internship being one academic year and one semester. Furthermore, the procedure and structure of UEW Internship were silent in the literature. However, the level of teachers' knowledge acquisition is influenced by duration of practice. Therefore, this key variable would be the focus of the study.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

The researcher used the descriptive research design. This design was adopted because time is an important variable in the mission to improve students' achievement. Also the internship is the major instrument that the UEW use to support her students to acquire the Pedagogical Content Knowledge in teaching, and to gain in-depth insight of it's duration effect on pre-teachers preparation, the descriptive research design is appropriate.

Study Population

The targeted population for the study included the 2015/16 academic year interns, mentors, institutional heads and supervisors in respect to the SIP of UEW. These groups of people were targeted because they could provided relevant information concerning durational change in the UEW SIP and the extent to which it influence the pre-service teachers' preparation.

Sampling Frame:

A total of 2,198 pre-service teachers and 861 Institutional Heads were the participants selected from the UEW internship program in the Winneba campus. This represented the sampling frame for the descriptive design. The intuitive method (Table 1) was therefore used to determine the sample size for the study. Table 1 is the table for the intuition method.

Table 1: Intuition Method of Determining Sample Size

Sample Frame	Percentage (%)	Sample Size
100	30	30
1000	10	100
10000	5	500

(Puopiel, 2014)

Sampling Techniques and Procedures

The sampling techniques adopted were stratified, simple random and convenience samplings. As stated earlier, the internship program at the UEW is participated by interns, mentors, institutional heads and supervisors. The population was therefore stratified according to status. The pre-service teachers were selected using the simple random technique and the convenient technique was applied for the institutional heads' selection. The sub-sample from each status were then put together to get the desired sample size of 478. Source: Fieldwork data (2015/16)

Sample Size:

By the intuition method of determining sample size, the sample size for the study therefore became 220 pre-service teachers and 258 institutional heads. It is however important to note that the sample size depended on the stipulated period of the study. In the light of this, the sample size in the study was considered critical to the study.

Data Collection Instrument

Interview and document guide were the instruments used to collect data from post interns pre-service teachers and institutional heads respectively.

Sources of Data

The study gathered primary and secondary data from primary and secondary sources respectively. Primary data was gathered through interviews of post interns on impact of duration on their preparation towards the teaching profession in the internship program. Secondary data was also gathered from evaluations and suggestions of institutional heads on the UEW SIP written on the 'IRB 7' sheets of the 'Intern Record Book' in the 2015/16 academic year.

The secondary data used in the study helped improve measurement by expanding the description of variable. It also increased validity and reliability of the primary data gathered from the 2015/16 interns after their internship program.

Piloting of Data Collection Instruments

The research instrument, specifically the interview questions, was pre-tested before the collection of data. This was done to ascertain the validity and reliability of the questions. The pre-test was therefore conducted in December, 2015 on available resources. In the light of this, interns were randomly approached and interviewed. For interns talked about authentication and trustworthiness. In this regard, the instrument demonstrated good internal consistency and could produce the same or similar result when used in another setting. Very few errors were detected and corrected.

Data Collection Procedure

In the period of post internship, the researcher informally approached the post internship pre-service teachers at their departmental areas. After establishing rapport, some post internship pre-service teachers were conveniently called and interviewed by the researcher. Interviewees were allowed to speak freely in their responses. The responses from participants of interview were recorded by means of the researcher's own mobile phone recorder. After the administration of the interviewees responses, the researcher in her office followed up with an act of reading through the 2015/16 institutional heads' evaluations and suggestions about the UEW SIP written on the 'IRB7' sheet found in the UEW's Intern Record Book, typically known as the Yellow Book, and sent to the UEW through CETDAR. Some suggestions and evaluations were purposively selected, rewritten and saved in a file.

Methods of Data Analysis

Quantitative data was analyzed using percentages and the thematic approach was used to analyze the qualitative data.

Validity of Study

The implementation of the SIP in UEW's teacher education system is what the University uses to train her students in the skills and experiences involved in the job, teaching. Also, the heads whose evaluations and suggestions were analyzed are the heads of the institutions that the UEW students do their real practice in the teaching profession during internship. Nevertheless, the

2015/16 academic year UEW post internship B Ed. students constituted the interviewees. As a result, the analysis of data obtained through these sources made the study valid.

Ethical Issues

The anonymity and confidentiality of information given by individual respondents was assured. The researcher used about three months to collect the data (Jan to Mar, 2016).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Duration;

The analysis of some statements made by some interviewees, such as;

“The one term (3 months) period allotted as the duration for the program” A19

“Duration of internship (ie 3 months) is not” A11

“The program was good but the duration ie. the three (3) months, is” A12

“The three (3) months (a term) should be” A18

brought out a revelation that UEW interns do internship within a period of three months.

Further investigations of the suggestions made by some institutional heads, such as those listed below, also brought out to the knowledge of the researcher that the three months duration within which the pre teachers do their one semester internship is not meant for only classroom activities.

“..... because of extracurricular activities in the” B20

“..... to the anatomy of situations on the ground.” B5

“..... in all school activities” B6

“..... can study the practical aspects” B28

This means that UEW interns play additional roles to the real classroom teaching in the partnership schools during their one semester internship period.

The integration of the two findings above proves that for the one semester internship, interns are typically engaged in classroom activities in a period of less than three months. Based on this finding, the researcher therefore concluded that, in practical terms, interns engage in classroom activities in duration underneath three (3) months for the duration of one semester for the UEW SIP.

Reduced Duration’s Effect on PCK Acquisition

From the interviewees, the following statements came out strongly;

“ the three months is too short a time for adequate experience.” ,

“ Three months is not sufficient enough for any intern to experiment any meaningful academic work, ”

“ the reason being that, most students lack teaching techniques and must stay on for intensive skills in teaching “

“ by the time the intern gets to know the school environment better, is the time he will be preparing to return.”

Their analysis brought out a result that with the one semester duration internship program, interns do not practice in an *adequate period of time* in order to *“gain a very high level of expertise”* (A21) as would-be teachers. This means that UEW interns are not agreeably equipped with the PCK required for teaching and learning by the one semester internship program.

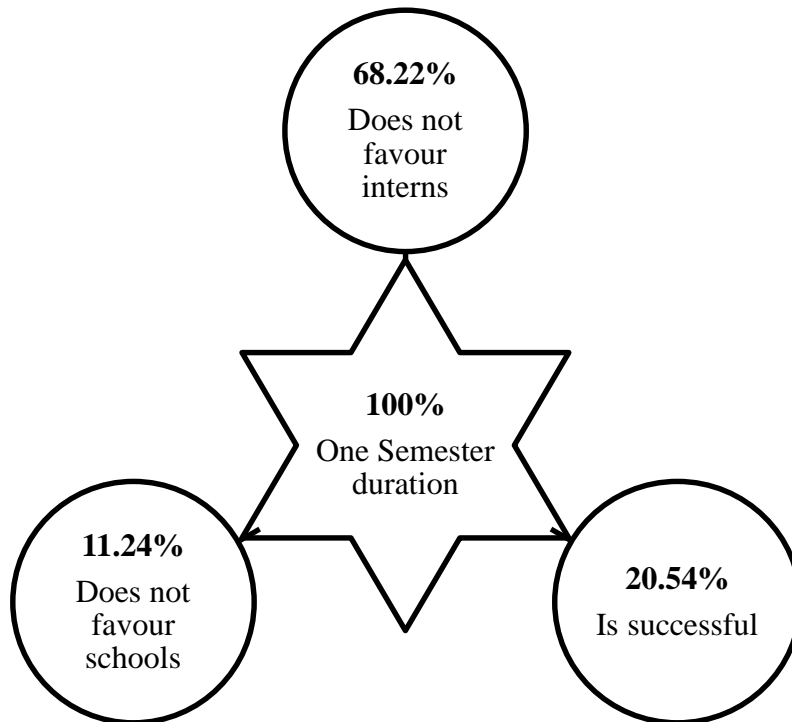
The implication of this immediate discovery to the study is that the reduction in duration, allotted to the UEW SIP, has in effect diminished the advancement of interns' PCK acquisition.

Put in “the Field”;

Further, the field data showed that heads of the partnership schools have various opinions about the one semester duration internship program held in UEW. They made evaluations and suggestions focused on the one semester duration and its influence on both pre-service teacher's preparation and institutional satisfaction. Table 2 displays the influential statistics of the heads' opinions.

Table 2: Influential Statistics of Institutional Heads' Opinions

GROUP	FREQ	PROGRAM EVALUATION WITH RESPECT TO DURATION	PERCENTAGE
1	176	Does not prepare well interns towards teaching	68.22
2	29	Does not help schools	11.24
3	53	Is successful	20.54
TOTAL	258		100.00

Figure 1: Influential Statistics of Institutional Heads' Opinions

It can be viewed from Table 2 (page 11) that a greater proportion (68.22%) of evaluations and suggestions made by some institutional heads was that, with the one semester duration allotted for the UEW SIP, pre teachers are not well prepared towards the job, teaching. This means that pre teachers do not “*gain much as far as teaching as a profession with its techniques, strategies and methodologies is concern*” (A1) in the UEW one semester internship program.

The integration of this finding to that of the second research question revealed that, the one semester duration for internship does not put interns at “*a very high level*” as far as “the field” is concern. Then the conclusion is that after internship, pre-service teachers are not highly put in “the field”.

Other Finding in the Study

The analysis of some suggestions like

“Just one (1) term for the internship is too short a time. Future internship that may last for only a term may not be entertained in this school. One (1) year duration is recommended.” (B4) and

‘Much as management would wish to maintain this relationship, it would be very grateful if the period could be extended to two (2) academic terms instead of one.’ (B11)

during the study brought out a revelation to the researcher that the one semester period for the UEW SIP, has impacted the participating interest of the partnership schools (heads) in it.

A detailed study will therefore be conducted on this issue in future by the researcher.

SUMMARY, RECOMMENDATION AND CONCLUSION

Summary

The integration of the stated results shows clearly that; by the insertion of the one semester duration field internship program into UEW's teacher education system, the length of time that UEW pre-service teachers use to do real classroom teaching practice in their field internship is less than three months. And this length of time (less than three months) to be used for real classroom teaching practice by UEW pre-service teachers makes UEW graduates professionally prepared at low level in the angle of the teaching profession.

Recommendation

With theories and little or no skills, how is one going to deliver his or her knowledge and skills in teaching when fully employed after training as a classroom teacher? The researcher therefore recommends the academic board of UEW to make UEW pre-service teachers' acquisition of PCK in teaching a felt need of the UEW SIP simply because internship is strong minded for job learning rather than evaluation.

Conclusion

In support with a suggestion made by an institutional head that ;

"..... I suggest a second look is given to the new trend if not reversed to the one year internship program." (Head, 2016),

the need of the hour is to decide on the duration for UEW SIP

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