

Who becomes a history Teacher in Ghana: Characteristics and Experiences of UCC history Student Teachers upon Entry into the University?

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Abstract- The study explored the experiences and characteristics of history student teachers as they are admitted into the history teacher education programme in the University of Cape Coast. The study surveyed 16 history student teachers, 3 lecturers and Twenty four (24) practising teachers. A combination of purposive sampling and census methods, stratified sampling and snowball sampling techniques were respectively used for the study. The results showed that candidate who chose to pursue teacher education in history at the university of Cape Coast had some teaching experience mostly at the basic level and have taught history related subjects. Also student teacher candidates had good grades in history as well as had good aggregates before enrolling into the programme. Again individuals who intend pursuing the programme also had interest in the study of history.

Index Terms- Education, History, Teacher, Entry characteristics, Ghana

I. INTRODUCTION

In Ghana, the training and development of teachers for the Junior High Schools is mostly undertaken by the 38 public training colleges in the country with the University of Cape Coast being the examining body. The University of Cape Coast and University of Education, Winneba, on the other hand, also run various teacher education programmes to prepare teachers for the basic and senior high schools in the country. Established in 1962, the University of Cape Coast was born out of a dire need of the then government for highly qualified and skilled manpower in education to man the affairs of the education sector. The university was established to train graduate teachers for second cycle institutions, teacher training colleges, and technical institutions. Education became a compulsory component of every programme in the university leading to the award of B.A and B.Sc. (general) education degrees to its graduands (Dwarko & Kwarteng, 2003). Due to the dominant education component, the Faculty of Education was established and the Department of Curriculum and Teaching was born. The department was responsible for the development of teaching methods and supervision of school practice. By 1975, the department became known as the Department of Arts and Social Sciences Education with additional responsibility of carrying out research to evaluate the effectiveness of teaching methods and at the same time devise new teaching methods and strategies. Currently, the department offers teacher education programmes in Arts, Social Science, Management

and Social Studies. The B.Ed (Arts) programme is designed to train teachers in arts related subjects especially English, History, Religious Studies, Ghanaian Language, French and Music.

There is a saying that if you forget your past you may miss the future. Others also believe that the past guides our way to the future. People become proud when they are able to trace their heritage from the earliest times to the present. Knowing one's heritage is one of the most cherished ideals in a society. One's knowledge of his/her heritage creates awareness of how people in the past lived, the way they entertained themselves, the way they dressed, the food they ate, how they related to each other, among others. In many African countries, cultural heritage such as festivals, religion, funeral rites, language and even the type of education they go through have their meanings evolving from the past (Opong, 2009). This therefore means that a clear understanding of the present must first start from the past, thus a history of the past. Hence the inclusion of history into the Ghanaian school curriculum. In the Ghanaian school curriculum, the teaching and learning of history have enjoyed considerable attention since the colonial period. During those days it was taught as a subject in both the missionary schools and the schools established by the British colonial administration. It continued to enjoy its place in the school curriculum even after colonialism and was one of the four subjects, which were written during the Middle School Leaving Certificate Examination (M.S.L.C.E).

History was also offered in the secondary schools from form one up to form five as an elective subject for Arts students who wrote the School Certificate and General Certificate of Education Ordinary Level (SC/GCE 'O' Level). At the sixth form, history was one of the subjects offered for the General Certificate of Education Advanced Level (GCE 'A' level) examination. After the introduction of the 1987 educational reform, history was incorporated into social studies at the basic school level and offered as an elective for General Arts students at the senior secondary school (now senior high school) level (Opong, 2009). Each year, the University of Cape Coast (UCC) compiles data on the background of students it admits into its programmes. The data is drawn from academic certificates submitted by applicants as well as information provided by the applicants during interviews conducted prior to admission (matured applicants). This data serve various purposes for which it is intended. For example, from the collected data, the university is in a position to monitor students' performance base on, among other things, whether or not a particular student entered with high or low grades. The idea of collecting information on student characteristics seems to be a step in the right direction. However, the data collected is not comprehensive enough to use for purposes other than administrative duties. More often than not, for example in the University of Cape Coast, it is common to have in a group of applicants two categories: (a) those who have a teaching experience and (b) some without such an experience. Additionally, a known fact is that prospective teachers enter the university with some idea about life in a school classroom. Data focusing on experiences among other things does not seem to form part of the data currently collected at the university. Such information, if properly documented and made available to teacher educators and

prospective teachers themselves in a refined manner could be used in the university for many purposes. Most importantly, through investigating entry characteristics regularly, the university will gain knowledge about the trainees it deals with and that knowledge can be used in informing the planning of programmes and at classroom level too (Oppong, 2009). The study sought to explore the type of teacher the history teacher education programme in the university of Cape Coast aim at producing, the entry characteristics of the student teachers upon entry into the history teacher education programme as well as their reasons for choosing history as their major subject

II. THEORETICAL UNDERPINNINGS

BECOMING A TEACHER IS A MULTIFACETED PROCESS THAT can be interpreted, for example, as learning to teach, as personal development, or as teacher socialization. During their development, teachers create their expertise, competence and practical knowledge, which to a great extent are simple and experiential. According to Virta (2002), becoming a teacher is not only a personal process, but is interactive and situated in certain contexts, and for a subject-specific teacher this process seems to include a great number of ingredients which are:

- Early influences of childhood and school years (formation of beliefs about teaching, learning, students, and school subjects),
- Attachment to the subject,
- Socialization into the academic subculture of the university department,
- Development as a subject specialist,
- Socialization as a teacher in teacher education and in work settings.

In the view of Grossman and Stodolsky (1995), secondary school subjects represent an essential framework in the formation of teacher identities and school culture, and remain central in all phases of teachers' careers. Most secondary school students' choice of becoming teachers is affected by the way they are taught (Little, 1990; John, 1996). There is a rich literature showing the importance of the early school experiences and the beliefs of student teachers at the beginning of their studies as the basis of their development as teachers (Calderhead, 1991; John, 1996; Lortie, 1975; Sugrue, 1997; Wideen, Mayer Smith, & Moon, 1998). As these researchers observed, early school experiences play a major role in students' choice of teaching as a career. To them, during lessons, students do not only learn for instance history, but also receive a rich store of experiences of differing types of teachers, differing styles of teaching, and various ways of studying. This is what Lortie (1975) called "apprenticeship of observation".

To the author, during this period teachers-to-be collect impressions and tacit knowledge about their future profession from their teachers. It is also believed that socialization into a subject teacher's role and into the subject subculture begins during this process. Also during this process, student teachers-to-be adopt the act of teaching various subjects, the status of the subjects in the school curriculum, and their appropriate teaching methods. The cycle continues at the university, where they learn to be subject specialists and adopt the models of reasoning and thinking typical of the field, although, in a single domain, the subject tradition may not be

totally coherent (Quinlan, 1999). Research by Virta (2002) suggests that students choose to be educated as history teachers themselves, because of their attachment or interest in a subject. To him although the school may have total influence in student's enthusiasm for the subject, it does not have much to offer; rather, it is the interest students have for the subject that motivates them to choose history teaching as a career.

John (1996) also analysed the interviews of 42 prospective history teachers and explored their implicit theories of learning and teaching history. He asked them how they had originally become interested in history, and it was found that it had more often been the school than because of its families, travels, museums and visiting of historical sites which had been more important. This means that, issues such as families, travels, museums and visits to historic sites is a contributing factor to student teachers implicit theories of learning to teach history. Similar results were reported by Von Borries (1988), who studied how professional historians became interested in history.

Friedrichsen, Abell, Paraja, Brown, Lankford and Volkmann (2009) investigated the influence of prior teaching experience upon prospective and novice biology teachers' knowledge for teaching upon entry into an alternative certification program. Both prospective and novice teachers demonstrated an information-transition approach to science teaching as evidenced by the sequence of instruction which followed an inform-verify-practice sequence and perceived learning as memorizing information (Friedrichsen *et. al.*, 2009). Study findings suggest effective teacher preparation programmes must include effective mentoring with a strong emphasis upon reflection as well as collaboration among interns "to assess student work, reflect on practice, challenge common myths of teaching, and share best practices to support the development of discipline and topic-specific Pedagogical Content Knowledge (PCK)" (p. 376). In other studies by Hollingsworth (1989), Adams and Krockover, (1997) the researchers found, however, that the entering beliefs and knowledge of prospective teachers act as powerful predictors of what they learn in education courses. Cobbold (1999) evaluated the implementation of the programme of instruction developed for social studies in the teacher training colleges of Ghana. Results of the study reveal strong evidence that the characteristics of the social studies programme was fairly clear to both tutors and students. However the professional and academic background of the tutors was found to be unsupportive of the implementation of the programme. It is against this background that the study sought to examine the characteristics and experiences of UCC history Student Teachers upon entry into the university.

III. Methods

The research employed descriptive survey design that purposely observe, describe, and document aspects of a situation as it occurs naturally. Fraenkel and Wallen (2000) describe descriptive research as the collection of data in order to test hypothesis or answer research questions concerning the current status of the subjects of the study. Both in-depth interview and focus group discussions

(qualitative methods) and questionnaires (quantitative) were used to collect data from the respondents. The study targeted all B.Ed (Arts) students offering history as a major subject, all history teachers in the central region of Ghana who pursued B.Ed (Arts) in UCC and all Lecturers involved in the history teacher education programme in the university. Data collected from the questionnaire were edited, coded and analysed using SPSS version 16. Discussion recorded from interview with lecturers and focus group discussion with the students in relation to the research questions were transcribed and grouped into themes and sub themes. These issues were quoted to support some of the discussions. Questions related to the entry characteristics of student teachers were analysed using percentages and frequencies.

IV. Results and Discussion

Socio demographic characteristics of respondents

Sex distribution of respondents

The respondents were asked to indicate their gender. Their responses are presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Sex Distribution of Respondents

Gender	Student Teachers	Practising Teachers	lecturers
	N %	N %	N %
Male	11 (68.8)	14 (58.3)	5 (100)
Female	5 (31.3)	10 (41.7)	-
Total	16 (100)	24 (100)	5 (100)

Table 1 indicates that there were 16 student teacher respondents and 24 practising teacher respondents. Among the student teachers 11(68.8%) were males and 5(31.3%) were females. The students' population represents the devaluing nature of history as a subject. In terms of gender, the number of female respondents compared to that of males was slightly lower which may be attributed to the fact that most females do not have interest in the study of history. For the practising teachers, 14(58.3%) were males and 10(41.7%) being females. This implies that the number of male history teachers at the senior high school level outnumber their female counterpart. On the part of the lecturers, all the 5 respondents were males. This can be attributed to the fact that there are not enough female lecturers in the programme.

Age distribution of respondents

The age distribution of both respondents was of importance to the researcher. The outcome is presented in Tables 2.

Table 2: Age Distribution of Respondents

Age	Student Teachers N%	Practising Teachers N%	Lecturers N%
21-25	9 (56.3)	3 (12.5)	0

26-30	4 (25.0)	9 (37.5)	0
31-35	3 (18.8)	9 (37.5)	2 (40)
Above 36	0	3 (12.5)	3 (60)
Total	16 (100)	24 (100)	5 (100)

Table 2 indicates that the age distribution of the student teachers ranges from 21 – 35 years with the majority (56.3%). The outcome indicates that the student teachers were matured enough to read, understand and respond to issues and also since they had spent a greater number of years on the programme, it will enable them evaluate the programme well. Majority of the practising teachers on the other hand were found to be within the range of 26-35 years and the lecturers were also found to be above 36years.

Type of teacher the history teacher education programme in the University of Cape Coast aim at producing

Documentary evidence laid bare on what the history education programme aims at producing. The history teacher education programme aims at providing insights, perspectives, directives and projections to prepare prospective teachers to provide guidance and leadership in the teaching/learning process in their schools and classrooms. The programme also aims to enable teachers draw up curricula for various levels of educational institutions in the country. It is also to lay the foundation for the preparation of qualified teachers dedicated to helping students attain high academic standards or laurels.

In this vein, I inquired from the student teacher and lecturer respondents about their knowledge and understanding of the type of teacher the history teacher education programme aims at producing. From the focus group discussions, student teachers were unanimous in their view that the objectives of the history teacher education is to train teachers to effectively teach history at the respective senior high schools. However, some had divergent views on what the programme aims at producing. This includes the idea of imbuing in student teachers an understanding of his country and the world at large. A lecturer also shared a similar view stating that the programme aims at developing people to work in other institutions such as the Archival offices, Institute of National Culture, among others.

When probed, through interview and focus group with lecturers and student teachers respectively on what the history teacher education programme should aim at producing, one thing stood out. Thus the programme should seek to produce teachers who knew their subject and could teach effectively. One student had this to say;

It should aim at helping student teachers to understand teaching history in the context of teaching resources and its problems as well as being practical.

Another student also stated

It should aim at helping students think critically and to analyse educational issues from their own perspective.

The views expressed by some of the lectures in regards of the objective and nature of history in the university were captured in the following instances.

A lecturer also indicated that, it should aim at training students to work in other areas of the economy be it the security and also should be redesigned to incorporate other courses because it is too 'education oriented'.

Another lecturer respondent suggested the incorporation of government related courses so that the history student teacher would be seen as having knowledge base both in government and history.

It can therefore be stated that the type of teacher the history teacher education programme aims at producing though explicitly stated in the faculty brochure, is not very clear to both respondents since all their responses bothered on the overall aim of the programme. However, it can be said that it aims to prepare teachers to teach effectively in their various classroom. This is typical of a teacher as a 'technician' whose role is to have knowledge of the curriculum- which is prescribed at a higher level and deliver them as efficient as possible. This is characteristic of an applied sciences model of teacher education (Cobbold, 2011) which is typical in most teacher education programmes in sub-Saharan Africa. Again, the programme depicts Lewin & Stuart (2003) 'technician' type of teacher education in Ghana as indicated in the MUSTER studies.

On the whole the objectives of the programme reflect the philosophy of teacher education in Ghana as it is in the philosophy of teacher education in the national teacher education policy (2011). Assertions of Aggarwal (2004) on the objectives of teacher education such as enabling teachers to play effective roles in their various classrooms and schools is also seen in this angle. In all these however, it can be said that the specific objectives of the history teacher education programme is not very clear to both respondents since all their responses bothered on the overall aim of the programme but not the exact objectives of the programme.

Entry characteristics of history student teachers in the University of Cape Coast

This aspect of the research sought to survey data relating to the background characteristics of respondents before enrolling in the programme. These included, among other things, the qualification, aggregates, grades obtained in history, teaching experience and especially the motives of student teachers for pursuing the B.Ed (Arts) programme. From the data collected from the two groups of respondents i.e. student teachers and practising teachers, it is possible to construct a profile of the background characteristics of those who are trained by the University of Cape Coast to become history teachers in Ghana. This is presented in Tables 3,4,5,6, and 7.

By the regulations of the programme, applicants to the programme are to at least have a senior secondary school certificate. The researcher by this inquired from student teachers and practising teachers' about their highest qualification before enrolling into the programme. This data is presented in Table 3.

Table 3: Highest Qualification before Enrolling into the Programme

Qualification	Student Teachers		Practising Teachers	
	N	%	N	%
HND	1	6.2	0	0
Diploma	0	0	0	0
Certificate 'A'	4	25.0	12	50.0
SSCE/WASSCE	11	68.8	11	45.8
'A' Level	0	0	1	4.2
Total	16	100	24	100

It is evident from the findings that 11 (68.8%) of the student teachers entered the university directly from the Senior High School. In the case of the practising teachers, not many of them entered straight from the Senior High School. Twelve (50.0%) of the respondents had certificate 'A' from the teacher training colleges before entering the university. However 11 (45.8%) of the practising teachers from the results can be said to have entered directly from the Senior High School. This clearly shows that majority of the entrants have qualifications from the senior high and training colleges in Ghana.

From the available data in Table 4 it was realised that some of the student and practising teacher respondents had experience of teaching before their admission into the programme. With respect to the number of years spent in teaching, 6 of the student teachers indicated that they had teaching experience ranging between 1-5 years. On the part of the practising teachers, 13 (86.7%) taught between 1-5 years and 2 (13.3%) of them taught between 6-10 years.

I also inquired from the student teacher and practising teacher respondents the level at which they taught. Data related to this question is presented in Table 4.

Table 4: Respondents' level of Teaching

Level of teaching	Student teachers		Practising teachers	
	N	%	N	%
Kindergarten	0	0	0	0
Nursery	1	16.7	0	0
Primary	1	16.7	1	6.7
JHS	3	49.9	13	86.7
SHS	1	16.7	1	6.7
Total	6	100	15	100

It can be said from Table 4 that majority of the student teachers 5 (83.3%) and practising teachers 14 (93.3%) who indicated they had teaching experience taught at the basic school level with only 1(16.7%) student teacher and 1 (6.7%) practising teacher teaching at the Senior High School level.

To qualify as a student teacher in the history teacher education programme, applicants are to have aggregates ranging from 6 to 20 from the WASSCE. By this, the researcher sought to find out aggregates obtained by prospective student teachers before enrolling into the programme. This is presented in Table 5.

Table 5: Aggregate obtained before Enrolling into the Programme

Aggregate	Student Teachers		Practising Teachers	
	N	%	N	%
6-10	2	12.5	4	16.7
11-15	12	75.0	11	45.8
16-20	2	12.5	9	37.5
Total	16	100	24	100

Table 5 indicates that 12 (75.0%) representing the student teacher sample had aggregates ranging from 11 to 15 whilst 11 (45.8%) of the practising teachers fell within the same range. Just a few student teachers 2 (12.5%) and practising teachers 4 (16.7%) had higher aggregates within the range of 6 to 10 before enrolling into the programme. Few student teachers 2 (12.5%) and practising teachers 9 (37.5%) had aggregates within the range of 16 to 20. This shows that student teachers enter into the history teacher education programme with fairly good aggregates.

In order to qualify as a history student teacher, there is the need for students to have basic knowledge in history. Table 6 indicates whether prospective student teachers studied history in the Senior High School.

Table 6: Respondents' Study of History in the SHS

	Student Teachers		Practising Teachers	
	N	%	N	%
Yes	15	93.7	24	100
N	1	6.3	0	0
Total	16	100	24	100

With respect to whether respondents had basic knowledge of history before enrolling into the programme Table 6 shows that majority of the student teachers 15 (93.8%) as well as practising teachers 24 (100%) studied history in the Senior High School. Only one student (6.3%) did not study history in the Senior High School, but rather studied government.

I further inquired from respondents the grade they obtained in history and this is presented in Table 7.

Table 7: Grade Obtained in History

Grade	Student Teachers		Practising Teachers	
	N	%	N	%
A	4	26.6	8	33.4

B	9	60.0	14	58.3
C	2	13.4	2	8.3
Total	15	100	24	100

From Table 7, it can be deduced that all the respondents who qualified for admission, possessed history grades in the top pass category of A, B and C. About 9 (60.0%) of the students and 14 (58.3%) practising teachers had grade B. A few of the students 2 (13.4%) and practising teachers 2 (8.3%) obtained grade C with about 4 (26.6%) student teachers and 8 (33.3%) practising teachers having a higher grade of A.

In relation to the subjects taught before entering the university, data shows that majority of those who had teaching experience taught social studies which is history related. With respect to the practising teachers majority of them taught Social Studies, English, Mathematics and Ghanaian language. The student teachers on the other hand taught subjects such as Social Studies, English, Religious and Moral education, Mathematic (i.e.) all the subjects taught in the primary school. This portrays that prospective student teachers had some ideas and interest in history before enrolling into the programme. Though it seems difficult to know how the profile status of student teachers impact on their early years of teaching. Nevertheless it is reasonable to believe that certain aspects of their background profile contribute to the development of their professional self-identity and image.

Reasons for choosing history as a major subject

Respondents were again asked on reasons why they chose to pursue the B.Ed (Arts) programme with history as their major subject. From the data provided it indicated that most of the student teachers chose to pursue the history teacher education programme out of their interest in teaching history. Six student teachers representing 37.5% of the student teacher population had interest in the teaching of history. Seven other student teachers representing 43.75% of the student teacher population wanted to develop themselves professionally by pursuing the programme and three student teachers pursued the programme either because of seeking employment, a ‘vision’ or chosen for by a relative. On the part of the practising teachers it was observed that majority of them pursued the programme because they wanted to develop themselves professionally. The idea of interest as compared to the student teacher respondents also reflected in the area of the practising teachers as 4 representing 16.6% indicated they had interest in pursuing the programme. Some practising teachers also chose the programme because they wanted to understand issues and acquire more knowledge about education. In all a greater number of the practising teachers pursued the programme because they wanted to develop themselves professionally. The researcher inquired from respondents of their interest in the study of history. This is presented in Table 8

Table 8: Respondents’ Interest in History

	Student Teachers		Practising Teachers	
	N	%	N	%
Yes	14	87.5	24	100

No	2	12.5	0	0
Total	16	100	24	100

From the data presented in Table 8, it can be said that all the practising teacher respondents expressed their interest in the study of history. Only two student teacher respondents (12.5%) had no interest in the study of history. When probed during the focus group discussion it was discovered that the grades they get in the programme deter them from developing interest in the programme as a student teacher remarked:

Madam, sometimes you will try your best to learn hard for quizzes and examination and it seems there is a predetermined grade for you. I never progress in the type of grades I have from the history department. My highest grade is a C+.

This result supports the findings Virta (2002) research that student teachers choose to be educated as history teachers themselves because of their attachment or interest in the subject. Findings to this effect indicate student teachers need to be motivated in order to maintain their interest in the learning and teaching of history. In this sense, motivating factors such as travels, museums and visits to historic sites should be made available to student teachers in order to boost their implicit theories of learning to teach (John, 1996). Again the findings in relation to the deeper motivation of student teachers choice of the programme is in consonance with Akyeampong (2001) study on the motives behind beginning student teachers choice of teaching as a career. With most of the practising teachers and student teachers holding certificates from the teacher training college, it can be said that the policy of study leave with pay which Akyeampong (2001) stated as one of the reasons for the choice of the teaching profession at the basic level is reflected here. Also its (teaching) offer of readily available job for all graduates in the country who are interested in teaching as profession as a basis for their choice of the teaching profession emerged in this research. It can be concluded from the findings on entry characteristics that people who chose to pursue teacher education in history had some teaching experience mostly at the basic level and have taught history related subjects. Statements can also be made to the effect that teacher candidates had good grades in history as well as had good aggregates before enrolling into the programme. Again individuals who intend pursuing the programme also had interest in the study of history.

V. CONCLUSION

1. The history teacher education programme in the University of Cape Coast is a technician type of teacher education which aims to train teachers to help students attain high academic standards or laurels in their academic pursuits. It is recommended therefore that the content area courses, especially the African related courses be revised to meet current trends and topics in the Senior High School (SHS) syllabus. This will equip the student teacher with the required knowledge and Insight needed

to impart on the students and also improve their understanding of the issues bordering the African continent and the world as a whole. It is suggested that the Department of history revises their course content to cater for these anomalies.

2. It can also be concluded that the respondents entry characteristics to the programme are appropriate and well deserving, coupled with their background in history and other art related courses. They particularly have interest in the subject and had also taught other related subjects in the basic schools thereby developing their edge for the programme. Though respondents' background characteristics are appropriate, it is recommended that prospective applicants are made to choose the subject area of interest to study instead of it being chosen for them by the university. This affords prospective students the opportunity to pursue the programme with ease and confidence.
3. Again, most of the student teachers had interest and are motivated to study the course and to deliver after schools. This makes the assertion that the study of history is boring and as such people are not interested in it again somehow questionable. It is therefore recommended that the interest on would be history students be sustained and strengthen to increased the students number.

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