

Training Needs Assessment of College of Education Tutors in the Central Region, Ghana

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Abstract

This study aimed to assess the training needs of tutors in the colleges of education in the Central Region of Ghana. A total of 111 Colleges of Education tutors participated in the study. Data obtained were analyzed using descriptive statistics. It was evident in the study that tutors find out about programmes from friends and co-workers. It was also revealed that most tutors had a favourable attitude towards available staff development opportunities. Again, most tutors considered available training programmes to be relevant to their areas of specialization. Based on the findings of the study, it was recommended that periodic orientation programmes should be organized by College of Education authorities to update College of Education tutors on available training programmes which are relevant to the performance of their academic duties.

Keywords: Needs Assessment, Training Opportunity, Job Performance, Quality Teachers, Teacher Attitude, Curriculum Change, Implementation.

1. Introduction

Education is a very critical tool and plays a very important role in the development of the human capital of any country. Bartlett, Burton and Peim (2001) assert that the concept “education” in its broadest sense “is normally thought to be about acquiring and being able to use knowledge, and developing skills and understanding-cognitive capabilities” (p. 3). According to Acheampong (2006), education enables individuals to develop and fulfil aspirations aimed at achieving economic progress, by developing their abilities and talents; it also enhances people’s development of general reasoning faculties, causes values to change progressively and increases the receptivity of new ideas and attitudes towards society. In this regard, Carnoy and Rhoten (2002) are of the view that if nations’ desire is to raise the cognitive skills of their young population through schooling, they will have to depend on autonomous, motivated, diligent and skilled professional teachers trained in public institutions to do so. This calls for intensive teacher education.

The need for quality teachers is a very pertinent one, since the role of the teacher in the effective implementation of the school curriculum cannot be overemphasized. Marsh and Willis (2003) assert that “whenever policies and programmes have originated from above, teachers must plan their activities around them for periods of time, ranging from a full-year course to a daily lesson of a few minutes” (p. 197). They further explain that teachers rely on the content and methods outlined in textbooks, syllabi, and teachers’ guides for their planning, but what they actually teach depends on their own preferences. The implication of this is that, a case of poor teacher quality in schools is likely to have a debilitating effect on students’ performance as well as on the acquisition of the basic skills and knowledge required of them. Again, with the introduction of the free compulsory Universal Basic Education (fCUBE) programme Ghana, the number of pupils in the basic schools keeps increasing by the day.

A study conducted by Osei, Owusu, Asem and Afutu-Kotey (2009) revealed that after a year of implementing the capitation grant, school enrolment had increased by 15% in the forty selected districts for their study. This gradual increase in the number of pupils in Ghanaian basic schools calls for the empowerment of teacher training colleges to enable them rise to the challenge of producing the right quantity and quality of teachers required for the numerous basic schools in the country. This, among other factors, necessitated the need for the upgrading of teacher training colleges into diploma awarding institutions. The upgrading of teacher training colleges to diploma awarding institutions started from the mid-nineties. In 2004, the colleges offered Diploma programme, that is, Diploma in Basic Education. All the 38 teacher training colleges were given accreditation to the tertiary status of education in October, 2007. The colleges were re-designed 'Colleges of Education' in June, 2008 (PRINSCOF, 2008). The promotion of teacher training colleges into tertiary institutions means that certain basic requirements such as infrastructural upgrading and staff development programmes have to be put in place. There is therefore the need for needs assessment to ascertain the quality of teachers mandated to teach trainee teachers at the colleges of education to ensure that the quality of tutors there can live up to expectations of the new policy.

Needs assessment has been defined as "a critical study or examination of the society for which an educational proposal is being designed in order to identify the problems, needs and aspirations, resources available, and feasible solutions" (Adentwi, 2005, p.133). It is the process by which educational needs are defined and priorities set for further curriculum work. McNeil (1996) has defined need in curriculum as "a condition in which a discrepancy exists between an acceptable state of a learner achievement or attitude and an observed learner state" (p.122). By identifying those needs not being met by the curriculum, the curriculum worker is provided with the "basis for revising the curriculum in such a way as to fulfill as many unmet needs as possible". This is because the conduct of needs assessment is not a single one-time operation but a continuing and periodic activity (Oliva, 1992). This stems from the fact that curriculum planning is a process and needs assessment serves as a form of diagnostic evaluative procedure for improving practice. This implies that the attempt to assess the needs of college of education tutors must constantly be ongoing to ensure that every gap that develops in terms of their levels of competencies can easily be identified and appropriately filled. Some of the areas that this study concentrates on, in trying to assess the training needs of college of education tutors include: tutors' access to information about available training programmes; the attitude of tutors regarding available training programmes; relevance of available training programmes to tutors' training needs; and the influence of available training programmes on tutors' perceived improvement in job performance.

For training of tutors to be effectively done, tutors in the colleges of education are expected to have adequate information about available training programmes. This means that there must be ready sources from which tutors could obtain information about training opportunities. A study conducted by the Odum Library Staff Development Committee (1997) revealed that the majority of employees obtained information about training opportunities from mailings and brochures as well as announcements by the library authority. It is also important to consider the attitude of College of Education tutors regarding available staff development opportunities. It is assumed that positive attitude towards work and greater organizational commitment increases job satisfaction which in return enhances performance of the individual (Linz, cited in Ahmad, Ahmad & Ali Shah, 2010). It is, therefore, possible that tutors' attitude towards staff development opportunities may influence their participation and commitment to such programmes, which may eventually translate into enhanced job performance. This notion is supported by Rotenberry & Moberg (2007) whose study indicated that employees that were more involved in their job were good performers as compared to the employees whose attitude towards work is not good. It is thus possible that better attitude towards training opportunities may be translated into active participation in such programmes.

Another variable of interest is the relevance of training programmes to the training needs of tutors. According to Wlodkowski (2003), a programme is relevant when learning reflects the personal, communal, and cultural meanings of the learners in a manner that shows a respectful awareness of their perspective. In other words, if tutors perceive training to be relevant, they are more likely to participate. Research has revealed that because of the transferability of skills that general training offers, employees devoted greater effort and energy to general training (Barrett & O'Connell 2001). Finally, employee development through training has been found to contribute positively to employee performance. Krueger and Rouse (1998) examined the effect that training and workplace education programmes can have on various organizations and came out with the conclusion that training programmes impact positively on performance.

In support of this assertion, Lorette (2011) also argues that overall, trained employees tend to benefit both their own careers and the company they work for in terms of enhanced job performance.

2. Statement of the Problem

The education system in Ghana has undergone a number of reforms. In 2002 another reform was kick started. One of the main highlights of the reform was the production of well trained teachers who should be able to: apply, extend and synthesize various forms of knowledge; develop attitudes, values and dispositions that create conducive learning environment; facilitate learning to enable learners to realize their potential, and; prepare the learner adequately to be full participant in national development (MOE, 2002). In order for the teacher to develop these competencies, there is the need for the strengthening of Teacher Training Colleges. On account of this, the report of the education reform review committee clearly stated that “all Teacher Training Colleges will be upgraded into diploma-awarding institutions, which will be affiliated to the education-oriented universities” (MOE, 2002, p. 31).

The implication of this is that the Training College tutors’ qualification for teaching in a diploma-awarding institution would be an important factor in the selection and retention of staff in the institution. In order to perform their professional role effectively, teacher educators need to develop competencies in the following areas: Competencies in content of particular subject, pedagogical content knowledge of learners, knowledge of educational context, curriculum competencies (i.e., grasp of materials and programmes for teaching), general pedagogical knowledge, knowledge of educational ends and purposes, organizational competencies in working in a community of practice, competencies in reflecting and developing ones professional practice, and research competencies. This will require a re-design of the way teacher educators are trained and recruited (PRINSCOF, 2008).

Currently, it looks as if the majority of tutors in the colleges of education hold Bachelor degrees (and are trained as teachers not teacher educators) while many of those with second degrees majored in administration and management and not in their own teaching subjects. This situation would need to be corrected. This is because teachers are usually recruited to teach specific subjects and a lack of the requisite knowledge in those subjects is likely to have a negative effect on the quality of teachers that would be produced. There is, therefore, the need to identify areas of further professional development for teachers in the colleges of education and also to ascertain their training needs so as to inform the design of training programmes geared towards improving the quality of teachers in the colleges of education.

3. Research Questions

The study was guided by the following research questions:

1. How do College of Education tutors find out about available training opportunities?
2. What are the attitudes of College of Education tutors regarding staff development opportunities?
3. To what extent do current continuing education programmes meet the training needs of College of Education tutors?
4. What is the effect of available training programmes on job performance of College of Education tutors?

4. Methodology

4.1. Research Design

A descriptive survey design was deemed more appropriate for the study because according to Fraenkel and Wallen (2000), survey research deals basically with obtaining data to determine specific characteristics of a group. This study sought to obtain information about the training needs of tutors in Colleges of Education in terms of their attitude towards available training programmes, the relevance of training programmes and the sources of information about training programmes.

4.2. Sample and Sampling Procedure

The participants for the study consisted of all tutors in the Colleges of Education in the Central Region of Ghana. In all, there were a total of 148 Colleges of Education tutors.

A census survey was employed to include all tutors in the colleges of education. This was to ensure a complete coverage of the entire population. The census method was used because the size of the study population was not too large, hence each element in the population could conveniently be involved in the study. All Vice – Principals (Academic) were involved in the study. There were three Vice – Principals (Academic) involved in the study by purposive sampling. The researcher employed purposive sampling because; it is Vice – Principals (Academic) that have the oversight responsibility of ensuring high academic standards in their respective Colleges of Education. This measure is supported by Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2008), who explained that in purposive sampling, researchers handpick the cases to be included in the sample on the basis of their judgement of their typicality or possession of the particular characteristics being sought. In this way, they build up a sample that is satisfactory to their specific needs.

4.3. Instruments

The main instruments for the study were a training needs assessment survey questionnaire and an interview guide. The questionnaire was designed by the researcher to find out the training needs of teachers in Colleges of Education. It was made up of 29 items with 24 closed-ended items and 5 open-ended items. The interview guide was made up of 12 open-ended items. Both instruments were thoroughly vetted before their final approval by experts in teacher education and the field of research to establish their validity. The questionnaire was then pilot-tested to ensure its reliability. Cronbach's alpha was used to determine the reliability. A reliability coefficient of .75 was obtained, which according to De Vellis (1991), is considered very respectable for determining the appropriateness of the instrument.

4.4. Procedure

The research instruments were administered personally by the researcher. This was to ensure a high return rate and also to clarify items to the respondents. For the questionnaire, the researcher explained each of the items to the tutors and a two weeks period was allowed for tutors to fill the questionnaire at their own convenience. The questionnaires were then retrieved after the two weeks for analysis. Out of the 148 questionnaires administered, a total of 111 were retrieved from the College of Education tutors. This clearly indicates that there was 75% return rate. For the interviews, only one vice – principal academic out of the three selected vice – principals for academic participated in the study.

4.5. Data analysis

Information obtained from the questionnaire was coded and analyzed with the Statistical Product for Service Solution (SPSS). Frequencies and percentages were generated to determine teachers' perceptions about available continuing education programmes for them and also describe the kinds of support available to them. The information obtained from the interview guide was transcribed and organized into themes. The emerging issues were either used to confirm or disconfirm that obtained from the questionnaire.

5. Results

5.1. Research Question 1: How do College of Education tutors find out about available continuing education programmes?

College of Education tutors were asked to indicate the sources from which they obtained information about available training opportunities. Information obtained has been presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Sources of Information about Available Training Opportunities

Source	Frequency	Percentage
Professional Publications	27	24.3
Co – Workers and Friends	33	29.7
College's Administration	22	19.8
Mailings and Brochures	16	14.4
Other Sources	13	11.7
Total	111	100

From Table 1, 33 (29.7%), which constitute a majority of respondents, indicated that they find out about continuing training opportunities from co – workers and friends, 27 (24.3%) of respondents obtained such information from professional publications, while 22 (19.8%) obtained such information from the colleges' administration. Together, sources of information about continuing education opportunities, other than the colleges' administration constitute 78%. This implies that the flow of information about further professional development opportunities is usually not from the Colleges of Education authorities themselves, but from a myriad of other sources. This finding was further corroborated by the interview data obtained from the study which clearly indicated that College of Education tutors find out about professional development opportunities on their own.

5.2. Research Questions 2: What are the attitudes of College of Education tutors regarding staff development opportunities?

In order to answer this research question, respondents were asked to indicate the level of importance they attached to staff development programmes available to them. Information obtained has been presented in Table 2

Table 2: Level of Importance of Staff Development Opportunities to Tutors

	Frequency	Percentage
Very Important	62	55.9
Important	35	31.5
Somewhat important	8	7.2
Not important	6	5.4
Total	111	100

From Table 2, the majority of tutors indicated that staff development opportunities were either “very important” (55.9%) or “important” (31.5%). Only 6(5.4%) of respondents were of the opinion that such development opportunities were not important to them. This implies that the majority of respondents had a favourable attitude towards available staff development programmes. According to a vice-principal from one of the colleges of education, “we are overwhelmed every year with applications for study leave”. This clearly shows that College of Education tutors have interest in further professional development. A further investigation was conducted by the researcher to ascertain the probable reasons why tutors were interested in participating in available training opportunities. Information obtained has been presented in Table 3.

Table 3: Reasons why Tutors Participate in Staff Development Programmes

	Very Important F (%)	Important F (%)	Somewhat Important F (%)	Not Important F (%)
To obtain a higher qualification	28(25.2)	26(23.4)	39(35.1)	18(16.2)
To work Towards Job advancement.	1(0.9)	18(16.2)	18(16.2)	74(66.7)
For consideration on annual evaluation	46(41.4)	32(28.8)	21(18.9)	12(10.8)
For personal growth	38 (34.2)	33 (29.7)	33 (29.7)	7 (6.3)

From Table 3, the topmost ranked reasons why tutors participated in staff development programmes were for consideration for evaluation, which was rated by a sum total of 78 (70.2%) as important; and the need for personal growth, which was also rated by a sum total of 71 (63.9%). The majority of tutors 74 (66.7%) selected job advancement as the least ranked reason why they would pursue any staff development programme. Information obtained from the interview conducted however, contradicted with this. According to the principals interviewed for this study, the most important aim for organizing staff development programmes is to help improve the performance of tutors on the job. This implies that, while job advancement is considered by colleges of education management as the main drive for encouraging tutors for participating in staff development opportunities, tutors are rather motivated by personal growth and development.

5.3. Research Question 3: To what extent do current continuing education programmes meet the training needs of College of Education tutors?

Respondents were asked whether available training programmes were relevant to their areas of specialization. An overwhelming majority of tutors 96 (86.5%) responded in the affirmative, while only 15 (13.5%) indicated that they did not have any programmes in their areas of specialization. To get a better picture of the availability of relevant continuing education programmes, respondents were asked to indicate the extent to which they found available programmes relevant to their areas of specialization. Information obtained has been presented in Table 4.

Table 4: Relevance of Available training Programmes to training needs of tutors

	Frequency	Percentage
Not Relevant	10	9.0
Somewhat Relevant	26	23.4
Very Relevant	75	67.6
Total	111	100

From Table 4, out of the total number of tutors employed for the study, only 10 (9.0%) found available training programmes irrelevant to their areas of specialization. A good number of them 26 (23.4%) found available training programmes to be somewhat relevant; while an overwhelming majority of 75 (67.6%) indicated that available training programmes were very relevant to their areas of specialization.

5.4. Research Question 4: What is the effect of available training programmes on job performance of College of Education tutors?

Table 5: Effect of Available Training Programmes on Job Performance

	Frequency	Percentage
Greatly improved performance	58	52.3
Improve performance	35	31.5
Somewhat improve performance	8	7.2
Have little effect on performance	4	3.6
Have no effect on performance	6	5.4
Total	111	100

From Table 5, it is quite clear that there was a unanimous agreement by respondents that current training programmes improve performance greatly (52.3) or at least improve performance (31.5%). Only a sum total of 10 (9%) tutors perceived that training programmes either had little or no effect. It is likely that those who perceived the programme not to be effective might not have completed their programme.

6. Discussion

The study revealed that tutors in the Colleges of Education usually found out about professional development opportunities from co – workers and friends. This contradicts findings made by the Odum Library Staff Development Committee (1997) that employees found out about training programmes from mailings and brochures. This implies that not much effort is put into awareness creation about continuing education for tutors in the colleges of education. This is a matter of great concern, because it is expected that the authorities in the colleges of education create more awareness about areas of further professional development to encourage tutors to meet their training needs. There is the likelihood that, the case where tutors fail to get access to these mailings and brochures might result in information gap with respect to the kinds of programmes tutors are supposed to take and also where to take those programmes.

The study also revealed that, almost all the tutors who participated in the study had a favourable attitude towards staff development programmes. This is likely to enhance participation in such programmes and improve tutors performance. As indicated by Linz, (cited in Ahmad, Ahmad & Ali Shah, 2010) positive attitude towards work and greater organizational commitment increases job satisfaction which in return enhances performance. However, the majority of them did it for more personal reasons other than for the general development of their institutions.

This implies that, even though most of these tutors may be interested in acquiring higher qualifications, there is the likelihood that such development may have little impact on their performance on the job. This is because; they have different aspirations for further personal development, other than for institutional development. It is thus possible that skills acquired during training may not be necessarily employed on the job. To add to this, there is the possibility that since teachers participate in these programmes for personal gains, other than for job enhancement, they might not take the information acquired seriously, and could still end up being deficient on the job, though they are purported to have gone for further training.

It again became evident in the study that available training programmes were relevant to the training needs of tutors in the Colleges of Education. According to Wlodkowski, (2003) a programme is relevant when learning reflects the personal, communal, and cultural meanings of the learners in a manner that shows a respectful awareness of their perspective. The implication of this finding is that almost all tutors in the Colleges of Education who are faced with the need for further development, as a result of the upgrade to diploma – awarding institutions, are more likely to be enrolled on the relevant programmes that would help them to acquire the requisite expertise in their areas of specialization to effectively deliver on the job. It also means that the colleges of education have the needed capacity to develop their human resource base to meet the basic requirements to be upgraded to diploma awarding institutions.

Finally, in terms of the effect of training programmes on job performance, it was revealed that the majority of tutors in the Colleges of Education were of the opinion that available staff development opportunities improved performance on the job. This supports the findings of Krueger and Rouse (1998). It is, however, important to note that, those few tutors who did not find available training programmes relevant to their areas of specialization may face difficulty in upgrading themselves and may be rendered redundant. Even in a situation where the attempt is made to upgrade themselves, tutors are more likely to pursue programmes that may not have any bearing on what they teach in the classroom. The danger here is that since the study has already revealed that most teachers seek upgrading for certain personal gains vis-à-vis professional development, they may still go ahead and pursue irrelevant programmes and this could have a debilitating effect on the human resource development endeavours of the Colleges of Education. It may also defeat the notion that continuing education programmes affect performance positively. However, it is also important to note that tutor's perception of the positive effect of available training programmes on their job performance may influence them to develop interest in participating in such training programmes. This view is supported by research findings that because of the transferability of skills that general training offers, employees devoted greater effort and energy to general training (Barrett & O'Connell 2001).

7. Conclusions

Tutors in the Colleges of Education are aware of existing training opportunities. However, such information is not provided by college authorities. Tutors find out about such programmes from friends and co-workers. Tutors had a favourable attitude towards available staff development opportunities. Most of them, however, were motivated to pursue further training for more personal reasons such as for personal growth and consideration for promotion other than for job advancement and the general development of their institutions. Again tutors generally agreed that available training programmes were relevant to the performance of their job.

8. Recommendations

It is recommended that periodic orientation programmes be organized by college of education authorities to update College of Education tutors on available training programmes which are relevant to the performance of their academic duties. Again, the colleges of education could liaise with training institutions, such as the University of Cape Coast and the University of Education, Winneba to provide them with brochures about available training programmes and also give them constant update on new areas of professional development for tutors. It is also recommended that colleges of education establish a professional development committee that would see to it that tutors employed possess the relevant competencies and also put in place measures to address the training needs of college of education tutors.

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