M U S T E R

Multi-Site Teacher Education Research Project

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Discussion Paper

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"On the Threshold": the
Identity of Student Teachers
in Ghana

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Multi-Site Teacher Education Research Project (MUSTER)

MUSTER is a collaborative research project co-ordinated from the Centre for International Education at the University of Sussex Institute of Education. It has been developed in partnership with:

- The Institute of Education, University of Cape Coast, Ghana.
- The Institute of Education, The National University of Lesotho.
- The Centre for Educational Research and Training, University of Malawi.
- The Faculty of Education, University of Durban-Westville, South Africa.
- The School of Education, The University of the West Indies, St. Augustine's Campus, Trinidad.

MUSTER is focused on generating new understandings of teacher education before, during and after the point of initial qualification as a teacher. Its concerns include exploring how new teachers are identified and selected for training programmes, how they acquire the skills they need to teach effectively, and how they experience training and induction into the teaching profession. The research includes analytical concerns with the structure and organisation of teacher education, the form and substance of teacher education curriculum, the identity, roles and cultural experience of trainee teachers, and the costs and probable benefits of different types of initial teacher training.

MUSTER is designed to provide opportunities to build research and evaluation capacity in teacher education in developing countries through active engagement with the research process from design, through data collection, to analysis and joint publication. Principal researchers lead teams in each country and are supported by three Sussex faculty and three graduate researchers.

This series of discussion papers has been created to provide an early opportunity to share output from sub-studies generated within MUSTER for comment and constructive criticism. Each paper takes a theme within or across countries and offers a view of work in progress.

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ABSTRACT

This paper considers the identity of Ghanaian student teachers as they begin training. It begins with an outline of the educational context. It then goes on to note the importance of the contextualised self, which teachers bring to training, formed by home environment, school experience and other factors. In exploring this contextualised self, both survey and qualitative methods were used and key findings are as follows: trainees are often young, unwilling recruits with no teaching experience (or limited informal teaching experience), weak grades, and are generally from poorer backgrounds. They often express altruistic reasons for being a teacher and some positive attitudes as to their potential impact in the classroom, alongside more instrumental motivations such as the desire for further study and using teaching as a gateway to other parts of the profession or out of it. The transmission model of teaching predominates in training and many articulate a desire for more teaching practice and methodology. Many experienced hardship in their family life. Positive experience of schooling often related to teachers who connected to their own lives or were caring. Negative experiences often related to use of the cane. The paper ends with a call for teacher education to reflect more closely, and engage with, the cultural realities of schooling in Ghana, and the experiences of trainees.

1. BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

1.1   Introduction

Initial teacher training in Ghana has in recent times come under criticism resulting in calls and attempts to improve the quality of teacher training. Concerns about teacher training, particularly from teacher education policy planners in Ghana, appears to be the result of the lack of impact of major educational reforms began in 1987, intended among others to improve the quality of teaching and learning and pupil achievement at basic schools. The 1987 education reforms introduced a new education structure that provided at the basic education level for 6 years primary education and 3 years junior secondary education. New curricula were introduced at each level incorporating a reduction in the number of subjects studied and, more recently, an increase in the length of the school day from 4 to 5 hours. However, despite such changes, there is little evidence that the reforms are achieving their desired outcomes. Criterion-reference tests administered by the Primary Education Programme (PREP) of the Ghana Ministry of Education for primary 6 pupils from 1992 – 1996 suggest limited success in delivering quality learning outcomes. For example, PREP criterion-referenced tests for 1996 showed that with mastery scores at 60% for English and 55% for Mathematics, the percentage of public primary school pupils scoring at the mastery level and above were 5.5% for English and 1.8% for Mathematics (PREP/MOE 1996). The Ghana Ministry of Education (MOE) in trying to understand the reasons for such lack of impact of the reforms on teaching, learning and pupil achievement pointed to teacher training.   Teacher training is accused of being ineffective in producing the kind of teacher capable of addressing the teaching and learning needs of basic schooling. MOE indicated that,

> [The teacher training colleges] are inefficient in producing effective teachers since the trainees and the tutors have so little exposure to actual classrooms, and academic content is taught and tested above practical teaching methodology (MOE 1994:23)

The Government of Ghana since 1995 embarked on further reforms, dubbed 'FCUBE' (Free Compulsory and Universal Basic Education) to address some of the problems that appears to have militated against the impact of the 1987 education reform, particularly on teaching, learning and pupil achievement. Under FCUBE, the curriculum of teacher training has undergone some restructuring mainly to foster better links between college training and school experience and make training more practically oriented (Teacher Education Division/GES, November 1997).

Underlying all of these changes, it appears, is the assumption that producing effective teachers is simply a matter of curricular orientation and practical training. Such an assumption fails to recognise the more complex process of professional teacher development and how teachers' beliefs and attitudes interact and shape teaching behaviour. Mifsud (1996), for example, argues for primary teacher training to take cognisance of the entering characteristics of trainees as a crucial step in the process of

achieving professional expertise in teaching. Similarly, Calderhead & Robson (1991) question whether training courses take sufficient account of student teachers' initial images of teaching in order to challenge misconceptions and develop their expertise. The 'missing' dimension in Ghana's basic teacher education programme, we would argue, is a better understanding of the entering characteristics, beliefs and attitudes of trainees and how that can inform curriculum restructuring to develop teacher expertise.

This paper represents a small attempt to understand some of the issues that may need reflection in the policy and design of basic teacher education programmes in Ghana. Our analysis and findings are in some ways consistent with other accounts. However, in some respects our findings illustrate a perspective from the 'south' and therefore bring a somewhat different dimension to some of the issues already explored in research from the 'north'.

In the next section, we provide a fuller historical background to recent developments in education in Ghana. Within that context we identify the forces that appears to be driving teacher education reform. Our intention is partly to highlight what we consider the 'missing dimension' in the attempts to promote relevance and effectiveness in initial teacher preparation in Ghana.

1.2 Recent Developments in the Ghanaian Education System

Ghana is ranked among the world's poorest countries with a per capita income estimated at US$390 in 1995. Since 1983, however, its economic growth has been higher than most other countries in sub-Saharan Africa (SSA), averaging 4.3% per annum between 1990 and 1995 (World Bank 1997) Investment in education, and basic education in particular, is a central feature of Ghana's economic strategy and is based on the experience of countries that have made the transition to sustainable economic growth through the promotion of human resource development.

Ghana gained independence from British colonial rule in 1957 and since then its educational system has been financed and provided mainly through the public sector, although private provision has been an important part of primary schooling and technical training. The population of the country as at 1995 stood at approximately 17 million, with an annual growth rate of 2.7%. The fast growth of the population puts nearly half of its population under 15 years, and coupled with a low average income per head of $450 puts a strain on the resources for education, health, water and sanitation.

The late 1970s and early 1980s saw a sharp economic decline during which GNP per capita fell by 23% between 1975 and 1983 (Nti, 1997:5). As a result, the real value of government financing for education fell sharply from 6.4% of GDP in 1976 to 1.4% in 1983, and resulted in near collapse of the education system (World Bank, 1996: 2). Teachers were not paid promptly, there was little supervision or inspection, schools were in disrepair, and there were few textbooks or instructional materials. The deteriorating economic climate and working conditions prompted an exodus of trained teachers to find better paid work in other countries. Untrained teachers were employed to avoid disintegration of the education system, and in sharp contrast to the

predictions of the early 1970s, by 1985 the percentage of trained primary school teachers had fallen to 56% (Konadu, 1994: 41). Consequently, the quality of teaching deteriorated and gross enrolment rates at the primary level decreased from a high of 80% in 1983 to 70% by 1987.[1]

The severity of Ghana's economic problems peaked in 1983 at which time the Government of Ghana launched the Economic Recovery Programme with financial assistance from the World Bank and international donor agencies. In 1987, as an integral part of its plan for economic recovery, the Government initiated an education sector reform programme to reverse the decline in the education system and reorient the schools towards a more cost-effective, relevant, and practical programme. Its major goals were to increase access to basic education, improve the quality of basic education, make education more relevant to Ghana's socio-economic needs, and ensure sustainability of the reform programme after the economic adjustment period (MOE, 1994:13). The main elements of the reform agenda were - reduction of the years of pre-university education from 17 to 12, reform of the curriculum within a clear national philosophy of education, raised entry requirements for teacher trainees, and mobilisation of local community participation in the provision of basic education (DFID, 1998:26).

Although no large-scale evaluation of the 1987 reforms have been conducted, there is increasing evidence from some small-scale studies of aspects of the reforms that suggest the impact has been less than anticipated. An evaluation study of the World Bank-supported Primary School Development Project (PSDP), for example, revealed problems of teacher absenteeism, loss of instructional time, poor instructional quality, poor management and instructional lapses and, inadequate textbooks in schools, as limiting the impact of reform inputs (Fobih, Akyeampong & Koomson, 1999).

However, there have been some significant gains in either access to, or quality outcomes from, the education system. Explanations for the slow rate of change include the following: (a) a lack of commitment to change among education professionals, (b) underestimation of the extent of institutional change, (c) lack of accountability at all levels of the system, (d) lack of an agreed and integrated approach to the reform programme, and (e) lack of focus in the contribution of external funding (DFID, 1998: 26).

Some of the more specific reasons for the deterioration of the educational system, particularly at the primary level were:

1. That in many schools, school children and teachers were without textbooks and stationary items as a result of foreign exchange constraints;
2. Building, furniture and equipment had deteriorated as a result of lack of replacement and repair – enrolment levels had declined over the years while dropout rate from the school system continued to rise;
3. Enrolment levels had declined over the years while dropout rate from the school system continued to rise;

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[1] Using data from the Ghana Living Standards Survey 1988-89, Glewwe and Ilias (1996) find that after controlling for years of schooling, older Ghanaians score higher on mathematics and English tests than younger Ghanaians. They suggest that this is due to the deterioration in educational quality in the early 1980s.

4.   There was an exodus of significant numbers of trained and highly qualified teachers.   This had led to the recruitment of untrained teachers in primary schools resulting in less effective instruction at the Basic Education level;

5.   Government's finance towards education had drastically reduced

6.   There was no data and statistics on which to base any planning

<div align="right">(Yeboah, 1990)</div>

The 1987 educational reforms did not specifically target the teacher training institutions for reform.   However, there were certain implications of the reform for teacher training due to the expected changes in the curricula of the basic education level.   For example, the objectives of the revised school curricula placed a lot of emphasis on hands-on activities and student-centred approaches to teaching.   Thus, in response to the basic education changes that were taking place, the ODA/British Council in collaboration with the Teacher Education Division of the Ministry of Education launched the Junior Secondary School Teacher Education Project (JUSSTEP).   JUSSTEP was a 4-year project (1989-1993) which targeted the 38 teacher training colleges in five subject areas (Mathematics, English, Science, Technical Skills and Education) for improvement.

The central thrust of JUSSTEP was to up-grade the professional competence of college tutors and to disseminate ideas on appropriate teaching methodology through INSET workshops and tutor-support instructional materials.   The strategy to achieve this main objective, as was pointed out earlier, was to introduce student-centered, interactive models of teaching.   Five subject areas in all the 38 teacher-training colleges in Ghana became the targets of this approach.

In 1993 the Teacher Education Division and the ODA carried out a study to assess the impact of the JUSSTEP reforms.   It concluded that:

> Tutors (were) positive about the new methodologies and in certain areas (such as) Mathematics, Science and Technical Skills (were) applying a more student-centred approach. However, the study reveals that the impact of JUSSTEP is limited by certain major structural constraints; the main ones being an overloaded curriculum, excessive student-tutor ratios exacerbated by insufficient tutors per subject, over-enrolment, high staff turnover, and lack of classroom facilities.   These factors, combined with pressure to cover the syllabus and prepare for examinations, present an excessive workload in terms of teaching and assessment requirements and act as major impediments in the effective implementation and adoption of new methodologies in teacher education in the training colleges (GES/TED/ODA, 1993)

According to Akyeampong (1999), not enough attention was given to certain critical aspects of the teacher training system, in order to make them more responsive to the kind of changes that were being introduced.   For example, he points out that although innovative instructional/learning and assessment strategies were introduced at the classroom level, the teacher training assessment system was still narrowly focused on

timed written examinations. Consequently, this had the effect of undermining certain aspects of professional teacher development competencies that were not amenable to written testing. Thus, a key limiting factor of the impact of the JUSSTEP teacher training reforms was the effect an examination-oriented culture was having on teaching and learning decisions. In addition to that was the lack of appropriate management structures in the colleges to promote and support the changes.

In effect the JUSSTEP reforms, intended to improve the competence of teachers to improve the quality of teaching and learning in basic schools, did not make the desired impact. The reason was mainly the poor conception of changing practice as evidenced in the insufficient shift in assessment philosophy and practice and inadequate management support structures to facilitate the change process (Akyeampong, 1999).

However, what has been largely ignored is the important role beginning teachers' characteristics, beliefs, and attitudes play in education policy change (Jessop & Penny, 1998). As Jessop & Penny point out 'educational development is cultural and ideological, tied as it is to people's perceptions of knowing, doing and worth' (p. 401). In other words, it is not simply the institutional contexts and programmes that have an effect on how teachers behave, but also significant in this context, are the characteristics, dispositions, and abilities of individual teachers (Zeichner 1986). Similarly, Tabulawa (1997) argues that:

> teaching is not just a technical activity whose solutions require technical solutions. As such when teachers … fail to adopt certain innovations we should not just concentrate on technical issues associated with the innovation delivery system. We must analyse the proposed innovation in relation to the values and past experiences of those who we expect to adopt and/or implement the innovation. Where the values embedded in an innovation are incongruent with the values and past experiences of teachers, tissue rejection might be inevitable (p. 203).

As indicated earlier in this paper, we seek to explore some of the images, experiences and expectations of beginning teacher trainees as a way of raising issues that may need to inform teacher education programme change or re-structuring in Ghana.

1.3   Literature Review

Much evidence from research suggest that, teachers' classroom practice is more than a function of teacher programmes and that their 'personal socio-historical past', beliefs and values play a big part in shaping their classroom behaviour and practices (Wideen, Mayer-Smith, & Moon, 1998; Knowles, 1998). For example, Bullough, Knowles and Crow (1997) contend that beginning teachers bring with them into teaching a teaching schema which '… is formed over years of experience interacting with teachers in various capacities and perhaps of prior teaching. Furthermore, this schema …reflects a model of what the individual believes that teaching is 'supposed' to be' (p. 10). Similarly, Calderhead (1988) notes that teachers often look upon their classroom competence as a matter of personality that indicates a belief in the idea that

teachers are born not made. Research into teacher role identity points to a contextualised sense of self that plays a critical part in shaping teaching behaviour. This formulation of one's view of self, according to Woods is essentially influenced by '… home environment, parents, teachers, marriage and socio-economic and political factors, (Woods, 1987 cited in Knowles, 1992). Richardson (1996) in a review of research on beliefs held by beginning teachers prior to entering preservice teaching programmes, also suggests that their beliefs about teaching come through personal experience, schooling and instruction.

Treatments of student teacher perceptions indicate that student teachers begin teacher education programmes with well-established perceptions of what teaching is, based on their previous experiences. Studies show that student teachers value the personal development of children and relationships between children and their teachers (Wilson & Cameron, 1996). Mahlios & Maxson (1995) in a study of pre-service teachers' beliefs about schooling, life and childhood report that student teachers primarily emphasise teacher effectiveness in terms of teacher caring, nurturing and imagination. These findings suggest that prior to teacher training student teachers would have formed quite strong ideas of teaching due to the long socialising experiences of schooling. Consequently, teacher education programmes may have to find ways of articulating and integrating these and other perceptions of professional practice into the training to achieve greater relevance and impact.

In Ghana, little is known and understood about what beginning teachers bring to training, their expectations of teacher training, teaching and the teaching profession. The MUSTER project provided a good opportunity to explore this territory from a developing world context. In effect we were interested in understanding *who* comes for training, *what* they bring and *how* they perceive themselves in relation to training and teaching.

2. METHODOLOGY

2.1 Approach

Understanding the experiences of those entering the teaching profession naturally leads us towards a methodological orientation in which the individual student teacher's voice is given prominence. This in turn directs our attention to a cluster of research methods associated with the qualitative research paradigm and in our case the use of autobiography, interviews and open-ended responses in questionnaires.

Qualitative research approaches have been used to good effect in Northern educational research, particularly in understanding individual-community relations at a time of change (Bertaux, 1981). Until recently, there has been a paucity of studies in the so-called South that utilises qualitative approaches to explore attitudes, values and beliefs of teachers. Given the potential utility of these approaches to illuminate the realities of teacher's lives, particularly in countries like Ghana which are experiencing great change, this is a little surprising.

Part of the disinclination to develop research along these lines may be the predominance of traditional, positivistic routes of enquiry and the perceived difficulties in using methods that appear 'subjective' and context-specific. To account for this we have, in this study, adopted an approach that combines both breadth and depth in our data sources, and which gathers individual 'subjective' material from a range of sources e.g. interview, short autobiographical accounts and open-ended questions.

It is important to stress that our intention, in some respect, is to foreground the 'lived experiences' of student teachers and to give priority to meaning rather than any discovery of 'truth' (Eisner, 1985; 1979). Perhaps the question we are addressing – how do we learn about the life or lives of another? – impels us to adopt an approach which is as person-centred as the teaching we hope the young students would embrace in the classroom.

Content analysis of student teacher written accounts of early life experiences, in which we took note of the words used to portray these experiences and the images, gave us outward hints of inward perspectives (Campbell, 1990). What was particularly interesting in the student accounts was often the way in which experiences are presented – using language and images that provide rich insights into experiences that also reveal their complexity.

2.2 Sample

One hundred new student teachers were randomly selected from each of four Teachers' Training Colleges in the southern part of Ghana. The total number of 400 was made up of 265 male student teachers and 135 female student teachers. 18 student teachers made up of equal gender were randomly selected to write the

autobiographies. 12 of the student teacher trainees, made up of 6 male and 6 female were similarly chosen to form the focus group for the interviews.

2.3 Instruments

In the research into teacher identity, we considered it necessary to understand who generally basic education beginning teachers' are, their characteristics and what might have shaped some of their beliefs, values and perceptions of teaching and the teaching profession. Thus, both breadth and depth were sought in data collection.

Survey questionnaire, interview and structured autobiographies were used as collaborative instruments. The structured autobiographic and interview instruments focused on the student teachers' self-identity with respect to their early life experiences of parents, teachers and school and their motivation for becoming a teacher. They were also to state their views on teachers, teaching, the teacher training and the kind of expectations they had when they leave college. In producing their autobiographies the student teachers were provided with brief guidelines in order to focus their writing on the issues relevant to the subject of the study.

The questionnaire focused on their background characteristics, their views about teachers, teaching and teacher training experiences, which were elicited through their response to structured statements. The first part of the questionnaire covered such items as age, parental education and occupation, respondents' ethnic group and language spoken at home. The second part consisted of 20 structured statements, which covered three main categories, viz. the trainees' perception about teachers, teaching and the training college experience. Examples of the statements are:

- Teachers are born not made
- teaching is a difficult job to do well
- child-centred teaching tends to lower educational standards etc.

The student teachers were to respond to the items on a four point likert scale:
Strongly agree (1), Agree (2), Disagree (3) Strongly Disagree (4)

A third section consisted of a variety of more open-ended questions requiring longer responses. These covered best and worst memories of schooling, views on life at teachers' college and career ambitions.

2.4 Data Collection

Firstly, the questionnaire was distributed to the student teachers to respond to the statements. Later they were given the structured autobiographic themes to write their views on them.

2.5   Research Questions

The key research questions around which the research into Ghanaian student teachers' identity was organised were as follows:

1. What images of the teacher and the teaching profession do beginning student teachers bring into training?

2. What do beginning student teachers see as the relevant experiences they bring to the training process?

3. What do beginning student teachers expect from their training?

2.6   Analysis

The recurrent themes in the autobiography and the interview data were qualitatively analysed based on the protocols used i.e. early life experiences, perceptions about teaching as a career and the training college experience. The statement items in the survey were grouped as they related to the categories used: i.e. beliefs about teachers, teaching and teachers' training college, before scoring them. There were 5 statement items dealing with teachers, 4 on training college and 11 on teaching. The mean response, standard deviation for each statement and the grand mean response for the entire category were then calculated.

The analysis of qualitative data was based on a thematic approach and mainly involved critically examining individual responses to question items, categorising the responses and finally deriving themes from these responses. For the analysis of the open-ended question items, two researchers examined the written responses derived, and agreed on the response categories for each written response. Following this, emerging themes were derived for the subsequent analysis and reporting of findings. The use of two researchers to interpret and categorise the open-ended questionnaire items was to ensure internal validity.

In practice the analysis of the open-ended items involved grouping similar responses to a question under a single and typical response category. Each new response type was put in a different category and this method continued for all the responses to each of the open-ended items till an exhaustive list of typical response patterns was arrived at. In order to determine which response patterns were in the majority, each response type was tallied and this provided good insight into which response pattern was in the majority and which the least.

Altogether the autobiographies, survey questionnaire statements and interviews provided excellent opportunity for data triangulation and enhanced the validity of interpretation and analysis. In effect, we adopted the multi-method approach to counter-balance the distorting effects of any single approach (Murphy et al. 1998).

3.   THEORETICAL FRAMEWORKS

3.1   Teacher Role Identity

'Who are we?' is a question loaded with philosophical and cultural import. For a young Ghanaian considering a teaching career a further question: 'What do I want to become?' lies at the heart of the fundamental relationship between the individual sense of self and the development of a professional identity.

It is not the purpose here however to enter into a lengthy discussion on the concepts of role or identity but rather to map out the conceptual landscape in which young teacher trainees live and work. The two key relationships are those of self and identity at the level of the individual; and cultural context and professional environment at the level of the society in which the student teacher resides.

We use concepts of teacher role and identity in the sense of providing us with a theoretical framework for the discussions of findings and issues from this study.   In other words, they are used in the context of how they might help us to explain and develop meaning from what our subjects are saying or writing about.

3.2   Self and the development of Role Identity

At a fundamental level questions of identity are located in a process that is to be found 'in the core of the individual and yet also in the core of his communal culture' (Erikson, 1968).   For Erikson, the concept of identity is one which expands from the 'inner' sense of self to include social and 'external' factors (Breger, 1974).

For teacher trainees growing up in Ghana, we were looking therefore to understand the relationship between a personal self, shaped by such socio-cultural forces as family and childhood school experiences and the nascent professional identity to be developed by the Teachers' College.

This idea of identity as a situated or contextualised sense of self has been explored by Nias (1985, 1989) in her work with British teachers. Drawing a distinction between what she calls the 'substantial' and the 'situational' self, she paints a picture of teacher identity formation in which an 'inner' or 'core' self strives to realise its own purposes, while a latter more 'external' and professional sense of self is constrained by circumstance. The situational self that in this context is a professional self might be constrained by circumstance.   Consequently, the interplay between the cultural context of the trainee teachers and the professional environment they study is a major dimension in understanding their role identity (Goodson, 1997).

As we saw when analysing the autobiographies and interviews with young Ghanaian trainees,- tensions exist between the hopes and ambitions individuals have for *themselves* and what they feel they can achieve as a teacher. Similarly, the experience students have as school children influence the formation of their identity as a teacher-

in- training. Pollard (1982), for example, points out that the socialising role of pupils and the influence of the ecology of the classroom are influencing forces that shape and have impact on teacher development. These are echoed in the findings of our study.

3.3   Cultural Context and Professional Environment

The inter-play between the cultural contexts from which the trainees come and the professional environments in which they will study and teach forms the second major dimension in an understanding of teacher role identity.

As we shall see when examining this interface between self and society in Ghana, growing up for many teacher trainees is characterised by experiences of the struggle to overcome poverty, the hardships of schools in which corporal punishment is commonplace, and ill-health (Harber & Davies, 1997). Osler's pioneering study of the lives of 108 black teachers working in the north of England identifies ethnicity, gender, and family responsibilities (particularly for women) as major factors constraining the development of a professional identity (Osler, 1997).

The professional environment in Ghana into which trainees will initially enter on teaching practice and later as newly qualified teachers is equally one shaped by difficult and volatile forces.

The rapid expansion of the formal educational system through the ambitious FCUBE Programme has necessitated a demand for more, quickly trained, teachers who will be able to impart knowledge and skills very different from those acquired by the trainees in their own days at school. But the professional environment of College and school is also one constrained by lack of physical resource and funding.

The picture that emerges, as we move towards the next Millennium, is of a changing teaching force working in and under very new and difficult circumstances (UNESCO, 1998). The Ghanaian teacher of the future is now entering the Teachers' College and bringing with her cultural and personal 'baggage' that will both promote and hinder the development of the nation's schools.

3.4   The Future : Becoming Teacher Role Identity

If our young teacher in training is shaped by contextual forces then important also is the dynamic, future-oriented nature of her developing role identity.

Hall (1991) suggests that cultural identity is actually something which is being:

> produced, always in process, never fully completed … belonging
> as much to the past [yet] subject to the continuous 'play' of history,
> culture and power- (Hall, 1991 in Lorrain 1994).

Teacher identity in a country like Ghana, which is in the process of rapid social and economic change, is therefore much about the development of a future-oriented role -

what we want teachers-in-training to become – shaped not only by the sort of contextual factors mentioned earlier but by complex relations of power and contestation which determine the future course of identity formation and, we would argue, the direction of teacher education (Deusterberg, 1998).

For the new entrant to the teaching profession experience of these ideological forces is often referred to in terms of 'fitting in', learning to 'play the game', and in looking for ways to develop a career which satisfies both personal self and professional identity. The Ghanaian state, though, also has its interests to promote, presenting to the novice professional an idealised image of the teacher, which in turn make identity claims upon the teacher it rewards with status and a livelihood. Young teacher trainees, therefore, walk a tightrope in both developing a personal teacher identity which sits comfortably with their own sense of self and in maintaining a balance between satisfying the requirements of state and society and in providing the source and impetus for change.

4. FINDINGS

4.1   Characteristics of Student Teacher Trainees

Analysis of student teacher characteristics was undertaken from the survey data. This section provides a summary of the results of this analysis.

Prior to initial teacher training, student teachers would typically have spent at least 6 years at primary school, 3 years at junior secondary and a further 3 years at senior secondary.

The ages of the 390 student teachers ranged from 17 to 29 years old with the majority (73.4%) between 19 and 21 years. The mean age was 21 years and the standard deviation was 2.06. Only 34% of the students were above 21 years. There was virtually no difference in mean ages of both male and female student trainees. Acceptance for teacher training or the decision to become a teacher was made earlier for more females than males. 35% of female teachers were between the ages of 17 and 19 years whilst 21% of males were between these ages.

87% of the student teachers spoke 'Akan', a language predominantly spoken in the south of Ghana. This is unsurprising, as the study colleges were all located in the south of the country where Akan is the predominant language.

74% of the student teachers had no teaching experience prior to coming to teachers' college. 14% of those who had taught before had done so for less than a year.

The survey analysis suggests that many of the students did not enter training college soon after secondary school. 63% of the students spent between 2-5 years before entering teachers' college. Only 33% went straight from secondary to training college. This provides evidence that many of the student trainees either did not possess the requisite grades for teacher training upon first graduating from secondary school, or did not initially intend to go into teacher training after their secondary education. It is not uncommon for students who wish to enter the university or polytechnic to re-sit their exams in order to improve their chances of selection. Many of the student teachers may therefore have chosen teacher training after a couple of attempts to improve their grades for selection into University or polytechnic had failed, turning to teacher training with weak grades. The evidence from student teacher grades in English and Mathematics supports this.

Entrance to post-secondary teacher training institutions in Ghana is based on stated minimum requirements. For GCE 'O' level applicants, a minimum of 5 credits including Mathematics and English Language is the entry requirement. For the Senior Secondary Certification Examination (SSCE), the requirements are a minimum of

aggregate 24 including at least credits in Core Science, Core Mathematics, and Core English Language[2].

Of those who entered college on the merit of senior secondary certificate examinations (SSCE), about 69% obtained an 'E' in English – which is the lowest grade in the pass category, and about 22% obtained a 'D' pass category. This means that about 91% of student teachers entered teachers' college with very weak passes in English. Of those who entered with 'O' levels, 62.3% obtained a credit or grade 6 in English which is the minimum pass grade for English acceptable for teacher training. Further evidence from the results of the English test administered to the 400 students confirms the weak English background of the new trainees. The student teachers' mean score in the English test was 41% with standard deviation of 10.

For Mathematics 40% of SSCE entrants obtained an 'E' and 25% a 'D', indicating that about 65% had what could be described as weak passes in Mathematics. Mean and standard deviation scores for the Mathematics test was 31% and 16 respectively.

The quality of entry grades in English and Mathematics, and achievement test scores provide ample evidence that the student teachers in this study are among the weakest of their cohort 'O' level or SSCE group. Thus, most of them would not be eligible for other tertiary level institutions whose entry requirements are generally higher than for teacher training.

There is evidence to suggest that social class plays an important motivating influence in people's educational and occupational pursuits. Some studies have shown that educational and occupational aspirations of children reflect not only those of their families but also the achievement aspirations which their parents hold for them (e.g. Jencks 1972, King 1969). For example, a study carried out by Abrah (1988) of Ghanaian teachers' reasons for choosing the teaching profession indicated that the most influential social motive was 'parents' wish' (80%).

The concept of social class and its categorizations is highly contested in the literature. We have used the term in this study in a liberal sense, based on the assumption that occupations differentiated on a number of dimensions can provide meaningful social class groupings (Cooper & Dunne, 2000). We differentiated the social class background of the parents of the student teachers by their educational qualification. In a society such as Ghana, this can at times be problematic as the social strata based on such a dimension is not at times straightforward. For example, a higher or moderately high educational qualification may not necessarily correspond to a socially high employment status, and this can at times present problems in social classification. In this study, we have not employed a social classification of student teachers' parents based on any particular model; instead one of us used his 'insider' understanding of Ghanaian occupation status to derive a loose social classification for the purposes of our study. This is because of the exploratory nature of the study and

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[2] The SSCE has replaced the 'O' level as part of the restructuring of education in Ghana. The minimum qualifying aggregate grade of '24' is derived from 3 core subjects (English, Mathematics and Science) and 2 elective subjects (either science or general arts programme). Grade designation for SSCE are as follows: A=1, B=2, C=3, D=4, and E=5. The minimum qualifying aggregate grade for teacher training was changed to 20 from year 2000.

also the fact that we did not intend to analyse responses to questionnaire items by social class.

Student teachers' parents' occupation was examined to provide insight into the social class level of parents whose children were going into teaching. No direct association can be made between occupation of parents and the student teachers' choice of teacher training as there could be other motives - either personal, educational or economic - that may be critical to their choices. However, knowledge of their parents' occupation added to insights into the socio-economic background of the student teachers. The assumption here is that the socio-economic status of their parents is central to the core meaning in their lives and therefore a mitigating influence on the forces that shape their choices.

From the analysis of the survey data, out of the 384 trainees who responded to the question about their parents' occupation, 21% and 14% respectively indicated their father or mother were teachers. The next highest proportion of fathers' occupation was 'farmers' (18%), followed by traders (14%). In the analysis of the mothers' occupation, the highest proportion were traders (52%), followed by teachers (14%) and farmers (13%). Thus, many beginning student teachers' parents in this study were engaged in jobs that, in Ghana, would generally be low paying and have relatively low status. The educational qualifications of 383 of the fathers of the trainees were: 50% with a higher education qualification (e.g. post-secondary – teachers certificate, diploma, degree etc.), 24% with secondary school certificate, and 15% with a primary leaving certificate, and 11% with no qualifications. For the mothers, 19% had a higher educational qualification, 32% with secondary school certificate, 27% with a primary leaving certificate, and 22% with no educational qualifications.

The socio-economic status of the student teachers' parents would suggest the level of financial, material and psychological support that they can offer them with regard to the provision of clothing, fees, school materials, food and shelter. Both the occupation and educational qualification of the student teachers' parents indicate a predominantly low socio-economic status, typically *working class*, which suggests that many of them may have had an economically difficult upbringing in terms of financial and psychological support. The autobiographic evidence relating to the student trainees' experiences of school and teachers, which we discuss in part B of this paper, is indicative of the kind of difficulties some trainees might have had. It raises questions relating to the student teachers' aspirations in relation to their situational and professional sense of self. How much of the trainees' socio-economic family background influence decisions to become a teacher and how does that affect attitudes towards training and teaching? Student teachers in Ghana are paid a monthly allowance during their training and this could possibly make teacher training an attractive option particularly for trainees whose parents or guardians feel unable to continue to support them financially. It would appear, from our data, that educational achievement ('O' level/SSCE grades) – low grades that limits their chances of entering university or other tertiary level institutions - and socio-economic family background - generally working class - are factors that play a significant role in the decisions to enter teachers' training college.

In conclusion, the survey bio-data of the student teachers revealed the following:

♦ the majority of student teachers were quite young and may not have been initially attracted to teaching as a career – are likely 'unwilling recruits';
♦ the vast majority have had very little or no teaching experience prior to entering teacher training;
♦ the majority of beginning student teachers enter college with weak grades in English and Mathematics with implication for the focus and content of the training programme and;
♦ finally, that most of their parents were engaged in the primary sectors of the economy which is generally low on the socio-economic ladder in Ghana; the question of how this impacts on their motives and aspirations is important here.

These findings have further implications for policies on selection, retention of teachers and design of training programmes that would enhance relevance and increase impact. In view of the little or no prior teaching experience of beginning trainees, coupled with their weak academic backgrounds and generally low motivation to enter teaching, there needs to be an effective training scheme that is intrinsically attractive, can effectively develop their competence, and lead to higher professional commitment.

4.2   Summary of beliefs prior to training

The student teachers had some interesting beliefs about teachers, teaching and learning and the expectation of the training college programme, as their responses to the structured statements indicated.

For instance, about 60% of them disagreed that teachers are born and not made. This is likely to mean that most felt that training played an important part in the development of a teacher. In other words, most of them are likely to see training as a means to make fundamental improvements in their capacity to teach. Coming from new training college entrants, this result is hardly surprising as it could be argued that this is what new trainees would expect when they make the decision to train to become teachers. Also, since the 'born teacher' concept is often articulated forcefully by those teachers who have been teaching for some time, it could be more a reflection of a personality trait that results after a period of reflecting the effect of one's own teaching. (c.f. Akyeampong, Pryor & Ampiah 2000). Therefore, some of them are likely to change position after a period of teaching. It would be interesting to know what the majority of newly qualified teachers who have been teaching for a period of time would say on this issue.

Generally, most of the student teachers agreed that:
• teachers can improve the academic performance of slow learners (59%)
• teachers should be trained to teach all age groups (93%)
• the most important thing a teacher can do is to teach pupils facts (86%)

The expression of the view that teaching is about presenting facts reflects a transmission model of teaching that has implications for teacher training pedagogy.

Given that such a big percentage share this view, it is important that the training programme attempts to engage trainees in more constructive reflection of the assumptions and implications of a transmission model of teaching.

However, 62% felt pupils learn more from asking questions than from listening and this shows espousal of some social constructivist orientation to learning. This result is encouraging as it indicates that many of the trainees' views on learning are based on more interactive methods of teaching and learning. How does one reconcile this with the behaviourist position on teaching held by many of the trainees? One explanation could be that their model of teaching, derived from their own experience as pupils, is based on patterns of interaction with teachers which do not encourage teacher-pupil interaction or pupils' active engagement in teaching and learning transactions (see for example, Fobih et al 1999; Pryor & Akwesi, 1998). When it comes to the issue of learning, again, their own experience may have indicated the positive impact of questioning, when it has occurred, on their learning. In other words, what teachers do and what promotes pupil learning may be seen as quite different endeavours, and that the *interactive effects of teaching and learning* is what training needs to pay more attention to. The student teachers' portraits of good teachers and worst teachers, later discussed in this paper, reveal the complexity of their views on teaching and learning. The view that children need to be divided into ability groups to be taught well (60% expressing this view) also presents some challenges to the training programme as to how that might be done given the composition and structure of actual Ghanaian classrooms.

On responses related to teacher training the student teachers felt that:

- Teacher training should involve more methodology and less mastery of subject knowledge (66.3%)
- Teacher training should involve at least a year's teaching practice (79.1%)

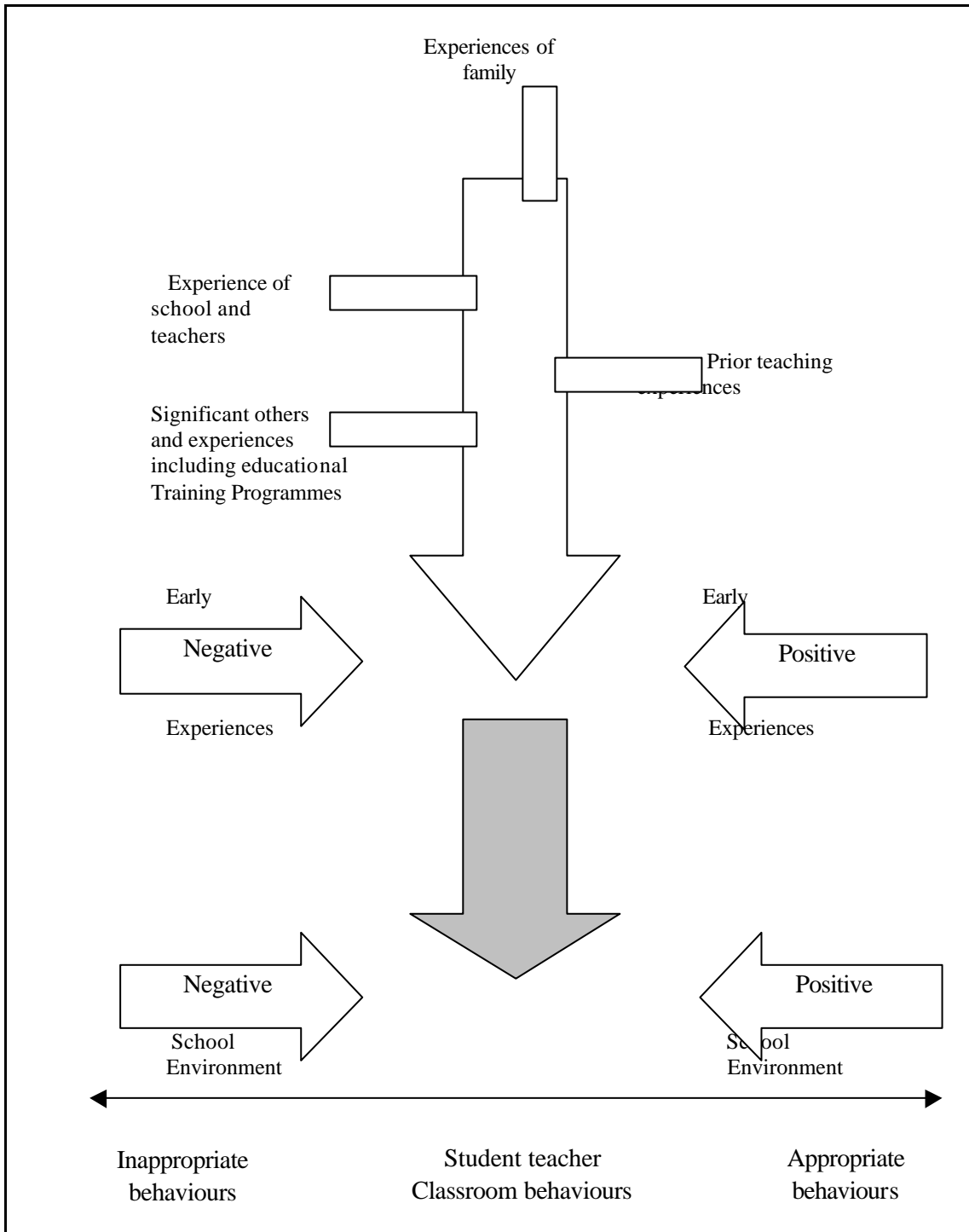The responses suggest that new trainees' expectation of training is one of practical orientation.

An issue that this study sought insight into was the perception of self in relation to the opportunity to become teachers. About 76% felt their friends thought they were fortunate to be training to become a teacher. Whether this gives them a sense of value and influences the formation of their identity as a teacher-in-training is not clear and will require further research to clarify. 89% disagreed that they would rather have gone to Polytechnic than go to teacher training. This result is hardly surprising given the knowledge that most would not have been eligible for polytechnic with their 'O' level/SSCE grades. Thus, one cannot infer that this statistic is suggestive of a high interest in teacher training.

4.3   Images of Teacher Identity and Role

This section focuses on the analysis of qualitative data and therefore provides a more textured and in-depth account of the trainees' images of teacher identity and role.

Gary Knowles' (1992) model of the stages of development of teacher role identity was adapted as a conceptual and organising framework for reporting the findings of the study based on the qualitative data.

Figure 1: Developing teacher role identity: Stages of development of teacher role identity with phases of the Biographical Transformation Model

Experiences of family

Experience of school and teachers

Prior teaching experiences

Significant others and experiences including educational Training Programmes

Early

Negative

Experiences

Early

Positive

Experiences

Negative

School Environment

Positive

School Environment

Inappropriate behaviours

Student teacher
Classroom behaviours

Appropriate behaviours

Source: Adapted from Gary Knowles (1992) 'Models for understanding pre-service and beginning teachers' biographies: Illustrations from Case Studies', in Studying Teachers' Lives, Ivor F. Goodson.

Using this model, the experiences of family, teacher or school are analysed and interpreted. However, in the analysis of the autobiographies and responses to the open-ended items, no attempt was made to impose this classification on the data. Rather, the emerging themes were laid side by side to this classification to highlight similarities and differences.

4.3.1 Experiences of Family

What distinctive feature characterised the early family life experiences of some student trainees? Using the autobiographies, an attempt was made to examine the sort of family life background some might have had. The accounts suggested that early family life was quite challenging, often characterised by financial difficulties or having to live with extended family relations, e.g. grandmother, with the attendant social and economic constraints. Children were schooled away from the village or town in which they were born often because their parents, particularly the father, were transferred to another job or place. This suggests often an itinerant education.

Most of the autobiographies did not contain vivid and detailed accounts of family life. However, one student trainee vividly described how his life was filled with financial obstacles that had impact on his education.

> *I continued my basic education at this same town at the age of 13. By then my mother was a trader. She used to sell various commodities including fish, rice, maize etc. My father was also a farmer with middle school certificate. … after school I had to sell fish up to 5.30pm and in the evening did well to send kerosene to the market. At one time I told my parents honestly that I want them to suspend the fish and kerosene business since it could have impact on my education. … The main problem I had was the financial constraints on the part of my parents, This made me at every weekend move to the 'calamsey' (*a term used for illegal mining) *site to do surface mining to enable me make ends meet. I needed money to buy post-secondary teacher training forms from which I did not get any help from anywhere (sic). I would at times consult my parents and they would say they don't have money.*

Similar stories were recounted by others but in less detail. However, it is interesting to note that these difficulties were often also seen as hurdles rather than obstacles. Thus, in some of the autobiographies one reads a lot about the determination and perseverance that resulted from such experiences. The hurdles had served to motivate rather than hinder progress – the modest gains they had made in their education up to teacher training was due to dint of hard work. How much of this is perceived by the trainees, as an important quality they bring to the training is not clear. However, the role teachers played in helping them to progress in their education despite these difficulties could have contributed to the view of teachers' role as a social role model. Many of the student teachers wrote about heir own teacher's support in their pursuit of education, which illustrates the significance of a conscious identification with a teacher during childhood development. In particular students wrote about teachers' support and encouragement and how this enabled them overcome learning and social obstacles, leading to an expanded image of teacher role identity. It does emerge, from the autobiographic and survey evidence, that teachers did have a positive influence on some student teachers' lives beyond the school and classroom setting.

My parents were not well off to provide me with all the necessary things that I needed to assist me in my academic work. At times I was sacked from class for owing school fees and had to stay at home until my parents were able to pay my school fees. ...There was once a time when my class teacher Mr Morgan visited my parents at the house and advised them to take good care of me especially in catering for my education. Through all these agonies I experienced, I was able to pass through the basic education with a successful completion in 1992.

Another student trainee who had earlier described the many financial difficulties he faced in his education recounted the significant role teachers played in ensuring that his parents make the effort to finance his education.

I was told I had got aggregate six in the BECE examination, which has stood as a record up till now. This made my teachers rush to my father telling him in a way of intimidation that if he did not send me to secondary school, he stood to be questioned by the authorities in the education service. As a matter of fact these tutors encouraged my father to send me to secondary school.

Mr Gevo was my best teacher. It was through his effort that I have been able to come up to this stage. When I wanted to write the common entrance examination, it was Mr Gevo who helped me and even to the extent of buying the forms for me. Whenever he sees I'm in difficulties he comes to assist me. I could see it was that which helped me further my education

In giving accounts of their early life experience, teachers' involvement feature quite prominently in the way in which they encouraged, supported and, as the vignettes above suggest, sometimes even contributed to parents' decision about children's education. Thus, as far as early childhood family life experiences are concerned, teachers' role appears to represent a significant part.

4.3.2 Experiences of School and Teachers

Students were asked the question: 'What was the best thing about your primary schooling?' and this produced a plethora of responses. Most of the students cited the impact of resourceful teachers and motivation for learning derived from early success in schoolwork. R*esourceful teachers* are seen as teachers who are good at improvising teaching methods to facilitate children's learning. Good teachers are capable of using effective teaching strategies, demonstrate good interpersonal relationships, are disciplinarians or provide moral or spiritual guidance.

Good teachers are recognised as those capable of employing effective teaching methods that made learning both interesting and rewarding. Many responses in this regard centred in particular on the individual attention teachers provided children and on the ingenious use of instructional materials to facilitate children's learning. Good teachers are also considered to be knowledgeable in the subject they teach. This reflects a concept of the teacher not only as a repository of expert knowledge but also capable of contextualising and making 'real' the knowledge transmitted. Some of the

typical responses student teachers wrote regarding the positive impact of a good teacher's pedagogic style are captured in these statements:

> *In fact the way she taught was amazing. Even if you don't have sharp brains you will understand the subject clearly. She mostly taught using everyday experiences*

> *He used our daily life activities to explain problems in mathematics and you will understand and love mathematic-*

> *He was then a pupil teacher (untrained) but the way he presented the lessons were very goo-*

Further important characteristics of good teachers presented in some of the written responses are the love and care they demonstrated both within and out of classroom contexts. Such images of a good teacher suggest the importance attached to teachers who exhibit liberal and humanistic values, which promote social cohesion in the classroom and the society at large. This is an interesting image of a good teacher because it shows the importance attached to an orientation to teaching that extends beyond simply teachers' instructional pedagogy. In effect, good teachers exhibit characteristics that project them as social role models. How such characteristics can be exemplified through the processes of training and given value is the challenge that faces designers of teacher education programmes who may desire to make this an important philosophy of training. One of the interesting observations made is that the language used to describe the idea of a 'born teacher' is similar to the language used to suggest the attributes of the humanistic and liberal teacher – teachers who are tolerant and generous. If indeed it is believed that humanistic and liberal teachers are born and not made then trainees who share this view may not expect training to inculcate in them such attributes. On the other hand if it is believed that this can be nurtured and developed in teachers then this invites a model of training that finds room for the expression and development of such attributes. The critical issue is what image of a good teacher a philosophy of training promotes and whether this is in conflict or resonates with certain strongly held aspects of the beginning trainees' internalised image of a good teacher.

Some of the ways in which student teachers presented this concept of the good teacher is captured in the following written accounts:

> *He was patient and listened to the problems of all students as best as he could. He also sacrificed his private time to teach topics we couldn't cover during the normal class period*

> *This teacher was actually a role model in the community. He was very humane, patient and above all very approachable. In the classroom he kept his cool in the face of all provocation. I liked him so much because his life and deeds were worth emulating*

> *He would never miss (classes). At a point in time I stopped schooling but he advised me to come back.*

Other evidence from the student teachers' responses revealed that a good teacher, generally, was perceived as one skilful in promoting children's

learning and who possessed humanistic and liberal values that benefited both children and the school-community.

Others expressed appreciation of the teacher who was punctual, dedicated, hardworking, and approachable and generally helped children to make effort in learning. A student teacher's response reflecting the action of a teacher that stood in sharp contrast to others as far as motivating learning is captured in this statement:

> *I was a dull student and most of the teachers always insulted and disgraced me, which made me feel bad. But my P5 teacher made me try and I made it*

Some trainees also remembered school life for the satisfaction produced by success in schoolwork, whilst others recollected good school facilities or headteachers as important images of school life.

Student teachers' recollection of their worst school experience was mainly corporal punishment. This was often expressed in connection with the teaching and learning process. Caning was often meted out for poor academic performance or failure to answer teachers' questions in class. The use of corporal punishment as a corrective measure in school was considered to be counterproductive by some, as it produced negative attitudes towards teachers and subjects rather than promoted learning. Others, however, saw corporal punishment as having played a positive role in shaping character and motivating hard work.

Although quite an extreme example of the use of corporal punishment, the following autobiographic account of its use by one student trainee reveals just how strongly corporal punishment can create a negative image of a teacher in early school experience.

> *I remember, one day when I was in the primary school I had a fight with one of my classmates. So some friends went to the next classroom and reported the case to the teacher there. She sent them to come and call us. When we got there the teacher didn't ask us anything and told us to fight in her presence because she has seen me fighting on several occasions. It was about 45 minutes to the closing time and the lady teacher made us fight and fight as she was sitting down watching the fight, while the other pupils were watching and shouting as we knocked each other with heavy blows. What hurt me so much was that, when the bell was rang for closing she called me and after giving me some lashes she asked me the number of canes I have received. When I told her I was not counting, she started all over again and gave me ten lashes. .My father reported the case to parents of the teacher and since then she never liked me. At times she didn't mark my work when she gave us some assignment.*

Other stories reflected similar negative images of teachers that were the direct result of unfair or excessive use of caning as a form of corporal punishment.

> *We were caned when we didn't do well in mental work … and so I was afraid of every teacher who normally holds the cane in class*

> *In fact, I was not performing well so whenever I saw a teacher coming to class with a cane I started panicking*

Poor school facilities, poor staffing, undisciplined teachers (not attending class or, coming late or drunk) and low achievement, were also reported as some of the experiences of primary school that had left a negative impression of schooling and teachers.

In summary therefore, as far as classroom experiences are concerned, significant childhood images of teachers for the student teachers range from the general to the specific pedagogic style of teachers. Furthermore, the character of schools and personality of teachers seem to be important images that many student teachers carry with them into training.

4.3.3 Prior Teaching Experiences

The survey revealed that about 26% of the beginning student teachers had formal classroom teaching experience prior to their entering teachers' college. Out of the 170 questionnaires sampled for the qualitative analysis of open-response items, only 14 had formal classroom teaching experience. However, many others had engaged in less formal teaching episodes that included teaching siblings at home and teaching Sunday school. Interestingly, such experiences were portrayed as the awakening moments of a potential in teaching ability that hitherto remained buried in them. Again, quite often this was linked to the born teacher concept in which teaching is essentially a matter of personality which one discovers. Loving children and the desire to make an input into their development was regarded as one of the most important qualities of the born teacher. Hargreaves (1994) has cautioned about the effect the concept of a loving pedagogy can have on the value of training, arguing that '- this diminishes teachers' valuing of pedagogy courses or professional attitudes- ' (p. 146). However, it could be argued that it is how teachers perceive the role of a loving pedagogy in the teaching and learning discourses that is important. As reported by Akyeampong, Pryor and Ampiah (2000) in their study of Ghanaian teachers' understanding of learning, teaching and assessment, when teachers talked about their experiences using the language of a loving pedagogy, they actually focused on very important professional issues relating to teaching and learning.

We will argue that, instead of ignoring images of the teacher that do not appear to fit into the traditional image in terms of teacher role identity, we need to use the 'unconventional' images as a basis to either redefine or refine student teachers' conception of teaching. The importance of this lies in the contention that student teachers do not necessarily develop new perspectives of teaching but become more skilful at defending whatever perspectives they already hold (Bolin, 1990, cited in Wideen et al. 1998). Similarly, as Calderhead (1988) points out, it is important that the ethos of training supports a conception of teaching which resonates with one's own image of teaching and aims to improve upon those conceptions. He argues that ignoring images of practice that are acquired from past experiences, 'student teachers' learning could quite quickly reach a plateau where teaching has become a routine, conservative and unproblematic' (Calderhead 1988, p. 9). It seems therefore necessary for teacher education programmes to engage more actively with student teachers' conception of teaching even if these have been formed through informal

teaching experiences. The challenge is for teacher education programmes to depart from the fixed behavioural models of training often found in teacher education systems in Africa, to one which encourages student teachers to contest the grounds of their prior teaching experience or images of teaching.

4.3.4 Reasons for Choosing Teaching as a Career

Generally, the reason given by many to train to become teachers was more altruistic than extrinsic or intrinsic. Under the altruistic motives were reasons such as the desire to impart knowledge, interest in working with children and to help raise the standard of education in the country.

> *I want to impart the knowledge acquired to someone and also be a role model for the young ones to follow*
>
> *I want to become a teacher and help raise the falling standard of education in the country, especially in the remote area*

Under the intrinsic motive student teachers expressed reasons such as teaching will win them respect and love from society 'you will be loved by all people especially younger ones' '-you win maximum respect from the community'. It is likely that such intrinsic motives stem from the traditional image of teachers' wider role in school communities that in Ghana, has generally earned them much respect. However, this perception is not unique to student teachers in Ghana as other research seeking to understand why pre-service teachers chose teaching as a career also reports similar reasons (e.g. Wideen et. al. 1998).

There were two main extrinsic motives for choosing teaching as a career. One was the job security offered by teaching '-in the midst of graduate unemployment, my employment is assured after training' as one student teacher put it. The other motive was the potential of teaching as a path for social mobility. A career in teaching was considered by some as a gateway to further education leading ultimately to a respectable career. Some of the student teachers' motives are captured in the following statements:

> *Through teaching, one can become an officer (military), ... and even join politics to become a prominent person*
>
> *A teacher can further his/her education and there is also study leave with pay*
>
> *You can further your course to the University to become a secondary school teacher*

All of such motives appear to be founded on the realities of teacher education policy that offers teachers leave with pay to pursue further professional studies that ultimately enables one to move higher up the teaching status ladder or branch into other professions. The relatively young and ambitious nature of the student teachers to further their education suggest that an effective in-service training scheme may be needed to sustain and retain the newly trained teachers.

On the negative side, a major dissatisfaction with teaching was its poor conditions of service. This was expressed by about 79% of the student teachers. Poor remuneration from teaching was considered to result in a lack of respect for teachers. How can this view be reconciled with that of the views of teaching as a noble profession? It seems that when student teachers expressed the view of teaching as 'a noble profession', they were mostly thinking in terms of the impact it made on society's development; this is teachers wearing the 'intrinsic' cap. Thus, student teachers are well aware of the downside in choosing teaching as a career but perceive there are other potential benefits that come with being trained as a teacher. The opportunities to further one's education at the university and qualify as a secondary school teacher or acquire skills that are attractive to other more respectable jobs, or to contribute to society, seem to weigh considerably in their decision to consider a career in teaching. Teaching in the developing world context can offer those from a lower class an avenue for socio-economic advancement and a better life (Yong, 1995). Where the majority of student teachers are coming from this background and with low academic achievement, teaching may prove a very attractive option in fulfilling ambitions to move up the socio-economic ladder.

Some other references to the unattractive side of the teaching profession mentioned were: (1) working in deprived areas and confronted with disease; (2) facing language and accommodation problems; (3) potential conflict with community members and parents – being blamed for pupils' failure, and (4) public scrutiny of lifestyle because of the expected role model image of teachers. These are a reflection of some of the contemporary challenges facing teachers in Ghana today and have important implications for student teachers' long-term commitment to teaching. Again, how the training process prepares student teachers psychologically and practically to deal with these challenges is the issue for teacher development policy-makers in Ghana.

4.3.5 The Role of Teacher Training

In response to why teachers require training, there were two main reasons, one reflecting preparation for pedagogical classroom practice and the other preparation for personal and social responsibility. In the case of the former three main reasons offered for the function of training were: to gain mastery of subject matter, to develop teaching skills and to develop professional understanding of children's behaviour (child psychology). The fact that these reasons, particularly the first two, do not reflect any expectation that training will provide them with the agency for their own exploration of teaching is hardly surprising since such a conception may be foreign to them. It does, however, point to the expectation that training is intended to equip one with certain skills and knowledge for carrying out the teaching job. We would suggest that their understanding of what training is intended to do is essentially to *receive* knowledge and *acquire* skills and that this provides legitimacy for their teacher role identity. It reflects images of teacher role identity that are quite common in African education systems (Jessop & Penny 1998, Tabulawa, 1997). This is an expectation that has implications for the pedagogy of training, as trainees may be quite unwilling to *discuss* and *explore* teaching with the view to promoting ownership and reflective action. A conception of training that is fundamentally personality-centred and in which student teachers are expected to redefine their traditional teaching beliefs through theoretical lessons, may not gain acceptance with trainees who have strong expectations of training as simply a passive process of transmitting

knowledge and skills. We will argue that at the early stages of training, the transmission model of teaching held by student teachers needs to be vigorously challenged through monitoring their teaching practice and evaluating the difference that their changed practices makes on pupils' learning.

Some of the typical answers written to the question of what the function of training is illustrate a more or less passive utilitarian perspective.

> *It is important to acquire some knowledge and skills to impart to the children. Also to know how to handle problems facing pupils in the classroom*

> *Teachers need to acquire certain specific skills, which can help them to do the job well, e.g. they should be taught about methodology – how to teach every subject*

> *Teachers need to be taught why pupils' behaviours change in the classroom at certain times*

> *Training will help us fit into any place we may be posted to teach after training.*

The other views on the function of training that reflect an expectation of developing social interaction and survival skills suggest some belief in a 'hidden' outcome of training, that after training:

> *One becomes familiar with individual behaviours and therefore learns more about life in general*

> *One will be able to interact with others … and also undergo some hardships in the process to prepare one to face future hardships*

> *You will be prepared to look after yourself and to adapt to the environment.*

Further study is required to explore the origins of such expectations and whether the traditions and social norms of the training colleges contribute to such hidden outcomes of training.

4.3.6 Experiences in Training College

Experiences encountered during the training process can send powerful signals to student teachers as to the 'hidden' curriculum of teacher education programmes (Zeichner et al 1987; Wideen et al 1998). Thus, the experiences at college are an important stage in the development of teacher role identity. It is quite clear that student teachers expect some benefits from teacher training as their views on the role of teacher training suggest. However, what we were interested in exploring in more detail was their recent experiences of college life and the way in which they interpreted and made meaning of these experiences. In particular, we wished to know whether how student teachers perceived these experiences had an adverse or positive impact on their lives at college.

Four main college experiences stood out as significant for the student teachers of the study. These are the inadequate time for studying due to non-curricular/extra curricular activities (manual work e.g. weeding of college compound, fetching of water), pressure of academic work (too many subjects to study), inadequate college facilities (water, electricity, lack of textbooks, poor food), and insufficient training allowances. Student teachers explained that these made college life quite difficult and stressful. The vast majority of student teachers felt such college chores as weeding, scrubbing, and fetching water were the worst experiences of training college that limited teaching and learning time.

> *We do not get the time to do individual learning, always weeding, scrubbing and fetching water to the kitchen*
>
> *The subjects we study here are many and we have to cover a lot of content. Tutors also have less time to teach*
>
> *Facilities and other important logistics needed for smooth studies are lacking*
>
> *We are treated like primary school pupils. We are not allowed to regulate our lives*
>
> *The type of training we receive here is somehow like military training. If you prove to be recalcitrant in the college, you are punished*

The last statement reflects a view of college life that many found difficult to understand – why were there so many strict rules in training college, and why was so much time spent doing menial tasks? We explored some of these questions with college tutors. Some felt that the ethos of training was really to produce a teacher who was disciplined and responsive to duty and that college authority structure, strict rules and regulations were an essential part of the process of inculcating such qualities in teachers. Most of the student teachers, though, felt that the strict college rules and regulations undermined their personal self-worth and made them feel unable to exercise control over their lives at college. What was evident from the statements and views expressed on the experiences of college life was that it is often quite hard and not something many had expected.

Studies of an ethnographic kind on Ghanaian teachers' college characteristics and culture is called for to understand how cultural traditions and training practices within the teachers' college promote particular images of teacher role identity. Ultimately, this is about how the interconnected network of traditions, socialising practices, facilities and infrastructure, and the general instructional approach in a college; contribute to shape teacher role identity.

4.3.7 Aspirations and Expectations after Training College

What aspirations and expectations do student teachers have after their training? This was a question we were interested in exploring to understand more clearly their motivations for, and images of, the teaching profession.

Student teachers in our study pointed to two main aspirations after their training – the predominant aspiration was to 'further their education so as to be able to teach at a higher level of education ' (e.g. secondary school) and the other was, 'to become an effective professional teacher'. Most regarded primary teaching as low-status and secondary teaching of better status, and therefore looked forward to going to University to qualify to teach at that level. This aspiration reveals that the majority of these student teachers, who after graduation are posted to teach at primary schools, do not intend to remain there for long. In Ghana the salary structures of teachers at primary and secondary levels are similar. It means that the issue of teachers' salaries could not be the reason for the desire to teach at the secondary school level. It is likely that the better social status of secondary school teachers and the better accommodation most secondary schools offer are what make them more attractive. We are of the view that the question of teacher attrition and commitment at the primary school level in Ghana requires policies that recognise that many student teachers aspire to move up the teaching ladder, and that this aspiration can affect commitment and attitude to teaching at the primary level. The crucial question here, we will add, is what policies can be promoted to develop more interest in primary teaching?

The expectation to become 'effective professional teachers' after college confirms the earlier point in this paper that student teachers believed training was a technical enterprise that will equip them with specific pedagogical skills and knowledge to perform the teaching task. Both the aspiration to further their education to move up the school system ladder, and the expectation to become effective teachers, raise issues for policy regarding improving retention and commitment to primary teaching and issues for the model of learning about teaching. In the latter case, if student teachers' expectation is that effective teaching takes place simply because certain teaching methods are used, then when confronted with the real world of classroom practice disillusionment with teaching may set in. Training would then be seen as a dysfunctional experience.

In conclusion, what the student teachers wrote regarding their aspirations after teacher training generally indicates that they do not intend to remain teaching at the primary level for long primary school teaching is simply the first step in the journey towards a more high status career in education. For example, two student teachers wrote.

> *I hope to finish with my three years service and then apply to the University for my degree course and then my masters so that I can also take one of the highest positions in education in the future*

> *Teach at the primary level for 5 years and enter the university where I will graduate as a professional teacher and teach in any of the secondary schools in Ghana*

While what some student teachers wrote reflected altruistic aspirations, such aspirations were in the minority. For example, one trainee wrote:

> *My aspiration is to teach at any place, be it village or city because human beings live at both places so I will prefer the village to the city so that I can make my contribution to the society*

5. CONCLUSIONS

The findings of this exploratory study show that beginning student teachers in teachers' college in Ghana have similar expectations, aspirations and images of teaching as that of student teachers in other countries reported elsewhere (see Yong, 1995, Young 1995, Wideen et al. 1998). The student teachers' written statements about their motivation to go into teaching were often based on altruistic reasons. There was however a high expectation that a career in teaching would open up opportunities for further professional development leading to a higher status teaching position or else make it easier to gain employment in other careers considered more respectable. The survey data suggests, from the combined evidence of the majority not entering teachers' college soon after leaving secondary school and the poor quality of their grades, that most may have chosen teaching as a last resort. It is therefore not surprising that many stated their motivation to go into training in terms of the opportunities teaching offered either to find a more respectable job or to enter further education leading to a more high status position in education or the teaching profession. As Peil (1995) points out, in Ghana 'teacher training is often seen as merely a step on the way to a more lucrative employment rather than as leading to a career educating the next generation' (p. 290).

From our data it could be concluded that many beginning student teachers do not have a high commitment to teaching as a career and consequently will not invest sufficient personal energy in their own professional learning and development. We have argued in this paper that this realisation calls for a model of teacher training that aims to make teaching intrinsically more attractive by placing greater emphasis on the altruistic values of teaching. Research findings have revealed compelling evidence that there is a close relationship between intrinsic motivation and commitment to teaching (Kaufman, 1984 cited in Yong 1995). We are of the view that a substantial part of the first year of training should be geared towards inculcating a higher sense of commitment to teaching through professional learning situations that aim to affect the values and understandings of teaching for the better.

Also from our data, it emerges that student teachers begin their training with notions of teachers as technical practitioners – training is simply conceptualised as equipping them with *specific* pedagogical skills and knowledge that leads to effective teaching. This is counter to the notion of professional learning and development as a continuing process and in which teacher effectiveness is a function of teachers' processes of reflection and evaluation of their own practice. The model of teacher training that in our opinion can promote this is one in which student teachers are helped to:

- Make explicit the skills, knowledge and understanding necessary to becoming an effective teacher.
- Articulate their own decisions about appropriate teaching strategies with the support of the above.
- See learning to teach as a developmental process and learning to teach well as the long-term concern (Murphy et al., 1993, p. 143).

Also, student teachers in our study were able to paint vivid pictures of some early school life experiences, particularly of school ecology and teacher behaviour and practices. Beginning student teachers are therefore not empty vessels without any concept of teaching and particularly good teaching. Their images and perceptions, we have argued, needs to be made more explicit and given voice in the training process to promote deeper reflection of professional knowledge and pedagogical classroom practice that can lead to understanding of teaching from within.

There is also importance attached to the socio-political role of teachers in school and communities. Teachers are seen as much more than people who stand before children to impart knowledge. There is a role model image imposed on their identity, which student teachers in the study were aware would be applied to them. Student teachers wrote about encounters with teachers beyond the confines of the classroom that they recognised as contributing significantly to family decisions regarding their education.

Corporal punishment in the form of caning appears to play a big role in the lives of children in school. In the culture of many traditional Ghanaian societies, particularly in homes, caning is not necessarily evil. It often serves as a corrective measure in an authoritative home environment in which caning is frequently used as a means of morally straightening up children. Thus, its use in schools may simply be a reflection of an image of child-upbringing in which the parent is expected to control and direct the child through the periodic use of the cane. Since the issue of caning features quite prominently in early school life experience it is important that during training attention is drawn to assumptions about its value and role with the view to changing attitudes towards its use particularly as part of pedagogical classroom practice.

In summary the images, experiences and expectations of student teachers provides insight into some of the 'baggage' they bring with them into training. As our discussions reveal, the issues raised are pertinent to what happens in the selection, training and early years of teaching career as invariably these images, experiences and expectations have to contend with realities. Often, teacher education programmes address themselves to the theory and practice of teaching as if individual teachers' personal biographies, particularly in relation to early school experience, are of no consequence to later teaching behaviour and practice. Teacher education programmes ought to reflect and make explicit the commonly accepted socio-cultural values and norms about teaching and the profession and to do this in a way which challenges assumptions and anticipates the realities of their future teaching careers, in order to bridge the gap between expectations and reality. This is indeed critical to beginning teachers' survival in the profession, as their commitment will be tested by critical incidents in the classroom (Ball & Goodson 1985), and outside of it. Where the commitment to teaching is weak chances are that many will drift out of teaching.

Finally, the failure or success of training would seem to be determined not only by the sound model and delivery of the training programme, but as the student teacher voices suggest, by the impact of authority structures, college rules and regulations and facilities for professional learning within the college.

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