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**THE DILEMMA ON THE POLICY OF CLASSROOM
TEACHER AS AGAINST SUBJECT TEACHERS,
TEACHING IN PRIMARY SCHOOLS IN GHANA: THE
WAY FORWARD FOR PHYSICAL EDUCATION AS A
CORE SUBJECT**

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ABSTRACT

Teachers who are employed to teach in the basic schools in Ghana, either ply their trade in the primary schools or the junior high schools (JHS). The primary classes comprise of classes 1-6, and the junior high schools are made up of JHS 1-3. The primary school teachers are termed as “classroom teachers”, because a teacher is allotted a particular class and he or she is responsible for teaching all the subjects on the time table to the pupils throughout the duration the class is assigned to that teacher. In the case of JHS teachers, they are termed subject teachers because they don’t have permanent classes they stick to throughout the year, but rather move from class to class, teaching their specialized subjects to various classes and levels in the school. The writer’s concern in this paper is whether pupils in the primary schools are better off with the classroom teacher policy, or assigning them with subject teachers will be an improvement on the current policy of the Ghana Education Service. Considering the kind of training student-teachers receive during their formation periods in the Colleges of Education, are they better off with the current policy, or will be better off with the subject teaching option. Dose the curricula of Physical Education in particular and other core subjects in general in their present form

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at the colleges of education, favour the classroom arrangement over the subject teacher option after completion of the training of the newly trained teacher? The advantages and disadvantages of the two polices is discussed in this paper.. The way forward on the issue under discussion so far as Physical Education as a subject is concerned is also assessed in this paper. The interdisciplinary approach of learning is also discussed as one of the ways forward in addressing the classroom/subject teacher dilemma.

Keywords:

The dilemma on the policy of classroom teacher as against subject teachers, teaching in primary schools in Ghana: the way forward for physical education as a core subject

Introduction

The dilemma, on the policy of either to make classroom teachers teach all subjects or subject teachers to teach specialized subject at the primary school started from the post independent era. The philosophies on classroom teachers and subject teachers issues can be traced back to Dr. Kwame Nkrumah, Ghana's first president's statement that..... "only with a population so educated can we hope to face the tremendous problems which confront any country attempting to raise the standard of life in a tropical zone" (McWillieam, & Kwamena-Poh, 1975, p.94). Base on this dream, the free and compulsory primary and middle school education was implemented in 1960 to ensure quality education for national development under Dr. Kwame Nkrumah's regime. To realize this dream, training of teachers and their welfare became paramount to the promotion of quality primary education.

The decline of academic performance of students in public's schools puts pressure on the ministry of education under every government to research on the causes of low performance of students for educational reforms. Even though the issues were caused by multiple factors such as inadequate teacher preparation, poor teacher motivation, inadequate teaching and learning materials and effective policy implementation among the basic education sector the classroom teacher teaching or the subject teacher teaching philosophy is an elusive phenomenon researchers and stakeholders in Ghana need to consider (Acquah, Eshuni & Afful-Broni, 2013). For years now, many countries including Ghana and organisations like British Educational Research Association and other researchers have been looking at ways of refining their primary school system to enhance quality education.

In the course of solving this issue came up the dilemma in the policy of whether the classroom teachers or the subject teachers should teach physical education in the primary schools in Ghana (Rose & Woodhead, 1992). Although, the traditional system of the classroom teachers (generalist teacher) teaching all subjects in the primary schools in Ghana is making a significant

impact, the current Organizations for Economic Cooperation and Development's (DECD) publication in 2015 on global school ranked Ghana at the bottom of 76 countries with other African nations at lowest while Asians at the top five places. This indicates a positive relationship between education and economic growth (Coughlan, 2015).

Currently, the teacher preparation in Ghana is based on the policy of generalist ideology. This means that most teachers trained from colleges of education when posted to the primary schools should be able to teach all subjects irrespective of the credits hours the teachers as trainees used to study the subjects. Those who had the chance of specializing in a particular subjects as elective teach all subject when posted to the primary school. Despite the fact that teacher quality has shown by several studies to influence learning (Aaronson, Barrow, & Sander, 2007), the knowledge level of the teachers on subjects had also shown to be significantly and consequently related to students achievement level (Hanushek & Rivkin, 2006). This paper aims to identify the advantages and disadvantages of classroom teachers and subject teacher role in teaching in the primary schools in Ghana and the way forward.

The Classroom Teacher

The traditional model of teaching physical education in the primary schools in Ghana concerns a classroom teacher being responsible for the teaching of all curriculum subjects to his or her class has been in place for century not only in UK (Blaw & Capel, 2011) but Worldwide (Tasngaridon, 2012). In Ghana the policy is still that teacher in the primary schools should teach all subjects regardless of whether the teacher studied the course for just a terms in teacher training colleges This really serve as the pivot of the issue for contention due the resultant effect on our innocent children poor parents will be investing all their harvest in life with the hope for future. No matter what we say currently Ghanaian policy is that classroom teachers should teach all subjects in the public schools in Ghana irrespective of how well they are prepare.

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Advantages of Classroom Teachers Teaching in the Primary Schools

These are the findings on advantages and disadvantages of classroom teachers (Sarfo, Adusei, 2015 & Hansen, 2008).

1. The classroom teachers serve as pseudo parents to students in the class. They give children an extension of parental care and relationship by being with them in the class throughout.
2. They are able to ensure class discipline and control. Since it is a single teacher that teach all subjects he is able to implement the established routines and instill morals in the learners.
3. They serve as role model which positively influence students' life through the daily interactions and counseling.

Disadvantages

1. Boredom sets in due to continuous interaction with the same teachers for the whole year.
2. Low expertise and poor performance of the classroom teacher due to insufficient time spent in learning non specialized subject at the teacher training colleges as a core.
3. Lack of confidence in teaching due to low content knowledge. This can lead to teaching wrong skill skills which in the long round will have untold effects on the lives of our children.
4. Poor performance of students can also results in lacks of motivation and teaching of wrong sills.
5. Lesson delivered are also narrow and restrictive in content due to low content skill and acquisition.
6. Teaching absenteeism effects especially in under staffing schools.

The Subjects Teachers

The effort of researchers to find out cause of low performance of classroom teachers led to the comparisons of the quality of achievement of student at the private schools based on the subject teachers teaching at the primary schools. It seems due

to this some head teachers in the unofficially have stated experimenting subject teaching in their school in Ghana.

Subject teaching is a phenomenon that focuses on the principles that teachers who have specialized in a particular subject like physical education as a major should be allowed to teach the subject in the primary schools as it is done at the Junior High Schools and Senior High Schools in Ghana.

Advantages for Subject Teachers Teaching in the Primary Schools

1. Subject content knowledge and expertise: The specialists by their expertise are able to plan, teach give corrective feedback to learners for correct mastery of skills.
2. Ensures quality teaching and learning of physical education in the primary schools.
3. Hold high standards of physical education: This high standards leads to setting high expectation for children doing physical education leading to quality physical education
4. Systematic implementation of physical education curriculum: As a specialist he will be able to plan and implement the physical education curriculum systematically based on students previous knowledge for quality since he or she is in charge of the whole primary classes.
5. Developmentally appropriate physical activities: Specialist in physical education will be able to select and develop appropriate activities for all ability level to obtain success during physical education lessons.
6. Motivation: Subject teacher with their pedagogical and technological skills are able to motivate all learners in class using differential or inclusion approach to enable learners to be successful in class

Disadvantages

1. Subject teachers are limited in terms of scope due to their concentration on and specializing in one subject.
2. They are also limited in effective communication since they may not be able to contribute fluently outside their subject area.

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3. They will not be able to handle classes of generalist teachers during their absence.
4. They have limited employment chances since they cannot handle other subjects effectively.

The way forward

Having looked at the earlier argument about who should be allowed to teach physical education in Ghana, one may be tempted to say that with the current curriculum reforms it will be better if subject teacher are allowed to teach various subjects at the primary school. This is because the current curriculum content for primary school is not for those whose total encounter with P.E. is just twelve weeks introduction of the subject in their entire three years of training as teachers as is currently the case in Colleges of Education in Ghana. It needs teachers with the content and pedagogical knowledge to be able to meet the needs of the current learners for quality teaching. This can be effectively implemented if the policy mandates the Colleges of Education that train teachers for the primary school to work in that direction. By so doing, Colleges of Education will review their curriculum and align it with the primary schools curriculum for quality preparation of teachers for quality teaching (Hanushek & Rivkin, 2006). It could be started with subject teaching at the upper primary (P4-P6) as a pilot programme to confirm its effectiveness before extending it to the lower primary schools (P1-P3) where generalists with little in-service training can confidently perform the role of a classroom teacher.

Another way to resolve this dilemma in the current era of education and economic integration is to use interdisciplinary approach. The interdisciplinary education need to supplement disciplinary teaching and learning in 21st so that students can learn how to respond to challenges that transcend disciplines, work in the confluence of multiple disciplines and develop different researches that do not align to standard disciplinary path. Mansilla and Duraising (2007, p219) define interdisciplinary model as the capacity to integrate knowledge and modes of thinking in two or more discipline or established areas of expertise to produce a

cognitive advancement such as explaining a phenomenon, solving a problem in a way that would hence been impossible through a single means.

With interdisciplinary integration approach proposed by Drake and Burns (2004) child development and the ways in which school prepares a child to be a productive of the community. This is because children's interest in their environment is not subject specific. It rather crosses many disciplines which can be catered by interdisciplinary approach.

The Main Objectives of Interdisciplinary Subjects

On completion of an interdisciplinary subject, students should have interdisciplinary skills, understandings and attitudes and should:

- i. be able to occupy and understand different disciplinary perspectives;
- ii. be able to critically evaluate knowledge from a broad range of disciplines;
- iii. be able to engage in interdisciplinary inquiry and problem-solving, employing multiple ways of knowing;
- iv. have a meta-disciplinary understanding of the nature of knowledge and the disciplines;
- v. be able to integrate, synthesise, balance and accommodate knowledge from multiple disciplines in order to produce something greater than would be possible from any one disciplinary perspective.

There are three interdisciplinary teaching models namely connected, shared and partnership.

The connected model: With this connected model, the main skills, topics and concepts of a particular subject like physical education curriculum are the primary focus of the learning experiences and content of other subject areas like physics or biology is used to enhance or complement the learning.

This model is more effectively used when a teacher wants to introduce new topic, skills or new concepts, when the teacher wants to stimulate learners' interest and wants to demonstrate content relevance to students or to reinforce a skill, or concepts interconnectivity.

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The Shared Model: It is one in which two or more two or more subjects such as food and nutrition, physical education and biology are integrated through a similar skill, topic or concept that is part of the content of these subjects. The model agrees that the teachers should come out with a time line to research on the topic and present thematically in one lesson or in each subject area within the same time proposed week for reinforcement of understanding.

These models encourage collaboration of teachers for quality teaching, to reinforce the understanding of a selected theme or concepts from related subjects' areas and finally lead to interconnected teaching and learning emphasizing on teamwork.

The Partnership Model: It is defined by equal representation of two or more subjects areas in a curricular efforts. With this models, the topic or skill are blended together and learning takes place simultaneously in all subjects' areas. Teachers teach at the same time in the same classroom based on their area of strength.

The model enhances the understanding the relationship relationships between two or more subjects areas, give teachers the opportunity to restructure curricular content to provide students with the chance to learn through new lens and it fosters integration of events for effective management of time.

Conclusion

This paper has discussed the role of the classroom teachers and the subject teachers in the primary in relations to quality teaching and learning as well as the way forward. Interdisciplinary approach as an alternative has its own flaws such as time wasting in planning a unit lesson by group of teachers, conflicts may arise among the team teaching the planned lesson and others. The approach also needs thorough content and pedagogical skills and knowledge based on subject specialization for success. It therefore confirms that the success of quality teaching in the primary schools is based on teachers' content and pedagogical knowledge through subject specialization.

Finally, no matter which educational policy is implemented, the provision of the needed infrastructure, logistics, in-service training as well as supervision are the keys to the successful implementation of the programme.

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