

National Policy Dialogue | 16 March Forest Hotel, Dodowa

Conference Summary

The National Policy Dialogue was a day of discussion among senior decision makers within the Ministry of Education, teacher education institutions, development partners and civil society organisations designed to improve the quality of pre-service teacher education across Ghana. The Government of Ghana is driving reform through a new Pre Tertiary Teacher Development and Management Policy with support from a new four-year UK-government-supported programme, T-TEL (Transforming Teacher Education and Learning). Convened by T-TEL, the National Policy Dialogue aimed to generate debate and consensus on key areas and options for reform. The National Policy Dialogue was the first major stakeholder event in the start of a process of dialogue for the teacher education sector.

Hon Minister for Education Opens the National Policy Dialogue

Giving the keynote address, the Honourable Minister for Education, Prof Naana Jane Opoku-Agyeman set the challenge for the leaders of teacher education in Ghana. *“We are transiting our Colleges of Education to autonomy. We expect colleges of education to produce teachers who can deliver. Our challenge is to operate consistently. It is time to set up a system to turn things around.”* The Hon Minister also pointed to difficulties teachers have using the prescribed language of instruction as one which can damage learning outcomes. *“Teachers without confidence cannot teach well.”* she said.

Highlighting the need to celebrate success and promote best practice, the Hon Minister said: *“Results must get better, but there are many things that are working and we must make them bigger. What does not work, we make smaller. T-TEL will work with the key agencies. We have to bring the teachers on board and the learners on board. We need to arrive at conclusions that we have all formulated.”* she said.

Key Topics Discussed at the National Policy Dialogue

A series of presentations in the morning session were followed by debate on the critical areas for teacher education in Ghana. These issues included:

- Review and reform of the DBE Curriculum
- Teacher Professional Standards and Competencies
- Institutional reform and Development of Colleges of Education

Review and Reform of the DBE Curriculum

An important debate focused on the DBE Curriculum. Whilst acknowledging certain strengths, in terms of its flexibility for preparing teachers for a range of subjects and levels, concerns emerged that this creates an overcrowded curriculum in which does not give students sufficient skills to teach at any particular level or sufficient time to practice these skills. Significant aspects of the DBE curriculum do not relate to content that is taught at Primary or Junior High School (JHS) levels or the pedagogies required at these levels. For example, in the first year of training students study topics that are taught at Secondary High School. There is little discussion between colleges, the University of Cape Coast (UCC), NTC, NTCE and the Ghana Education Service about the development of the DBE curriculum and its relationship with sorts of teachers that Ghana needs or the school curricula.

This challenge is increased by the breadth of the curriculum because trainees are required to learn material for teaching a nine-year age range for any foundation subject. This limits the time available for learning year-appropriate teaching methods. Similarly, examinations take up nearly 20% of the academic year, greatly reducing the time available for other forms of learning. The reform of the curriculum is a critical issue for teacher education in Ghana and T-TEL is ready to support the process beginning with further meetings, in particular with UCC, to drive the process forward.

Teacher Professional Standards and Competencies

The National Policy Dialogue discussed the routes towards ensuring clarity on the skills and attributes that teacher trainees must acquire through their study. There was debate on the shape of the overall vision for teacher education in Ghana. Discussion centred on developing a coherent and integrated approach among universities and colleges of education to ensuring teachers entering the classroom have the appropriate professional knowledge, skills, values and commitment, and a positive attitude to professional development. These competencies, it was agreed, should be shared by all teacher education institutions

The conference debated the need for a broad and shared philosophy of teacher education to set and define what an effective teacher must be and must do. From this philosophy the teacher education sector can then design and describe the standards and competencies that teachers must acquire through pre-service teacher education. In this way, teacher professional standards and competencies inform curriculum, teaching and assessment within an overall framework based on a clear definition of the process for becoming a teacher who performs to the required level. It is likely that a process of visioning and integration, led by NTC, will be developed with support from T-TEL.

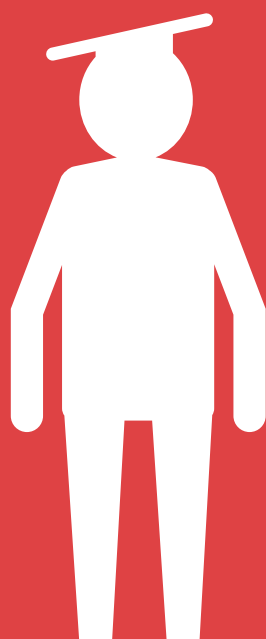
Institutional Reform Colleges of Education

The National Policy Dialogue heard that the transition of Colleges of Education from being closely managed by the Ghana Education Service to becoming autonomous tertiary institutions has presented several challenges. The legacy of previous institutional arrangements for teacher training still influences the current governance of Colleges of Education. Following the 2008 Education Act, new institutional responsibilities have created complexities and a confusion of roles.

A lack of appropriate structures and staffing in NCTE has been identified as a further potential threat to the successful transformation of CoEs. In addition, College Councils have been established by law as the governing boards of CoEs, but in practice they have little influence. The National Policy Dialogue discussed College Councils taking on responsibility for staff appointments, funding, curriculum and internal quality assurance. To ensure CoEs can become autonomous tertiary institutions, the National Policy Dialogue discussed the need for a Roadmap focused on addressing the barriers to autonomy. This Roadmap should be developed by NCTE as a priority, in consultation with the CoEs. T-TEL is focused on supporting the Roadmap process as an early priority.

THE TEACHER EDUCATION CHALLENGE - IMPROVING EDUCATION OUTCOMES

Despite rapid expansion in access to primary education in recent years, too few students are achieving minimum proficiency levels in basic subjects.



Less than 25%
of pupils are proficient
in maths at P3 level



35%
of pupils at P6 level
are likely to be
non-readers



Less than 30%
of pupils are proficient
at English at P3 level



30% to 40%
of pupils at P3 and P6
levels failed to achieve
minimum competency
levels in subjects tested



44%
of pupils at P3 level
are likely to be
non-readers

Source: NEA (National Education Assessment), Ghana Education Service (2013)



**For further information
contact:**

Transforming Teacher Education
and Learning in Ghana (T-Tel)
PMBL 47,
Legon-Accra
Email: info@t-tel.org

Physical Address: Plot 1C, Abotsi Link,
East Legon -Accra