

UNIVERSITY OF EDUCATION, WINNEBA

STUDENT

INTERNSHIP



HANDBOOK

A Guide for Students, Mentors,
University Supervisors, Link Coordinators
and Partnership schools/colleges



STUDENT INTERNSHIP HANDBOOK

By

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Preface

It has been observed that the traditional teaching practice does not sufficiently prepare student teachers to acquire the knowledge, skills and dispositions needed for the real world of work and for a rapid transition into the teaching profession.

Realising this deficiency in teacher preparation, the University of Education, Winneba (UEW) which has a mission:

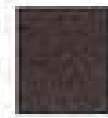
to serve as a centre of excellence, which will imbue its products with the necessary academic proficiency, professional competence and humanistic values for teaching and the production of instructional materials and the dissemination of relevant knowledge at such institutions as pre-school, basic, senior secondary, teacher training colleges and non-formal education,

introduced the one-year Student Internship Programme (SIP), which is the new trend in teacher preparation world-wide. The programme is to provide student teachers with the opportunity to learn the principles of exemplary practice in classroom settings by developing a repertoire of effective teaching strategies in collaboration with mentors in partnership schools

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Overview of the Student Internship Programme (SIP)

Introduction

Undergraduate teacher education in Ghana, for the past 40 years, has been based on the traditional model in which the student teacher spends more than 90% of the period of training on the theoretical aspect of teaching on campus and less than 10% on teaching practice. The objective of the teaching practice is to evaluate student teaching rather than help the student teacher develop appropriate teaching skills, techniques, and dispositions to teaching. In addition, the supervision is done mostly by University supervisors, with little or no involvement by the schools/colleges where they practice.

It has been realized by many educators that this model has failed to prepare student teachers to exhibit effective teaching skills, techniques, and right dispositions towards teaching, resulting in poor student performance in schools.

Realizing this deficiency in teacher preparation, the University of Education, Winneba in 1999, restructured its teacher education programme into a four-year B.Ed degree programme made up of a three-year on-campus segment and a one-year field experience in partnership schools and colleges.

Consequently, during the 2002/2003 academic year the University established partnerships with a cross section of

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public and private schools and colleges that share mutual interest in improving and advancing education. The partnership involves rural, urban and metropolitan schools both large and small, geographically spread throughout the country.

Partnerships for internship require schools and colleges to set up quality systems to facilitate the professional growth of student teachers. The role of the school-based teacher-mentors has, therefore, become increasingly prominent as they work with their university colleagues in developing systems and procedures to ensure that student teachers are adequately prepared in their teaching career.

The Student Internship Programme (SIP) at UEW

The student internship programme, as the field experience is called, is an intensive school-based student teaching-learning experience that provides a structured, supervised, clinical experience. It involves not just practising teaching, but rather experiencing good practices with students in a variety of ways, with the questioning and thoughtful guidance of a mentor for a full academic year in Basic and Senior Secondary Schools as well as Teacher Training Colleges.

The internship programme of the University of Education, Winneba is based on the Collaborative School Model (CSM). Some of the guiding principles of this model include:

- having interns interact with a cohort of peers,
- encouraging professional development opportunities for mentors, and
- encouraging interns to participate in a whole school experience.

Rationale

The teacher education programme at the University of Education, Winneba seeks to prepare teachers who demonstrate excellence in the classroom and who serve as leaders in the field of education. The University recognises that to become a teacher requires strong preparation in subject matter knowledge, the development of pedagogical skills, right dispositions, and the acquisition of the ability to make good judgements in practice. However, such knowledge and skills are incomplete without attending thoughtfully to the particular qualities of life in classrooms, schools, and communities.

The theme of the University's conceptual framework for teacher education, therefore, is that teachers are reflective decision-makers who facilitate student learning. It is through field-based experiences that opportunities are provided for student teachers to enhance their ability to engage in reflective strategies and to

assess and improve their teaching behaviours.

Teacher education programmes are currently expected to develop a nexus between theory and practice so that the training of student teachers becomes informed by a "more practically grounded, broadly informed theory" (Yeatman & Sachs, 1995:45). In spite of this expectation, past criticisms still remain that teacher education is irrelevant to the "real world" (Roth, 1989, Zeichner, 1986) of teaching and fails to concentrate on the practical expectations of teaching. It is argued that there is a gap between theory that is taught in the university and teaching practice that is linked to the classroom. Graham and Thornley (2000) argue that this results in student teachers failing to make the link between the two domains.

The conditions for developing quality teaching can be met most effectively by creating a real partnership between the University and the schools/colleges. In fact, the importance of the theory-practice link through school-university partnership is underscored by research.

Graham and Thornley (2000:237) suggest that for the connection to be made between theory and practice "a mutual respect" must develop between professionals in the two sites so that knowledge in the two areas is presented in an accessible and integrated manner. Educational researchers (Bullough et al, 1999) suggest that one way of ensuring this occurs is through the development of school-university partnerships. Langdon (1998) observes that partnerships acknowledge the crucial contribution that schools and teachers make in the development of the student teacher. Edwards (1997) also argues that school-university partnership provides the most successful teacher training programme.

These views are in line with the current trend in teacher education.

Current Trend in Teacher Education

Current practice in teacher education has moved away from the situation where teacher education institutions see themselves as having the sole responsibility for the training of student teachers. It now relies greatly on the use of the apprenticeship or internship model of training. This mode of training is similar to the internship programme that medical officers, engineers and journalists undergo. In fact, there is a world-wide trend in teacher education towards partnership between universities and schools in the professional preparation of teachers. In this trend, student teachers complete their training with substantial school experience. The University also believes that solving educational problems, especially those relating to teaching and learning, requires the knowledge, understanding, and the

practical involvement of the players or stakeholders at all levels of education. That is, improvements in education, in general, and teaching and learning, in particular, result when these multiple perspectives merge in cooperative efforts.

Partnership School Experience vis-a-vis Teaching Practice

The concept of 'teaching practice' has gradually given way to 'school experience' or 'internship', which is more comprehensive and professionally sound than the 'teaching practice'. This is because school experience or internship provides the student teacher with the experiences of all the tasks a regular teacher is called upon to perform while on the other hand the 'teaching practice' programme is confined to only one task, which is classroom teaching. The one academic year school experience also provides student teachers the opportunity to be part of a classroom over time to help them see curriculum progression and pupil/student development over a full school year. Thus, the longer period helps them to understand the theory and practice of teaching as they are 'lived' in classrooms and other educational settings instead of the shorter period of teaching practice during which student teachers 'act' teaching to please supervisors.

Goals of the SIP

The goals of the SIP through the School-University partnership are to:

- establish a reciprocal, collaborative, and developing relationship with schools/colleges
- foster the development of a professional learning community where everyone involved can benefit through collaboration, cross-fertilisation of ideas, and reflection
- facilitate school improvement through the development of a mentoring force in schools, whereby teacher mentors become change agents
- provide a holistic experience to student teachers during their teaching practicum, supported by teacher mentors, University Link Coordinators and University supervisors
- provide opportunity for student teachers to deal with the different experiences at the university and in schools.

Objectives of the SIP

The main objectives of the SIP are to provide opportunities for interns to:

- apply and practise the principle of teaching and learning in the classroom setting and in the school context
- develop practical understanding and appreciation of the teachers' major roles