

27th March 2025

National Education Forum Planning Committee

The Ministry of Education, Ghana

Accra

Dear National Education Forum Planning Committee,

Current Status and Issues in Initial Teacher Education for Basic Schools in Ghana

We write to share critical insights from our recent research on initial teacher education, specifically focusing on the Supported Teaching in Schools (STS) program, and to recommend immediate actions to enhance teacher preparation in foundational literacy and numeracy (FLN) and improve student teacher familiarity with the National Teachers' Standards (NTS). This research is critical to the future of basic education in Ghana.

Since 2015, Ghana has introduced comprehensive system-wide reforms to address a set of challenges in Initial Teacher Education, including poor quality of entrants; content-heavy examinations-oriented Diploma in Basic Education (DBE) curriculum; lack of practical exposure to teaching; lack of specialisation and limited resources and lack of appropriate policies and procedures for quality assurance in the Colleges of Education (CoEs) among others.

The starting point of the reforms was the production of the National Teachers' Standards (NTS), which sets out a common expectation of Ghanaian teachers' knowledge, behaviour, and practice. This led to the review and replacement of the DBE with a 4-year Bachelor of Education (B.Ed.) in Initial Teacher Education commencing in 2018.

The B.Ed. was aligned to the National Teacher Education Curriculum Framework (NTECF) and required specialisations for Early Grade (KG–P3), Upper Primary (P4-P6) and Junior High School (JHS 1- JHS 3). To better develop teachers on the new B.Ed. programme, the original teaching practice component of the DBE was extended and revised to form the new practical Supported Teaching in Schools (STS) component within the B.Ed. curriculum. The new STS represents one of the distinctive features of the new curriculum and provides a significant opportunity for student teachers to learn within different practical settings over the four years of the B.Ed. to enhance their professional development.

Since its introduction, there has been little evidence to ascertain the impact of the new STS on teacher professional development in FLN. Ghana Tertiary Education Commission (GTEC), Conference of Principals of Colleges of Education, Ghana (PRINCOF) and the Ghana Education Service (GES) with support from T-TEL, UCC DRIC and Gates Foundation conducted a study to fill this gap by providing empirical evidence on the impact.

Key messages from STS research for National Education Forum Committee

1. **National Teachers' Standards:** Year 3 student teachers' awareness of the NTS was relatively low (51%), certainly lower than expected after over 2 years of tuition. Efforts need to be made to ensure that the NTS is at the heart of the teacher education system, including greater effort by NTC to publicise the NTS and distribute copies to student teachers, and oversight efforts by universities and CoEs to reinforce knowledge and understanding.
2. **Foundational Literacy and Numeracy tuition in Colleges of Education:** Too many student teachers are not being given enough practical training in phonics and related FLN techniques as tutors have tended to focus on the theoretical. Practical phonics tuition should be enhanced and made mandatory for ALL student teachers- even those doing Upper Primary and JHS- to reflect the reality that many learners in these classes cannot read and write properly.
3. **Supported Teaching in School:** There is no doubt that STS has a critical role to play in producing competent teachers. Efforts should be made to continue to strengthen linkages between Colleges of Education and partner schools- including greater recognition from GES and NTC for the role that mentors and lead mentors play. Efforts should also be made to address some of the misalignments that exist between the CoEs' curricula and the curricula currently taught in basic schools.

Conclusion and Collaborative Appeal

These findings demand immediate, bold policy actions and coordinated implementation strategies. Collaboration across all educational stakeholders, including the Ministry of Education, NTC, GES, universities, and Colleges of Education, will be crucial in transforming these insights into impactful improvements. Together, we can ensure that every Ghanaian child receives quality foundational education, guided by well-prepared and professionally competent teachers.

We look forward to your decisive actions and remain committed to collaborating in achieving these critical educational outcomes.

Sincerely,

**The Research Steering Committee, STS Research
Transforming Teaching, Education & Learning (T-TEL)
University of Cape Coast (UCC), Directorate of Research, Innovation and Consultancy (DRIC)
Education Sub-Saharan Africa (ESSA)**