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ASSESSMENT OF IMPACT OF THE UNIVERSITY OF CAPE COAST' COLLEGE OF DISTANCE EDUCATION PROGRAMME ON PROFESSIONAL TEACHER DEVELOPMENT IN THE KUMASI METROPOLIS OF GHANA

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ABSTRACT

The focus of this study was to assess the impact of the University of Cape Coast Distance Learning Programme on the professional development of basic school teachers in the Kumasi Metropolis in the Ashanti Region of Ghana. The descriptive design was adopted for the study, and a sample of 315 basic school teachers from the ten sub-metros of the Kumasi Metropolis used. A self-designed questionnaire which contained 44 items and an observation guide were used as instruments to collect data for the study. The data collected were analysed using statistical tools such as means and standard deviations, frequencies and percentages as well multiple regression analysis. The study revealed that the University of Cape Coast distance learning programme has raised the professional ranks of basic school teachers. None of the teachers who pursued the programme was below the rank of Senior Superintendent II and 4.8 percent of them were Assistant Directors of Education I, which before the programme was not among the ranks which the basic teachers had attained. The study, therefore, recommended that the Ghana Education Service should introduce a policy making it mandatory for all basis school teachers who still hold Post-Secondary Teacher Certificate 'A' and other certificates below diploma level to enrol on the University of Cape Coast Distance Education Programme in order to update and upgrade their teaching competences and skills.

Keywords: professional, teacher development

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Learning at a distance is no new phenomenon. For generations, books have been a major source of information across the barriers of time and space (Tait, 2003). Learning at a

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distance received a new impetus with the establishment of single-mode institutions like the Rapid Results College, Wolsey Hall and the Open University, all of Great Britain, whose stock in trade was largely to provide correspondence courses through self-instructional manuals. According to Adentwi (2002), distance education has taken the form of a combination of print and electronic media (such as radio, television and computers). In the Ghanaian context, as elsewhere, Aggor, Kinyanjui, Pecku and Yerbury (1995) revealed that distance education has embraced the additional element of providing limited face-to-face interaction between course tutors and learners at appointed time intervals.

Technically speaking, distance education has been defined as "an educational process in which a significant proportion of the teaching is conducted by someone removed in space and/or time from the learner" (Perraton, 1993, p 6). In a workshop for Distance Education module writers, the Ministry of Education (2002) defined distance education as a teaching-learning organisation in which students of a variety of ages and backgrounds, study in groups or individually with centrally provided self-instructional materials distributed through a variety of media and with regular communication and feedback.

Collectively, the foregoing definitions suggest that distance learners receive much of their tuition through correspondence courses instead of attending formal classes in residential institutions. Also, especially where distance education is used as a means of teacher education, arrangements are made for learners to occasionally meet their course instructors face-to-face in a classroom setting to engage in discussions and other exchanges on their course. About 70 per cent of distance education in Ghana is geared towards teacher preparation due to their importance to the nation.

The roles played by teachers put them always at the forefront of education. This means that the teacher should always look for new ways of doing things by seeking knowledge to perform such innovative acts. This makes the quest for knowledge in the twenty-first century to be on the ascendancy for teachers. Many individuals currently have realised that education is a crucial tool for their development. Their desire for development and the acquisition of new knowledge have compelled them to seek ways of acquiring it either through the traditional mode or by Open and Distance Learning. Providers of education have also realised the need and so due to limited classrooms and other facilities, most institutions have opted for an Open and Distance Learning approach to cater for learners who do not gain admission into the regular University system. This is because most institutions of higher learning have realised that distance education could be used as a vehicle to meet the demand for higher education in all aspects of the study.

Distance education enables individuals yearning for education to stay in the comfort of their homes, workplaces and almost everywhere to participate in formal education and obtain diplomas and degrees. Distance education reduces the barriers that prevent and obstruct people's access to and participation in formal education. It also provides a learning environment that promotes self-learning through self-instructional materials and opens up opportunities for access to education to gain successes (Owoeye, 2004).

Ghana's Education Strategic Plan 2003 – 2015 (Ministry of Education [MOE], 2005) identified the development of teachers as critical in implementing the Millennium

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Development Goal (MDG) and Education For All (EFA) initiatives. Thus, developing teachers for the purpose of achieving the Education for all agenda is a challenge for the nation. It is only through the development of teachers in the country that could ensure that every child in the classroom gets the attention of a well-trained and developed teacher. Yet the teacher development agenda of the country grapples with a number of challenges due to the fact that, the existing structures are not able to provide the requisite number of trained teachers.

The Centre for Continuing Education, now College of Distance Education (CoDE) of the University of Cape Coast (UCC) introduced a three-year Diploma in Basic Education (DBE) programme in 2001 and by 2006 had 8,336 students at 18 study centres in all 10 administrative regions. It initiated Post-Diploma (PDE) Programmes in the 2005/2006 academic year (Ministry of Education, 2002; Ossei-Anto, 2003; Brown, 2004). Currently, there are over 40,000 teachers pursuing the Diploma, Post-Diploma and Masters' programmes in education on the UCC-CoDE programme. Apart from the distance education programme of the University of Cape Coast, other Universities namely, University of Education, Winneba, University of Ghana, Legon and Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology are running Distance Education programmes for teachers. There are even emerging private ones. All these institutions are heavily patronized by teachers from public and private schools in the country.

Despite the successful implementation of distance education in Ghana and the key role it plays in the training of teachers, the question is "Is distance education providing quality education needed for the socio-economic development of Ghana, as well as total professional development of its products?" It is an attempt to provide an acceptable answer to this question that has called for this study. Thus, examining how the University of Cape Coast Distance learning programme has impacted the professional development of its products is the thrust of this study.

1.1 Professional Development and Teacher Change

Professional development in a broad sense refers to the development of a person in his or her professional role. Hawkes and Good (2000) opined that teacher professional development is professional growth in which teachers gain increased experience formally and informally, as well as examine their own professional career systematically. Borko (2004) found that formal experiences are acquired through attending seminars, further training, professional meetings and workshops, and informal experiences can be acquired through watching television, documentaries and reading empirical professional publications.

Research has revealed some standards required for professional development and must be demonstrated by teachers in teaching (Borko, 2004 & Dede, 2006). These standards are as follows:

1. **Subject matter knowledge:** This refers to teachers' understanding of the basic concepts, theories, history, latest trends at the national and international level and the process of getting knowledge of that subject which they are to teach or teach.

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2. **Human growth and development:** Teachers' understanding of how students acquire knowledge, skills and develop the habit of mind. How to identify the developmental abilities of students and provide opportunities to that which supports students' intellectual, emotional, and physical development.
3. **Instructional planning and strategies:** This refers to teachers' understanding of the instructional planning and design short term as well as long term plans which are based on students' needs and development progress and then develop strategies to achieve these goals.
4. **Assessment:** The teacher uses different types of assessment for evaluating how students learn and how they implement their knowledge in their practical life. The result of such kind of assessment improves teaching and learning.
5. **Teaching environment:** The teacher creates a supportive and respective learning environment that encourages student's positive social interaction in learning and self-motivation.
6. **Effective Communication and use of Technology:** Teachers use verbal or non-verbal kind of communication techniques for supportive interaction with students. Teachers use of technologies in classrooms and laboratory activities.

These standards according to Fishman, Marx, Best, and Tal (2003) and Abbasi (2010) can be acquired during courses, workshops, education conferences or seminars, qualification programmes and observation visits to other schools. Other types of professional development they identified were participation in a network of teachers, individual collaborative research, mentoring or peer observation and coaching, reading professional literature and engaging in informal dialogue with peers. From the above types of professional development, distance education can be used as one of the potential sources which can be used to develop professional standards of teachers while pursuing the course and after the course. This is because the teachers would be exposed to these standards while pursuing their courses. In a related study of how DL impacts on teacher professional development, Senyametor, Amponsah, Banini and Edjah (2020) found certain dimensions of instruction on UCC DL that impact on teacher effectiveness and professionalism as pedagogical quality [(□ = 0.503 (0.024), $p < 0.01$], quality evaluation [□ = 0.287 (0.022), $p < 0.01$], quality infrastructure [□ = 0.252 (0.027), $p < 0.01$], and learner support service quality [□ = 0.132 (0.029), $p < 0.01$]. This shows that pedagogical quality, quality evaluation, quality infrastructure, and learner support service quality are the dimensions of the UCC-CoDE that significantly impact on trainee-teacher effectiveness and professionalism in the field.

1.2 Teachers' Professional Development

Although self-efficacy beliefs exercise a powerful influence on human action, a number of factors can affect the strength of the relationship in the same way discussion of factors that affect teachers' professional development will lead to the desired outcome that will facilitate pupils' achievement in schools. Villegas-Reimers (2003) identified conceptual, contextual and methodological factors that contribute to a successful professional development programme. Conceptual factors relate to how change, teaching, and teacher development are perceived, while contextual factors refer to the role of the school leadership, organisational culture, external agencies and the extent to which site-based initiatives are supported. Methodological factors relate to processes or procedures that have been designed to support

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teacher professional development. It can be seen that from the perspective of an interactive system model, teacher professional development is a function of the interaction between and among five key players or stakeholders. These are the ministry responsible for teacher education, universities, schools, the community and the teachers themselves (Owoeye, 2004).

In the context of Ghanaians, the Ministry of Education (MoE) is responsible for providing policy and financial support for teacher professional development (MoE, 2005). Universities and Colleges of Education are responsible for providing training, conducting policy-oriented research and providing relevant literature and materials to support teachers in schools. School management on its part is supposed to provide support to the teacher on a daily basis through advice, supervision, monitoring and evaluation of the teaching and learning activities. The community through the school committee is responsible for supporting the teacher's professional development by providing the necessary resources in the budget. The teacher is responsible for being proactive in seeking opportunities for his or her own professional development.

Teachers' motivation is the most important of all factors. A teacher's intrinsic drive towards self-improvement cannot be matched with any amount of pressure from the educational managers. For real teacher professional development, the teacher herself/himself has to perceive it positively. Mosha (2006) found that the teacher has to see and accept the need to grow professionally. A teacher who perceives professional development positively is eager to attain new knowledge, skills, attitudes, values, dispositions and self-efficacy. Within such dispositions, there is pride, self-esteem, team spirit, commitment, drive, adventure, creativity, and vision. All these attributes have to be owned by the teacher (Owoeye, 2004).

Research has shown that teacher's professional development depends on self-efficacy and self-evaluation, the influences and supports of school leadership, and high-quality education. If school managers are empowered, they will be able to play their social and technical roles more efficiently (Blasé & Blasé, 1999; Mosha, 2006). School management capacity is the ability of the leadership to perform its duties including supporting teacher professional development at the schools. This ability depends on the way it has been empowered by education administrators and supervisors; human and physical resources available; managerial knowledge, skills of the headteacher and the school culture.

The school head is the key player or backbone of a school and the main executive officer of the school management. The overall effectiveness of the school is directly influenced by the headteacher. Her/his roles include facilitating, broker, providing resources, encourage, command, question, coach, and cheerleading (Dillon-Peterson, 1986). The teacher is like the spring to the watch and an engine to the ship. Again the teacher is the heart of the school and school management. The headteacher should be well knowledgeable and skilled on management issues. S/he has to attend various seminars, workshops, meetings and courses on management administration. Rowland and Adams (1999) suggested that the headteacher should be committed to develop teachers and therefore be able to design professional development activities. She/he has to be a model. Her/his work of teaching must be exemplary and has to make sure that she/he inspects teachers in order to know their teaching abilities and provide clinical supervisions.

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Education managers are very important incapacitating the school management. They have to interpret and monitor the implementation of educational policies at their levels of administration (Villegas-Reimers, 2003). They have to plan and develop teachers and to guide, direct and advise the school management on teacher professional development. Planning has to be based on teachers' needs, examination evaluations, inspectorate and monitoring reports. The teacher cannot teach productively, even if she/he is well qualified and developed, in the absence of inadequacy of teaching and learning facilities. There should be adequate classrooms equipped with facilities like furniture, books and visual aids. These help the teacher to perform her/his duties competently. Many classes are overcrowded. For the teacher to realise the best of her/his potential, there should be enough teaching and learning materials and facilities at her/his disposal. Teachers' participation is sustained easily without the help of teaching and learning resources.

School management with motivating culture encourages teachers to engage in professional development programmes at the school or elsewhere like distance education. A motivated teacher learns from others and he or she is more likely to attend various professional development activities. Motivation can be intrinsic or extrinsic, which drives the teacher toward self-improvement. Collegiality within the school is part of the school culture. If teachers cooperate, there is room for them to learn from each other (Galabawa & Agu, 2001). The role of school management is to encourage this culture to prevail in the school and between the schools.

This is one of the indicators of the presence of responsible school management in the school. Planning, which is the setting of goals and objectives with activities to be done at the specified time is one of the main roles of school management. Involve all teachers in the school during the planning process should be part of the school culture. Effective participation leads to a feeling of ownership and easy implementation (Galabawa, 2001).

1.3 Challenges involved in pursuing the University of Cape Coast Distance Learning Programme

Adentwi (2002) asserted that notwithstanding the many benefits associated with distance education as a strategy for teacher training in Ghana and other developing countries; it has quite a number of challenges associated with it. There are myriads of problems that control the individual students on a distance education programme. Other problems are due to the organizational structure of the distance education institution or to improper application of the principles of effective distance education. Yet, other problems may be attributed to the socio-economic context within which distance education institutions operate.

Dawson-Brew, Oduro, and Ankomah-Sey (2009) reiterated that distance learners study under conditions that are somewhat different from those of their counterparts on residential programmes. They, thus, face a number of problems which peculiarly affect them. They explained that distance education learners experience feelings of isolation because they are more or less permanently separated from their course tutors and other students pursuing the same programmes. This means that they do not get the chance to discuss issues affecting them with their course tutors and colleagues on a face-to-face basis and to clarify aspects of the course which they do not clearly understand. In the case of teacher education, for

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instance, where learners need to acquire professional training through regular contact with and imitation of their instructors, this problem becomes even more evident and serious (Keegan, 1993). Keegan argued that as a matter of fact, distance learners easily get frustrated where they do not find answers to questions that bother them. Sometimes lack of the necessary information de-motivates them so much that some of them easily drop out of the course, especially where they do not have anybody to encourage them.

In addition to the foregoing, Banda (2000) expressed the views that distance learners in many developing countries lack the requisite environment to carry out studies. He explained that some live in overcrowded compound houses where there is virtually no quiet place for them to concentrate on their course work. Also, there are considerable social commitments like funerals and church activities and family pressures that engage their attention and subtract from the time available for self-instructional readings. Furthermore, distance learners sometimes lack appropriate self-study skills because they are more used to studying by the traditional face-to-face residential education system. Distant learners also lack time management skills.

Again, Talbot (2003) contended that distance learners living in remote rural areas may not have easy access to library facilities, workshops, laboratories, tools and equipment for practical works. All the foregoing problems affect distant learners individually and may make study at a distance ineffective if the distance education institution does not take the necessary steps to ensure that the right type of students support services are provided.

The problems that result from weaknesses in the organizational structure of distance education institutions and ineffective application of the principles of distance education are also quite enormous. For example, in dual-mode institutions where distance education is an added function to conventional face-to-face residential education, there is always the problem of how to effectively utilise the scarce academic staff in distance education programmes. In certain cases, what these academic staffs do is not meant for distant learners but for their conventional students.

Incidence of this has occurred severally in the setting of questions for distant learners of CoDE, UCC (Dawson-Brew et al., 2009). The usual staff through short orientation courses after which they are engaged as course writers/instructors and counsellors on the distance education programmes. This scenario quickly brings into sharp focus the problems of divided loyalty.

Already, overburdened staff teaching conventional residential courses try to do their best on the two programmes which usually run concurrently. They end up, either not doing adequate work or any of the programmes, or as it sometimes happens, they satisfy the requirements of the residential programmes at the expense of the distance education programme which is regarded as a part-time business.

Another organisational problem that confronts distance education is the inadequate provision of the required student-support services (Elikplim, 2005). To cushion some of the problems affecting individual learners, distance education institutions try to put student –support services in place. Distance students are provided with counselling and tuition on how to

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select courses, how to cope with their domestic responsibilities, official responsibilities as classroom teachers and self-study demands. Where such services are not effectively provided, distant students get disenchanted and discouraged, leading to a high drop-out rate.

According to Banda (2000), there is also the problem of a lack of recognition among the populace for certificates acquired through distance education. Banda explained that this problem usually arises in a dual-mode institution where distant learners are taught by a separate crop of staff other than those teaching on the residential programme. In a situation like this, there is usually the feeling, even among colleague academic staff that the instructors on the residential programmes are superior to those who teach on the distance learning programmes. This tendency, Banda said, often creates the unnecessary suspicion that students on the distance education programme may not be as good as those on the conventional residential programme.

Female teachers pursuing distance education have to study and at the same time be raising children and caring for the family. This is a major problem for distance learners especially women. To be able to combine both activities successfully, learners need a lot of commitment. According to a survey conducted in Malawi, female teacher-learners had family problems that negatively affect their studies (Banda, 2000). For instance, some of the learners dropped out on the instruction from their spouses to choose between marriage and the programme.

Banda (2000) continued that, most women in Malawi were overburdened with domestic household chores, insufficient sleep attending to their babies and husbands as well as cooking. The tension and stress increased especially during examinations. The problems of women pursuing distance education in Malawi is not quite different from those reported in Ghana especially those pursuing Centre for Continuing Education Distance Education programme of the University of Cape Coast.

Dawson-Brew et al. (2009) also reported that lack of classroom accommodation at some study centres are some of the challenges of distance education. They contended that most of the institutions especially the Centre for Continuing Education, offering distance educations do not have classroom accommodation facilities and so depends on the educational institutions who also have a large number of students. In some instances, distance learners are stranded when the facilities are being used by students of the host institutions.

1.4 Conceptual Framework for Teacher Professional Development

The present study adapted self-efficacy to provide a framework that could be used to understand teachers' professional development through the impact of distance education and factors influencing teachers' professional development. In 1963, Bandura and Walters (as cited in Bandura, 1997) wrote a book entitled "Social Learning and Personality Development", which broadens the frontiers of social learning theory with the principles of observational learning and vicarious reinforcement. Later, in 1997, Bandura published "Self-efficacy: Toward a Unifying Theory of Behavioural change" where he identified self-beliefs that were missing in his social cognitive theory propounded earlier (Pajares, 2002).

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With the publication of Social Foundations of Thought and Action: A Social Cognitive Theory, Bandura (1986) advanced a view of human functioning that accords a central role to cognitive, vicarious, self-regulatory, and self-reflective processes in human adaptation and change. People are viewed as self-organizing, proactive, self-reflecting and self-regulating rather than as reactive organisms shaped and shepherded by environmental forces or driven by concealed inner impulses. From this theoretical perspective, human functioning is viewed as the product of a dynamic interplay of personal, behavioural, and environmental influences. For example, how people interpret the results of their own behaviour informs and alters their environments and the personal factors they possess which in turn, inform and alter subsequent behaviours.

This is the foundation of Bandura's (1986) conception of reciprocal determinism, the view that (a) personal factors in the form of cognition, affect, and biological events, (b) behaviour, and (c) environmental influences create interactions that result in triadic reciprocity (Figure 1). Bandura altered the label of his theory from social learning to social "cognitive" both to distance it from prevalent social learning theories of the day and to emphasize that cognition plays a critical role in people capability to construct reality, self-regulated, encode information, and perform behaviours.

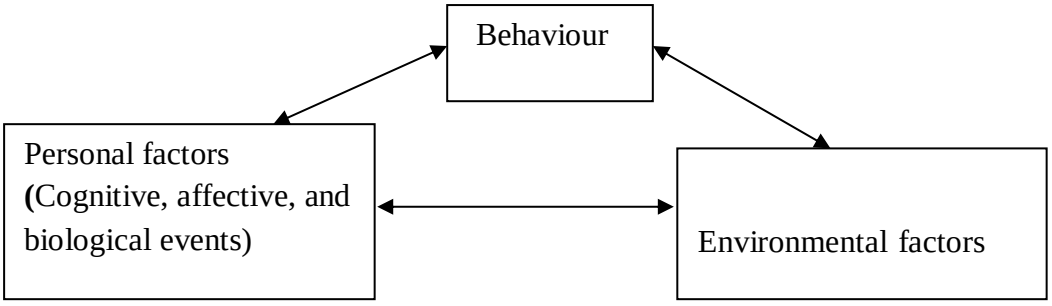

Figure 1: Conception of Reciprocal Determinism

The reciprocal nature of the determinants of human functioning in social cognitive theory makes it possible for therapeutic and counselling efforts to be directed at personal, environmental, or behaviour factors. Strategies for increasing well-being can be aimed at improving emotional, cognitive or motivational processes, increasing behavioural competencies, or altering the social conditions under which people live and work (Schunk & Pajares, 2002). In school, for example, teachers have the challenge of improving the academic learning and confidence of the students in their charge.

Pajares (2002) found that using social cognitive theory as a framework, teachers through distance education can acquire skills and knowledge which they can use to work to improve their students' emotional states and to correct their faulty self-beliefs and habits of thinking (personal factors), improving their academic skills and self-regulatory practices (behaviour), and alter the school and classroom structures that may work to undermine student success (environmental factors) (Koomson, 1998).

To Bandura (2005) and Schunk and Pajares (2002), the social cognitive theory is rooted in a view of human agency in which individuals are agents proactively engaged in their own

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development and can make things happen by their own actions, as teachers do in their professional development. Key to this sense of agency according to Pajares (1997) is the fact that among other personal factors, individuals possess self-beliefs that enable them to exercise a measure of control over their thoughts, feelings and actions that "what people think, believe and feel affects how they behave. Bandura (1986) provided a view of human behaviour in which the beliefs that people have about themselves are critical elements in the exercise of control and personal agency.

Thus, individuals are viewed both as products and as producers of their own environments and of their social system. People work together on shared beliefs about their capabilities and common aspirations to better their lives. Based on this aspect of social cognitive theory, teacher professional development can be described as a process embracing all activities that enhance professional career growth (Rogan, Grayson & Towarels, 2003) or as formal and informal experiences throughout the teachers' career to better him or herself. This, the teachers are doing through distance education. This conceptual extension makes the theory applicable to human adaptation and change in collectivistically-oriented societies as well as individualistically-oriented ones.

Zimmerman and Schunk (2007) also found that rooted in Bandura's social cognitive perspective is the understanding that individuals are imbued with certain capabilities that define what it is to be human. Primary among these are the capabilities to symbolize, plan alternative strategies (forethought), learn through vicarious experience, self-regulate, and self-reflect. These, Bandura (1995) said, are influential in determining people's ability to perfume and succeed.

1.5 Statement of the Problem

Teachers are expected to render a very high job performance and the Ministry of Education is always curious regarding the job performance of its teachers. Within the context of the CoDE, UCC, Distance Education is used as a form of support for formal education directly, through courses in school or indirectly by helping teachers gain access to in-service training or on the job development. Distance education has been used effectively for the development of both professional and unprofessional teachers in other countries.

The mission of the Distance Education programme in part is to ensure quality education and the professional development of teachers at all levels accessible and relevant to meet the learning needs of Ghanaians so as to enhance their performance and improve the quality of their lives. The demand for university education by non-graduate teachers is due to the government's directives that the minimum qualification for teaching in Ghanaian basic schools by 2005 should be at least a Diploma Certificate.

The Centre for Continuing Education, now CoDE was established in the year 1997 and became vibrant in the 2000/2001 academic year with an initial intake of 750 basic school practising teachers to pursue a three-year Diploma in Education, to develop their professional skills. Primarily, the Centre for Continuing Education was established to provide opportunities for teachers and other professionals to pursue higher education in the comfort of their homes, to develop themselves professionally for all levels of Education and develop

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the professional competence of serving teachers of the Ghana Education Service (CCEUCC, 2011).

Teacher preparation by the distance education mode of delivery was introduced in Ghana to accelerate the training of teachers to enhance the quality of teaching in basic schools. No standard has been articulated to measure the impact and the success of the programme. Impact assessment is crucial to the development of any programme to see if the stated objectives have been achieved (Mark, Henry & Julnes, 2000). The University of Cape Coast College of Distance Education (UCC-CoDE) programme is no exception. There have been studies in Distance Learning (DL) about the effects of Distance Education (DE) on teacher performance (Dankyi, 2013), predictability of instructional quality on teacher effectiveness in the preparation of teachers at the College of Distance Education University of Cape Coast (Senyametor, Amponsah, Banini & Edjah, 2020), DL our hope for sustained human capacity development in Ghana (Anamuah-Mensah, 2015), and as a strategy for training teachers in Ghana with regard to its problems and prospects (Koomson, 2007). However, despite the key role that impact assessment plays in the development of programmes, since the inception of the UCC-CoDE programmes, it appears that there has not been any empirical research in the existing literature on how the programme has impacted teachers trained so far in the Ashanti Region. This study, therefore, examines the impact of the University of Cape Coast distance learning programme on the professional development of basic school teachers in the Kumasi metropolis in the Ashanti Region of Ghana.

1.6 Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to assess the impact of the University of Cape Coast (UCC) College of Distance Education (CoDE) programme on professional teacher development in the Kumasi Metropolis of Ghana. The study sought to investigate the following:

1. The perception of basic school teachers in the Kumasi Metropolis about Distance Education
2. The extent to which the University of Cape Coast Distance Learning programme enhanced the professional development of basic school teachers in the Kumasi Metropolis.
3. The value the University of Cape Coast Distance Learning programme added to the professional status of basic school teachers who have pursued the programme in the Kumasi Metropolis.
4. The contribution the University of Cape Coast distance learning programme has made to the overall teaching competence of the basic school teachers who have pursued the programme in the Kumasi Metropolis
5. The challenges involved in pursuing the University of Cape Coast distance learning programme.

1.7 Research Questions

The following research questions were formulated to guide and give direction to the study:

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1. What is the perception of basic school teachers in the Kumasi Metropolis about Distance Education?
2. To what extent has the University of Cape Coast Distance Learning programme enhanced the professional development of basic school teachers in the Kumasi Metropolis?
3. What value has the University of Cape Coast Distance Learning programme added to the professional status of basic school teachers who have pursued the programme in the Kumasi Metropolis?
4. What contribution has the University of Cape Coast distance learning programme made to the overall teaching competence of the basic school teachers who have pursued the programme in the Kumasi Metropolis?
5. What are the challenges involved in pursuing the University of Cape Coast distance learning programme?

2.0 METHODOLOGY

2.1 Research Design

The study employed quantitative research methods with the descriptive survey as its design. The descriptive survey design was used in collecting data from the sampled population on two occasions, answering questionnaire and observation during practical teaching lessons in the classroom.

2.2 Population

The target population for this study consisted of all trained basic school teachers in the Kumasi Metropolis who had pursued the University of Cape Coast Distance Learning programme totalling 8,963 made up of 4,976 males and 3,987 females in the Basic Schools and Secondary Schools. The accessible population was 1,667 consisting of 943 males and 724 female Basic School teachers who had pursued the UCC-CoDE programmes and were teaching in the Kumasi metropolis.

2.3 Sample and Sampling Procedure

The sample for the study consisted of 333 basic school teachers made up of 173 males and 160 females who had pursued the University of Cape Coast Distance learning programme and were teaching in the Kumasi Metropolis. This sample was 20 percent of the total accessible population of 1667. The selection of the sample was based on the recommendations by Ary, Jacob and Razaviech (2002) who recommended that in descriptive research, a sample size of 10 - 20% of the population is representative enough to produce reliable results. The respondents were sampled using the stratified random sampling technique. To ensure complete coverage and to avoid biased sampling of respondents in the metropolis, the researchers obtained names and contact details of all basic school teachers in the metropolis who had successfully completed the College of Distance Education, University of Cape Coast distance learning programme.

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The contact details of the teachers were used to group respondents into the various sub-metros within the study area to form the strata. Separate sampling frames were then constructed for the various sub-metros in the metropolis. After constructing sampling frames for the accessible population of the sub-metros, each sub-metro at a time was taken and 20 percent of the respondents were selected using the lottery method of the simple random technique. The distribution of respondents sampled from the 10 Sub-metros is presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Distribution of Respondents Sampled from the Ten Sub-Metros

Sub-Metro	Accessible Population	Number Sampled
Bantama	242	48
Kwadaso	200	40
Asawase	125	25
Oforikrom	115	23
Suame	120	24
Manhyia	153	31
Old Tafo	201	40
Asokwa	216	43
Nyiaeso	145	29
Subin	150	30
Total	**1667**	**333**

Source: Field Data, 2021.

2.4 Research Instruments

The instruments used to elicit relevant data for the study were the questionnaire and an observation schedule. The close-ended type of the questionnaire was used as the main instrument to elicit relevant data for the study. The contents of the questionnaire were developed along the line of the research questions and divided into five sections. Section 'A' of the questionnaire contained three items and described respondents' demographic characteristics which include gender, age and number of years of teaching experience.

Section B was about the value-added onto the professional teachers in the Kumasi Metropolis who have pursued the University of Cape Coast Distance Learning Programme. It contained seven items that demanded respondents to provide short answers to questions related to their professional quality before and after their training and learning from the University of Cape Coast Distance Learning Programme. Section C contained nine items on the enhancement of

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the professional development of teachers. The items in section C and D were constructed along a four-point Likert-type scale (summated) of strongly agree (1) disagree (2) agree (3) and strongly agree (4).

2.5 Observation as a Technique of Data Collection

In addition to the main research instrument, observation was employed to elicit otherwise hidden information from the participants of the study. To this end, an observation guide designed and used by the teaching practice unit of the UCC technically known as "Teaching Practice Assessment Form 'A' was used by the researchers for the observation exercise. The observation schedule among other things focused on:

1. Teachers' advance lesson preparation characterized by procurement of TLMs and detailed lesson notes.
2. Teacher's classroom organizational skills
3. Effective use of TLMs
4. Statement of clear and achievable objectives
5. Communicative skills
6. Teachers' knowledge of the subject matter
7. Teacher's use of questions
8. Teacher's ability to link the various segments of the issues

The choice for the observation technique as an additional research instrument, as opposed to other data collection instruments, was influenced by the fact that it is comparatively the most appropriate data collection technique deemed fit for the impact assessment of the practical teaching by the participants in the classroom.

2.6 Data Collection Procedure

Data were collected from the Institute of Education, UCC and was made up of participants' teaching practice raw scores at the College of Education before enrolling on the CoDE Distance Learning (DL) programmes, which served as a proxy for their initial competence level. Data collected from the Department of Education of CoDE at the University of Cape Coast include:

1. Records of all past students of CoDE who pursued their diploma and Post-diploma in Education Programmes at the Kumasi Study Centres.
2. Records of their years of completion of the programme and the courses they pursued (diploma or post-diploma) were also made available to the researchers.

In addition, records of contact addresses of all past students and their places of residence and schools in which they taught (information given by students to the Teaching Practice Unit of CoDE in order to get captured by the teaching practice supervision team) were obtained from CoDE. This information was used to sort out basic school teachers who pursued their courses at the Kumasi Study Centres but did not teach in the Kumasi metropolis. Also, a tried and tested observation guide technically called "Teaching Practice Assessment Form 'A' designed by the teaching practice unit of the University of Cape Coast which was used in

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assessing the teachers during their training was used by the researchers in observing the practical teaching of the teachers. Circuit Supervisors at the Kumasi Metropolitan Education Office and respondents themselves provided assistance in locating schools where their colleagues could be contacted. After debriefing, a copy of the questionnaire was given to each respondent. In order to provide appropriate responses and to complete the filling of questionnaire at their own convenience, the respondents were not required to fill the questionnaire on the spot. They were given a few days to return the completed questionnaire. The collection of the questionnaire was done with the assistance of volunteer teachers and headteachers. In the end, 315 completed questionnaires were returned by the respondents.

To obtain information about the quality of teaching is done by the basic school teachers in the Kumasi Metropolis who had pursued the University of Cape Coast Distance Learning programme, the teachers were observed in their classrooms during teaching sessions and awarded marks for teachers' competencies in the following areas of lesson delivery using the University of Cape Coast Teaching Practice Assessment Form 'A' as an observation and assessment guide. Each component of the observation guide has its own sub-components and weights (marks). The mark allotted to each sub-component is 5. In all, the observation guide has 20 sub-components with 5 marks each and the observer is supposed to indicate by means of a circle the degree to which the teacher displays teaching competencies in the areas specified above.

2.7 Data Analysis

Data collected were edited, coded and entered into the statistical analysis software tool known as the PASW Version 21.0, the Test Analysis for Surveys (TAFS) for analysis. Items on the Likert scale were scored 4, 3, 2 and 1 for issues with the responses "strongly agree", "Disagree" "Agree" and "Strongly disagree". Cross- tabulation was first used to analyse the background information of research question three while multiple regression analysis was used to analyse research question 4. Means and standard deviations were used to analyse research questions 1, 2 and 5.

3.0 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Research Question One: What is the perception of basic school teachers in the Kumasi Metropolis about Distance Education?

The rationale for this question was to know the perceptions of basic school teachers in the Kumasi Metropolis about the UCC distance learning programme. In order to answer this question, a four-point Likert-type scale was used to measure the perceptions of basic school teachers about the UCC distance learning programme. The perceptions of these teachers on the UCC distance learning programme were described in terms of means and standard deviations. The following ranges of the means were used as a guideline to explain the individual mean scores.

4 – 3.45 = Strongly Agree
3.44 – 2.45 = Agree
2.44 – 1.45 = Disagree
1.44 – 1.00 = Strongly Disagree

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The results showing the respondents' perceptions are provided in Table 4.

Table 4: Perception of Basic School Teachers in the Kumasi Metropolis about Distance Education

Statements	Mean	SD
Distance education has increased access to university education	3.89	.37
Candidates who enrol on distance education programmes are as academically good as candidates who enrol on the conventional programmes	3.52	.55
Distance education programme has a brighter future in Ghana	3.79	.41
Distance education enables adults to learn in the comfort of their homes	3.49	.52
I am proud to be a product of the UCC distance learning programme	3.74	.46
Distance education has helped me to upgrade myself professionally	3.70	.46
Distance education helps in reducing pressure on facilities in our universities	3.66	.49

Table 4 Continued

Statements	Mean	SD
Distance education certificates are inferior to conventional educational education certificates	1.43	.73
Distance education can help solve the problems associated with study leave with pay	3.53	.81
Distance education course materials (modules) serve as reference materials for lesson notes preparation	3.30	.62
I felt a sense of accomplishment after completing UCC distance education programme	3.56	.59
Distance education has the potential of helping workers to enhance their salary levels	3.40	.69
Distance education can serve as a guarantee for job security	3.64	.53
Where SD = standard deviation	**(N = 315)**	

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Source: Field Data, 2012.

The perceptions of basic school teachers in the Kumasi Metropolis about UCC distance learning programme were described by the calculation of the arithmetic means for each statement. Table 4 indicates that basic school teachers within Kumasi Metropolis agreed (strongly agree or agree) with all the statements presented with regard to their perception on the UCC distance learning programme (M > 2.44) except the statement, 'distance education certificates are inferior to conventional education certificates' (M = 1.43, SD = .73) which teachers strongly disagree. From Table 4, it could be deduced that the participants perceived distance education in positive terms.

Research Question Two: To what extent has the University of Cape Coast Distance Learning programme enhanced the professional development of basic school teachers in the Kumasi Metropolis?

The objective for this question was to examine the extent to which the University of Cape Coast Distance Learning programme has enhanced the professional development of basic school teachers in the Kumasi Metropolis. In order to provide an answer to this research question, means and standard deviations were calculated. The result of this finding is shown in Table 5.

The extent to which the University of Cape Coast Distance Learning Programme has enhanced the professional development of basic school teachers in the Kumasi Metropolis was described by the calculation of the arithmetic means for each statement. Table 5 indicates that basic school teachers within Kumasi Metropolis agreed with all the statements presented with regard to the extent to which the University of Cape Coast distance learning programme has equipped them with the desired teaching competences needed for classroom lesson delivery (M>2.45).

Table 5: Enhancement of Professional Development through Distance Education

Statements	Mean	SD
CCE distance education has improved my subject matter knowledge (in the subject I teach)	3.25	.48
Through the UCC distance education programme I have understood better my students' human growth and development	3.41	.49
My instructional planning and strategies have improved considerably since my completion of UCC distance education programme	3.37	.50
Assessment of my pupils has improved since my completion of UCC distance education programme	3.39	.56
My ability to create supportive and respective learning environment for my pupils were acquired through the UCC distance learning programme	3.15	.65

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My communication strategies in the classroom and use of TLMs is better now than before being enrolled into the distance education programme of UCC	3.34	.62
My present collaboration abilities are due to what I learnt in the UCC distance education programme	3.10	.54
My refining of instructional materials in the classroom is due to what I was taught at the UCC distance learning programme	3.18	.59
My ability to improvise and develop new instructional materials is attributed to what I learnt during the UCC distance education programme	3.10	.67

Source: Field Data, 2012. **(N=315)**

Results in Table 5 that basic school teachers strongly agreed that through the UCC distance education programme, they had understood better their students' human growth and development (M=3.41, SD=.49 while. Similarly, 33.7 percent of the basic school teachers strongly agree that their instructional planning and strategies had improved considerably since their completion of UCC distance education programme (3.37, SD=.50).

Research Question 3: What value has the University of Cape Coast Distance Learning programme added onto the professional status of basic school teachers in the Kumasi metropolis who have pursued the programme?

The rationale for this research question was to discover the value the University of Cape Coast Distance Learning programme has added onto the professional status of basic school teachers in the Kumasi Metropolis who have pursued the programme. Cross tabulation is used to compare the teachers' previous and current credentials they are holding and also their previous and current professional rank.

Table 6 indicates that previously, with regard to teachers' professional qualification, 80 percent and 20 percent of the teachers had post-secondary (3- year) and certificate 'A' (4- year) professional qualification respectively. None of the teachers were previously having bachelor's degrees in education.

Table 6: Professional Qualification of Teachers before and after being enrolled in the UCC Distance Education Programme

Professional Qualification of Teachers	Previous Professional Qualification of Teachers		Current Professional Qualification of Teachers	
	No.	%	No.	%
Post-secondary (3-year)	252	80.0	0	0
Certificate 'A' (4- year)	63	20.0	0	0

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Diploma in Basic Education	0	0	253	80.3
Bachelor of Education	0	0	62	19.7
Total	**315**	**100**	**315**	**100**

Source: Field Data, 2012.

Table 7: Ranks of Teachers before and After Being Enrolled in the UCC Distance Education Programme

Rank of Teachers	Previous Ranks of Teachers		Current Rank of Teachers	
	No.	%	No.	%
Teacher	43	13.7	0	0
Superintendent II	81	25.7	0	0
Superintendent I	101	32.1	0	0
Senior superintendent II	29	9.2	49	15.6
Senior superintendent I	51	16.2	55	17.5
Principal superintendent	8	2.5	173	54.9
Assistant director of education II	2	0.6	23	7.2
Assistant director of education I	0	0	15	4.8
Total	**315**	**100**	**315**	**100**

Source: Field Data, 2012.

This indicates that the distance education programme of the University of Cape Coast is on course to fulfil one of its core mandates for which it was established. The impact of the distance education programme on the professional standing of respondents was also noticeable, as indicated in Table 7, previously, with regard to teachers' rank, more than half of them (71.5%) were having ranks lower than Senior Superintendent II. Only 0.6 percent of the respondents were previously Assistant Directors of Education II while none was Assistant Director of Education I.

Research Question 4: What contribution has the University of Cape Coast Distance Learning programme made to the overall all requisite teaching competencies currently possessed by the basic school teachers in the Kumasi Metropolis who pursued the programme?

A further analysis using multiple regression analysis was used to analyse the contribution or influence teacher training college education and that of UCC distance learning programme

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had on teachers' current requisite teaching competencies needed for effective classroom lesson delivery. The rationale for this research question was to identify the contributions of Teacher Training College Education and that of UCC distance learning programme to teachers' professional development with respect to competencies needed for effective classroom lesson delivery. This analysis was undertaken to better understand the kind of training that contributes more to the teachers' professional development and the aggregate contribution of the two levels of training. The results of the analysis are presented in Table 8.

Table 8: Contribution of Teacher Training College and UCC Distance Learning Programme to Teachers Current Requisite Teaching Competencies needed for Effective Classroom Lesson Delivery

Variables (Scores)	Mean	Std. Deviation	Beta (Std. Error)
Training college scores	68.041	8.012	.109 (.043)*
Distance learning scores	72.194	5.467	.297 (.063)**
Constant			56.290
R Square			.381
Adjusted R Square			.325

Source: Field Data, 2012.

Table 8 indicates that the two independent variables that are, training college scores and UCC distance learning scores both have a positive statistically significant contribution to teachers' current requisite teaching competencies needed for effective classroom lesson delivery. The independent variable that influences, predicts or contributes more to teachers current requisite teaching competencies needed for effective classroom lesson delivery is UCC distance learning scores (= .297 (.063), $p < 0.01$) followed by the training college scores (= .109 (.043), $p < 0.05$).

It is, however, significant to observe that the proportional contribution (R2) of the two independent variables is 0.381 with an adjusted R2 of 0.325. This means that the training college education and that of UCC distance learning programme are able to influence, predict, or explain about 38 percent of the variance in the teachers' current requisite teaching competencies needed for effective classroom lesson delivery. It, therefore, means that besides these two levels of professional training, other variables that are not in the model have a chance of influencing or predicting about 62 percent of the teachers' current requisite teaching competencies needed for effective classroom lesson delivery.

Research Question Five: What are the challenges involved in pursuing the University of Cape Coast distance learning programme?

The objective of this research question was to outline the challenges that pertain to the UCC distance learning programme, looking at it from the perspectives of basic school teachers who have gone through the programme successfully. To find answers to this question, the descriptive statistics on teachers' view on the challenges of pursuing UCC distance learning programme was computed and is shown in Table 9.

Table 9: Challenges and Problems of Pursuing Distance Education

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Statements	Mean	SD
Study materials are very difficult (in terms of content) to study	2.84	1.01
Study materials are full of typographical mistakes	3.06	.84
Study materials delay in being handed over to students	3.10	.97
The cost of the study materials is too high	2.65	.86
Study materials are too broad in terms of scope	3.07	.81
Tutors lack professional skill in tutoring	2.57	1.01
Tutors fail to solve students' problems	2.63	.98
The distance education programme is very expensive	3.07	.87
It is difficult to combine teaching and schooling through distance education	3.35	.78
Assessment procedures adopted by the distance education programme are inappropriate	3.03	.97
Feedbacks on students' assessment are not prompt and cause anxiety to students	3.31	.85
Social issues greatly interrupt with students studies and affect their performance	3.28	.78
Time management is a major factor which negatively affect the students' learning	3.28	.83
Administrators always fail to act on students' problem	2.90	.93

Source: Field Data, 2012. **(N = 315)**

Basic school teachers agreed (M > 2.45) that all the listed statements in Table 9 are the possible challenges and problems of pursuing distance education in UCC. There are some levels of disagreement to some of the statements though they are not enough. For example, 14.0 percent of the basic school teachers strongly disagreed that study materials are very difficult in terms of content to study while 17.5 percent just disagreed with that. Again, some of the basic school teachers disagreed (strongly disagreed or disagreed) with the statements that the cost of the study materials is too high (40.9%) and that tutors lack professional skill in tutoring (50.2%).

Only 13.3 percent of the basic school teachers disagreed (strongly disagree or disagree) that social issues greatly interrupt students' studies and affect their performance, and that, time

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management is also a major factor that negatively affects the students' learning. The challenges faced by respondents were also of interest to the study. Respondents' views in that regard are indicated in Table 9.

4.0 DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

In Table 4, all the statements, except 'distance education certificates are inferior to conventional education certificates', were rated high in positive terms with regard to teachers' views on the UCC distance learning programme. The statement, 'distance education has increased access to university education with the highest mean score (M=3.89, SD=0.37) was perceived overall as the strongest statement teachers consider.

Therefore, basic school teachers' in Kumasi Metropolis perceived the UCC distance learning programme positively. Seventy-nine percent of the basic school teachers used for the study strongly agreed that distance education programme has a brighter future in Ghana and 21 percent of the teachers also agreed to the same statement. As indicated in Table 4, 99.4 percent of the basic school teachers said that they were proud to be products of the UCC distance learning programme. These findings support submission by Owoeye (2004) and Adentwi (2002). Owoeye (2004) contended that distance education enables individuals yearning for education to stay in the comfort of their homes, workplaces and almost everywhere to participate in formal education and obtain various degrees. Owoeye further argued that distance learning provides an environment that promotes self-learning through self-instructional materials. Distance education, thus, opens up opportunities for teachers to enhance both their academic and professional competencies.

Similarly, Adentwi (2002) said that distance education has a worldwide reputation as a viable alternative to conventional residential education because of its cost-effectiveness and its enormous potential for providing education to a large number of people who would otherwise have no chance to pursue higher education. He concluded that in contemporary Ghana, distance education has gained popularity as an effective strategy for training teachers. The results in Table 4 indicate that workers all over the world including teachers in Ghana perceive in positive terms any learning programme that has the potential to enhance their professional competencies. This explains why many teachers patronise the distance education programme of the University of Cape Coast.

The participants of the study disagreed with the statement "Distance education certificates are inferior to the conventional education certificates" (M=1.43, SD=.73). This perception of the participants about distance education may be true because distance education course modules and examinations are written and set respectively by chief examiners who teach in the conventional system and always look at some standard set by the University for the Award of its certificates. This finding of the study is inconsistent with the view expressed by Banda (2000) that there is the problem of lack of recognition among the populace for certificates acquired through distance learning.

Among the reasons put forward by the critics according to Banda is that distance learners are taught by a separate crop of instructors who are considered by the academic staff of the conventional system as being inferior. Even though not all the instructors of distance

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education programmes have the requisite qualifications to teach in higher institutions, in the case of dual-mode distance education institutions such as that of the University of Cape Coast, the instructors are not allowed to use any material other than what the lecturers in the conventional system have written. Thus, in the case of the University of Cape Coast distance learning programme, course instructors only act as facilitators to explain some portions of the textbooks written by the lecturers themselves. In such a situation, the argument that a section of the stakeholders considers distance education certificates as inferior to the conventional ones is baseless and invalid.

In Table 5, the majority (98.4%) of the basic school teachers agreed that the assessment of their pupils has improved since their completion of the UCC distance education programme (M=3.39, SD=.56). In all, basic school teachers agreed that the UCC distance learning programme has really enhanced their professional development in general. This outcome of the study is in line with the view of Dede (2006) who posited that professional development of teachers is means of bringing changes in the classroom practices, attitudes of teachers, their beliefs and learning outcome of students. The study further supports that of Senyametor, Amponsah, Banini and Edjah (2020) who revealed that certain dimensions of instruction on UCC DL that impact teacher effectiveness and professionalism are pedagogical quality, quality evaluation, quality infrastructure and learner support service quality. This shows that pedagogical quality, quality evaluation, quality infrastructure, and learner support service quality are the dimensions of the UCC-CoDE that significantly impact trainee-teacher effectiveness and professionalism in the field.

Dede (2006) explained that teachers are attracted to their professional development because they want to expand their knowledge, skills and abilities because of the various reforms that take place in the education sector. Teachers, therefore, do not want to be rusty but rather update their knowledge to be abreast with the current educational issues and pedagogical processes of imparting knowledge to learners. Teacher's consequently, see distance education as one of the avenues through which they could develop themselves professionally. The participants in this study, therefore, perceive the University of Cape Coast distance learning programme as a programme worth pursuing because of the positive impact it had on their professional development.

Table 6 shows that currently, with regard to teachers' professional qualification, 80.3 percent and 19.7 percent of the teachers had a diploma in education and bachelor's degree in education as professional qualification respectively. As indicated in Table 6, none of the teachers is currently having post-secondary (3- year) certificate 'A' or 4- year cert 'A'. This clearly indicates that there has been a drastic positive change with respect to teacher's current credentials. The advancement in teacher professional qualification as a result of the training they had from the University of Cape Coast Distance Learning programme as found in this study is in line with one of the objectives for which the University of Cape Coast distance learning programme was established (Koomson, 2007). Koomson asserted that the Centre for Continuing Education of the University of Cape Coast (CCEUCC) now CoDE was created primarily to mount all the viable programmes on distance as a direct response to promoting the academic qualifications of basic school teachers.

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Table 7 also shows that currently, with regard to teachers' professional rank, 54.9 percent, 7.2 percent and 4.8 percent of the teachers are having ranks of Principal Superintendent, Assistant Director II and Assistant Director I, respectively. None of the teachers currently belongs to the Superintendent I rank or lower. This clearly indicates that there has been a drastic positive change with respect to teacher's current ranks.

Both results in Table 6 and 7 show that teachers in the Kumasi metropolis who have pursued the University of Cape Coast Distance Learning Programme have value added to their profession as teachers with regard to their professional qualification and rank. These findings are congruent with the submission made by Abbasi (2010) and Fishman et al. (2003) that distance education is a means of improving the professional standards of teachers. They reiterated that professional development and academic qualification, as well as ranks, are acquired through courses mounted on distance education, short courses, seminars, workshops and qualification programmes. They indicated that distance education is a potential source that can be used to develop professional standards of teachers during and after going through a course of study. Abbasi (2010) and Fishman et al (2003) were of the views that pupil teachers are likely to benefit most from distance education. As indicated in Table 8, the mean score for UCC distance learning scores (M = 72.194) is higher than the training college scores (M = 68.041). This means that on average, basic school teachers who pursued the UCC distance learning programme after completing training college performed better in the programme than in their respective training colleges. In other words, basic school teachers who have gone through the UCC distance learning programme after their training college education acquire more teaching competencies needed for effective classroom lesson delivery than basic school teachers who after training college did not acquire any training again. The standard deviations of the two scores also indicate that the training college scores are more scattered among the respondents than that of the UCC distance learning programme scores.

The relative improvement in the teachers' teaching competencies after going through the University of Cape Coast distance learning programme as portrayed in this study is consistent with the work of Dede (2006). He was of the view that teachers add value to themselves because the knowledge and skills they acquire enhance their effectiveness and promote their competencies. The skills and knowledge gained during the distance education programme enabled teachers to keep pace with new technologies and recent pedagogical processes in the classroom. This outcome of the study is an indication that continual professional development of teachers is very important to make them more competent and effective in their job and in the classrooms.

All the statements were rated in positive terms with regard to basic school teachers' views on some selected challenges and problems of pursuing UCC distance learning education. The statement 'tutors lack professional skill in tutoring' (M = 2.57, SD = 1.01) with the lowest mean score was perceived on the overall as least challenge and the problem of pursuing UCC distance education that basic school teachers consider. Meanwhile, the degree of teachers' perceptions on the challenges and problems of pursuing distance education in Table 9 were largely positive.

The study identified many problems and challenges facing teachers pursuing distance education, which ranges from materials, socio-economic to human resources. The problems

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identified are likely to impact negatively on the professional development of the distance learner especially those related to the organisational structure of the distance education institutions. These problems can frustrate the teachers. As Keegan (1993) indicated, those who get frustrated due to lack of information easily drop out of the course, especially where nobody is around to counsel them.

4.1 Summary of Key Findings

Based on the study, the following key findings emerged:

1. The basic school teachers in the Kumasi Metropolis perceived the University of Cape Coast Distance Learning Programme as one of the means through which they can have access to University Education and upgrade themselves professionally.
2. The study revealed that the distance education programme of UCC had helped basic school teachers to understand their students' human growth and development, improve assessment of their students, and instructional planning strategies.
3. The study revealed that 80.3 percent and 19.7 percent of the teachers had got Diploma and Bachelor Degrees in Basic Education respectively. Prior to their enrolment in the UCC Distance Learning Programme, 4.1 percent and 80.0 percent of these teachers were holders of Post-Secondary 3- year Teachers' Certificate or 4-year Teacher's Certificate respectively with none of them holding Bachelor's Degree in Education.
4. The University of Cape Coast distance learning programme has raised the professional ranks of basic school teachers. None of the teachers who pursued the programme was below the rank of Senior Superintendent II and 4.8 percent of them were Assistant Directors of Education I, which before the programme was not among the ranks which the basic teachers had attained.
5. The study revealed that 38 percent of the teachers' current requisite teaching competencies needed for effective classroom lesson delivery can be attributed to what the teachers were taught during their initial Training College Education and that of the UCC Distance Learning Programme. However, the regression analysis means score of 72.2 for UCC Distance Learning score as compared to 68.0 of the initial Teachers' Training College mean score suggested that teachers who went through the UCC Distance Learning Programme had acquired more teaching competencies needed for effective classroom lesson delivery than those with only initial teachers' training college education.
6. The challenges encountered by teachers in pursuing UCC Distance Learning Programme can be categorized into the material, social, economic and human resources.

4.2 Recommendations

On the basis of the findings and conclusions, the following recommendations are made:

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1. One of the findings of this study is that the University of Cape Coast Distance learning programme has equipped the basic school teachers in the Kumasi Metropolis with the requisite knowledge and skills needed for effective classroom lesson delivery. It is, therefore, recommended to the Government of Ghana and the Ghana Education Service to do away with the policy of study leave with pay which creates unnecessary teaching vacancies at the basic level of education and increases the government's wage bills. Part of the amount spent on study leave could be used as incentives for distance education students as a way of motivating them and encouraging more basic school teachers to patronize the programme. Such financial support would go a long way to alleviate the financial hardships of teachers learning by distance to upgrade themselves and solve the problem of teacher attrition, especially at the basic level.
2. Another finding of the study is that participants in the study performed better when they were on the UCC Distance Education programme than when they were on the Teacher Training College programmes with specific regard to their teaching practice scores. Based on this, the Ghana Education Service as part of its effort to achieve higher professional education for all agenda should introduce a policy making it mandatory for all basic school teachers who still hold Post-Secondary Teacher Certificate 'A' and other certificates below diploma level to enrol on the University of Cape Coast Distance Education Programme in order to update and upgrade their teaching competences and skills.
3. The study revealed that study materials are very difficult in terms of content to study. It is, therefore, recommended to CoDE to appeal to the writers of distance education modules to use simple language and a lot of illustrations in writing the study materials in order to make them easier for the learners to read and understand.
4. Another finding of the study is that course materials are not handed over to students on time. It is, therefore, recommended to the management of UCC-CoDE to have a policy aimed at distributing course materials on time. It is also recommended that all distance education course modules should have their electronic versions on the internet so that students can access them when the need arises.
5. The study also explored and documented that course facilitators lack professional skills in tutoring and also more often than not, failed to solve students' problems. It is, therefore, recommended that UCC-CoDE should organize periodic in-service training for the course facilitators in order to sharpen their professional skills and competencies. Writers of Distance Education Course modules should be made to play the roles of facilitators during such training sessions so that they can inculcate competence and confidence in the course facilitators.
6. It is recommended that counselling services should be provided for students of distance education in the areas of time management, combining studies with teaching and striking a balance between studies and social responsibilities.
7. Finally, it is recommended that the CoDE should come out with a policy aimed at making assessment procedures flexible and ensuring that feedback on students' assessment is released on time to learners.

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