

**Impact of Orientation Programmes On Fresh Students In The Colleges of Education in
Ghana: A case of St. Monica's College of Education**

Abstract

The focus of the paper was to find out how orientation programmes at Saint Monica's College impact on the fresh students in the College and find ways through which such programmes could be strengthened. The study adopted case study approach of the qualitative design and targeted Lecturers, Counselors and Students. The study used the mixed methods to solicit data. The respondents were however sampled using random and purposive sampling techniques. It was revealed that, orientation programmes help students to socialize properly in the new environment. Besides, the programme helps to clear misconceptions that associate with courses of study in the College. It came out that, orientation programmes should be extended to cover a longer period and also, such programmes should be added to the Student Representative Council's activities so as to attract mass students' participation.

KEYWORDS : Orientation, Educational Institutions, Colleges of Education, Fresh Students

Background to the study

Orientation programmes are so vital in the lives of every individual in an establishment. It might be crucial for new people in an organization to help them find their feet. Old folks in institutions may equally need the orientation to keep them up with dynamism in society. Society the adage goes “is dynamic “meaning new developments keep affecting society; that is the more reason why individuals in society need to keep updating their knowledge on new developments that crop up in society.

One of such means by which members could update themselves with new dynamics in society is through orientation programmes. This clarifies that, as and when new issues are introduced into one’s society, such individuals need to be orientated to be able to catch up with new developments.

In establishments and institutions such as Educational institutions, orientation programmes are organized for new entrants so that they would be able to know the rules and conventions of the institutions. According to Marcey and Schneider (2008), orientations are good for the first-timers in institutions as they help them to adapt well into the organization. He adds that, orientation is equally good for those already on the job as it helps them to get familiar with new developments that come to bare on their career or job.

When workers for example are not given the needed orientation concerning their jobs, they might not be well guided to execute their duties well. Also, institutions that do not offer orientation to their workers; have high tendency of making errors which would affect productivity in general.

In the Colleges of Education which are now regarded as part of the tertiary institutions in Ghana, whenever the fresh students are admitted, there is an orientation programme for them; and it seeks to teach and guide them to clear any misconception in their minds and also help them to be familiar with the new environment.

The orientation covers themes on Academic, personal, social and psychological issues that confront the students and the school community in general. It is at the end of an orientation programme that all doubts are cleared, the organogram of the school is known and also the

channels of communication are known after orientation. Once the students are well informed about things in their new environment, they are likely to settle down psychologically, socially and academically for teaching and learning to occur.

For the fact that students are coming from different background, their way of perceiving issues would be different. Besides, some “seniors “in the institutions could equally mislead the freshers’ on some of the things that happen on campus. So many students carry those misled issues in mind which affect their understanding of real issues. Therefore it is during the orientation programme that they are given the opportunity to ask question bothering them for them to have a good redress. The orientation programmes are centred on variety of issues and each of the issues is address by an expert in the issue being addressed.

According to Aryetty (2002), the success of every good leader depends on that leader’s ability to be orientated by people from all walks of life in leadership positions. He opines that, any leader who is democratic listens to varied views from people and with that, he is guided to make good decision at the workplace. He shares further that, knowledge is not clad in one person’s mind, therefore no matter what; one must be orientated on current developments in society for better adjustment. He adds further that, every institution has its norms, culture and conventions. Therefore, once any individual found him or herself at a new environment, such person must be taught on things that prevail around in the new establishment. Without that, such person would be found wanting on certain areas. He therefore advice that, employers must take orientation programmes for the employees seriously because when orientation is well organized, work output would be equally high. Besides, he cautions employees as well not to dodge orientations at the work place because it is at such programmes that they are well resourced to function effectively at the work place.

St Monica’s College of Education where the focus of the study is centred on is located at Ashanti Mampong in the Ashanti Region of Ghana. According to Ndah et al (2022), St Monica’s College was established by the Anglican missionaries to train women to help contribute to nation building in terms of Education. The college is currently among the 46 Colleges that are given presidential charter to run Degree programmes in Basic Education in Ghana. The College runs courses in Early Grade, Primary and Junior High Education. The college is currently affiliated to

the University of Cape Coast hence observes all the protocols that exist among the mother University; such as orientation, matriculation and congregations.

Statement of Problem

Orientation according to many scholars is a means by which one is educated to adapt well into a new environment or phenomena. Orientation is supposed to be done for anyone who is recruited to work in an establishment for the first time. Observation as Counselors shows that, in many colleges especially Saint Monica's College, the students for which the programme is organized do not attach much seriousness to it. They see it as time wasting; hence many of them dodge it making some of the resource persons who are supposed to speak at the orientation programme get demoralized.

It is as a result of this that this study was done to educate the general public on the impact of orientation programmes on the students in addition to the means through which orientation for students could be strengthened in the study area.

Research Questions

1. To what extent does orientation programme impact on fresh students at St Monica's College?
2. How could orientation programmes for fresh students at St Monica's College of Education be strengthened?

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Theoretical Framework

The study was hinged on the theory of **Concept of Harmonious Socialization** propounded by Prinsloo (2007) which states that, individuals are supposed to be guided to develop positive attitude in their communities. Besides, when individuals are well orientated in life, they grow to become responsible and fulfilled adults in society thereby influencing society with good harmonious relationships.

Concept of Orientations

At work place and many institutions, orientation programmes are organized when there are new recruits or when there are policy changes.

According to Marcey et al (2008) orientations are programmes that are aimed at teaching new persons or teaching new phenomena at an institution. They opine that, orientations position workers so well to function effectively. They continue that, orientations help to minimize errors at the work place hence increasing work output.

Aryeetey (2002) equally add that, orientations are media through which workers are taught the best way to do things at work place or best ways to handle new phenomena.

It could therefore be summarized that, orientations teach workers how to do things better at the work place to increase productivity.

Importance of Orientation programmes in institutions in Ghana

According to Kokro et al (2022), orientation programmes help first timers at institutions to be taught for them to acquire knowledge on how things are done at the work place. They share also that, orientations help those concern to be enlighten and make informed decisions. They further add that, orientations help to clear doubts of people at an institution. They corroborate that, orientations teach persons on what exactly to do in an organization hence give them confidence to perform.

It could therefore be deduced that, orientation programmes help to enlighten people and position them well to deliver at their organizations.

Concept of school climate

School could be termed to mean a place where there is exchange of knowledge and skills. According to Argus et al (2019), climate of a school deals with the psychological tendencies that are part of the school. In other words things in the school environment that boost the morale of the members of the school community. They differentiate between the school culture and the climate and stated that, the culture has to do with the norms and values of the school, while climate has to do with psychological phenomena which result to the quality of issues in the school. These scholars however admitted that, the themes in the climate are part of the culture of the school.

They referred to the climate of the school as the “*engine room*” of school; as it seeks to draw the heart of the members of the community to love the school environment.

They opine that, the climate of the school shows in the leadership skills and style of the heads of the school in addition to the teachers –student relationship during the teaching and learning situation. They equally posited that the total strength of the elements in the school climate translate in the performance and achievement of student, during examination.

Wayne et al (1997) equally state, school climate could be viewed in two ways, thus the healthy interpersonal relationship within the school setting as well as the school healthy in relation to the performance of the student. They further share that the climate could include the internal codes and ethics that are unique with the school; for that matter distinguishing it from other schools and to the largest extent have influence of the members of the community. They add that, school climate forms part of the school environment, and it affects the perception of the members of the school’s community about the school. They substantiate further that many instruments could be used to measure the climate condition in a school; they identify some as the school in its stature and also the healthy organizational structures.

According to Makena (2011) schools climate is an integral part of the teaching and learning. They add that all the measures that are put in place to guarantee a sound, secured and conducive

environment in the school, constitute the climate of the school. They confirm that, schools are never the same because, the environment, the philosophies in terms of students and staff behavior, academic performance, social and moral values on the campuses differ. And all the final effects of all these elements create of the school. These scholars also agree that, the final examination performance of student is the reflection of what goes on in the climate of the schools. They Therefore argue that policy makers and other stakeholders in education should always make sure the school's climate is that of positive one if they want to achieve good results.

Marshall (2004) also adds that the physical structures such as the school building and the interpersonal relationships between the student and staff constitute the school climate. He opines that behaviors in the school's climate have direct bearing on the performance of the student during examination. Marshall identified the following element that directly affects the climate of a school. These are the quality of student –teacher relationship the perception of the members of the school's community about the school, physical performance, safety of the members in the school, respect among the seniors and junior members of the community. He discussed that, because school's climate affects the performance of student, parents, teachers, churches all stakeholders should always work towards upholding better climate in schools

Deducing from all the contributions of the researchers, it could be stated that, the school's climate is the total experience that is enjoyed within the school's setting. These experiences could be from the things within the physical environment such as the buildings, spaces and logistics, in addition to the policies and the ethics, principles and the philosophies in which the school is governed.

School climate and its effects on students' performance

According to Angus et al (2009), school climate is the experiences that are found in school environment to give psychological satisfaction to the members of the school's community. Explain that, the climate manifest in leadership style of management which eventually translates on the performance of the students.

Marshall (2004) also argues that, the student-teacher inter personal relation which are key elements of the school's climate could either positively or negatively affect the performance of the student during examination. He discusses that, the heads of schools serve as agents of change during the process of teaching and learning. He cites from Normura (1998) that when the

stakeholders improved on the school's culture and the learning environment, the morale of the teachers as well as the performance of the student would be high and eventually leading to good academic performance.

METHODOLOGY

The research paradigm for the study was qualitative, and the design adopted case study approach.

The target population of the study consisted of Lecturers, Counselors and students. The accessible population was 20 lecturers, 5 counselors and 60 students hence bringing the total population for the study to Eighty Five (85). The study used mixed method thus questionnaire, interview and observation as the main instruments for collecting data in the study.

The sampling techniques adopted for the study were random and purposive sampling methods.

Analysis of Data

60 students were sampled from across level 100 to level 300 using random sampling technique. This sampling method was used because all the students were deemed to have possessed the same characteristics in relation to the focus of the study hence in good position to answer the questions in relation to the study. Data was analyzed using content thematic technique. Data was sought from them using questionnaire.

On the understanding of the concept of orientation, all of them thus 100 % discussed that, it is an official programme to welcome fresh students into the College hence inform them of the rules and convention in the college.

As to whether the programme is relevant to the fresh students, 58 of them representing 96 % admitted that, the programme is very useful. The remaining respondents thought that the programme is mere time wasting as they have already being through Senior High School system and are familiar with such " new comers " situations. Those who admitted the programme is relevant justified their stance that, the programme helps to alleviate fear and anxiety that normally characterize the new comers. Also, they added that, the orientation programme helps to

spell out the rules, norms and convention in the school; thereby helping them to know what to do and what not to do.

In responding to whether they would advocate for the programme to be continuous for the freshers, 40 of them (67 %) responded that, they would wish the programme continues for the fresh students. 15 of them thus 25 % disagreed that, no need for the continuous organization of such programme. 5 of them representing 8 % never responded to that item.

As to how orientation programme could be sustained in the study area, 67 % who responded to the earlier item stated that, the programme should be made part of the Student Representative Council (SRC) activities so that it could attract mass participation. They added that, resource persons should be invited to discuss not only academic issues but also social, financial and health issues.

The remaining respondents did not respond to this item as well.

Twenty (20) lecturers were equally interviewed with the aid of an interview guide. Their responses are discussed below:

They all explained that, orientation programme is meant to educate the freshers on acceptable and unacceptable behaviours in the College. They added that, the programme helps to position the students well for good academic work.

They unanimously agreed that, orientation programmes are very relevant in the College. They justified their assertion by stating that, the programme aids in clearing every doubt in the mind of the students and any other person including the staffs that have joined the college for the first time. They added that, at such programme, the students have the opportunity to ask questions that bother them hence seek appropriate answers.

They discussed that, the orientation programme help beneficiaries to easily adjust into the College environment. Also, they opined that, the programme aids them to choose their academic course of study. Furthermore, they would get to understand campus life and things that are desired of them as learners.

On how the programme could be made more effective, they discussed that, the issues that are discussed during the orientation should be broadened and professionals in the various fields should be brought in to educate the students. They added that, social issues such as marriage, relationship, health and home management should equally be included in the orientation so that the students become holistically trained and proactive.

Five (5) professionals who are experts in guidance and counseling were also interviewed and their thoughts herein discussed:

They shared that, orientation is an official forum where the culture and climate of an environment is shared with members who come into that environment for the first time. Unanimously, they agreed that, orientation programmes are relevant in the College setting because it is at such programmes that one truly understands how things are done in the college environment.

They explained many ways through which orientation programme impact new students in the College environment. They shared that; it is through such programmes that students get to know the 'channels of communication' in the College. In addition, according to them, the programme helps to educate the students on what to do and what not to do. Besides, the programme helps the students to make good choices in terms of their academic courses.

The researchers equally had opportunity to take part in several orientation programmes in the college; including the 2022 / 2023 academic year as could be seen from plate 1 to 3 below and made informed judgments based on their observations.



Plate 1 : Fresh students at Orientation



Plate 2: Programme co-ordinator addressing the fresh students at orientation



Plate 3: The researchers taking part in the orientation for fresh students

Credits for the Photographs: The researchers

According to them, orientation programmes are very relevant because they inform, educate and entertain the students. An action that position the students to have a good start in the College. They observed that, the programme helps to alleviate doubt and fears that associate with the fresh students. They asserted that, the programme helps to make the students clear on their choice of courses.

FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

Drawing inferences from the data, the study revealed that, orientation programmes at Saint Monica.s College help to educate the fresh students on the rules, norms and conventions of the College hence guide them to conform.

The study made it clear that, orientation programmes help to set the tone for good academic work as courses and their prospects are discussed during the orientation.

Orientation programmes help students to know their leaders in the College so that when there is a problem they could reach to them.

It was revealed that, orientations help students to clear all doubts and misconceptions regarding choice of courses and their study.

Also, orientations help to minimize bullying that usually associate with fresh students in educational institutions since students are told the appropriate places to report such occurrences.

It also helps the new students to conform since the acceptable and un acceptable behaviours are fully discussed during the orientation programme.

The above assertions have confirmed the study of Marcey and Schneider (2008), Aryeettey (2002) and Zumond et al (2020).

The study also shared that; orientation could be more effective if the duration for the programme is extended as well as the topics to include social issues such as relationship, marriage, health and gender. Furthermore, it should involve the SRC so that certain issues could be discussed at the level of students with flexibility.

It came to light that, when professionals in various fields are brought on board to talk to the students during orientation, it would help to sustain activities of orientation in the College.

The above points equally confirm the stance of Agnus et al (2009), Wayne et al (1997) and Makena (2011).

Conclusion

The paper sought to explain the impact of orientation programmes for fresh students of Saint Monica's College of Education and also discussed how the programme could be sustained in the College. It was established that, the Orientation programme helped to inculcate into the new students the acceptable behaviours in the College. Also, the programme helped students to do away with anxieties that normally associate with new comers in a new environment. Besides, the programme helped the students to choose their academic courses wisely.

The study revealed that, when the programme is fused with the activities of the Student Representative Council, it would gain more popularity hence help to strengthen it in the College. furthermore, it came out that, when topics outside the academia is discussed at the orientation, it would make it more interesting hence help to sustain the programme in the study area.

Recommendations

1. Management of Saint Monica's College of Education should invest more funds in the organization of orientation programmes for the new students in the College so to position them well for effective academic work
2. Monitoring mechanisms should be put in place at the College to ensure that all students concern fully take part in the orientation programme
3. Professional resource persons should be invited to address students on particular themes
4. Student Representative Council (SRC) should be involved fully in the organization of the programme.

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