

FACTORS INFLUENCING CHOICE OF BACHELOR OF EDUCATION (EARLY GRADE) PROGRAMME IN COLLEGE OF AGRICULTURE EDUCATION (CAGRIC), ASANTE MAMPONG

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ABSTRACT

The study was conducted to find out the factors that influence students' choice of B. Ed. (Early Grade) programme in CAGRIC. Descriptive survey design was employed to study 400 students who were purposively sampled for the study. Data were collected using a self-made questionnaire. The data were analysed using descriptive statistics, independent samples t-test and one-way ANOVA. It was found that, most students chose the programme based on their interest in teaching and relating to children. Teachers, family members and friends were their main influencers. They chose CAGRIC because of its location, presence of some distinguished lecturers and easy access to learning facilities. They obtained information on the programme from past and continuing students of CAGRIC. There was significant difference in the students' sources of knowledge of the programme based on gender and age and also factors that influenced their choice of the programme based on age. It was recommended among others that, prospective students should be encouraged to continue choosing the programme based on their interest since interest is a rational factor of career choice.

Keywords: Factors, choice, B. Ed. (Early Grade), CAGRIC, career choice, programme.

1.0 INTRODUCTION

The quest for holistic education in Ghana continues to receive attention from successive governments. This is attested to by a number of educational reforms over the years aimed at improving the quality of education in the country. One of these reforms was the 2004 educational reform. This reform was significant in the fact that it formalised Early Childhood now known as Early Grade education (Ministry of Education, Youth & Sports, 2004). Thus prior to this reform, though the initial part of Early Grade education (kindergarten) went on in the country, it was not recognised as part of formal education. The 2004 educational reform absorbed it into the formal stream. Since this reform, a number of institutions (colleges and universities) have run and continue to run Early Grade education as a means of meeting the manpower needs of Early Grade levels in Ghanaian schools.

Opinions on the span of Early Grade development stage differ (Swiniarski, Breitborde & Murphy, 1999). An exploration of literature indicates different classifications. Gordon and Browne (2000) see Early Grade stage as from three (3) to age 5 while UNESCO (2000) defines it as age zero (0) to eight (8). The conclusion from literature suggests that the western world sees the period as from birth to age eight (8) (Wortham, 2000) while those in developing world see it as from birth to six (6) years (Eville-Lo & Mbugua, 2001). The new Bachelor of Education Early Grade curriculum stipulates Early Grade period as period from kindergarten one (1) to primary three (3) that is, approximately age four (4) to eight (8) (University of Education, Winneba, 2018).

Early Grade education refers to group setting deliberately intended to effect developmental changes in children from birth to the age of entering first grade (Gordon & Browne, 2000). In school terms, it consists of group settings for infants through primary years of elementary school, grades one (1) through three (3) (Gordon & Browne, 2000). The importance of Early Grade education cannot be underestimated. It forms the foundation of development of intelligence, affective and social relations (Evans & Gruba, 2000). The development of personal values and social behaviour have been found to depend to a large extent on Early Grade education (Rutter, Giller & Hagell, 1998). As a result of the importance of Early Grade education, high caliber of teachers are needed for that level in Ghanaian schools. This can be attested to by a report on Ghanaweb where the minister of education indicated that there is critical need for Early Grade educators in Ghanaian schools and hence products from training schools would be employed by Ghana Education Service (Ghanaweb, 2019).

In 2018, by way of improving initial teacher education in Ghana, cabinet approved for adoption a new initial teacher education programme in colleges of education and universities. The programme called Bachelor of Education (Curriculum) has as a vision “to transform initial teacher education and secure the training of highly qualified, motivated new teachers who are able to inspire their learners to achieve better outcomes in basic education” (T-TEL Professional Development Programme, 2018, p.1). This programme which spans a period of four years has three specialisms namely Bachelor of Education (Early Grade), Bachelor of Education (Upper Primary) and Bachelor of Education (Junior High School). The Bachelor of Education (Early Grade) is modeled in line with the National Teacher Education Curriculum Framework (NTECF) and National Teaching Standards (NTS). The course areas of the programme consist of subject and curriculum knowledge, literacy studies, pedagogical knowledge, supported teaching in schools and cross-cutting issues namely equity and inclusiveness, professional values, assessment strategies, core and transferable skills, information and communication technology and special education needs and disability (T-TEL Professional Development Programme, 2018, p. 3). The implementation of the Bachelor of Education (Early Grade) programme began in 2018/2019 academic year in Colleges of Education and teacher training universities in the country.

One of the teacher training universities that run the Bachelor of Education (Early Grade) programme is College of Agriculture Education (CAGRIC), a constituent campus of University of Education, Winneba. CAGRIC located in Asante Mampong started this programme in 2018/2019 academic year.

1.1 Focus and Rationale for the study

Since the roll out of the Bachelor of Education (Early Grade) programme in CAGRIC in 2018, appreciable number of students have enrolled in the programme. The first and second year enrollment statistics were 107 and 314 students respectively (CAGRIC Registry, 2019). Ascertaining the reasons behind the choice of the programme by the students was found imperative for proper planning towards more enrollment into the programme, for guidance and counselling of the students and for planning towards meeting the career aspirations of enrolled students. Choice of programme and hence career is a critical issue for students. It determines the path of a student in his or her entire life. A critical look therefore needs to be made of the influencing factors of students’ career choice so as to guide them in their course of pursuing their careers in life.

The study was conducted to find out the factors that influence B. Ed. (Early Grade) students to choose the programme. Being a new programme in CAGRIC, ascertaining the factors that make students choose it, who influences them to choose it, why they choose CAGRIC over

other institutions to pursue the programme among others will help management strategize to increase enrollment by meeting the aspirations of prospective students and the job market. Again, counsellors would gain insight into the choice pattern of students and factors that influence those choices for proper career counselling. Universities conduct regular reviews of their programmes to meet the needs of emerging students and the job market. These reviews are normally done through research which depicts the views and aspirations of enrolled students and prospective students as well as the job market. This study will serve as a review of the programme for current and future planning. The study will further add to literature on factors that influence career choice of students especially of B. Ed. (Early Grade) students. Based on the above focus and rationale for the study, the following research questions were set to guide the study:

- 1) What factors influence most students in their choice of B. Ed. (Early Grade) programme?
- 2) Who influences students most in their choice of B. Ed. (Early Grade) programme?
- 3) What factors influence students to choose CAGRIC to pursue B. Ed. (Early Grade) programme?
- 4) How do prospective students get to know of the B. Ed. (Early Grade) programme in CAGRIC?
- 5) Is there any significant difference in the factors that influence choice of the Early Grade programme, sources of knowledge of the Early Grade programme and the factors that influence choice of CAGRIC based on gender?
- 6) Is there any significant difference in the factors that influence choice of the Early Grade programme, sources of knowledge of the Early Grade programme and the factors that influence choice of CAGRIC based on age?

2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Factors that influence career choice

Literature is replete with factors that influence people's choice of a particular educational programme and hence careers in life. Fokken-Bruisma & Canrinus (2012) found the ability to teach as most influencing factor of a choice of career in teaching profession. A study by Salifu, Alagbela & Ofori (2018) on the other hand found the desire to shape the future of children and adolescents as most influencing factor of teaching choice among teacher respondents in Greater Accra region of Ghana. Job security, desire to make social contributions and having time with the family came on top as influencing factors of entry into teaching in a study by Watt and Richardson (2007) while attractive salary and job recognition were found to influence teaching choice decision making (Claeys, 2011). A study of 133 university students in South Africa on their career aspirations identified factors namely family, ability of the learner self to identify his preferred career and teachers as significant influencers of career choice. Choice of career is based on socio-economic background (Hannah and Kahn, 1989) and age (Asaolu, 2001; Essuman, 1986; Salifu, 2000). Yaseen (2011) in a study of Kuwaiti students identified factors namely enjoying holidays and large salary to be significant factors influencing Kuwaiti student teachers' choice of teaching as a career. Influence of family members as well as peers, personal interests, gender, career opportunity and availability of jobs influence students' career choice (Rababah, 2016). Parental influence was identified as main influencing factor in career choice (Dagang & de Mesa, 2018; Hoai, Thi, & Thanh 2016; Ibrahim, 2017; Kaneez & Medha, 2018; Khoo, Ban, Neng, Hooi & Joan, 2015) while parents in addition to friends, siblings were found to influence career choice (Al-Rfou (2013). Al-Rfou (2013) however, identified teachers and media as least influencing factors in career choice. Umar (2014) identified factors relating to parental influence, peer group, employer and relative as influencing students' career choice. In a study by Ahmed, Sharif and Ahmed (2017), interest in a subject, level of social status,

financial resources, affordability and future employability were found to have strong influence on career choice while ease of grade, financial outcomes and future job opportunities had least impact on career choice. Similar but somehow different were the findings of a study by Yazici and Yazici (2010) who identified interest in a subject, guaranteed employment and expected earnings after graduation as most influencing factor of career choice. Akyina et al. (2014) in a descriptive survey study of 169 female agriculture science students of CAGRIC on factors that influenced their choice of the programme, identified factors relating to interest in agriculture science, employment avenues in agriculture, high academic ability in agriculture, teachers and parents. They were less influenced by factors like parents' involvement in agriculture, importance of agriculture, nature of occupations in agriculture, job security in agriculture and peer influence. The reviewed literature indicates that a number of factors including parental influence, gender, interest, job security influence students choice of a career and hence an academic programme in school.

2.2 Parents influence on career choice

A number of studies apart from those stated above, give credence to the fact that parents have influence on the choice of careers of their wards. Holland (1973) in a study of mothers in Virginia found that their upbringing practices had influence on their wards career choices. Gostein (2000) similarly identified parental influence as strong factor in career choice and enumerated that the influence is related to direct inheritance, apprenticeship training development of interest and role model of their wards. Geofflich and Moses (2003) supported this assertion when he found in a study that 95% of boys who chose farming as a career had their fathers being farmers. In a study of 76000 male college students, Werts cited in Birk and Blimline (1984) identified that father directly or indirectly encourage sons to choose careers similar to their own. Alden and Seiferth cited in Birk and Blimline (1984) in a study of a sample of 1470 students to rank in order of importance people who had most influence on their career pathway, ranked parents as most influential in their career decision. They were followed by teachers, counsellors and siblings in rank order. In a study by Pappas and Kounenou (2011), undertaken to determine the impact of both parents and career decision making self-efficacy on Greek post-secondary vocational students' career decision making, the results revealed a strong correlation between parental influence and career decision making ability. No gender differences concerning parental impact on decision making were found. A study on Adolescents' and Young Adults' Reasoning About Career Choice and the Role of Parental Influence by Bregman and Killen (2010) ascertained Adolescents' and young adults' evaluations of reasons used by adolescents for making career decisions, and the role of parental influence. The results showed that adolescents and young adults supported adolescents' career choices for reasons of personal growth and rejected their choices when their decisions were based on interpersonal relationships or hedonism. Parental influence was judged to be most important when the adolescents' decisions had negative moral consequences or focused on short-term goals. Igbinedion (2011) indicated that Nigerian male students perceived parental influence as a factor that influenced their choice of a secretarial career, which is more inclined towards female students. Similarly, Agarwala (2008) established that Indian fathers were found to be the most significant influence in the career choices of Indian boys and girls in management.

2.3 Age and career choice

In a study of 369 freshmen in college on relationship of age, sex and educational groups to career decisiveness, Neice and Bradley (1979) found that age was extremely important factor in career decidedness. Sex on the other hand was not an important factor in career decidedness. There was no significant difference between the career choice of adolescents between the age of 15-17 in a study by Fabunmi and Adedayo (2017) on adolescents' gender and age as

correlates of career choice among secondary school students in Southwest Nigeria. Significant difference was however found based on choice by gender. Ooro, Omari and Mong'are (2017) in a study of 231 students of School of Business and Economics, Kisi University, Kenya on factors that influenced their career choice, found age as the leading factor after gender. Other factors namely peer group and parental guidance had least influence.

2.4 Gender and career choice

There is ample body of research which points to the gender differences in career interests in the jobs school leavers choose to do (McKeen & Bu, 1998; Tolbert & Moen, 1998). Teaching is largely perceived as female domain career (Williams, 1992; Wrigley, 1992, cited in DeCorse & Vogtle, 1997). Studies indicate that females hold about 68% of teaching and administrative positions in basic and second cycle schools, whereas they hold a small minority in tertiary schools (Wrigley, 1992 cited in DeCorse & Vogtle, 1997). Hansen and Oster (1997) and Shamaï (1996) identified gender as influencing factor in choice of career in aviation. They found that male students were more likely to choose careers in science than their female counterparts because of their perceived roles. Gender stereotyping exists in number of countries and hence influences people's career choice. In Thailand, males are thought to be more suitable to females in managerial jobs (Hutchings, 2000). Women are seen as more adaptable to work as nurses and teachers, while men are found to be most suited to being police officers and military officers (Romanow, 2011). Though today the trend has changed somehow, gender stereotyping still exists in such areas like science, technology, engineering and mathematics in which men seem more superior to women (Makarova and Herzog, 2015). Chileshe and Haupt (2010) in a study in South Africa, found out that both male and female students are motivated by similar factors namely perceived salary, working conditions, opportunities for promotion and lifelong learning. Durosaro and Abebanke (2012) assert that in Nigeria, female students go for careers that are feminist in nature while their male compatriots opt for careers that are masculine. Griffen, Hutchins and Meese (2011) and Tang, Pan and Newmeyer (1998) found out that female students in America were more likely to choose careers involving offering help to others and asserting themselves. Males on the other hand, chose careers involving data, investigative and enterprising nature. Heredia (2007) noted that prior to entering university, males and females have different perception of the programme to do. Males tend to prefer science and business while females prefer social and artistic programmes like teaching and nursing (Nicolao, 2014 & Ramaci et al., 2017). The foregoing assertions in literature indicate that gender stereotyping influences the type of career chosen by someone in life.

2.4 Factors that influence choice of a particular college/university

The choice of a particular college or institution to pursue a programme is based on several factors. In a study of 541 students from different institutions in Uttarakhand State, Chaubey, Subramanian and Joshi (2011) identified in rank order, parents, friends, relatives, teachers and social media as the main influencers of students' institution of study choice decision. They further indicated that vital information on choice of study, financial affordability and the institution's infrastructure facilities were found to be significant factors that influenced students to choose their college of study. Sports activity, age of student, and parental income were not significant in influencing choice of a college. Father's income was relevant in respect of the location of the school. In a similar study by Rudhumbu, Tirumalai and Kumari (2017) of 300 undergraduate students' participants of Botho University, factors namely academic programme offered, image and reputation of institution, advertisement, career factors, employment prospects of graduates and quality of staff were the major consideration of students and hence factors that influenced them to choose the university. On the other hand, factors like tuition fee, chance of getting scholarships and campus visits did not influence the choice of the university.

Studies by Proboyo and Soedarsono (2015), Kusumawati, Yanamandram and Perera (2010) and Aguado, Laguador and Deligero (2015) indicate that parents are the main influencers of students' institutional choice because they are the financiers of their education. Other studies have indicated factors like marketing strategies (Ariffin et al., 2008 and Keling, Krishnan and Nurtjahja 2007), location of the institution, opinion of people like parents, teachers and friends (Beneke & Human, 2010), access to ICT, cultural diversity, admission requirements, easy study modes and attractiveness of campus (Mubaira & Fatoki, 2012) as most influencing factors. Others are institutional image and reputation, academic programmes and tuition fees (Ismail, 2009) and educational facilities, convenience such as parking space and sporting facilities (Ivy, 2008).

2.5 Sources of career/educational information

Students can find career information and hence programmes offered in colleges/universities from a number of sources. Trusty and Watts (1996) identified that parents rate school counsellors, schools, books and magazines as important career information sources. Career information can also be obtained from local news resources, computer-based systems, employment offices and occupational guides such as Dictionary of Occupational Titles and Occupational Outlook Handbook (Schmidt, 1999). In the outline of occupational information sources, Kashyap (2016) noted sources including official notice boards of organizations, employment news and bulletins, employers and employees and directories. The rest are books, posters, occupational monographs and pamphlets. Specifically regarding educational information, registrars, provosts, deans of students' affair, current and past students are important sources of information (Unachukwu & Igborgbor, 1991)

3.0 Methodology

The primary purpose of the study was to find out the factors that influence the choice of Bachelor of Education (Early Grade) programme in CAGRIC. Based on this purpose, the researcher adopted descriptive survey design for the study. The study population was 421 students consisting of 314 level 100 and 107 level 200 students respectively. All the 421 students were purposely sampled for the study. This was because the population was not large and the researcher wanted each student to get involved in the study.

Questionnaire was used to gather data in the study. The questionnaire was designed by the researcher. It had five (5) sections based on items relating to demographics of respondents, factors that influence their choice of academic programmes, who influenced them most in their programme choice, what influenced them to choose CAGRIC and lastly how they got to know the Early Grade programme in CAGRIC. After the design of the questionnaire, colleague lecturers were made to critique it for constructive feedback to improve upon it. Cronbach Alpha coefficient of 0.79 was obtained for the questionnaire indicating that it reliably measured the factors under study.

The questionnaire was administered to the students online and responses similarly obtained online. First, the researcher met the respondents (level 100 and 200 B. Ed. Early Grade students) in formal class and explained the rationale of the study to them and entreated all of them to partake in the study. Second, the respondents were urged to be genuine in their responses and assured of the confidentiality of their responses. The link of the questionnaire was then placed on the two (2) classes (level 100 and 200 B. Ed. Early Grade) WhatsApp platform in the first semester of 2019/2020 academic year. All the level 100 and 200 Early Grade students were given opportunity to take part in the study by visiting the class WhatsApp platform and clicking

the link to respond to the questionnaire. Students without android phones were urged to contact their friends with android phones to use their phones to respond to the questionnaire.

At the end of the one month period given to the respondents to respond to the questionnaire, 405 students responded to the questionnaire. Further processing through screening of the responses brought the number to 400. The sample of the study therefore was 400, which forms 95% of the population. The responses were entered into the SPSS 20.0 version for analysis.

4.0 Demographics

The researcher looked at gender, age and the highest level of education of the respondents. After running the simple frequencies in SPSS, there were 92 males (23.0%) and 308 females (77.0%). This implied that the number of female B. Ed. (Early Grade) students were slightly three times more than their male counterparts. In terms of age of the respondents, the researcher divided them into three groups (18-23, 24-26, and 27 and above). Out of this number, the students within the 24-26 bracket were 214, representing 53.5%. The 27 and above were 129 students (32.2%) and 57 students within the 18-23 bracket, representing 14.3%. Technically, the findings seem to indicate that 75.7% of the B. Ed. (Early Grade) university students do not belong to the typical traditional university students' bracket. The last on the demographics was students' level of education before they enrolled in the Early Grade programme. As indicated in Table 1, 360 students, representing 90%, had the West Africa Senior Secondary Certificate (WASSCE) whereas 40 students (10%) had a diploma in education.

Table 1. Demographics of Respondents

Gender	Frequency	Percentage
Male	92	23.0
Female	308	77.0
Age		
18-23	57	14.3
24-26	214	53.5
27 and above	129	32.2
Level of Education		
SHS	360	90
Diploma	40	10

(Field data, 2019)

4.1 RESULTS

Research Question 1: What factors influence most students in their choice of the B. Ed. (Early Grade) programme?

The researcher, after reviewing extensive literature on this subject identified some factors that influenced the choice of academic programmes. For this reason, I wanted to find out the factors that influence most Early Grade students in their choice of the programme. After the analysis, the findings indicate that 268 Early Grade students, representing 67.0%, chose the programme based on the *interest in teaching and relating to children*. The next factor that followed was

ease of getting employed after the programme with 42 respondents representing 10.5%. The third factor that had 39 respondents, representing 9.7%, was *gender (perception of Early Grade teachers as either males or females)*.

Table 2. Factors that influenced respondents in the Choice of the B. Ed. (Early Grade) programme.

Factors	Freq.	Percentage
1. Gender (perception of Early Grade teachers as either males or females)	39	9.7
2. Parental advice	31	7.7
3. Friends and peers' advice	6	1.5
4. Interest in teaching and relating to children	268	67.0
5. Ease of getting employed after the programme	42	10.5
6. Attractive salary of Early Grade professionals	1	0.2
7. Job security of the teaching profession	3	0.7
8. High demand for Early Grade professionals	10	2.5
9. Ease of having time with your family as Early Grade professionals	0	0.0
Total	400	100

(Field data, 2019)

Research Question 2: Who influences students most in their choice of B. Ed. (Early Grade) programme?

The researcher thought it wise to identify different categories of people who have influence in the decisions of the Early Grade students. For this reason, the research question centred on people who had the most influence on them. The question originally required the students to rate the influences on a Likert-type scale of very high influence (4), high influence (3), No influence (2), and no influence at all (1). During the analysis, the scale was further split evenly into *no influence* and *influence*. As indicated in Table 3, 343 respondents, representing 86% indicated that their teachers influenced them most in the choice of the programme. Next to their teachers were their family members with 334 respondents (83.5%). It is interesting to note that their counsellors had the lowest rating of 245 respondents, representing 62.5%. In our pre-university schools and institutions, the idea of full time school counsellors is not a mainstream policy in the country though some schools have that. In many situations, teachers double as counsellors in their various schools. Therefore, pupils and students see their teachers as their counsellors.

Table 3. Influence on students choice of the Early Grade programme

Factors	No Influence	Percentage	Influence	Percentage
1. Pastors/Imams/Priests	120	30.0	280	70.0
2. Friends	116	29.0	284	71.0
3. School counsellors	150	37.5	245	62.5
4. Teachers	56	14.0	343	86.0
5. Family members	66	16.5	334	83.5

(Field data, 2019)

Research Question 3: What factors influence students to choose CAGRIC to pursue the B. Ed. (Early Grade) programme?

For some years now, the University of Education, Winneba (UEW) continues to be the most populous university in Ghana. According to the speech delivered by the Vice-Chancellor of the University during the 24th Congregation at the College of Agriculture Education in Asante Mampong, the university has a little over eighty-five thousand students for both full-time, sandwich and distance education modes. To understand the reasons why the university continues to be a preferred destination for academic excellence in the country, the researcher came out with this research question. After running the statistical procedure, the researcher found that the *location of the university* was the first reason why people will choose CAGRIC over other public universities. This factor had 115 respondents, representing 28.8% and was closely followed by *presence of some distinguished lecturers/ staff in CAGRIC* 86 respondents (21.5%). The third reason why people would choose CAGRIC was *easy access to learning facilities like library, I.C.T centre* with 54 respondents (13.5%). Put together, these three factors alone had a total of 255 respondents (63.8%) out of the ten possible factors that influence the decisions of university students in the choice of academic institutions.

Table 4. Factors that influence students' choice of CAGRIC

Factors	Freq.	Percentage
1. Presence of some distinguished lecturers/staff in CAGRIC	86	21.5
2. Easy access to learning facilities like library, I.C.T centre	54	13.5
3. Easy application mode of entry into CAGRIC	12	3.0
4. Experience of cultural diversity in CAGRIC	11	2.8
5. Financial support facilities like VC scholarship in CAGRIC	18	4.5
6. Image and reputation of CAGRIC	23	5.8
7. Infrastructure facilities in CAGRIC	22	5.5
8. Location of CAGRIC	115	28.8
9. Reasonable cost of living in CAGRIC	43	10.8
10. Sporting activities in CAGRIC	16	3.8
Total	400	100

(Field data, 2019)

Research Question 4: How do prospective students get to know of the B. Ed. (Early Grade) programme in CAGRIC?

This question sought to find out how students who are offering the B.Ed. (Early Grade) programme got to know that CAGRIC offers that programme. To answer this question, the respondents were given some possible sources of educational information to tick the appropriate one or indicate their source of information of the B. Ed. (Early Grade) programme in CAGRIC. The results are shown in Table 5 below. It can be seen from the table that a number of the students had knowledge of the programme from continuing students 123 (30.8%). This was followed by their friends 76 (19.0%) and the university Website 64 (16%). Continuing students and past students combined gave a figure of 173 (43.3%) indicating that nearly half of the respondents had the information of the programme from people schooling or who have

schooled in CAGRIC. School counsellors and newspapers recorded the lowest figures of 4 (1%) and 2 (0.5%) respectively.

Table 5. Sources of Knowledge of B. Ed. (Early Grade) programme

Factors	Freq.	Percentage
1. Continuing students of CAGRIC	123	30.8
2. Friends	76	19.0
3. Parents	36	9.0
4. Past students of CAGRIC	50	12.5
5. School counsellors	4	1.0
6. Teachers	27	6.7
7. CAGRIC Registry	18	4.5
8. University Website	64	16.0
9. Advertisement in Newspapers	2	0.5
Total	400	100

(Field data, 2019)

Research Question 5: Is there any significant difference in the factors that influence choice of the Early Grade programme, sources of knowledge of the Early Grade programme and the factors that influence choice of CAGRIC based on gender?

Apart from the percentages on respondents' choice of Early Grade programme and CAGRIC, the researcher wanted to find out whether there were group differences of the respondents, based on gender. To do this, an independent t-test statistical procedure was run. The results indicated that there was no significant difference in the factors that influence the choice of the Early Grade programme ($t(397) = 0.881, p = 0.380$, 2-tailed) as well as the factors that influence choice of CAGRIC as an institution of learning ($t(397) = 0.333, p = 0.739$, 2-tailed). This results implied that both male and female respondents were more likely to rate these factors similarly. However, there was a significant difference in the sources of knowledge of the Early Grade programme based on gender ($t(397) = 3.815, p = 0.001$, 2-tailed). With a mean difference of 1.15, male students were more likely to use different sources than their female counterparts.

Table 6. Group difference based on gender

Factors	(t)	p - value
Choice of Early Grade programme	0.881	0.380
Knowledge of Early Grade programme	3.489	0.001
Choice of CAGRIC	0.333	0.739

Research Question 6: Is there any significant difference in the factors that influence choice of the Early Grade programme, sources of knowledge of the Early Grade programme and the factors that influence choice of CAGRIC based on age?

As obtained from gender, the researcher also wanted to find out whether there would be differences in these factors, based on the age of the respondents. Independent one-way ANOVA statistical procedure was run on *factors that influence choice of Early Grade*

programme, sources of knowledge of Early Grade programme, and factors that influence choice of CAGRIC. Among the factors, there was no significant difference in the factors that influence choice of CAGRIC ($f(2, 396) = 0.724, p = 0.485, 2$ -tailed). The findings mean that age does not affect the choice of institution of the respondents. On the other hand, there were significant differences in the factors that influence choice of Early Grade programme and sources of knowledge of Early Grade programme. The significant difference in the factors that influence choice of Early Grade programme, based on age was ($f(2, 396) = 5.798, p = 0.003, 2$ -tailed) whereas the sources of knowledge of the Early Grade programme was ($f(2, 396) = 9.642, p = 0.000, 2$ -tailed).

To identify the age groups that had the significant differences, a post-hoc test (Bonferroni) was conducted on the two factors. There were significant differences between age 1 (18-23) and age 2 (24-26) as well as age 2 (24-26) and age 3 (27 and above) on the sources of knowledge of the Early Grade programme at significance levels of 0.015 and 0.028 respectively. The difference between age 1 and age 3 was not significant ($p=1.000$). In terms of the factors that influence the choice of the Early Grade programme, there were significant differences between age 1 and age 2 at 0.000 as well as age 1 and age 3 at $p=0.000$. Between age 2 and age 3, the difference was not significant ($p=0.916$). These findings seem to indicate that different age groups did not have the same information on the Early Grade programme and as such would consider different factors before they choose the programme.

Table 7. Group difference based on age

Factors	(<i>f</i>)	<i>p</i> - value
Choice of Early Grade programme	9.642	0.003
Knowledge of Early Grade programme	5.798	0.000
Choice of CAGRIC	0.724	0.739

4.2 DISCUSSIONS

The findings from the demographics give evidence of high enrollment of females in B.Ed. (Early Grade) programme. This confirms the assertion of (Williams, 1992; Wrigley, 1992, cited in DeCorse & Vogtle, 1997) that females tend to dominate in the field of teaching at the lower levels of the educational ladder. The nature of Early Grade education requires the acquisition and utilization of skills of caring for children. Females by their make-up tend to be more caring and hence see themselves as such and thus might account for the high female enrollment in the programme. Again, the programme is more reading based and not highly mathematically inclined in nature. Since females tend to prefer humanities-based programmes, the high enrollment of females in the programme can also be attributed to that.

It was found that most of the students in Early Grade programme do not fall within the traditional university students' bracket of 19-23 years. Most of them were above that age group. This might be because most of them did not have the requisite qualifications to enter the programme straight away after completing Senior High School (SHS) education or had financial challenges enrolling straight away after SHS. With large number of the students above the traditional university age bracket, instructional strategies adaptive to their level need to be employed in their education. Majority of the students were entering university for the first time and hence were direct products from SHS. This calls for them to be properly oriented on practices of university education for their proper adaptation.

Interest in teaching and relation to children influenced most students to choose the programme. This is in consonance with the findings of other studies (Ahmed et al., 2017; Akyina et al., 2014; Yazici & Yazici, 2010) that interest in an area or in doing something influences career choice. Interest is a rational factor of career choice and hence if students choose careers based on it, their persistency in the programme is very much assured. In terms of people who had most influence on the students' choice of the programme, teachers, family members and friends had the most influence (Ahmed et al., 2017; Akyina et al., 2014; Geofflich & Moses 2003; Igbinedion, 2011; Pappas & Kounenou, 2011). The constant interaction of these people with students might account for that. School counsellors, in terms of percentage had the lowest. This might stem from the fact that counselling is still a developing profession in Ghana. Though most basic and SHSs in Ghana have school counsellors, most of them double as teachers and hence the students might have seen them as their teachers rather than their counsellors.

On why the students chose CAGRIC as the destination to pursue the Early Grade programme, three factors that came top were *location of the university, presence of some distinguished lecturers/ staff in CAGRIC* and *easy access to learning facilities like library, I.C.T centre*. This confirms findings in literature (Ariffin et al., 2008; Beneke & Human, 2010; Keling et al., 2007; Rudhumbu et al., 2017). CAGRIC is the only constituent campus of UEW in the northern and central part of Ghana that runs B. Ed. (Early Grade) programme. This explains why a number of the students chose it for its location. Pursuing the programme there saves them from travelling to down south of Ghana, Winneba to pursue the same programme.

Students pursuing B.Ed. (Early Grade) acquired knowledge of the programme from a number of sources. Of the various sources however, students (past and continuing) provided most information on the programme to students. This means that prospective students ask information about a programme from past and continuing students. Past and present students tend to have first-hand information on programmes and hence prospective students rely on them for information on programmes they want to pursue. Newspapers and university website did not serve as a significant source of information for the students. Cost of newspapers and lack of interest in reading among the youth might have contributed to that. Again, it is possible that the students read newspapers but did not read the particular issue that contained the programme advertisement.

Females were influenced by different factors in knowing the B. E. (Early Grade) programme in CAGRIC as compared to males. However, there were no significant differences between the factors that influenced their choice of the programme and factors that influenced their choice of CAGRIC. The biological make up of females make them a bit reserved compared to males and hence might have relied on non-human factors in knowing of the programme in CAGRIC as compared to their male counterparts. No significant difference was found in the three age groups in relation to factors that influence students to choose CAGRIC. However, significant differences were found between the ages in factors that influence choice of Early Grade programme and sources of knowledge of Early Grade programme. The age of people influence their career choice (Neice & Bradley, 1979; Fabunmi & Adedayo, 2017). The older one is, the more he/she is less likely to experiment with careers and hence might choose a career that will give him/her job security. Again, the young generation might be more adaptable to the use of phones (Manu, Akyina, Yeboah-Appiagyei & Opoku, 2018) and hence might acquire knowledge of a programme different from the older ones.

5.0 Conclusion and recommendations

A number of factors influence students' choice of academic programme. In this study, it can be concluded that most B. Ed. (Early Grade) students in CAGRIC choose their programme based on their interest in teaching and relating to children. They are most influenced in their choice of the by their teachers, family members and friends. They choose CAGRIC as an institution to pursue the programme because of its location, presence of some distinguished lecturers and easy access to learning facilities. Past and continuing students mainly provide them with information on the programme prior to choosing it.

The following implications are deduced from the study:

1. CAGRIC should continue to create good image in the eyes of its students (past and present), so that they can effectively sell its programmes to prospective students.
2. Males should be encouraged to enroll in B. Ed. (Early Grade) programme.
3. Prospective students should be encouraged to continue choosing the programme based on their interest since interest is in tune with reality hence a rational factor in choosing a career.
4. Full time counsellors should be employed in basic and SHSs to influence students in their choice of their programmes.
5. Instructional methods should be adopted to meet the needs of the students who are not in the traditional university age bracket.
6. New strategies should be developed by CAGRIC to enable prospective students in the B. Ed. (Early Grade) programme, utilize advertisement information on the programme in newspapers and on the university's website.

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