Welcome to the May 2014 edition of the ‘Edu’ newsletter. Hope the year is going well for you so far. In this edition we have new beginnings for some projects, the latest information from the ongoing projects/activities in the Education programme, interesting thoughts, upcoming events, and of course the hot topic: a recipient’s experience of scholarship. Hope this newsletter finds you well. Enjoy the read, Mama Laryea 😊.

Hot topic: A recipient’s experience of scholarship

The dream of a student, who will prefer to remain anonymous, was to complete his university education and get a good paying job. But being born to a single mother from a rural village in Ghana, and with two siblings, the dream was anything but attainable. The financial burden on his mother was huge. The student stated, ‘after struggling through with my secondary education, I gained admission to study for my bachelor’s degree. I managed to cope for the first year. In year two however, I felt confused and stressed out because I had no idea how I was going to pay for my tuition and other bills. Having taken so long to get to my university education, by the time I got there I had a son, a wife and a sick mother who could barely assist me. There was no family support and I had to depend on gifts, donations and sometimes literary beg close friends whose parents were seen as rich’.

‘But for the gift of a scholarship from my University, the greatest gift of all, a scholarship that came my way just in time. It appears the University had noticed my plight and hard work, so with the help of the University’s scholarship, I was able to concentrate on my education. Now, I look back with only fond memories. I did not have additional pressure to worry about paying for bills and school fees until I finished my course. In my experience, local institutions, be it primary schools, junior high schools, secondary schools, Parent Teacher Associations and communities, being nearer to their users, have a big role to play in supporting users to achieve the best in their endeavors. I guess I now have a deeper understanding of what it means to empower local institutions to act. Thank you my university 😊’.  
*Written by a guest writer - the anonymous student, who is also related to JICA activities.*
The teacher development policy support project starts, hurray!!!

Finally it is here. The much awaited Project for Supporting Institutionalization of the Pre-Tertiary Teacher Professional Development and Management (PTPDM) policy has started. The Japanese Expert team from PADECO, an international development consulting company with its headquarters in Tokyo, but active throughout the world with experience in over 110 countries, will be supporting the Ghana Education Service and the Ministry of Education to implement.

The PTPDM policy or the teacher development policy for short is intended to ensure that teachers are adequately prepared through Continuous Professional Development (CPD) to respond to the changing needs of education in Ghana. More importantly, the policy sets out clear standards for each newly created career path for pre-tertiary teachers’ education and development. From the Beginning Teacher, fresh out of a College of Education (CoE) who needs an induction then after one year licensing, to the Principal Teacher who needs a head teacher’s training to assume the role. Based on the teacher policy, the project aims to formulate a replicable career progression mechanism that will utilise training records including School-Based INSET (SBI) and Cluster-Based INSET (CBI) practice of pre-tertiary teachers and their classroom practice to make promotions, as well as register and license teachers. This will be in stark contrast to the old system of teachers being promoted based on the number of years they have served on a rank. Instead, all the training and practice records of teachers are to be stored on a yet to be modified version of a combination of existing databases on teachers, so that teacher managers can utilise these records to effect promotions, registration and licensing.

Selected activities of the project whilst piloting will include: (1) reviewing and modifying for operationalisation the proposed career progression framework (including licensing and registration) in the teacher policy. (2) Reviewing and refining existing database of teachers to administer career progression, and (3) revising and developing mandatory training courses for teachers. The project period is four years from April 2014, and piloting will be in five, yet to be selected, districts. For now the Japanese Expert team are working with the National INSET Unit (NIU) of the Teacher Education Division (TED) of the Ghana Education Service (GES), until the National Teaching Council is fully operational. It is hoped that through the nationwide implementation of the PTPDM policy, SBI and CBI will be more firmly institutionalized to provide further opportunities for teachers to strengthen their teaching capabilities in the classroom and, as a result, improve the quality of education in Ghana.

Nationwide INSET programme progress report

Aside of receiving the new Japanese Expert team for the PTPDM policy support project, the National INSET Unit (NIU), building on the achievements of the JICA supported GES teacher In-Service Education and Training (INSET) project, has been continuing to implementing the INSET nationwide. Below is one such activity recently undertaken by the NIU.

Re-orientation workshop and sourcebook training: for the purpose of continuous teacher professional development, a five-day re-orientation and sourcebook training was organised for District INSET Committee (DIC) members of the 57 deprived Ghana Partnership for Education Grant (GPEG) districts at the Wesley College of Education, Kumasi and in Tamale at the Ghana National Association of Teachers (GNAT) hall in 3 batches, concurrently from 10th to 29th March, 2014. The objectives for the workshop were four, (1) to re-define the individual and collective roles and responsibilities
of the DIC members, (2) to re-strategize INSET activities in the districts, (3) to develop strategies to address some teachers and other stakeholders’ lukewarm attitude towards INSET activities, and (4) to be abreast with the latest development of the INSET policy framework. Out of the 342 DIC members targeted, 340 attended, representing a 99.4% attendance rate.

During the workshop participants discussed strategies to improve INSET in basic Schools. They also identified challenges that work against the smooth implementation of the INSET programme, including

the fact that most Head Teachers and their Curriculum Leaders and some newly appointed Circuit Supervisors did not receive any training from the various DICs on how to implement and monitor INSET. At the end of the training, the districts developed Emergency Action Plans for implementation between May and June 2014. Some of the crosscutting activities the districts intend doing includes (1) re-orienting and training Head Teachers (HTs), Circuit Supervisors (CSs) and Curriculum Leaders (CLs) on the sourcebooks, and (2) organizing information exchange seminars. The next activity of the National INSET Unit is to monitor training sessions that the districts planned doing.

Ms Chisato Maruyama, a JICA youth activities volunteer, on her experiences in Ghana

Ms Chisato Maruyama is a JICA youth activities volunteer attached to the Ashanti School for the Deaf as an Information and Communication Technology (ICT) teacher. She writes about her experience as follows.

I belong to the vocational department teaching vocational students as well as primary class 4, 5 and 6 students with Ghanaian sign language. Vocational students have ICT lessons twice a week. They learn touch typing, Word application (formatting, copy, cut and paste, and saving), and the Internet. In the last term, they tried to make documents with Word that have pictures and photos, for example, how to insert pictures, clip arts, lines and shapes, and editing.

The primary students on the other hand have ICT lessons once a week. They learn touch typing, how to save and format
documents. Normally, theoretical lessons and exercises are held in their classrooms first, then, the following week they learn practically at the computer lab. However, I have had to be flexible and change the plan often because we cannot use the computers when the lights go off.

As part of capacity building at my institution I had planned to shift my position from a lecturer to a supporter, but it did not work well. Some teachers do not observe my lessons; they just take a rest during my lessons. On the other hand, some teachers are interested in my teaching methods and materials. Consequently, they use some visual aids to reinforce students’ understanding. In turn, I learn the way of class management in terms of Ghanaian style, as well as teaching terms in sign language.

I do not use a cane because I do not want to control the students by fear. When students disobey my instruction or go off by themselves, I stop my lesson. I also admonish them to behave their selves. Students take my explanation quietly and seriously. After that, they can behave themselves.

I also open the computer lab after school every day. Students are allowed to use the computer 30 minutes each, once a week. My aim for this activity is to facilitate punctuality by the necessity of the students coming to the lab on their assigned time. Additionally, I foster students’ self-management ability. I have trained some volunteer students, who are familiar with the computer, as the management staff. They keep the discipline of the lab, teach other students how to use the computer, and cope with any troubles that emerge. I believe that these abilities will help develop their future career as punctual persons that might be taken into confidence especially for cooperating with other people. The management ability may also nurture their self-confidence, which is very important to create their own future.

The school construction project

We are pleased to report on the project for Improvement of Access to Basic Education in Deprived Areas. Almost all the schools have been handed over to the Ministry of Education including furniture. Below are selected pictures.
On the other hand, we had to terminate two contracts all in the Bunkprugu Yunyoo (BY) district (Lot H by Paskam Limited and Lot I by Nafina Limited) and re-tender. Radebs Limited was awarded the re-tender and the contractor has been able to complete and hand over Lot H and one other school under Lot I. We also terminated two school sites under our phase 1 project which was awarded to Paumag Limited due to non-performance and huge delays. The schools have been awarded to Suretrack Limited and are now due to be completed by June 2014. We will share the pictures in the next edition of the newsletter.

An upcoming project: expert for decentralised education management

As reported in the February 2014 edition of this newsletter, one more exciting project forthcoming in 2014 is the expert for decentralised education management. The predecessor project was the Advisory Unit on Decentralised Education Management (AUDEM), which was supported by Mr. Daisuke Kanazawa, a JICA Expert who completed his assignment period at the end of September 2013. At the request of the GES, a proposed follow up, now approved, is to have another expert for Decentralised Education Management attached to the Basic Education Division of the GES, but this time focused on strengthening the capacity of the GES on decentralized education management between the school and district level. The assignment period is yet to be determined. More details will be published in the next edition but in the interim, outputs of the AUDEM’s work are available at https://sites.google.com/site/audembed/

Some more interesting thought(s) / fact(s)

Kinki University in Japan is going to change its joke-inducing name as it seeks to raise its international profile and appeal to English-speaking overseas students. Read the interesting full story from www.bbc.com/news/education-27519000 (last accessed: 29/05/2014).

Upcoming event(s) in the Education sector

- Eight new education related JICA volunteers would be arriving in July 2014 including for school health, youth activities, and primary school mathematics and science teachers.
- The National Education Sector Annual Review (NESAR) 2014 is due to take place from 7th to 10th July 2014. Venue yet to be determined. The NESAR is organised by the Ministry of Education in collaboration with stakeholders with the aim of providing an opportunity for stakeholders to review the sector’s performance, as well as propose recommendations to challenges identified.

Useful websites

- Disaster response: sharing Japan's experience, read the full story in JICA’s World publication at www.jica.go.jp/english/publications/j-world/1404.html
- Checkout the JICA Ghana website for information on JICA’s activities in Ghana, Sierra Leone and Liberia: www.jica.go.jp/ghana/english/index.html
- Don’t forget we are online, old/new copies of this newsletter are available via the JICA Ghana English website: www.jica.go.jp/ghana/english/office/others/newsletter.html

Have your say: and finally thank you for your reports, views and comments which make up this newsletter. Keep them coming including your feedback on the hot topic in this issue, the address to use is: gn_oso_rep@jica.go.jp Thank you.