



Teaching Practice Supervisory Process: A Resourceful Tool for Up-Coming Teachers

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Authors' contributions

This work was carried out in collaboration between both authors. Both authors read and approved the final manuscript.

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ABSTRACT

In today's keen competitive global environment, schools and institutions of higher learning are entrusted to produce quality human capital that is able to participate and cope with the ever changing market demands in various sectors of the economy such as education, business and commerce, and technology. The quality of education that students receive is inextricably linked to the knowledge, intelligence, professional skills and competencies of teachers. Teachers are the major in – school influence on student achievement and the most influential profession in the society that make huge differences to children's lives. The professional roles and qualities of the teacher are blended to make him/her an effective teacher. With teacher preparation issues becoming a major concern for many societies today, it is therefore crucial to shed more light on pre-service teachers teaching practice program aimed at positively influencing the quality level of our student teacher preparation to assist them in carrying out their core mandate as and when they become fully grown teachers. The issues in focus are; the concept of teaching practice, why the need for teaching practice for student teachers, supervisors and supervision, supervisions and feedback, and challenges in supervision.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Teachers are considered the most important in – school impact factor on the quality of students' achievement. The evidence available indicates that the principal factor of variation in student learning at school is instructor/teacher quality [1,2] reported that teachers' quality would have a greater effect on students' learning outcomes than curriculum quality, teaching methods, school building, or parents' position. Therefore, the demand for trained and professional teachers has been on the rise worldwide. Especially in developing countries there has been an unprecedented expansion of school education due to the fact that there has been an incremental change in the societies' population that has accentuated such demand.

Schools are the hope whereby society can create a better future through transformation [3]. The school is a social system where relations between teachers and pupils are vital to the achievement its objective of change. According to Bottoms and Mc Nally [4], today's teachers have a dual mission: to prepare students for ever-increasing demands on the workforce and for further research. As a result, Bottoms and McNally noted that schools need professional teachers who can build and maintain learning environments where students in their further education and workforce are ready for success. It has been recognized that well-prepared teachers and high-quality teachers are key factors in promoting learning between students. Quality teaching and student success are also main topics of concern to educators and wider stakeholders everywhere.

The changes that have taken place in society have generated new dynamics and contributed to a significant redefinition of the teachers' work. Considering the generally acknowledged value of education, a lot of attention is paid to teacher quality policies. They now need to develop high-level professional skills that can no longer be gained by trial and error, but that need to be consistently trained as part of a continuum of training designed to produce cultured professionals. The teacher education programs have naturally acquired renewed importance. It has become imperative that the efforts and resources mobilized towards teacher education are effective and relevant in the world, but the need to invest in teacher training quality is based

on the challenges faced by the government of a nation with regard to their education systems. It is therefore necessary that the concern for quality is explicit in all aspects of teacher education programmes.

Education has become an investment, as well as a tool that can be used to accelerate the country's economic, social, political, technological, scientific and cultural growth. Consequently, education in all its forms is supposed to act as the primary means of social change and national growth. Giving people a better taste and perspective on life and equipping them with better handling of daily life's affairs is again expected. Hence the need to train teachers to acquire professionalism in order to improve their lifestyle and make them deal with daily life affairs.

2. THE CONCEPT OF TEACHING PRACTICE

Teachers in training institutions pass through a number of practices such as academic, professional and social preparation. Teacher education programs are structured to cultivate professionals who are ready to address the teaching and learning challenges in the classrooms. The career practice is a way to formally expose the trainee teacher to the principles of their teaching profession. One such professional practice is what is called the teaching practice. This teaching practice under supervised condition is for the student teacher to be properly equipped to handle teaching task. It is a time when all these learned principles must be effectively implemented in real-life situations.

According to Adentwi [3], as it is often called, practice teaching or teaching practice typically takes the form of formal on-campus and field experiences designed to provide opportunities for students attending teacher training to practice different aspects of teaching under the guidance and supervision of experienced teachers. The program is an outcome of recent developments in the policies and practices of teacher education in Ghana. It offers the opportunity to beginning teachers to become socialized into the profession [5].

For some time now in Ghana, teaching practice as a teacher development program has been under the limelight. The Diploma in Education and Bachelor of Education student teachers from

Universities and College of Educations in Ghana undergo more than a semester off-campus teaching practice to enhance the efficiency of teacher – trainees. The innovative curriculum at the universities and colleges of education seeks to improve training of teacher–trainees to infuse more professionalism into the students that the university brings out annually. It gives student teachers the opportunity to apply theory to practice and encourage them to go out and prepare their students for workplace and continuing education success. One of the most significant aspects of technical and vocational training, according to scholars, is its orientation towards the world of work and the incorporation of job-oriented learning in the curriculum that prepares students for the work environment. At the other hand, some theorists suggested that some skills may be learned in the on-campus classrooms, [6] assume that some skills are better developed in the workplace by work-based learning.

In view of [7], number of terms related together such as; practice teaching, student teaching, teaching practice, field studies, infield experience, school based experience or internship are used to refer to this activity of student teachers. The term teaching practice encompasses all student teacher learning experiences in the schools. Teaching practice is the name of preparing student teachers through practical preparation for teaching. It is the practical implementation of teaching methods, teaching strategies, teaching principles, teaching techniques and practical preparation and the practice/exercise of different everyday school life activities. Teaching practice is an activity that can play a major role in teachers training. A study by [8] suggested that, the term teaching practice has three key connotations: teaching skills practice, teacher role acquisition; and the practical aspects of the course as distinct from the theoretical studies. Moreover, all these three connotations are very significant to the growth of a student teacher during teaching practice.

Performance during teaching practice provides some basis for estimating the teacher's potential success. Since this placement of student teachers offers the opportunity to improve their ability to plan and prepare lessons effectively, execute lessons, focus on and evaluate their own teaching and learning. This act provides feedback to the pre-service teacher during teaching practice, feedback constitutes a central aspect of teaching and learning in developing and preparation of the student teacher.

3. WHY THE NEED FOR TEACHING PRACTICE FOR STUDENT TEACHERS

Teaching practice is seen as a very vital aspect of teacher education which needs full cooperation from university authorities, tutors / lecturers, student teachers and cooperating schools in order to achieve its purposes. [9] outlined fairly inclusive teaching practice in many developing countries of which Ghana is no exception. This assist pre-service teachers to:

- Apply learning principles to a given situation in order to bring about meaningful changes in learner experiences.
- Identify objectives of teaching and to see the relationship of a day's lesson to the long-ranged plans for a week or a term.
- Organize syllabus content around major concepts and generalization in the development of segmental learning in a unit or course of study.
- Use knowledge of human growth and development of children and adolescents in providing effective teaching – learning situations.
- Become familiar with a variety of instructional materials and resources, evaluate and select those appropriate for the objective in teaching a unit lesson.
- Identify factors that influence the effectiveness of teaching-learning process and find ways to direct or control them.
- Apply the principles of evaluation and use the results of evaluation as a means for improving instruction.
- Develop efficient and effective practices for carrying out the routine management of a classroom.
- Establish rapport and appropriate means of interaction with individuals and small or large groups.
- Have the opportunity to participate in community activities which will enhance the professional growth of a teacher.

Additionally, [10] also listed some purposes of teaching practice as cited in [3] as follows;

- Provide the trainee with an opportunity to try out techniques.
- Create a situation of gradually increasing freedom within which the trainee can progress from simple to complex teaching.
- Provide trainees with an opportunity to have their teaching evaluated and constructively criticized.

- Provide trainees with exposure to real learners, their learning problems and the affective factors which influence such learning.
- Encouraging trainees to develop some criteria for self – evaluation.
- Help trainees develop their own style of teaching.
- Allow trainees to stimulate or approach the real teaching situation under sympathetic supervision.

When the purposes are put together, the main reasons for engaging student teachers in teaching practice can be vividly deduced by the researchers as:

- To allow student teachers approach a real teaching situation under supervision.
- To provide pre-service teachers with an opportunity to try out teaching techniques.
- To provide pre-service teachers with an opportunity to have their teaching evaluated and constructively criticized by their supervisors.
- To provide student teachers with an opportunity to reflect on the taught lesson and improve upon it.

The teaching practice session should give students the opportunity to observe, work with and learn from experienced and committed teachers at their respective schools. Students are required to improve their teaching abilities in the weeks that follow by applying their experience, understanding and skills in classroom situations in conjunction with their school mentors. Under the mentorship of the cooperating teacher, the student teacher is expected to function responsibly in the school. By the end of the teaching practice session, the student teacher is expected to demonstrate what he/she has learned in their future practice.

4. SUPERVISORS AND SUPERVISION

The University and Colleges of education supervisor holds the main responsibility for the general welfare of student teachers, and acts as the intermediary between the University/Education College and the schools to which their student teachers are assigned for teaching. The Supervisor works closely with both the student teacher and the school to ensure that each is fulfilled with their desires and expectations. The supervisor usually organizes or directs the work of others by giving direct

instructions, according to Weston, Grimshaw & Norton [11], although subordinate supervisors may be involved as additional layer between supervisor and worker. The type of professional relationship established between the School Cooperating Teacher, and the University/College of Education Supervisor is an important factor in the success of the supervised teaching practice experience of a student teacher. It is crucial that a sound team relationship is established, and that team members can connect with each other freely and honestly.

Supervisors are tasked with providing feedback on specific aspects of teacher practice, so that student teachers can improve their use of class time, the quality of their comments on the responses of students, their pedagogical practices or their relationship with their students. An educational manager may use different types of supervision, depending on the situation and purpose for which supervision is being performed [12]. The type of supervision styles are:

- Critical Friendship: The supervisor acts as a friend and guides the supervisee or the student teacher.
- Mentoring: the supervisor acts as a role model for the supervisee.
- Monitoring: The supervisor checks on progress and any problems as well as advising on solutions.
- Advisory: The supervisor assumes a relative superior position in terms of knowledge and skills.
- Clinical Supervisor: In this situation, the supervisor and supervisee engage in face – to – face interaction that is primarily based on the observation of performance and an emphasis in collegiality.
- Hard Accountability: In this type, the supervisor performs the traditional inspector's role, demanding strict accountability from the supervisee [12].

The most frequently used type of supervision in teacher training institutions for the preparation of teacher trainees is the clinical type of supervision of which the teaching practice in universities/educational colleges is no exception. Trained raters/supervisors score the lessons based on protocols of classroom observation developed by leading academics and experts in professional development. The raters evaluate everything from the ability of the teacher to create a positive learning environment and control his/her classroom to the ability to clarify concepts and give students valuable feedback.

However, when evaluating the teaching of a student teacher, the supervisor should take particular note of the following features for assessing his or her performance:

- Procedures or rules relating to pupils entering the class; record attendance and handling of late-comers.
- Set Induction or introduction to the lesson(s) (including methods used to get the class to “settle down”)
- Presentation of lesson (use of teaching aids, clarity of explanation and language, questioning techniques, teaching approach, pacing and use of blackboard, etc)
- Setting of class work, homework, tests, practical work and other related activities.
- Methods of giving instructions, comments, encouragements, praise, positive criticism, and so on.
- Methods of motivating the pupils (how to focus attention on the teaching; how to stimulate interest and how to improve pupils’ participation).
- Teaching styles (including teacher-pupil rapport).
- Methods of evaluating pupils understanding of the lesson(s).
- Methods of concluding a lesson (lesson summary, question and answer sessions, quizzes and discussions, etc.).

The supervisor supervises the student teacher in the classroom during a visit to the school and provides written feedback on the teaching performance assessment form to enable the student teacher to:

- relate their teaching experiences to previous academic training and current professional preparation and practice;
- use past learning and help himself/herself develop understandings by applying prior experience and knowledge in classroom situations;
- explain and reconcile differences between the philosophy or methods of the School Cooperating Teacher and those presented in the programs, observe and confer with the Student Teacher on a regular basis;
- review the Student Teacher’s lesson plans, Teaching File and reflections at each visit;
- encourage the pre-service teacher in self – reflection;

- notify the Director/Coordinator of Teaching Practice Office immediately at any hint of concern;
- make recommendations to the Director/Coordinator of Teaching Practice Office for transferring or removing the Student Teacher from a field placement or from the program after all reasonable alternatives have been pursued;
- complete Teaching Practice Evaluation for the Student Teacher’s graduation dossier on both a formative and summative basis;
- consult regularly with School Cooperating Teachers (Mentors);
- schedule conferences/meetings among the School Cooperating Teacher and Student Teacher and self as needed;
- collect the Summative Teaching Practice Assessment Form from the School Cooperating Teachers;
- complete the University/College of Education Supervisor’s Summative Teaching Practice Assessment Form; and
- deliver all Summative Teaching Practice Assessment Forms to the Teaching Practice Office Director/Coordinator in a timely manner.

5. SUPERVISIONS AND FEEDBACK

The school supervisors are usually the heads of the school, senior assistants to the head of the school, departmental heads, tutors and officers from the educational supervisory units or mentors in various schools on the teaching and learning agenda. [13] described supervision as an instructional act of leadership in which the ultimate purpose is to enhance instruction in classrooms. While helping to improve the cycle of teaching and learning, it is often seen as a mechanism for ensuring the formal curriculum applied in the classroom. Most specifically, the supervisory process will provide positive input to teachers leading to improved motivation and success for the teachers. There is also no denying it that in teacher training institutions the supervisory process in teacher education helps assess student teacher competence in terms of instructor experience (knowledge), abilities (skills), and attitudes.

Feedback about the effectiveness of an individual’s behavior in performance-oriented organizations has long been recognized as essential for learning and motivation. Human performance technology accepts feedback as an effective and efficient performance-enhancing

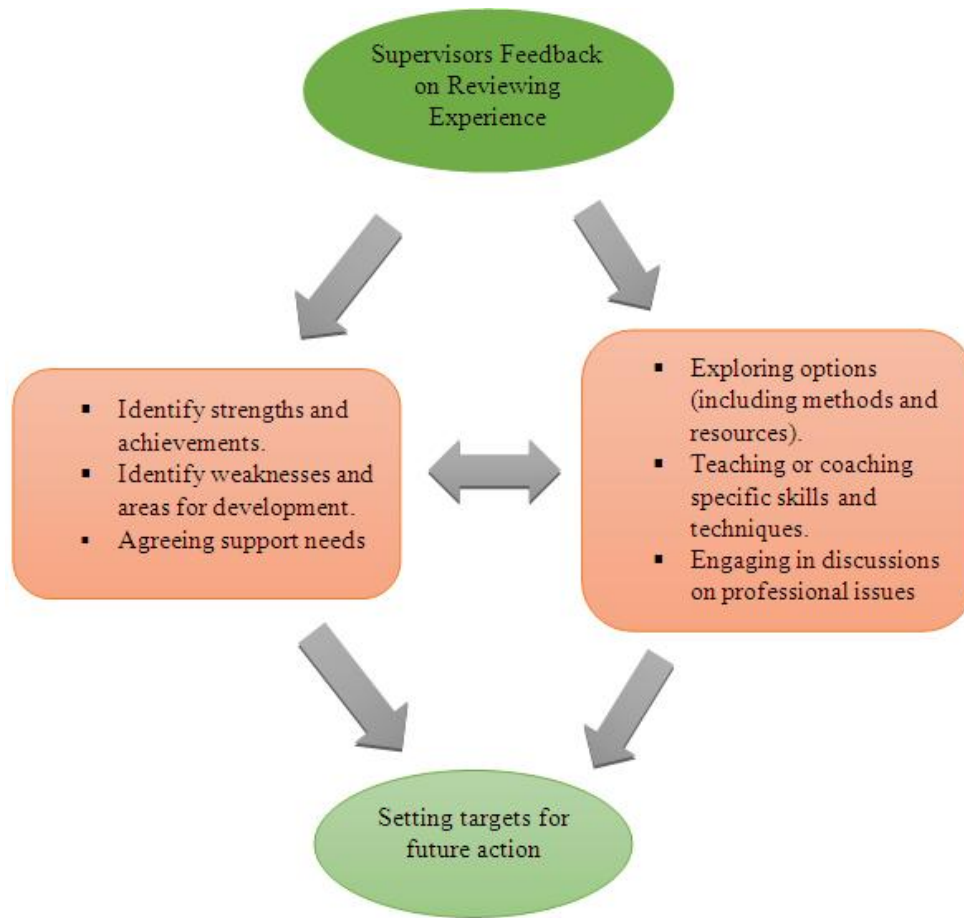


Fig. 1. Conceptual framework showing relation between supervisors feedback and the student teachers future practice

technique. Therefore, providing feedback is central to the supervisory process, as it constitutes a significant type of instruction. According to Hyland [14], feedback helps students understand 'the norms and values of their particular disciplines, and thus facilitates students' enculturation into disciplinary literacies and epistemologies'. Certain feedback roles, as [3] describes, include those that help a student discover his or her own standpoint, obtain appreciation for his or her "own work," and find ways to convey it in his or her own voice.

In other words, feedback is important to help teachers become self-reliant in all work areas. To achieve a level of independence is not something that materializes overnight: it is developed over time as supervisors interact with their supervisees and provide feedback on their performance. Regardless of the timing of the feedback, the details, recommendation or advice

is provided by the supervisor or supervisory team that is (are) considered to be the 'expert(s)'. It is believed that the right supervision supports teaching and professional development, enhances personal and collaborative enquiry, promotes critique, and contributes to an evolving pedagogy [3]. Adentwi further stresses that the supervisor can be seen as "a teacher of teachers". In the opinion of [15] they suggested that supervision is not autocratic but collaborative and interactive. This is often more teacher-centered, rather than being an operation centered on authoritative supervisors. Therefore, feedback from supervisors during teaching practice can also be seen as a very valuable tool for improving the student teacher's level of competence which will contribute to professionalism.

In teaching practice experience, the supervisors feedback on reviewing pre-service teachers

performance aid in identifying his/her strength and weaknesses. This provides an opportunity for the pre-service teacher to agree on support needs, through engaging the supervisors in discussions on professional issues involving exploring options (including methods and resources) and teaching or coaching specific skills and techniques. Consequently, it is expected that the engagement between supervisors and the pre-service teachers during teaching practice will influence the pre-service teachers classroom actions thereby guiding them in setting targets for future action.

6. CHALLENGES IN SUPERVISION

Given the fact that teaching practice is a very important component of teacher preparedness for pre-service; it faces growing problems. [16], on his part found that some supervisors recommend that student teachers use their old teaching method, although this method might be obsolete and become dissatisfied if it is not used. He also asserted that some supervisors might not be professionals who seem to criticize subject matter incorrectly which confuses students in the end. It was found that most student teachers are not completely prepared for the teaching practice, thus being confused and messing up teaching when supervisors visit during those periods [16].

Problems connected with teaching practice, either on the side of supervisors or student teachers, [3] is of the view that:

- Supervisors who passed through Colleges of Education are not properly qualified to operate as supervisors without special training offered them to become professionals.
- Some of these supervisors are dictatorial by not allowing student teachers express themselves and exercise any initiative during post – observation conference.
- Student teachers are not exposed to the wide spectrum of administrative work and co-curricular activities that they will be required to perform when they pass out as qualified teachers but all is centered on classroom situations.
- Student teachers do not take their teaching practice as serious as was intended for. Such students neglect to do what is expected of them when the supervisor is out of sight. Feedbacks of supervisors are neglected by student teachers instead of

using them to improve upon their performance later on.

- Sometimes getting schools for student teachers to do their teaching practice become a problem since most schools are unwilling to allow them interrupt in their school program and at times see them as inexperienced teachers who are coming to spoil the academic performance of their students.

7. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

In education, the ultimate purpose of the teacher is to help students to learn often in a school to achieve their aims. The aims of teaching entail a course of study, planning of lesson, including learning and thinking skills. The teaching profession demands full devotion towards continuous learning as the importance of teachers in this modern era has assumed new dimension. Teachers do not only have to impart subject matter to pupils but also help them in the use or application of knowledge and skills for developing their abilities and talents with which they were born. The success of any educational system depends, among others, on how good teachers are, the kind of training teachers go through is very important since we cannot replace teachers with any other type of instructional material. It has been well said that teachers are the best educational system. So, in an educational system, the teacher is the basic factor for its success. A teacher is more than what is commonly talked about. His duties of profession have many other dimensions [17].

In order to attend to the growing concern of teacher quality and teacher shortage, it is crucial to examine the core of the problem, that is, the type of teacher preparation and training being provided. The primary aim of teacher training is to develop educational skills that are compatible with education policies and to enable teachers to deliver these policies. As a first step, it is required that the developmental needs of our schools, of our teachers and the teacher educators are identified. Secondly, a framework that provides a systematic recording tool helping institutions to ascertain and assure their quality provision needs to be evolved. Realizing that the quality of the teachers as long regarded is a professional responsibility rather than a policy issue, and the need to evolve a framework and evaluation tool to help institutions in quality assurance and continuous improvement. Therefore, teacher preparation is linked to teacher performance.

DISCLAIMER

The products used for this research are commonly and predominantly use products in our area of research and country. There is absolutely no conflict of interest between the authors and producers of the products because we do not intend to use these products as an avenue for any litigation but for the advancement of knowledge. Also, the research was not funded by the producing company rather it was funded by personal efforts of the authors.

COMPETING INTERESTS

Authors have declared that no competing interests exist.

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