

Reflective Practices to Student Teachers on Internship Programme in Ghana: Effectiveness and Challenges

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Abstract: The research was undertaken at Komenda College of Education to consider the effectiveness of reflective practices used as a means of recapping student teachers (STs) classroom teaching and learning. Reflective Practices are ways of equipping STs with core competencies, confidence experiences as professional teachers to mitigate complexities and challenges of becoming a teacher: the population for the study were all the three hundred and eighty (380) final year STs who completed their internship during 2018/2019 academic year. The researchers used both quota and random sample techniques to sample one hundred and sixty (160) final year student teachers as prerequisite for becoming professional teachers. STs were selected from our partnership schools. The researchers used quantitative method for the study. The instruments used to collect data for the study was questionnaire. The researchers used the questionnaire to collect the initial data. This means were used to check the consistencies of the responses that the STs gave. The questionnaire was offer comprehensive data for explanation to the issue at stake. The findings were that reflective practices help equip the STs with important skills and competencies that will strengthen the STs Competencies and to enhance their confidence.

Key Words: Student Teachers, Mentors, Lead-mentors, Partnership Schools, Internship. On-campus Teaching Practice.

I. INTRODUCTION

The role that teachers play in the development of education in every nation cannot be easily quantified. Teachers are major agent of change of which the school is the most prominent and structured avenue teachers' use for their practices. It is an indispensable fact that if the society is to be changed and transformed then the youths which are in the school need to be changed. Comenius as cited in Ampadu and Ofori (2007) commented that education should begin in the early years of a child's life to fulfil nature's obligation before their minds get corrupted. Teachers are very versatile in fitting into any profession apart from their normal teaching profession with ease. The effectiveness of teaching, learning and professional developments have become very imperative for students to function appropriately to reach their potential and achievement of their goals. Teachers learning have been and will persist to be continuous processes that promote teachers' teaching skills, mastering new of knowledge, developing new proficiencies, which in turn, help improve students' learning. This professionalism would be possible with effective reflective practices.

Dampson (2019) noted that basic school heads face challenge of tapping teachers' expertise and experience to facilitate

enlightened decisions and building better educational programmes. With this assertion made here indicates that decision making is essential in the classroom management. There are lot of skills and qualities that teachers are expected to acquire. These skills as Dampson (2019) commented that decision making serves as important conflict resolution tools which allow the members of the school environments to work out their differences before the educational process is hampered and students learning diminished. For Student teachers to be able to make prudent decisions require effective reflective practices.

T-TEL (2018) asserted that Teacher Education should be viewed as an applied professional developmental qualification that requires student teachers to apply the concepts and strategies, they are simultaneously learning about in their course work within practical settings. With the current process much, emphasis is given to the practical aspect of the teaching profession. As a result, mentors and lead-mentors are given adequate training that will equip them with skills to manage Student teachers and to organise reflective practices with them.

T-TEL (2018) commented that in understanding and demonstration of the qualities of a good teacher as represented through the domains of the National Teaching Standards, through nine essential skills as:

- Planning for Teaching and Learning,
- Assessment for Pupils progress,
- Teaching for inclusivity and equity
- Classroom enquiry and reflective practice
- Action research
- Professional portfolio building
- Professional Values
- Management and leadership qualities and
- Core and transferable skills.

These competencies were given much consideration in the New Educational Reform which took off in Ghana commencing from the 2018-2019 academic year. In this New Education Reforms in the Colleges of Education take into consideration effective reflective practices among Student teachers, mentors and lead-mentors "Pre- During and Post" internship orientations. Student teachers are expected to keep a journal to record every important activity in. Colleges of Education (C.O.E) Tutors group Student teachers and discuss their write-up and their observation and experience. Darling-

Hammond, Furger, Shields, and Sutchter (2016) asserted that in teacher preparations regular teachers (mentors) are required to do reflective activities with the Student teachers. When tutors from C.O.Es supervise the Student teachers they also take the Student s through reflective practices.

All these are aimed at equipping the Student teachers with all the needed acumen and skills that will make them competent and capable to face the challenges of their chosen profession. Davis (2003) pointed out that not everyone can teach. Therefore, teachers require a lot of skills such as, Knowledge of content, child development, classroom management, diversity of teacher competencies. In Ghana, National Teaching Council (N.T.C.) newly trained teacher are expected to write licence examination so as to be able to practice as professional teachers since 2018. They (teachers) are expected to meet professional standards as enshrined in the National Teachers' Standards for Ghana (NTS 2017). The Standards are divided into three main domains such as, Professional Values and Attitudes (PVA), Professional Knowledge (P.K) and Professional Practice (P.P). These support the argument raised by Nolan (2008).

Nolan (2008) argued that unless the standards and quality of teaching in the Seychelles classrooms significantly improved, it was unlikely for the standard of the Seychelles workforce to improve. This means that it was very essential in that year to see to the improvement and sustenance of professional teaching standards in Seychelles. The study argues that the dominance of effective teaching practices dependent on improved teacher learning and support, which would in turn impact students' learning and achievements. Further effective teaching practice (internship programme) will enhance teacher competencies.

Despite these efforts made to ensure teacher competencies, student teachers make some complains about their chosen profession as teachers. This is not very particular to only Ghana. Bharagava in 2009 remarked that student teachers often complain that they forgot the content matter and feel nervous when their lecturers sit and observe them teaching. They may show some lack of confidence and courage to stand before the classroom. They may also feel anxious of possible mistakes that may be very unpardonable. This to the researcher may not be surprising because "experience they say is the best teacher". Hence Student teachers need to take reflective practices with all seriousness. Bhargava (2009) commented that student teachers often complain that they forgot the content matter and feel nervous when their lecturers sit at the end of the classroom and observe them when teaching.

This conflict can be due to beginning teachers' challenge of whether to teach in the ways they were taught in their teacher preparation programs, which are best for young children, or to surrender to the school climate and teach in ways that contradict what they were taught (Brashier & Norris, 2008). Student teachers are at a dilemma of how to prepare their

lesson note as they get to the field to teach. Many of the mentors prepare a very brief lesson plan which is different from what Student teachers were asked to prepare their lessons when they were in Colleges. They at time try to use teacher-centred methods rather than the child-centred approaches that are expected to be used in the lower grades for better and appropriate students' participation understanding. In such an instance, reflective practices are inevitable. Yoh (2019) considered reflective teaching as an effective vehicle for improving pre-service teachers' critical thinking in schools. He continued that it is a process that helps teachers to collect, record and analyse everything that happened during the lesson.

Wanzare, (2007), claimed that it is not surprising that beginning teachers were challenged to encourage and facilitate positive behaviour and relationships with their students, and the outcomes were not always to their expectations. Teachers are supposed to be role models for their students to emulate. The classrooms are made of students with diversified characters to which some are very difficult to control and managed. For STs should be well organised reflective practices to mentor STs and beginning teachers. It is good for teacher educators to take reflective practices as a component of the teacher preparation in the colleges.

Objectives of the Study

The objectives of the study are:

- To explore the varied experiences student teachers acquire from their mentors C.o.E. tutors during their internship programme.
- To consider problems STs encounter with their pupils in their teaching and learning.

Research Questions

- What are the major experiences student teachers acquire from their mentors and C.o.E. tutors about their planning and implementation of teaching and learning?
- What are the problems that student teachers face with their mentors and students?

III. METHODOLOGY

The research approach used for the article was quantitative research design. Creswell & Creswell in 2018 and Leavy 2017. considered quantitative approaches to research centring on achieving objectivity, control and precise measurement. They were of the view that, methodologically, these approaches rely on deductive design aimed at refuting or building evidence in favour of specific theories and hypotheses. The researchers used descriptive survey aimed at checking the effectiveness and challenges teacher-trainees experience and perception during their internship programmes to establish the discernment concerning the nature, effectiveness and challenges of internship programme offered to Student teachers through reflective practices. The

researchers collected quantitative data and made then generalisation.

Pelham & Blanton in 2007 define case study as the systematic analysis of the experiences of a particular person or group of persons to serve as studies in their own right. It often serves as source of inspiration for more traditional scientific investigations such as experimentation exercises. The researchers used questionnaire to collect quantitative data from the students.

Population

The population for the study was all the final year students of Komenda College during 2018/2019 academic year. They were made up of three hundred and eighty (380) final year student teachers from the College.

Sample

Out of three hundred and eighty (380) respondents the researchers used one hundred and sixty Student teachers which represent 42.1 % of the final year students which was highly represented. The researchers used both quota and random sample to select the respondents.

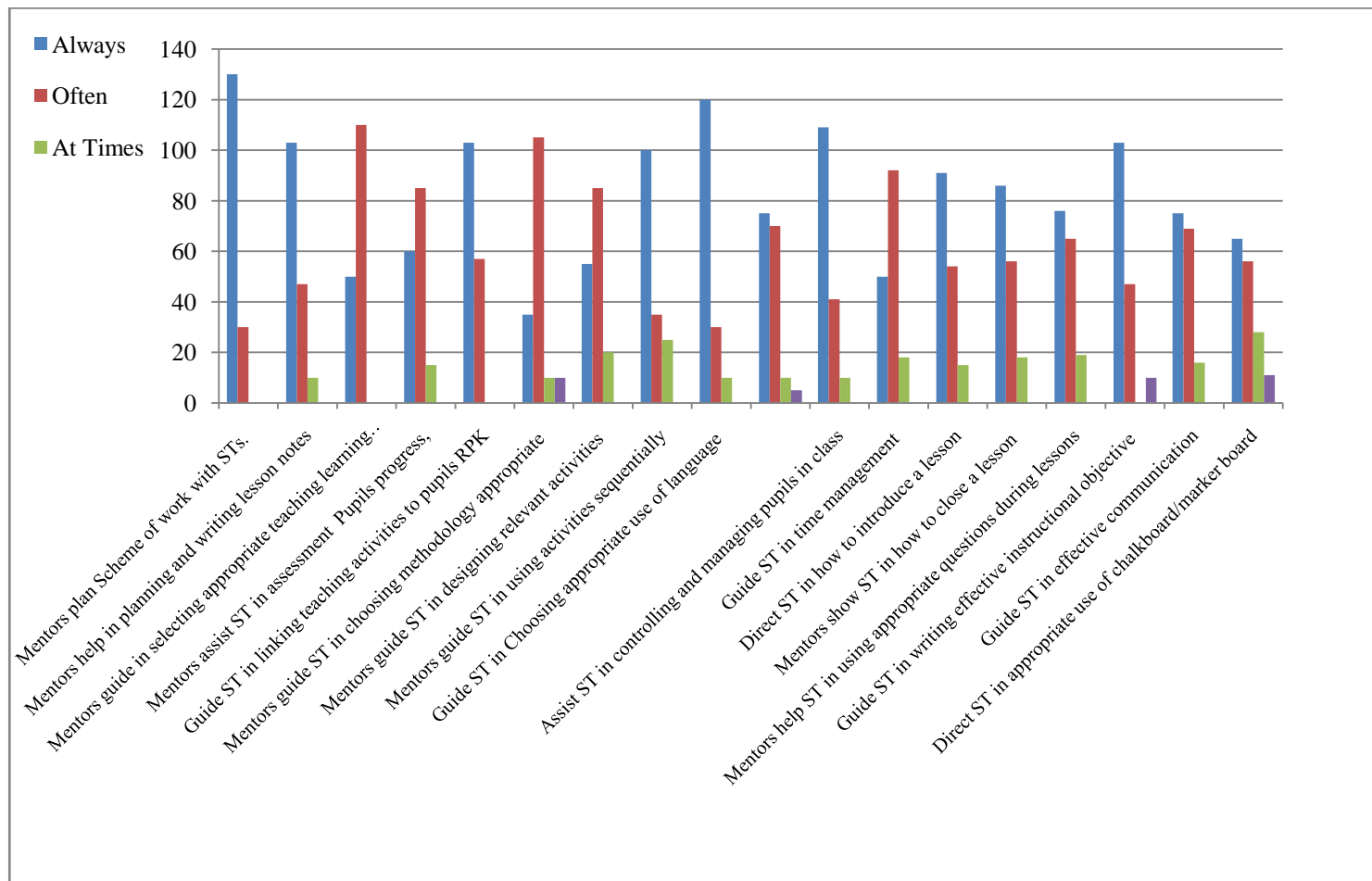
Instruments

The instruments used for data collection were questionnaire. A questionnaire is an instrument comprising a set of questions disseminated to a sample of research respondents in order that the researcher receives clear responses to a given phenomenon, which seems to be straight forward and relatively pain-free (Wittrock 2005, Castle 2010 & Sidhu 2010). The questionnaires used were adopted from Panda and Nayak (2014) work.

Data Analysis

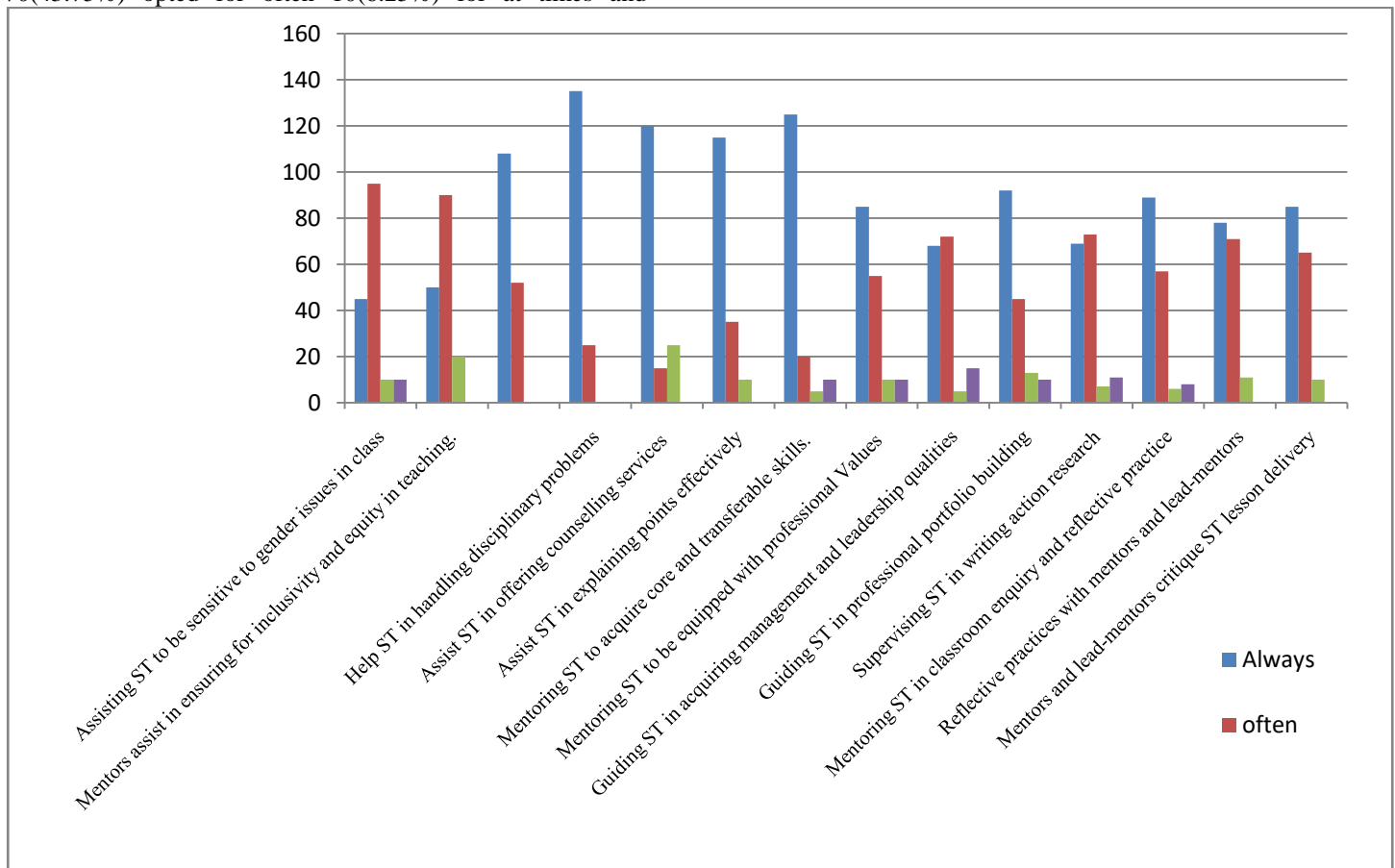
Data collected from the Student teachers from the partnership schools were analysed into bar graphs in figure one and two. Figure one has to do with activities that mentors and lead-mentors are expected to perform collaboratively with Student teachers, lead-mentors and mentors as advance preparation before they enter the classroom. Per the regulations two Student teachers are expected to be in one class at a time with the mentor. Figure two considered activities that take place after the Student teachers completed their presentation.

Findings



Data from figure one indicated that as many as 130 (81.25%) were of the view that their mentors always plan scheme of work with them as only 30 indicated their mentors often plan with them, 103 (64.4%) were of the view that mentors always help them in planning and writing lesson notes with 47 (29.4%) and 10 (6.25%) ticking often and at times. Also 50 (31.25%) and 110 (68.75%) going for always that mentors guide them in selecting appropriate teaching learning resources (TLR). Further, 60(37.5%) said always mentors assist STs in assessment of pupils' progress, 85 (53.13%) and 15 (9.38%) selected often and at times, on mentors guiding STs in linking teaching activities to pupils RPK 103(64.4%) opted for always and 57(35.6%) for often. As to whether Mentors guide STs in choosing methodology appropriate 35(21.9%) was for always, 105(65.6%) for often with 10 (6.25%) each selecting at times and not always, mentors guide STs in designing relevant activities, 55(34.4%) were for always, 85(53.13%) for often while 20(12.5%) chose at times. Mentors guide STs in using activities sequentially, 35(21.9%) opted for always, 105(65.6%) chose often 10 (6.25%) each chosen at times and not always. Do mentors guide STs in choosing appropriate use of language 120(75%) selected always, 30(18.75%) went for often with 10(6.25%) going for at times. Mentoring STs during demonstration and experimentation lesson delivery 75(46.9%) opted for always, 70(43.75%) opted for often 10(6.25%) for at times and

5(3.13%) chosen not always. As to whether mentors assist ST in controlling and managing pupils in class 109(68.13%) indicated always, 41(25.6%) and 10(6.25%) going for often and at times. The researchers wanted to ascertain if mentors guide ST in effective time management, 50(31.25%) indicated always, 92(57.5%) for often while 18(11.25%). Do mentors direct STs about how to introduce lessons 91(56.9%) indicated always, 54(33.75%) stated often while 15(9.38%) selected at times. The next was to find out if mentors show STs in how to close a lesson or not, 86(53.75%) with 56(35%) and 18(11.25%) chosen often and at times. As to if mentors help STs in using appropriate questions during lessons delivery 76(47.5%) were of the view that mentors always help STs 65(40.6%) and 19(11.9%) ticked often and at times. Another variable to consider if mentors guide STs in writing effective instructional objectives, 103(64.4%) indicated always, 47(29.4%) often and 10(6.25%) selected at times. As to whether mentors guide STs in effective communication with during lesson delivery, 115(71.9%) went for always, with 69(43.13%) and 16(10%) ticking often and at times. Also, to ascertain if mentors direct STs in appropriate use of chalkboard/marker board 65(40.6%) circled always while 56(35%), 28(17.5%) and 11(6.9%) chosen often, at times and not always



Data from figure two indicated that 45(28.13%) were of the view that their mentors always Assisting STs to be sensitive to handle gender issues in class, 95(59.4%) chose always 45(28.13%) often and 10 (6.25%) selecting at times and not always. Do mentors assist in ensuring inclusivity and equity in teaching, 50(31.25%) decided on always, 90(56.25%) and 20(12.5%) chose often and at times. The researchers wanted to know if mentors guide STs when they show nervousness, fear and lack of confidence, 108(67.5%) picked always with 52(32.5%) going for often. To check whether mentors help STs in handling disciplinary problems in class as many as 135(84.4%) opted for always as 25(15.6%) were for often. Do mentors assist STs in offering counselling services as part of their responsibilities? 120(75%) said always, 15(9.4%) opted for often with 25(15.6%) decided for at times. To ascertain whether mentors assist STs in explaining points effectively after lesson delivery 115(71.9%) decided on always, 35(21.9%) and 10(6.25%) deciding on often and at times. Further, the researchers wanted to check if STs are mentored to acquire core and transferable skills. 125(78.13%) picked always, 20(12.5%) said often with 5(3.13%) and 10(6.25%) going for at times and not always. On if STs were taken through mentoring so as to be equipped with professional Values 85(53.13%) decided on always 55(34.4%) decided on often, with 10(6.25%) each concluding on at times and not always. Do mentors guide STs in acquiring management and leadership qualities so as to be able to manage their class 69(43.13%) for always with 73(45.6%), 7(4.4%), and 11(6.9%) settling on often, at times and not always. Were STs mentored in classroom enquiry and reflective practices after everyday teaching and learning, 89(55.6%) settled on always, 57(35.6%) settled on often while 6(3.8%) and 8(5%) went for at times and not always. The researchers wanted to justify whether the STs were taken through reflective practices with mentors and lead-mentors, 78(48.75%) said always 71(44.4%) and 11(6.9%) deciding on often and at times. The final question was to ensure if mentors and lead-mentors critique STs lesson deliveries 85(53.13%) were for always with 65(40.6%) and 10(6.25%) going for often and at times.

IV. RESEARCH FINDINGS

The researchers meant to check whether the STs were offered efficient and effective mentoring strategies to see to build confidence, professional practice, values and content knowledge to perform their professional duties. The findings indicated best performance in the following areas:

- Mentors planning Scheme of work with STs before they get to the classroom to teach.
- Mentors helping STs in advance planning and writing lesson notes for their dairy.
- Mentors guiding STs in linking teaching activities to pupils (RPK)
- Mentors guiding STs in using activities sequentially
- Guiding STs in Choosing appropriate use of language

- Guiding STs when they show nervousness, fear and lack of confidence
- Assisting STs in controlling and managing pupils in class
- Helping STs in handling disciplinary problems
- Assisting STs in offering counselling services
- Guiding STs in writing effective instructional objective
- Mentoring STs to acquire core and transferable skills.
- Assisting STs in explaining points effectively

Suggestions

There were areas which need to be improved upon. The researchers suggest that the following areas need to be improved. For these to be achieved lead-mentors, circuit supervisors and all stakeholders in education should improve upon their surveillances and monitoring to help produce competent, confident professional teachers for the nation. The areas include:

- Mentors guide STs in selecting appropriate teaching learning resources (TLR)
- Mentors assist STs in assessment of pupils' progress,
- Mentors guide STs in choosing methodology appropriate
- Mentors Assisting STs to be sensitive to gender issues in class.
- Mentors guide STs in time management
- Mentors assisting STs in ensuring for inclusivity, equality and equity in teaching.
- Mentors guide STs in designing relevant activities

V. CONCLUSION

In conclusion necessary steps to solve concerned issues related to internship programmes. Suitable policies must be organized and STs must be educated to cope with these stresses. Such challenges could be ameliorated remedial instructional designed for STs. Areas where respondents chose at times and not always to should be given attention to. The study was conducted with the STs in mind therefore every aspect that will help improve the skills, competencies, and to help boost their professional capabilities should be looked at.

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