

# Mentoring: Role of Mentors in the Professional Life of Student-Teachers

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## ABSTRACT

Mentoring has gained recognition as being a major factor and component in the training and professional development of individuals across various sectors such as education, health, commerce and industry. Mentoring is thus described generally as involving helping and giving back information to the student teacher without any unqualified criticism or laydown streamlines. Thus, the study investigated the essence of mentoring programme in shaping the professional behaviour of student-teachers in the Assin North Municipality. The study was conducted in the Assin North Municipal Assembly in the Central Region of Ghana. The descriptive survey design was adopted for the study. A sample of 200 student-teachers and 130 teacher-mentors were selected for the study through simple random sampling. The instrument for collecting data was adapted. The data were analyzed using mean and standard deviation. The study revealed that mentors provided help to student-teachers in unearthing their potentials in teaching, acted as role-models for student-teachers, and helped improve teaching abilities of student-teachers through regular feedback. It was recommended that authorities of Colleges of Education fully prepare teacher-mentors to effectively assist their student-teachers during the mentorship period.

**Keywords** –Mentoring, Student-teacher, mentor teacher, Mentee, Professional

## INTRODUCTION

Mentoring has gained recognition as being a major factor and component in the training and professional development of individuals across various sectors such as education, health, commerce and industry (Roberts, 2000). Teaching, like any other profession, involves roles and responsibilities that are quite demanding. When student teachers start their mentorship in schools, they are frequently expected to take on the same tasks as their more experienced coworkers. They are frequently penalized by being assigned the least appealing and challenging teaching assignments. They are also required to adopt and become familiar with existing norms, networks, and behavioural styles and gaining insight into why specific schools have distinct characteristics.

Flanagan (2006) acknowledges that it takes time to learn the means to handle classes, educate and assess a large number of children with varying needs and skills, gain mastery in teaching-related records keeping and interact effectively with parents. One strategy that helps student teachers acquire the needed competences and skills for effective teaching and learning is having in place a well-designed mentoring programme. The support system provided to student-teachers is essential in improving their present and future professional experiences. This creates a need for mentorship.

Graham (1993) argues that the mentor teachers who lead and encourage student teachers, as well as the places where the experiences take place, are both vital to the effectiveness of the teaching practice experience. These two critical components in the training of teachers are well catered for by having in place a well-designed mentoring programme. Mentoring is a complex idea to describe, despite the fact that it is

not wholly new (Roberts, 2000). In the context of teaching, mentoring occurs during professional placement, when student-teachers are paired with classroom instructors to study, improve, and make practical their teaching abilities (The Queensland College of Teachers, 2007).

In mentoring, student-teachers are given the chance to acquaint themselves with total school culture in terms of knowledge of school curriculum, managing the behaviour of students and parents, classroom management strategies, assessment of learning needs of learners among others. Mentoring also provides student-teachers with the chances to lead thereby improving their self-confidence and boldness professionally (Gilles & Wilson, 2004). Most definitions of mentoring imply a relationship that is by nature in the form of a hierarchy where the mentor has more experience than the student teacher, or in which the mentor has or may supply information and expertise that the student teacher needs or requires to succeed (McCormack & West, 2006; Aladejana, Aladejana & Ehindero, 2006; Fowler & O’Gorman, 2005; Price & Chen, 2003).

Mentor teachers are experienced professionals who are knowledgeable about contemporary educational challenges and are especially qualified to assist student-teachers in navigating the rigors of the practical work, particularly with regards to curriculum and classroom management. Preparing teachers to teach requires providing the necessary platforms so that student teachers can enhance their cognitive abilities, experience level and overall skills of the teaching profession. Smith (2007) captures this clearly by stating that mentoring is a cycle which brings up individuals holistically and not a partial development. The expected outcomes of mentoring for understudy-teachers include improved basic characteristics like communicating skill and good interpersonal skills. Again, they gain more noteworthy expertise and forecasting abilities, as they become powerful conveyance of procedures and assessment strategies as well (Hudson, 2013).

In literature on school-based mentoring (Herrara, Grossman, Kauh, & Mc Maken, 2011; Karcher, 2008; Randolph & Johnson, 2008), it has been established that mentorship programmes can improve academic work, enhance attendance while reducing truancy and tardiness and at the same time improving the consistency with which assignments and home-works are completed and submitted. Hobson (2002) contends that mentoring is so critical to the formation of educators and along these lines all educators ought to know about the significance of mentoring and uphold the nature of relationship between them and their mentors. Aside these, Hobson added that teachers should be aware of the challenges which could hinder mentors from performing their roles effectively.

The effect of mentorship on mentee teachers’ performance on the job and the impact of the nature of relationship provided by mentors on mentee teacher’ identity is that the mentor has a wealth of experience in comparison to the student-teacher and can also impact the student-teacher with knowledge and skills which can be useful during teaching (McCormack & West, 2006; Aladejana, Aladejana & Ehindero, 2006). In line with this argument, Fairbanks, Freedman and Kahn (2000, p.103) saw mentoring in teacher education as “complex social interactions that mentor teachers and student teachers’ construct and negotiate for a variety of professional purposes and in response to the contextual factors they encounter”.

Mentoring can thus be said to be a strong interpersonal relationship comprising planning together, doing together and reflecting together all geared towards preparing the student teacher professionally. Mentoring, according to Smith (2007), is a process that brings about the full development of the individual rather than some parts of the individual. Mentoring, according to Kwan and Lopez (2005), is both a relationship and a process. Additionally, in the light of Fairbanks et al. (2000)’s definition, context is also an important aspect of mentoring. Regardless, most definitions in the literature fail to take into account all three aspects of mentoring-connection, process, and context.

Ghana has been consistent in reviewing and introducing reforms in its education sector and these reforms

have often seen changes to the nature of teacher education. One of such reforms is the introduction of the mentorship programme in the colleges of education. Over the years, the journey of preparing students to become professional teachers can never end without school-based mentoring, since it is a significant component of the training process. Mentoring as part of teacher training education has come to stay as a result of its inherent ability to equip students with the needed skills and competencies for the teaching profession. The traditional approach, which embraced supervising student teachers on teaching practice in college-based and school-based teaching practice is now a thing of the past. However, supervision on the other hand is gradually fading-off as far as teacher education is concerned, since the model is regarded as an obsolete practice (Zeegers, 2005).

The Assin North Municipality has one College of Education which is the Foso College of Education. Foso College of Education began in November 1965 as a Teacher Training College. The College was established with the aim of training teachers to become useful citizens in the development of the country. Currently, there are two main programmes run in the college. These are Bachelor of Education (JHS) and Diploma in Basic Education. At the core of these programmes is to train professional teachers who would teach in basic schools in Ghana. The extent to which mentorship impacts on the practice of student-teachers even though is not in doubt as shown in the literature, there is the need to contextualize the knowledge. In this sense, this current inquiry sought to examine the role of mentorship in shaping their professional behaviours of student-teachers in the Assin-North Municipality.

## **RESEARCH OBJECTIVE**

Examine the roles of mentors in shaping the professional behaviour of student-teachers in the Assin North Municipality.

## **RESEARCH QUESTION**

What are the roles of mentors in shaping the professional behaviour of student-teachers in the Assin North Municipality?

## **THEORETICAL VIEWPOINT**

### **Traditional Model of Mentoring**

Traditional model of mentoring involves the process where the model typically emphasizes on individuals whose skills and abilities are sharpened and shaped by others outside the formal educational setting, mainly in aspects of management (McInerney & Hagger, 1994). According to Cogan (1972) and Goldhammer (1969), in clinical supervision models, the supervisor starts the process by giving explanations of the aim and structure of the supervision to the supervisee. Therefore, mentors greatly impact student-teachers (Sullivan, 1980). After that, the student-teacher develops a lesson, discusses it with his/her supervisor before a formal observation begins at what time the supervisor would observe and assess the student-teacher's instruction.

Following the observation, the supervisor and novice meet for a post-teaching conference to analyze the lesson, make any necessary improvements, and devise a strategy to put the changes into action. For succeeding lessons, the procedure is repeated. Mentoring models are distinguished by their narrow emphasis on only minor array of topics or issues such as cultural adjustment, lesson planning, and teaching methods. Also, traditional teaching and learning model which involves seeing the mentor as the provider and assessor of knowledge while the student-teacher is seen as the passive recipient of knowledge and feedback.

### **Reform-Minded Model of Mentoring**

Wang and Odell, (2002) ascertained that the main objective of mentors in this model is to help novices in the teaching profession to bridge the conflicts which might exist between the teacher's personality and professionalism. As a result, the focus is less on assisting the student-teacher in building topic understandings or teaching practices and more on assisting the teacher in transitioning into the teaching culture by cultivating a healthy professional uniqueness and positive concept or view of self. In this way, the mentor's job is similar to that of a counsellor, assisting the student-teacher in identifying and working through any needs, challenges, or concerns as assurance in the position of a teacher grows. Mentors that follow this paradigm are expected to have good interpersonal skills, such as the capacity to listen carefully, detect needs, and assist others in developing boldness (West, 2016).

### **Differentiated Coaching Model**

Kise (2009) described differentiated coaching as a unique model. This model focuses on the differences which exist between the personality of the mentor and the mentee. The bases of this emanate from the fact that "teachers form their practice around what they do best, their strengths are related to their own personalities and learning styles, their personalities and learning styles drive their core educational beliefs, and changing their teaching practices means changing those core beliefs" (p. 147). Thus, the mentor does not view the mentee as being less open to change, but instead, asks, "How can I adjust my coaching style to meet the needs of this teacher?" (p. 147). The idea that people have varied learning styles and different ways of processing information is central to the approach. As a result, mentoring tactics vary depending on the relationship.

### **Systematic Training Model**

Another type of mentorship defined by Maynard and Furlong (1994) is systematic training. In this paradigm, the mentor serves as a systematic trainer, monitoring the mentee while teaching on a set timetable, offering feedback on desirable skills, and coaching on a list of behaviors that are primarily established by others. The mentee is gradually encouraged to take on more tasks for teaching and learning.

### **Apprenticeship Model of Mentoring**

Skills used in teaching are regarded to be "best gained through emulation of experienced practitioners and by supervised practice" under an apprenticeship model of mentorship (Hillgate Group, 1989). Apprenticeship is believed to be more important than teaching in this paradigm, and the mentee just has to work with a colleague with more experience so as to learn how to teach (Furlong & Maynard, 1994, p. 78). By assisting the beginner in making sense of all that is happening and by giving "recipes" that work, the mentor serves as a guide and translator. For example, a mentee could collaborate with the mentor to create a lesson or unit, but only teach a tiny portion of the lesson. As a result, the mentee gets a taste of what it's like to be a teacher while avoiding the onerous work of teaching.

### **Mentoring and Professional Development of Student-Teachers**

The majority of instructors operate alone in their classrooms, protected by autonomy and non-interference standards (Smylie & Hart, 1999; Stigler & Hiebert, 1999). The teaching culture does not sufficiently embolden instructors to observe a colleague's skills or to share their knowledge with other experts. For the seasoned instructors, this culture of solitude and isolation resulted in loneliness and a lack of contact. Immersion in a setting that provides feedback, according to Dewey (1959), is the best learning condition because it allows learners to conceive things via direct experience and reflection.

Mentoring programmes, which provide a collaborative atmosphere in which mentors and student-teachers explore new ways together, may help to alleviate some of this. Promoting teacher observation and discussion may inspire the mentor to build skills for ongoing learning and fresh enthusiasm for their profession and employment (Ragins&Kram, 2007). Mentoring is an option for school leaders to address the professional and emotional concerns of new teachers and student-teachers (Brockbank& McGill, 2006).

Mentoring, according to research, provides unique learning experiences and has an influence on professional and educational development, which in turn has an impact on the adult learner's progress (Carter, 2004; Hendricken, 2001). Mentoring connections, according to researchers in applied psychology and management, provide a way for businesses to exchange information, foster learning, and improve intellectual capacity (Tannenbaum, Lorenzet, & Smith-Jentsch, 2005; Hezlett, 2005; Lankau&Scandura, 2002).

In her analysis of mentoring, MacCallum (2007) noted that the collaborative model is a model in which the mentor with more experience supports the protégé; nonetheless, teamwork and exchange of ideas and information benefit both persons' professional growth. She also claimed that, while the mentor primarily serves as a facilitator, both the mentor and the mentee participate in reflection and professional growth.

### **Mentoring Effects on Education**

Chandler and Kram (2005) were particularly interested in the effects of mentoring relationships on individual careers and organizations. Given the financial investment made by organizations in mentoring programmes, it was imperative for a study to focus on the influence of relationships on mentor and mentee results, as well as a determination of whether the program improves organizational effectiveness. According to research, the most important school-related element connected with student accomplishment is the quality of instruction (Rothman, 2004). The knowledge and experience of teachers have the greatest impact on how effectively children learn. Quality teacher preparation is therefore paramount in the school establishment. The focus of the mentoring programme is to make sure that teachers are well equipped for their utmost role. Any phenomenon which can enhance teacher-education is an important issue to explore.

According to school improvement research, professional development must be oriented on conversation and group action in order to tackle future educational difficulties (Hipp& Huffman, 2004). Mentors serve as sponsors of educational reform initiatives as proactive change agents. They inspire people to reconsider old habits and hold themselves accountable for continuous progress. Professional growth must be viewed as a process instead of an event by trainers.

This process, according to Guskey (2000), has three distinguishing characteristics: it is purposeful, ongoing and systemic. This provides an atmosphere in which learning leads to more than just individual development; it also leads to organizational growth. Schools may establish a learning community and atmosphere that fosters and embraces educational innovations by taking a collaborative approach to change. The level of training and knowledge that mentors obtain over their years of being involved mentoring, they are often more effective in their new roles (Huling, 2001).

Increased leadership in a facility may result in high level of productivity and positive environment for students and teachers. Colleagues usually play an important role in pushing teachers to adapt or be involved in different tasks by offering help and assistance. Creating programmes that foster connections while also improving the mentor and the mentee might help to improve school performance and growth. Having a strong knowledge of the mentors' perspectives might bring valuable knowledge to the mentoring field. As academics and professionals, there is the need to implement the environments and situations which can enhance individual learning and skills, improve performance, and a variety of other results necessary for individuals, groups, and institutions to continue to progress (Ragins & Kram, 2007).

Given that learning necessitates reflection, it is critical for institutions to examine situations and occurrences that promote reflection. Reflective practice is seen as a significant practice in schools which helps in attaining higher performance (Hawley & Valli, 2000). It is evident and clear that when instructors are involved in positive learning environments and experiences, it has a favorable influence on student learning. Reflective techniques help educators learn, refresh, and grow as they progress through their careers (Steffy et al., 2000).

Mentoring programmes may bring more advantages because they foster a collaborative atmosphere in which mentors and protégé instructors may experiment with new ways together. Organizations can improve institutional commitment, retention, leadership succession, and productivity by promoting mentoring (Wanberg et al., 2003). Also, the mentee benefits from greater role definition, protection, advancement chances and support due to mentoring.

### **Roles of Mentors and Relevance of Mentoring**

Mentoring is crucial not just for the information and skills that students may get from mentors, but also for the professional socializing and personal support that mentoring gives to help students succeed in the workplace. Mentoring is supposed to improve mentees' personal traits such as communication skills and the capacity to collaborate more successfully with others. They may also improve their professional knowledge and planning abilities, as well as establish successful delivery plans and assessment approaches (Hudson, 2013).

Mentoring provides student teachers with leadership opportunities which can help them develop in terms of their confidence professionally (Gilles & Wilson, 2004). School-based mentoring provides varied chances for pre-service teachers to acquire problem solving skills as they learn to be involved in reflective practices with school-based mentors (Doecke & Kostogriz, 2005). For both the student teacher and the mentor, this technique is noteworthy of resulting in greater depth of learning. Mentoring provides professional benefits when mentors properly communicate and model educational expertise in such a way that both mentor and mentee teacher growth is possible (Hudson, 2013). Mentoring has been linked to multiple benefits for students. With mentoring student teacher motivation and satisfaction tend to increase. Mentors guide students and assist them in progressing by utilizing their professional expertise and abilities. Professional traits such as knowledge and experience, as well as self-confidence, are required for people to develop professionally (Hudson, 2013).

Mentoring helps to create a supportive collegial relationship built on trust and negotiation. Both the mentor and the student teacher gain from a healthy exchange of ideas in an environment defined by mutual respect and a common interest in a topic in the collaborative teaching process (Calaman & Mokshein, 2019). Bigelow (2002) defines mentoring as a process that involves a caring relationship between an inexperienced individual and an experienced individual with the mentor functioning as a role model and adviser to assist novices develop teaching behaviors and tactics.

Carver (2009) espoused that in most comprehensive mentoring programme, mentor teachers are responsible for many roles ranging from the provision orientation to new teachers about school practices, standards and rules to integrating an appropriate curriculum which can facilitate teaching and learning. Mentors have to be qualified and highly skilled in facilitating the learning of adult teacher candidates (American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education, 2010). Mentors require actual chances to engage with their starting teachers on real difficulties of classroom teaching and learning, as well as continuous and ongoing opportunities to watch, coach, and co-plan with one another, in order to do these roles (Carver, 2009).

As part of his contribution to innovative ways of mentoring student teachers, Catapano (2006) suggests that the mentoring process includes problem solving techniques and communication strategies along with how to

“authentically” get parents involved in their children’s education. New teachers may use these resources to make their classrooms pleasant places for children and families to learn. There is one compassionate and experienced professional engaging and getting involved in the lives and practices of a normally younger and inexperienced colleague and showing readiness to help that person develop a variety of professional and in some cases personal habits. This connection, according to Smith, can range from casual encounters that turn into long-term ties to highly organized, formal agreements with defined obligations and expectations.

Teaching, according to Kling and Brookhart (1991), entails considerably more than just conveying information from one person to the next. There are personalities to cope with, as well as disparities in learning styles, intercultural, ethnic, and economic differences, and a slew of other aspects that the teacher must integrate into a cohesive, functional, and effective whole. Expectations, obligations, and the rapid transition from student-to-student teacher can overwhelm student instructors. Mentoring is viewed as one way to help a student teacher’s personal and professional growth.

### **Roles Played by Mentors in Shaping Professional Behaviours of Student-Teachers**

Teacher mentoring has progressively become central in teacher education, gaining much attention from researchers. In the course of teacher education and induction, mentoring has become a major underlying factor which serves as a collaborative tool between universities and schools in the facilitative exercise in teacher development. In ascertaining the relevance of mentoring on student teachers, Carter and Francis (2001) conducted a study with the topic “Mentoring and Beginning Teacher’s Workplace Learning” and appointed some 1492 student teachers to government basic schools in New South Whales in Australia. Questionnaires were distributed to a sample of 387 schools. 220 and 245 usable data were received from student teachers and mentors respectively. One-way ANOVA and Multivariate Analysis of Variance indicated that student teacher mentorship programme had relevance on teacher education and found importance of mentoring on student teacher’s professional learning. Mixed method was used for the study which indicated an empirically significant evidence of the techniques in mentoring.

The practice of mentorship in teacher education has become an accepted tradition in teacher training. Researchers have explored the influence of mentorship on the professional behaviour of teachers. Simpson, Hastings and Hill (2007) conducted study on the professional benefits of mentoring with a research topic “I knew that she was watching me: the professional benefits of mentoring”. The study reported the benefits of teachers taking the role of mentorship in preservice teacher education. The study was a qualitative case study which investigated the impact of mentorship of student teachers in varying settings such as early childhood and primary education in the rural part of New South Wales, Australia. A purposive sample was used in selecting 14 co-operative teachers who were mentors for student teachers with different levels of education. The study noted that teachers found mentoring programme to be rewarding for professional and personal development, therefore indicating its relevance in teacher education.

Mentorship is an important tool used in the educational settings to bridge the transition from student teaching to professional teaching. To ascertain the relevance of mentorship as a means for transitioning student teachers to professional teachers Hellsten, Prytula, Ebanks and Lai (2009) conducted a study with the topic: “Teacher Induction: Exploring Beginning Teacher Mentorship”. Using a qualitative method, a purposive sampling procedure was utilised to select 12 student teachers from the University of Saskatchewan teacher education programme to participate in the study. Interview was conducted over the telephone to gather data. The findings give the indication that most of student teachers were content with the outcome of the mentorship programme which emphasizes the relevance of the programme.

Teachers need continuous training for professional development to keep up with the current and emerging teaching practice. Trainings and workshops for teacher’s development may be costly, however mentorship

programmes among teachers can be cost effective. Hudson (2013) did a study with a topic: “Mentoring as Professional Development: Growth for Both Mentor and Mentee”. The study employed mixed method which included 101 student teachers who responded to a five-part Likert scale and 10 mentors responded to interview questions to ascertain professional development for mentors as they perform mentorship roles. The quantitative data analysis revealed that, while pedagogical knowledge was important and most mentors were knowledgeable, mentors were expected to examine and communicate teaching techniques. Also, it was found that mentoring improves professional growth in the areas of communication skills, problem solving and capacity building, and pedagogical expertise based on the qualitative data.

Providing mentorship to student teachers holds the perception that it has the propensity to retaining student teachers and bringing them up to speed on the professional practices required. To ascertain the perception of mentoring Andrews and Quinn (2005) conducted a study on the topic “The Effects of Mentoring on First-Year Teacher’s Perceptions of Support Received”. The qualitative study used about sixty thousand student teachers who were representative of first year students of a school district. The school district comprised 59 elementary, one special education, 11 middle and 13 high schools. Participants responded to questionnaires that addressed student teacher’s perception on the support services they received. The results showed that student teachers perceived the support received as significant.

Kwan and Francis (2005) explored the perception on mentoring on professional development with a study topic “Mentors’ perceptions of their roles in mentoring student teachers”. There is a general perception that mentoring student teachers is the medium through which student teachers are transitioned into professional teachers. Using a mixed method approach, the researchers explored the perception of mentors through a questionnaire and interview data. In all, 583 questionnaires were administered, however 259 questionnaires were returned. Given the findings of the study, teachers held the perception that mentoring is “provider of feedback” where pragmatic advices are given on student teachers strengths and weaknesses.

Gilles, Carrillo, Wang, Stegall and Bumgarner (2013) study which had a topic the connotes student teacher’s perception about mentors; “Working with My Mentor is Like Having a Second Brain, Hands, Feet, Eyes: Perceptions of Novice Teachers”. The study as the topic connotes was to find out student teacher’s (novice teachers) perception on mentoring programme and mentors. The study used a yearly induction programme to survey student teachers at their lowest point to find out their perception about the programme. Five years of survey which contained open ended questions on mentoring were examined and compared. Questionnaires were sent to all participants; however, the 264 responses were received. Qualitative approach using the grounded theory method was used for the study. The findings showed that student teachers had a positive feeling about their mentors and have the perception that mentors give emotional support, pedagogical support, collaborative support and advice.

Hairon, Loh, Lim, Govindani, Tan and Tay (2020) opined that mentoring of student teachers is inherently important. Hairon et al. (2020) in their study “Structured Mentoring: Principles for Effective Mentoring” explored student teacher’s perception on structured mentoring and the principles that support it. Using a mixed method, the study quantitative analysis investigated student teacher’s perception of the effectiveness of structured mentoring and qualitatively through focused group discussion, the research looked into the fundamentals of successful mentoring vs formal mentorship. The study found that four mentoring delivery modes, such as discussion, reflection, reading materials, and provision of feedback on observations made, as well as six mentoring components, such as attention, routine, discipline, momentum, space, and time positively influenced student teachers’ knowledge of classroom management.

The empirical evidences reviewed indicated relevance of mentoring on the professional behaviour of student teachers. The areas that the various studies found relevance are student teachers professional learning,



professional and personal satisfaction and contentment student teachers find from the outcome of the teacher education mentoring programme.

## **METHODS**

### **Research Design**

Descriptive survey research design was used in this study. Descriptive research design is “a scientific method which involves observing and describing the behaviour of a subject without influencing it in any way” (Shuttleworth, 2008). It includes the gathering of data so as to respond to the research questions concerned with the present state of a particular theme of the study. In this study, the mentorship has already gone on and the researcher seeks to examine certain aspects of the mentorship programme.

In this study, the researcher ensured that the instrument covers the depth of the objective of the study so that the data obtained did not lack depth but was sufficient.

### **Sample and Sampling Procedure**

A sample in research has been viewed by Ofori and Dampson (2011) as the segment or part of the population that is selected for a study. The sample was chosen based on the sample size table of Gill, Johnson and Clark (2010). A sample of 200 student-teachers and 130 teacher-mentors was adopted for the study. Simple random sampling procedure was chosen for the study. Simple random sampling gives the possibility for each individual member of a population to have an equal chance of being sampled (Gravetter&Forzano, 2009). Simple random sampling also allows selection of samples without bias and is representative of the whole population. There is also the “probability of a member of the population being selected is unaffected by the selection of other members of the population”. This procedure is therefore advantageous since it helped in ensuring that the sample distribution was without bias.

### **Data Collection Procedure**

The researcher obtained an ethical clearance from the College of Education Studies Ethical Review Board. After this, an introductory letter was obtained from the Department of Education and Psychology in the University of Cape Coast. The questionnaire was administered by the researcher himself with support from three assistants. These assistants were college master’s students and so they were given some brief training on the nature of the study and the need to adhere to all ethical issues during the data collection. On each day of data collection, the consent of the respondents was sought. After this, the nature and reason for the study was explained to them and an opportunity given them for them to ask any question and also seek clarity.

For the student-teachers, the data were collected from them when they were assembled in one place. All the questionnaires were retrieved from the respondents after they had responded to them on the same day. This helped obtain 100% return rate. For the teacher-mentors, the questionnaire was administered to them in their various schools. In each situation, the researcher and the assistants waited until the teachers had responded to the questionnaires. This also brought about 100% return rate.

### **Data Processing and Analysis**

Statistical Package for Service Solution (SPSS) version 22 was used to analyse the data using descriptive statistics. The demographic data of the respondents were analysed using frequencies and percentages. For

the question, means and standard deviations were utilized to analyze the data. Data were analysed using mean and standard deviation. Using a scale of “Strongly Disagree=1”, “Disagree=2”, “Agree=3” and “Strongly Agree=4”, a cut-off of 2.5 was set. This means that, mean scores of 2.5 and above were deemed to be high while mean scores below 2.5 were deemed to be low. A higher mean implies that the respondents were in agreement with the statement. The use of mean and standard deviation to produce single values for comparison was beneficial. In this case, interpretations were based on the mean and standard deviation values. The results were presented in tables and interpreted. Discussion was done in relation to previous literature

## DISCUSSION AND FINDINGS

In this section, the background information of the student-teachers are presented. The gender, age and programme of study of the respondents are presented as part of the background information. The results of the analysis are shown in Table 1.

**TABLE 1: BACKGROUND DATA OF STUDENT-TEACHERS**

Variable		Frequency (F)	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	112	<b>56.0</b>
	Female	88	<b>44.0</b>
Age	18-20	7	<b>3.5</b>
	21-25	134	<b>67.0</b>
	Above 25	59	<b>29.5</b>

It is shown in Table 1 that more than half of the respondents (112, 56%) were males while 88(44%) were females. This means that the study had more male student-teachers than females. This aligns with the population details of students in Colleges of Education in Ghana. In most of the Colleges of Education, mixed-sex colleges, there are more male students than female students. Also, it can be seen in Table 1 that, majority of the student-teachers (134, 67%) were within the ages of 21 to 25 years. The rest of the respondents were either above 25 years of age (59, 29.5%) or 18 to 20 years of age (7, 3.5%). Since the student-teachers in the study were about completing their course of study, it did not come as a surprise that most of them were older.

The background characteristics of the mentors are presented in Table 2.

**Table 2: BACKGROUND INFORMATION OF MENTORS**

Item		Frequency (F)	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	76	<b>58.5</b>
	Female	54	<b>41.5</b>
Age	25 below	17	<b>13.1</b>
	26-40	59	<b>41.5</b>
	41-60	54	<b>45.4</b>

It can be seen that 58.5% of the respondents were males while 41.5% were females. This means that there were more male mentors than female mentors. In the schools where the student-teachers had their mentoring programme, most of the teachers were males. Therefore, having more male mentors in the study does not come as a surprise. Also, it is shown in Table 2 that most of the respondents were aged 41 to 50 years (45.4%) and 26 to 40 years (41.5%). Only a 17 respondents representing 13.1% were aged 25 years and below.

**TABLE 3: ROLES OF MENTORS IN SHAPING PROFESSIONAL BEHAVIOUR OF STUDENT-TEACHERS**

Statement	Mean	SD
Mentoring provides collaboration between mentors and student-teachers	3.66	0.54
Mentoring helps student-teachers unearth potentials in teaching	3.65	0.57
Mentors act as role-models for student-teachers	3.63	0.57
Mentors act as friends for the discussion of classroom concerns	3.19	0.67
Mentors act as counsellors for student-teachers	3.36	0.83
Mentoring focuses on improving the teaching abilities of student-teachers	3.62	0.57
Mentors provide opportunities for self-reflection of student-teachers teaching	3.44	0.65
Mentoring afford student-teachers opportunities to discuss classroom management strategies	3.33	0.69
Mentors provide regular feedback to student-teachers about their teaching	3.47	0.82
Mentors provide student-teachers the amount of help they need for their teaching	3.68	0.59

Table 3 shows that mentors provide student-teachers the help they need for their teaching (M=3.68, SD=0.59). Mentoring was also shown to provide collaboration between mentors and student-teachers (M=3.66, SD=0.54). This means that mentors play the role of collaborators. Also, Table 3 shows that mentoring helps student-teachers unearth potentials in teaching (M=3.65, SD=0.57). Thus, mentors play the role of helping to unearth potentials in teaching among student-teachers.

In addition, the respondents agreed that mentors could act as role-models for student-teachers (M=3.63, SD=0.57) and help improve the teaching abilities of student-teachers (M=3.62, SD=0.57). The results in Table 3 show clearly that mentors provide help for student-teachers in teaching, collaborate with student-teachers in their teaching, help unearth potentials in teaching, act as role-models for student-teachers, and help improve teaching abilities of student-teachers. Other roles may include providing regular feedback to student-teachers about their teaching and providing opportunities for self-reflection.

### Summary

The study found that mentors provide help for student-teachers in teaching, collaborate with student-teachers in their teaching, help unearth potentials in teaching, act as role-models for student-teachers, and help improve teaching abilities of student-teachers. Other roles may include providing regular feedback to student-teachers about their teaching and providing opportunities for self-reflection. These were the major roles played by mentors in shaping the professional behaviour of student-teachers.

The work of mentors during teaching practice is mainly to collaborate and assist student-teachers develop and practice what they have been taught from the Colleges. This means that mentors play very crucial roles

in the practices of student-teachers. Aside the assistance given to the student-teachers, mentors provide feedback to student-teachers which help them in self-reflection. A student may know all the theoretical aspect of how to teach but will require practical on-the-field experience to be able to self-reflect and know whether his or her teaching is up to standard.

The findings support the findings of several previous studies. For instance, in ascertaining the relevance of mentoring on student teachers, Carter and Francis (2001) revealed that student teacher mentorship programme had relevance on teacher education and found importance of mentoring on student teacher's professional learning. Similarly, Gilles, Carrillo, Wang, Stegall and Bumgarner (2013) also revealed that student-teachers have a positive feeling about their mentors and have the perception that mentors give emotional support, pedagogical support, collaborative support and advice.

In addition, the findings support the findings of Kwan and Francis (2005) explored the impact of mentoring on professional development and found that through mentoring, student teachers are transitioned into professional teachers. Hairon, Loh, Lim, Govindani, Tan and Tay (2020) also explored student teacher's perception on structured mentoring and the principles that support it. The findings of the study indicated that mentors engage student-teachers in discussions, reflections, and provision of feedback on lesson observations.

Finally, the study's findings support Padua's mentor teacher approach. Mentor instructors, according to Padua (2003), are typically seasoned, have a solid grasp of a given topic area, and know how to develop others' potential. Mentors assist classroom teachers and student-teachers in refining existing instructional strategies, introducing new strategies and concepts, engaging teachers in conversations about their teaching, and providing overall support, taking into account the fact that each teacher will have different needs, according to Padua.

## **CONCLUSION**

It was concluded that mentors played several roles during the mentorship period in aiding the student-teachers through the period. Mentors acted as collaborators for student-teachers providing help and assistance for the development and improvement of their professional competences and abilities. The mentors mainly carried out their roles through providing feedback to student-teachers and giving them opportunity for self-reflection.

## **RECOMMENDATION**

It was recommended among other things that, authorities of Foso College of Education should prepare the supervisors and teacher-mentors on how to go about supervision since the study found that students are sometimes intimidated by the supervision provided. Also, the authorities should organise intensive workshops for student-teachers before they go out for the mentorship so that they can be well prepared in terms of planning and preparing individualized lessons and meeting any challenge they may be faced with.

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