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ENSURING ALL-ROUND TEACHER TRAINING AT THE UNIVERSITY FOR DEVELOPMENT STUDIES: THE SWAY OF THE PRACTICING SCHOOLS'MENTORS ON STUDENT TEACHERS

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ABSTRACT

This study aimed at examining the influence of practicing school mentors on student teachers from the University for Development Studies during their off-campus teaching practice programme. The study adopted a descriptive research design using simple random sampling to sample90 student teachers out of the150 at the Department of Basic Education in the Faculty of Education, University for Development Studies - Ghana. Questionnaire and interview were the main data collection tools used whilst the data obtained were analysed using statistical package for service solution (SPSS) version 22 and the qualitative data were subjected to descriptions and narrations. The study revealed that practicing schools mentors make most of the student teachers to consider teaching as their career profession. It became clear that the practicing school mentors assist student teachers to build strong and effective classroom management skills, appropriate use of varied teaching and learning materials, identify and work with children with special needs. It also became known that student teachers acquire lesson delivery and confidence during the On-Campus teaching practice section not during the off-campus teaching practice programme. The study, therefore, recommends that more attention should be paid to on-campus teaching practice since that is where most of the student teachers build their confidence. The university authority should collaborate with the head teachers of the cooperating schools to ensure that the school mentors be have professionally to serve as a role models for the student teachers. The University should encourage student teachers to constantly consult their mentors during the teaching practice period.

Keyword: Student teachers, Mentors, Sway, Practicing Schools, Teaching Practice

1. INTRODUCTION

Teacher education is the most important component of the educational system of every nation. The quality of professionally trained teachers of every nation determines the type of educational system of that country. This suggests that for a country to have a quality education, it must focus on the training of her teachers. Training of teachers requires the contributions of all actors and stakeholders. The period of teacher training is deemed as one of the most important transformational stages during which student teachers need intensive professional support for professional growth and development. According to Carter and Francis (2001), one of such support

mechanism is mentoring. Sundli (2007) refers to mentoring as a generally accepted, effective and efficient method of preparing student teachers to acquire the needed skills and knowledge to enter the teaching profession.

Mudzielwana (2014) describes mentoring as when an experienced master teacher gives support to a student-teacher during teaching practice. The experienced and qualified teacher does not only support the student-teacher but also guides the professional development of the student-teacher or the mentee. Samkange (2015) also viewed mentoring as a process by which a person of higher rank, special attainments and stature, advises, monitors and facilitates the intellectual and or professional development of persons identified as less experienced. Mentoring can also be defined as a nurturing process whereby a more skilful or highly experienced person serving as a role model, sponsors, inspires, advise and befriends a less skilled or less experienced person for the purpose of enhancing the latter's professional and or career progress (Norhasni, 2006).

Maphalala (2013) also opined that mentoring is a critical component in the growth and professional development of a student teacher and, therefore, emphasised that the contribution of a mentor has an extreme impact on the professional development of the student-teacher. It is, therefore, important to establish what personal and professional benefits mentors can identify in the student teachers when participating in mentoring programmes and also recognize mentoring as an important source of learning for teachers and students, including mentors (Andrea, 2010). The mentors who form the focal point of the mentoring programme need some form of preparation and commitment to effectively institute the mentoring programme.

According to the Ministry of Education (2016), a mentor is the person who works closely with the student-teacher throughout the full period of Off-Campus teaching practice and provides them with the necessary professional guidance and encouragement. The ministry continued to state that, mentors act as role models and coordinate classroom and instructional activities to progressively give increasingly more responsibility to the student teachers as they develop their skills and confidence levels. Mentors are seen as the personnel who are highly qualified and experienced and are capable of transferring their knowledge, skills, and experiences within and across the institution. They are also capable of sharing their knowledge and experiences in applying effective procedures of work and also providing assistance for mentees to enhance their professional skills and qualification (Masalimova, Sadovay& Flores, 2016).

Lois (2002) stated that teachers who prepare themselves to mentor student teachers have a high potential of enriching their own teaching experience and professional development. This suggests that mentoring process does not only provide the student teachers the needed skills, knowledge and experience but also gives an opportunity for the mentors to learn new ideas from the mentee. The student teachers on teaching practice are perceived to possess fresh knowledge and skills of which they can share with experienced teachers in the practicing schools. The mentor's preparation and willingness to learn new things in the mentoring process is greatly influenced by the student teacher's exhibition of mastery of the subject matter and their interpersonal relations.

Mentoring student teachers of the University for Development Studies has always been considered as a critical component of the professional training of students. The Unit responsible for the professional training of students in the University has always attached great importance to mentoring in the teaching practice process. During the teaching practice period, the student teachers are posted to basic and senior high schools in the University's catchment areas, thus, Northern, BrongAhafo, Upper East and West regions of Ghana so that they will be exposed to the real practical teaching. The student teachers pursuing Secondary Education spend one term of the Senior High School calendar ranging from May to August whilst those in the Basic Education Department (Basic Education Studies and Early Childhood Care) spend one academic year of the Basic School Calendar, September to July in their assigned schools for the teaching practice programme. The student teachers pursuing Basic and Early childhood Care are posted to institutions in the Northern Region to undertake school-focused training to develop their practical teaching skills which cover the whole of the third year of their study (Abudu&Donkor, 2014). The duration of practice teaching contributes significantly to the experiences to be acquired by the student-teacher. A study has shown that, the lengthier the duration of teaching practice, the more exposed the student-teacher becomes to the processes and practices of the teaching profession (Geoffrey & Rob, 2005). Teacher training being a complex phenomenon requires a partnership of the University and the practicing schools where student teachers are assigned to mentors who contribute significantly to the holistic training of the student teachers. The mentoring process which constitutes an integral part of the professional training process exposes the student teacher to the real teaching and learning environment.

In the mentoring process, the Headteachers, Headmasters and Headmistress in the schools where the student teachers have their teaching practice are considered as lead mentors. The lead mentors provide professional assistance and guidance to both the student teachers and mentors (the class teachers or subject teachers) who have been appointed to directly mentor the student teachers. According to Masalimova, et al. (2016), lead mentors are highly qualified and experienced personnel who are capable of transferring their knowledge, skills and experience within and across the institution, share their knowledge and experience in applying effective procedures for the appointing of the school teacher as a mentor. The lead mentor also provides assistance to both the teacher mentor and mentee to enhance their professional skills and quality of work. The effective implementation of the mentoring programme in the various schools of practice is heavily dependent on the contribution of the lead mentors.

The implementation of a mentoring programme is often bedevilled with enormous challenges. According to Mutchler et al (2000), the planners and stakeholders in education are faced with a number of challenges when it comes to the successful implementation of mentoring programmes. A study conducted by Samkange (2015) reveals that the mode of selecting a teacher

as a mentor for the student teachers significantly affects the implementation of the mentoring process. Another study by Ankuma (2007) shows that logistical inadequacies, unclear definition of mentors' role and effective partnership of the teacher training institutions and the practicing schools are the major problems for the effective implementation of a mentoring programme. The study further indicates other challenges to mentees include subject areas where student teachers had little or no previous preparation and also the attitude of mentors towards the mentoring activities. The University for Development Studies is no exception to these challenges

relating to teacher professional training. There is therefore, the need to investigate these issues to provide elating recommendations to enhance the professional training processes of teachers at the University.

Problem Statement

Off-campus teaching practice is one of the most essential aspects of the teacher training where student teachers get the opportunity to acquire practical instructional experiences, knowledge and skills. It is a major avenue where the student teachers will put the theoretical aspects of teaching to the real world-teaching environment and also enhance their professional knowledge (Cvetek, 2009). During the off teaching practice periods, the student teachers are assigned to experienced teachers in the practicing schools who serve as mentors. The student teachers observe these mentors as they go through the teaching and learning processes, school management and administration. During these processes they assist in the instructional process and finally allowed to take over the entire teaching and learning process under the strict supervision of the mentor (Darling-Hammond, 2010). This makes mentoring an important component of the teaching profession and, therefore, requires highly experienced teachers for its execution. According to Fiadzawoo, Agoke and Pufaa (2018), most of the practicing school authorities use their discretion to appoint teachers as mentors for the student teachers and this influences the role these mentors play during the teaching practice process. It is against this background that this study seeks to examine the influence of mentors on student teachers during off-campus teaching practice programme. The study will specifically assess the influence of the cooperating school mentors on the student teachers in the following areas;

          Classroom management and practice
   i.   Professional development and practice
  ii.   Compliance and application of best teaching practices
 iii.   Academic and other support systems

2.   REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The review of related literature is focused on the influence of the cooperating school mentors on student teachers during teaching practice programme. Some of the key issues the literature review addressed include the mentor-mentee relationship, the contributions of mentors to the student teacher, the institution and the mentor him/herself and challenges faced by the mentors in mentoring the student teachers.

2.1 The influence of mentor-mentee relationship during teaching practice

Establishing and maintaining an effective mentor-mentee relationship is an essential component in the teacher training process and particularly as a way to engage student teachers and mentors in sharing professional experiences educational profession (Pianta, Hamre, & Allen, 2012) and facilitate productive collaborations with colleagues and other stakeholders in education (Ferguson & Johnson, 2010). According to Ligadu (2008), one of the most important factors in ensuring a successful mentoring process is the establishment of a resilient and trusting mentor-mentee relationship. The relationship that exist between mentor and mentee during the mentoring process is defined by Young (2001) as the process where the needs of both the mentor and student-teacher accomplish their goals and objectives. The nature of the relationship between mentors and student teachers defines the health of the mentoring process during the teaching practice process. According to Jonson (2008) to ensure an effective mentor-mentee relationship, it is very essential for both mentor and student teachers to cope and liaise on personal and professional grounds. This is suggested to be the surest way of creating a conducive atmosphere for a successful co-existence.

Research (Ligadu, 2008) has also shown that a successful mentoring process is a recipe to student teacher's commitment to the teaching profession. It is also important for both student teachers and mentors to maintain some level of commitment in order to enjoy a harmonious relationship. Even though interpersonal relationship contributes significantly in ensuring a successful mentoring process, it is very important to maintain a high level of professional intimacy which is essential in a collegial relationship with the student teachers (Ligadu, 2008). Ragins and Kram (2007) opined that the relationship that exists in the mentoring process is complex and very sophisticated and therefore requires both the student teachers and mentors to maintain their varied roles and responsibility effectively. The commitment of both parties to their roles and responsibility during the mentoring process regulate their behaviour for a successful process. The acknowledgement of both parties' contributions to the sustainability and maintenance of a healthy relationship redefines their perception towards the entire mentoring process.

The success of a mentoring relationship depends heavily on how the types of mentoring relationships are well blended. According to Selwa (2003), mentoring relationship varies in their degree of formality taking into consideration the knowledge and continue support derived from the relationship. The two main types of relationships that exist between mentors and mentees are formal and informal relationships. Ligadu (2008) described the formal relationship as occurring where the only interaction that exists between the mentor and mentee is centred on the mentoring process without any social involvement. This implies that the mentor and mentee do not discuss any issues outside the school or classroom setting. As the formal relationship is centred solely on the activities and issues on the mentoring process, the informal relationship goes beyond the immediate school activities and environment to include social and personal discussions. The informal relationship includes casual conversation or meeting that exist between the mentor and mentee during school hours and outside school hours (Ligadu, 2008). Jonson (2002) indicated that informal interactions provide an enabling atmosphere for the mentee to conveniently express their feelings which can serve as valuable sources of information for assistance by the mentor. The ability of mentor and mentee to establish a good rapport to conveniently interact formally and informally is an outcome of an effective mentoring relationship.

2.2 The stages in mentoring relationship

The stages involve in mentoring relationships are viewed by researchers from varied perspectives base on their orientations (Kram, 1985; Cohen, 1994). These stages characterised with the context of its usage, the motive of the mentor-mentee relationship and strategies over a considerable time period. Kram (1985) proposed four major phases of the effective mentoring relationship from the perspective of psychological and institutional features that influence the professional and psychological functions executed. These phases are identified as follows; initiation, cultivation, separation and redefinition.
features that influence the professional and psychological functions executed. These phases are identified as follows; initiation, cultivation, separation and redefinition.

The initiation stage: This is the period in which the relationship between mentor and mentee is conceived. This phase is considered very vital as it serves as an initial interaction which involve learning the others' personal style of working and behaviour. Ligadu (2008) holds the view that at this stage both mentor and mentee find out about each other and more in particular, the mentor identifies the type of socio-emotional support he/she can offer the mentee. The mentor and mentee become acquainted with each through the clarification of individual interest, values and set priorities. The mentor, therefore, establishes a desirable and favourable working environment with the mentee which enhances the interpersonal relationships between the two. A well-initiated mentor-mentee relationship sets the pace for effective and successful mentoring process.

The cultivation stage: This is a second stage where the positive expectations and values that occurred during the initiation stage are persistently examined and tested against reality. The mentor and mentee at this stage discover the actual worth of relating to one another and establishes clear boundaries of their relationship. The perimeters of the relationship which involves setting the ground rules are instituted to the dealings between the two parties. This help maintains some level of sanity and establishment of an emotional bond between the mentor and mentee through guidance and shaping of shared values (Ligadu, 2008).

*The separation stage:*This stage is very significant in the mentoring relationship stages where the student-teacher is given some level of independence and autonomy to operate without strict supervision by the mentor. Kram (1985) supported this view by stating that, the separation stage is a time when the mentee experiences new independence and self-sufficiency, as well as turmoil, anxiety, and feelings of loss. The mentee is allowed to exhibit his/her knowledge and skills acquired with a little or no supervision. The ability of the mentee to operate successfully, demonstratesthe extendto which the mentee can accept responsibility and act professionally. Alisa (2010) holds the view that the ultimate goal of this stage is to give the mentee opportunity to retain and have total control over their own professional trajectory and take full responsibility for the consequences of their actions. Irrespective of the freedom granted to the mentee, this is the stage where the mentee are require to exercise a high level of self-discipline not to abuse the opportunity and privileges granted.

*The redefining stage:*The last but most important stage in the mentoring relationship is the redefining stage which involves maintaining friendship between the mentor and mentee as peers. This stage requires examining the relationship between the two parties modifying the boundaries of the relationship to involves factors that will make the whole relationship peer like other than the previous mentor-mentee relationship. At this stage, both the mentor and mentee acknowledges that there is a shift in developmental tasks which does not follow the usual mentorship process but rather self-development and the desire to attain a professional efficiency. Even though mentoring process is not for the short term, it's very important to take critical note of the stages to involve in the mentoring relationship to avoid novice being mentored for the rest of their life.
These stages make it clear that, at the beginning of the mentoring relationship process, the mentor takes the sole responsibility of providing information to the mentee. The mentee accepts this information and direction from the mentor with little or no self-initiative and involvement in the decision-making process. The relationship, therefore, develops to involve sharing and discussion and making decisions that affect their relationship or otherwise (Ligadu, 2008). This implies the mentee graduate from Juvenal level to an adult level where he/she can contribute significantly the professional growth and development. This stage then proceeds with the redraw of support and direction by the mentor to give the mentee the freedom to operate independently and develop professionally.

2.3 The effect of mentor-mentee relationship during teaching practice

The period of practice teaching is an avenue for student teachers to learning about relationships and relationship building within the teaching profession when they enter the school system (Hudson, 2013). Mentors are the first point of call by student teachers during teaching practice and are therefore required to work closely with the student teacher to successfully develop him/her professionally for the teaching profession. Beutel and Spooner-Lane (2009) indicated that the success of mentoring relationships depends on the expertise and knowledge of the mentors, yet this also necessitates developing professional-personal relationships. The quality of relationship that exist between mentors and mentees during practice teaching are usually underpinned by a range of factors, ranging from the mentor's and mentee's personal and professional qualities, their expertise and knowledge in the practice, the environment or context in which mentoring operates, and the matching of mentors and mentees to form productive relationships (Rippon & Martin, 2006; Hall, Draper, Smith, &Bullough, 2008). Notwithstanding these factors, a positive mentor-mentee relationship depends heavily on how the professional and personal qualities of the mentor are managed.

The personal attributes of mentors, which include interpersonal skills, mentors intelligence, and creativity, are key factors, which influence the quality of the mentoring process. In a study conducted by Hudson (2006) the following mentor's personal attributes were identified as to have great influence on mentoring process; being supportive, being comfortable and patient with talking, being an active listener, possessing personal qualities for the mentee to be convenient and willing to reflect with the mentor, being fair and firm and ability to instilling positive attitudes and confidence in the mentee. Even though these factors are identified to be helpful for building and maintaining a strong mentor-mentee relationship during teaching practice, the responsibility, therefore, dwells on both the mentor and mentee to collaboratively ensure a successful mentoring process.

Moberg (2008) holds the view that mentees can also develop personal attributes to assist them in having effective interacting with their mentors, such as being enthused and thoughtful. This suggests even though mentors attributing is very important to a successful mentoring relationship, it is also important for mentees to also develop some personal attributes. In a study conducted by Hudson (2013), it was revealed that most experienced mentor teachers expect some specific desirable attributes from student teachers during teaching practice. These expected attributes include eagerness for teaching, the preparedness for building a positive relationship with all the stakeholders in the school setting (mentors, students, staff, parents and all auxiliary workers in the school), exhibiting enough commitment to the holistic development of the students, being ready for a lifelong learning, preparedness to accept constructive criticisms, having the ability to reflect on constructive feedback, being flexible and resilience and the ability to take initiative to enhance student learning. According to Gibson (2004), it is not at all circumstances that mentee can exhibit these attributes, the responsibility, therefore, depends heavily on the mentor to support the mentee to gain some level of commitment for the teaching profession.

The complex nature of mentoring relationships during teaching practice is a result of mentors and student teachers coming into the mentoring process with a diversity of beliefs and concerns that lead to complicated dynamics in the interactions among these parties. Thesebeliefs and concerns are mostly inspired by the discrepancies in experiences and assumptions of the mentoring by both parties. According to Wang (2001), the differences in perceptions of both mentors and student teachers affect the relationship and the learning process that develops for both mentor and student-teacher by influencing how they communicate effectively and what kind of advice to be given.

Effective communication is a major contributing factor in ensuring a successful mentoring relationship even though these may be bedevilled with unforeseen challenges due to the diversity in expectations and demands of the whole mentoring process. Shosh (2012) holds the view that, apart from communication which is the prime factor in the mentoring process, personal factors have been identified as very influential in the realization of students' concepts, beliefs and expectations about the nature of teaching and learning during mentoring process. She continued that, the assumptions about the very nature of teaching and how learning transpires during the mentoring period offer part of the justification for the mentors' approaches to the mentoring relationship.

2.4 The contribution of mentoring to teacher professionalism

Mentoring of student teachers is perceived to be an ultimate mechanism that can bring quality and holistic professional training of teachers for every nation. According to Ingersoll and Smith (2004), mentoring has been extensively implemented in most educational systems across the world as a means for assisting trainee teachers to develop professionally and also improve attrition among teachers in the profession. The demand for teacher professionalism has increased in the educational system across many nations and this require mentoring services. One of the most obvious means to produce professionally groomed teachers to enhance efficiency and effectiveness in the education sector is subjecting less experienced teachers and student teachers to understudy an experienced one (Hudson, 2004).

Kreitner and kinicki (2001) referred to mentoring as an essential component that enhances high-performance culture in an organisations and schools. The mentoring programmes aimed at creating a sense of unity and oneness among professionals, therefore, fostering and upholding the institutional values. The mentoring process does not only promote professional commitment and unity among members but also promotes socialization in the institution which helps build a sense of belongingness and interaction among the staff (Kreitner&kinicki, 2001). Mentoring creates open climate in an institution where there is a free flow of information among experienced and novice staff.

According to De Janasz, and Sullivan (2004), the principal purpose of instituting a mentoring program in every educational setting is to help newly recruited staff and teachers under training to wholly develop their professional careers. It will also give them the opportunity to redefine their professional identity and improve their competence and confidence in their field of work. Mentoring novice and student teachers enhance their professional learning, socialization, commitment and adaptation to new dimensions in the teaching profession. The form of learning and professional development that occurs as a result of role modelling, observing and apprenticeship is the underlying principle of mentoring. The more experienced and seasoned faculty member or school teacher usually serves as a role model and also advises and guides the novice employee on various setups which range from formal or planned relationship to informal relationship (Jipson& Paley, 2000).

2.5 The contribution of mentoring programme to mentors

Most of the benefits derived by mentors are relatively personal and individual in nature. The mentoring programme in educational setting offer mentors the necessary opportunity to improve upon their competencies by building their capabilities, skills, and practices.

In a study conducted by Hawk (1986), out of a total of 178 mentor teachers, more than 70% responded absolutely to the statement that mentoring programs have positively enhanced their professional growth development. The teacher mentors were further quizzed to indicate how they have grown professionally and about 60% replied by stating the following benefits: Mentoring has helped me to be a focus on and improve in classroom teaching skills; Mentoring has created my awareness on the need for educators to maintain a cordial relationship and healthy communication with each other; Mentoring has made me understood the roles of the lead mentors and the various supervisors during the teaching practice and induction process.

Based on these findings, Hawk (1986) drew a conclusion that policy implementers in education should not only focus on the direct effects of mentoring to student teachers and beginning teachers but also consider the residual impact that such programs have on all involved professionals especially the teacher mentor. Mentoring programme empowers mentors to realize their sense of self-accomplishmentas a result of sharing a lifetime hard-earned experience on the job and off the job with the ensuing generation and was duly acknowledged by the mentee.

The mentoring process gives an opportunity for mentors to tap the fresh knowledge and new experience that student-teacher and beginning teachers are exposed to. The continuous interaction with the student teachers gives mentor the privilege to learn new ideas, methods and techniques in the teaching profession. Hudson (2004) indicated that working with student teachers lessen the workload of the mentor as the student teachers assist in all sphere of the teaching and learning process.

Research has also shown that employing mentoring programme in every institution has considerable benefits for all the participating stakeholders as well as the implementers themselves. Huling and Resta (2001), in their study categorised the mentor benefits from mentoring programme as follows:

Professional competency: Teacher mentors benefit by engaging intellectual coaching skills with their student teachers which builds their professional competencies.

Reflective Practice: mentoring programme gives mentors the opportunity to validate the experiences and knowledge they have gained for a considerable number of years.

Renewal: Mentoring programme also gives the mentor an opportunity to learn more and revise the existing materials, therefore, strengthening their commitment to the teaching profession.

Psychological Benefits: Mentors become self-accomplished and improved in self-esteem and a sense of empowerment.

Collaboration: Continues interaction with student teachers and other stakeholders in the mentoring process strengthens interpersonal relationships in the school.

Contribution to Leadership: As part of the mentoring process, mentors are trained on how to effectively carry out the mentoring process. The experiences build by mentors during the training process enhances their capacity for leadership and effective classroom management.

Wang and Paine (2001) hold the view that, mentoring programmes contribute significantly to the overall professional development of the teaching profession. This is the reality on the ground which requires educational decision makers (Universities, colleges, government and school management) to reassess the mentoring process to benefit all stakeholders fully. All players in the mentoring process are to be made to understand the dynamics in mentoring to derive the full benefit of the mentoring process. Creating an atmosphere that allows experienced mentee teachers to work closely and understudy experts mentor teachers, will at the long round benefit the students of both mentee and mentor teachers (Hudson, 2004)

2.6 The contribution of mentoring to student teachers

Hudson, (2004) asserted that mentees derive varied benefits from mentoring process and the common among them is maintaining positive professional working relations between the school teachers, school administration, students/pupils, the school community and other stakeholders of the school. Mentors are responsible to assist student teachers to accept varied views and acknowledge the contributions of the various stakeholders towards the teaching profession. In a study conducted by Ingersoll and Smith (2004), it was revealed that mentoring in education particularly where the mentor has a professional background in education, the student teachers benefit greatly in self-development and specifically in the area of taking the teaching as their profession and retention.

According to Rhodes and Beneicke (2002), there has been a considerable number of positive social and emotional outcomes associated with mentoring at the school level. Studies have shown that there are a considerable number of come outcomes for mentoring programs consist of but not limited to improving peer and academic accomplishment, self-concept and behaviour (Hudson, 2004; Rhodes, 2005). Mentoring of student teachers during the teaching practice process offers them the opportunity to explore various academic avenues to identify their career path and also maintain a professional working relationships with various stakeholders in the education system.

The prime motive of ensuring effective mentoring of student teachers and newly employed teachers is primarily geared towards promoting a quality education system. This can be achieved by producing an efficient professional and also assisting them to operate comfortably in their respective portfolios. The varied abilities and potentials of not only the mentor but also the student teachers are well enhanced when effective and efficient mentoring is processes and programmes are instituted in the education system. Hudson

(2004), stated that mentoring develops the diverse capabilities of both the mentor and the mentee, whereby the establishment benefits from the skills and knowledge acquired to foster efficiency in an institution.

2.7 The contribution of mentoring in educational institutions

Mentoring programme in every educational establishment or institution contributes significantly to the total development and well-being of the establishment. One of the most significant benefit organisations derives from mentoring is an increase in employees commitment and retention hence reducing possible turnover (Raabe&Beehr, 2003). The nurturing of young employees through mentoring increases their confidence level, therefore, giving them the edge to effectively deal with the institutional problems which intend hastens their incorporation into the organisational culture. Studies have shown that people who have been mentored have a high tendency of offering mentoring service to the next generation more than those who have never had mentoring experience (Bozionelos, 2004). Mentored employees are more preservative of the organisation culture and always ready to promote the structural make-up of the organisation taken into key consideration of both human and material resources of the organisation (Hudson, 2004).

The economic benefits of mentoring to institutions are numerous and the key among them is the reduction in the cost of training newly recruited employees to take a more challenging position (Lyons &Oppler, 2004). The financial resources required by an organisation to train, educate and provide professional development to its employees are usually lessened when the employees were first mentored. According to Hudson (2004), in a situation of financial limitation, when institutional financing for education, training and professional advancement of employees may be in short supply but on contrary, mentoring offers relatively cheap but irreplaceable professional and personal development to the mentee and mentors alike.

In the case of educational institutions or school settings, little time and resources are spent on inducting well mentored student teachers when he/she is fully employed in the teaching profession. Lyons and Oppler (2004) supported this view by stating that, many institutions are aware of the economic implications of engaging individuals who have no previous experience of a profession and will, therefore, prefer personnel with some level of on the job experience.

2.8 The difficulties faced by mentors during teaching practice

Even though there are numerous benefits derived from mentoring process, but there are also a considerable number of difficulties and setbacks bedevilled the entire mentoring programme during teaching practice. Majoni and Nyaruwata (2015) confirm this assertion by stating that despite the positive contributions of mentoring towards the professional development of student teachers during teaching practice it has its own problems. Irrespective of the difficulties surrounding mentoring processes, it is still considered as one of the most effective tools to develop student teachers for the teaching profession and mentors has the greatest influence on the professional development of the student teachers (Maphalala, 2013).

A study conducted by Majoni and Nyaruwata (2015) reveal that to ensure effective mentoring process and procedures, the following assumptions on the professional development of student teachers should be adhere to; mentors should be able to impact practical knowledge to the mentee, mentors must take the responsibility to ensure professional development and commitment of student teachers, mentors should provide professional and social support to the student teachers, mentors should initiate student teachers into school culture and values, mentors must possess an in-depth knowledge in the subject matter practical teaching, mentors must be cooperating and be sensitive to the needs student teachers.Baran (1992) opined that there are several problems engulfed with these assumptions which make the role of mentors very complex and task demanding.

According to Long (1997), the ability to clearly identify the root cause of a problem gives a spectrum for finding a relatively permanent solution to the problem. Long, continued to identify the following as some of the difficulties faced by mentors during mentoring processes; lack of time by the mentor for mentoring assignment; inadequate preparation for the mentoring process; mismatching of mentors and student teachers; inadequate information and understanding of the mentoring process; Sub-standard school facilities for teaching-learning purposes. The mentoring process loses its credibility and value when both mentor and student-teacher do not derive any benefit from the mentoring process which will build their professional skills and expertise.

Ngara and Ngwarai (2012) opined that effective mentoring involves both the mentor and the mentee contributing to its success despite its numerous setbacks. This suggests that mentors must develop their professional competencies to face all challenges that may arise during mentoring process head-on. According to Johnson (2009), a mentor should possess cognitive abilities, emotional abilities and virtues to deal with difficulties associated with mentoring process to ensure that effective mentoring takes place. Johnson continued that, these abilities are embeddedin theoretical learning, dedication, self-awareness and relational abilities, upholding high integrity and commitment to the teaching profession and the mentoring programme as well. The ability for mentors to handle mentoring issues professionally, they require some level of competences which include understanding the developmental needs and learning process of the student teachers, possessing problem–solving skills and acknowledging the mentoring perimeters (Clutterback, 2004).

Scandura and Hamilton (2001) advanced four key elements that serve as a measure to discover the factors that disrupt or militate against the smooth operation of mentoring programme. These measures are;

Submissiveness: This measurement underpins the power struggle that may exist during the mentoring process. An excessive submission by the student-teacher generates some level of timidity and over-dependent which therefore compromises the professional development of the student-teacher. Non-submissive, on the other hand, leads to a power struggle and non-conformity orders. The exhibition of no-submissiveness or excessive submission is potential behaviours which can jeopardised mentoring relationship.

Unreceptive relationships: Relationship in the mentoring process is very crucial. Negative relationship emanates from psychosocial harms such as bullying, coercion, intimidation, exceedingly belligerent behaviour, misuse of power, and exasperating miscellany issues.

Difficulty in Cooperation: Non-corporation is psychosocial complications such as different personalities, varying work styles, continued struggle, disagreements, and excessive dependence. The inability on the part of both parties to accept the individual differences always impede the smooth mentoring process.

Destruction: It involves modifications in the mentoring relationship that transmute from a satisfying to an unsatisfactory relationship. The destructions in the mentoring process include vocational issues such as betrayal, unfaithfulness, treachery, and regret by both parties. Other factors that can also undermine an effective mentoring relationships are suspicion, rivalry, and deception (Scandura, & Hamilton, 2001).

In a similar study conducted by Musingafi and Mafumbate (2014), to assess the challenges and Prospects for School-Based Mentoring in the Professional Development of Student Teachers, from the mentor, mentees and academic perspectives. The study revealed numerous challenges that militate against the drive for a contemporary approach to teaching practice and quality teacher training process. Some the factors identified are as follows;

Lack of formal training of school teacher mentors: The teacher training curriculum does not provide enough skills and knowledge on mentoring for teachers during their training process. This suggests school-based mentors need some level of specific training on mentoring to perform their roles as expected.

The use of non-professional teachers as mentors: Some of the teachers who perform mentoring roles just poses academic degrees and diploma qualification with a considerable number of years of teaching experience without professional education qualification.

Unfair Assessment by mentors: In their study, it was discovered that most of the mentors create a close interpersonal relationship with the student teachers. This close relationship usually undermines the objectivity of the assessment process as the mentor is also an assessor for the student-teacher.

Inadequate resources in the practicing schools: Considering the state of our economy most schools are deprived of some basic resources and this has a tendency to adversely affect the effective teaching and learning process of both mentor and mentee as they may find it difficult to perform simple activities. Some of the mentees were also left ajar without any proper mentoring due to inadequate teachers in the school.

Yavuz (2011) in his study identified contradictory instructions from University supervisors and school teacher mentors as the major challenge student teachers encounter during mentoring process of teaching practice programme. Both parties are assessors to the student teacher and therefore variations in the instructions create a lot of confusion in the mind of the student-teacher affecting his/her ingenuity and initiative. According to Yavuz (2011),this contradictions elicited a very important reality of the gap that exist between the theory as exhibited by University supervisors and the reality that exist in the practicing school. This contradiction will also exist because of differences in ideology and styles in embarking on activities or carrying out a process.

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study employed a descriptive survey design to give a suitable description of the situation as they exist in the natural setting. Descriptive survey design is primarily concern with circumstances or relationships that exist (Best & Khan, 1998). Best and Khan, further stated that these circumstances and relationships include practices, aptitudes and opinions that are held, processes that are ongoing, trends that are developing and others. The design was adopted to help describe the phenomena, practices and situations, which constitute the subject of study. The study adopted both quantitative and qualitative approaches that necessitated the use of both questionnaire and interview guides. The use of a mixed approach was appropriate because it gives an avenue to the researcher to verify and authenticate to enhance the reliability of the results.

The population for this study is 150 student teachers from the Faculty of Education, University for Development Studies posted to 40 schools (Basic and early childhood centres) in the Tamale Metropolis and Sagnarigu District in the Northern Region of Ghana for their off-campus teaching practice. To determine the sample size of the study, Nwena (1992) suggested that when the population of a study is a few hundred, 40% or more sample size would do. Considering the population of 150, which is a few hundred, the researchers decided to use 60% of the population (90 student teachers) for the study. The study adopted a lottery method to select 90 student teachers randomly out of the 150 student teachers.

The study employed questionnaires and an Interview to elicit the required data for the study. Both open and close-ended questionnaires were employed with the closed-ended questionnaire was designed on a four Likert scale where; 1 = Strong Agree (SA), 2 = Agree (A), 3 = Disagree (D) and 4 = Strong Disagree (SD). The open-ended respondents gave researchers the opportunity to provided avenues for the respondents to provide a greater depth of response, revealing their frame of reference and possible reasons for their responses (Nkoom&Zuberu, 2015). Again, the study employed an interview to gather enough data relevant to the study. The interview took the form of informal conversation where the respondents were able to express themselves freely and comfortably. The main motive for the adoption of informal interviews is not to get answers to predetermined questions but rather to find out the perspective of the participants and their experience concerning the issue at stake (Kuranchie, 2016). The results obtained from the respondents were subjected to narratives and descriptions to support the quantitative data. The closed-ended questionnaire was analysed using Statistical

Package for Service Solution (SPSS) version 22 whilst the data obtained from open-ended and the interview was subjected to descriptive and narrations to confirm or otherwise the results obtained from the close-ended questionnaire.

4. DATA ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

The analysis and discussionswere grouped under following headings; Bio data analysis, Classroom management, and Practices, Development of Professional practices, Compliance with some best Teaching Practices, Academic, and other contributions by mentors.

Table 1: Age of Student teachers

SEX	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGES
FEMALE	60	66.70
MALE	30	33.30
TOTAL	**90**	**100.00**

From Table 1 above, 60 respondents representing 66.70% were female student teachers whilst 30 respondents representing 33.3% were male student teachers. These results suggest that more females were involved in the study making the voices and ideas of women heard and participate fully inthe decision making process. Generally, women in Ghana occupy low status in societies; they have been marginalized from taking part in decision making even when the outcome of the decision affects them directly (Mohanty, 2012).

Table 2: Age of range of student teachers

Age	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Below 20years	4	4.4
20-24years	51	56.7
25-29years	28	31.1
sss30-34years	5	5.6
35-39years	2	2.2
Total	**90**	**100.0**

Table 4.3 shows that, out of the 90 respondents, only 4 student teachers constituting 4.4% were below 20 years with the rest of the student teachers' ages ranging between 20 to 39 years. This simply means that almost all the respondents are adult individuals who are matured and possess some level of experience. Knowles (1984) supported this view by stating that adults are matured individuals who have experiences which are counted as a learning resource; therefore, their experiences are placed at the focal point of the learning process, rather than the instructor's personal experiences. The adult learning theory further expatiates this point by stating that, student teachers tend to feel more adult and matured in the practicing school where the relationship between them and their mentors is friendly and mostly informal, given the mentees the opportunity to observe all facets of the school and make contributions.

Table 3: Classroom management and practices

Statement	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
My mentor helped me to improve my classroom management skills.	90	1.52	0.722
My mentor helped me acquire problem-solving skills to deal with situations in the classroom.	90	2.02	0.899

Table 1 contains the results of responses obtained from the student teachers on how the relationship with their mentors has influenced their classroom management and practices. With a mean score of 1.52 and a Standard Deviation of 0.722, it is clearly established that the student teachers strongly agree to the fact that their mentors helped them to improve on their classroom management skills. This implies that mentor-student teacher relationship has greatly influenced and developed the student teachers' classroom management skills. Huling and Resta (2001) also confirmed this finding in their study to examine the benefits of mentoring to mentors and mentees. It was established in their study that, the experiences acquire by mentees during the teaching practice process enhance student teachers' capacity for leadership and effective classroom management.

Again, the student teachers were asked whether their mentors helped them to acquire problem-solving skills to deal with situations in the classroom. The response from the student teachers as displayed in table 1 shows a mean score of 2.02 and a standard deviation of 0.899. This simply implies that the student teachers agree to the assertion that they were assisted by their mentors to acquire problem-solving skills to deal with situations in the classroom. A student teacher in an interview revealed by stating that;

> *'My mentor has been very helpful to me because anytime I encounter a problem or face any challenge in the class, my mentor is the first person I always go to and he always directs me on how I should solve the problem'.*

This means that assist student to sharpen their problem-solving skills not spoon-feeding them with solutions to issues in the school.

Table 2 below also contains a set of variables and the results which assess the influence of mentors on the development of professional best practices of the student teachers.

Table 4: Professional development and practices

Statement	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
My mentor helped me to develop an interest in working with children of school going Age.	90	1.91	0.895
My mentor helped me to identify students who have difficulties and attend to them.	90	2.10	0.984
The support of my mentor has made me decide to take teaching as a profession.	90	1.76	0.940
My mentor has helped build my confidence level in class	90	3.40	0.897

From table 2, student-teacher agreed to the following assertions 'my mentor helped me to develop interest in working with children of school going Age' and 'my mentor helped me to identify students who have difficulties and attend to them' with the mean scores of 1.91 and 2.10 and a standard deviation of 0.895 and 0.984 respectively. These results suggest that the mentors contributed significantly for student teachers to develop an interest in working with children and also being able to identify children who possess special characteristics and handle them as such. A student-teacher attested to this finding by stating that his mentor assisted him to identify a pupil with difficulties in writing for his child study project.

Again, with a mean score of 1.76 and a standard deviation of 0.940, the student teachers strongly agreed to the assertion that their mentors have made them decide to take teaching as a profession. This simply implies that the activities and professional conduct of the mentor among other things has influenced student teachers to decide to make teaching a profession. Keay (2010) supported this finding by explaining that, during the teaching practice process, the activities of the veteran teachers who serve as mentors can easily influence the student teachers' perception about the teaching profession hence shaping their career choices.

With the issue of whether mentors helped student teachers to build their confidence in teaching, it was disagreed among student teachers with a mean score of 3.40 and a standard deviation of 0.897 which means that mentors do not contribute to building the confidence level of student teachers in class. This result implies that the student teachers already possessed some experience in teaching which becomes very useful for them during the off-campus teaching practice programme. a student-teacher added in an interview by stating that;

> *"My mentor does not make any contribution to building my confidence in teaching. I built my confidence level during the On-Campus teaching practice. I was panicking during the On-campus because I was teaching my own colleagues but here, the pupils are not grown so I don't panic when I am teaching".*

This response explained why Knowles (1984), in the adult learner theory proposed that adults have varied experiences, whichis counted as a learning resource; therefore, their experience should be placed at the focal point of the learning process, rather than the instructor's personal experiences. This implies that On-campus teaching practice gives the student teachers a lot of experience in teaching which is very useful for the off-campus teaching practice programme.

Table 3 below contains the responses and results obtained from the student teachers on some assertions assessing the mentors' influence on student teachers' compliance and application of some best practices in the teaching profession.

Table 5: Compliance and application of some best teaching practices

Statement	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
My mentor assists me to develop and use appropriate TLM for my lessons.	90	3.39	0.803
My mentor assist me on how to use a variety of teaching methods	90	3.44	0.721
My mentor always make sure I use the appropriate teaching methods and techniques	90	3.11	0.841
My mentor always assesses my lesson notes before I use it to teach.	90	1.71	0.864

From table 3 above, the student teachers disagreed with the assertion that their mentor assisted them to develop and use appropriate TLM for their lessons with a mean score of 3.39 and a standard deviation of 0.803. This result suggests that the student teachers design and use the teaching and Learning Materials without assistants form their mentors. Huling and Resta (2001) in their study recommended by stating that mentors should give mentees the opportunity to learn more about the design and use of teaching materials to improve the effective teaching and learning processes. A student teacher in an interview stated that;

> *"As part of the orientation and training given to us during the On-Campus teaching practice, we were told that one can not teach without the use of TLM but when we came here for off campus the story is different. Our mentors were teaching without TLMs and are not ready to assist us in design and use the TLMs. My mentor, for instance, does not care whether I use TLMs in the teaching and learning process or not. We just have to apply what we learned on campus about the preparation and use of TLMs in our daily teaching and learning process".*

The student teachers once again disagreed to the assertions that; 'my mentor assist me on how to use a variety of teaching method' and 'my mentor always make sure I use the appropriate teaching methods and techniques' with a mean score 3.344 and 3.11and a standard deviation of 0.721 and 0.841 respectively. This implies that the mentors leave the student teachers on their fate on how to use various teaching methods and techniques appropriate to the enhancement of effective teaching and learning process. The ability of the mentees to use the appropriate techniques and methods is not of the business of the mentor. In an open-ended questionnaire response, a student-teacher stated that the mentors only vet the lesson notes on a daily basis but do not assist in the teaching and learning process. This simply means that the mentors do not follow and be with the student teachers in the classroom and also contribute to the teaching and learning section.

Again, ironically the study revealed that there are close supervision and monitoring of what student teachers teach during teaching practice. This was realised when the student teachers strongly agreed with a mean score of 1.71 and a standard deviation of 0.864, that, their mentors always assess their lesson notes before it is used to teach. This finding confirms a statement made by

Samkange (2015) that, supervision is one of the most important role mentors perform during the teaching practice process. In an open-ended questionnaire, a student-teacher he explained by stating that:

> *"The regular teachers in my school submit their lesson note to the head teacher for vetting every Monday so we are also obliged to present ours to our mentors for assessment. During our off-campus teaching practice orientation, we were strongly entreated to always show our lesson notes to our mentors for vetting before using it to teach".*

This implies that despite the school routine to submit lesson notes to head teachers for vetting, the instructions and advice given to student teachers during their orientation to the off-campus teaching practice greatly influence student teachers' decisions.

Table 4 below displays the response and results obtained from student teachers on the mentors' influences on their academics and other contributions to the mentees' professional training.

Table 6: Academic and other contributions by the mentor

Statement	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
My mentor assists me with materials to master the content of the subjects	90	2.04	0.923
With the help of my mentor, I am able to link theories with practices in the school	90	2.02	0.887
My mentor always motivates me.	90	1.80	0.950
I have taken my mentor as my role model	90	1.82	0.967

From table 4, a mean score of 2.04 and Standard Deviation of 0.923 suggest that the student teachers agreed their mentors assist them with materials to master the content of the subjects. Lyn (2009) supported this revelation by describing student teachers as persons who are still in the learning process, therefore need knowledgeable, and well-experienced others (mentors) who will provide them with the needed materials, support and direction on their journey.

With the issue of whether the mentors helped the student teachers to link theory with practice, it was agreed with a mean score of 2.02 and a standard deviation of 0.887 among the student

teachers that, their mentors helped them to link theory with practice. A student teacher in an open-ended questionnaire added that there is a slight difference between what they learn in school and what they are teaching but it does not take time for them to cope or learn and apply the new knowledge. This finding confirms the 'adult orientation to learning' assumption of adult learning theory which states that, adults orientation to learning are problem centred, task-oriented and learn to adjust to their immediate situation (Smith, 2002).

The student teachers once again strongly agreed with a mean score of 1.80 and a standard deviation of 0.950 that, their mentors always serve as a motivation to them. This result is in line with the adult learning theory assumption 'Motivation to learn' which state that, as an individual matures, the motivation to acquire new knowledge and skills become intrinsic in nature though there are also some extraneous external factors that influence adult decision to learn (Wlodkowski, 2008).

Lastly, with a mean score of 1.82 and a standard deviation of 0.967, it was strongly agreed among student teachers that they have taken their mentors as role models. This means that the activities and contributions of the mentors has influenced the behaviour of student teachers to look up to their mentors and imitate them. This finding is in line with the recommendation made by Popescu-Mitroi and Mazilescu (2014) in their study which state that, a good mentor must instil positive attitudes in their mentees; mentors must serve as a role model for student teachers.

5. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

After a thorough analysis and discussions, the study revealed among the following; that mentors helped build the problem-solving skills of the student teachers, helped student teachers develop an interest in working with children and also use varieties of teaching methods and techniques appropriately. Again, the activities and professional conduct of mentors significantly influence the majority of the student teachers to consider teaching as their career profession. This simply suggests that cooperating school mentors influenced the student teachers' career path. It can also be concluded that the student teachers build self-confidence during On-Campus teaching

practice even though the activities of mentors have influenced the student teachers to take the mentors as their role model and decided to take teaching as their profession.

The study, therefore, recommends that the University in collaboration with Ghana Education Service should continuously organize a mentorship-training programme for all teachers in the cooperating schools to empower them and also build their capacity to effectively serve as mentors for the student teachers. The University should pay critical attention to the On-Campus teaching practice programme because that is where the student teachers build their confidence before they go for the off-Campus teaching practice programme. The Student teachers, on the other hand,should be entreated to take an active part in the On-campus teaching practice since that is where they develop their confidence in teaching. In addition, the headteachers of the cooperating schools should ensure that the mentors with good behave are selected to mentor the student teachers professionally.

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