



## MENTORSHIP IN TEACHER EDUCATION: CHALLENGES AND SUPPORT PROVIDED

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### **Abstract:**

This study sought to unveil possible problems that confront mentees in their professional development. A structured questionnaire and a semi-structured interview were employed for data collection. The population included 152 teacher-Mentees with sample size of 76 selected through multi-stage sampling technique. The data collected from the questionnaire was analyzed using descriptive statistics with the aid of frequencies and percentages. The interview data on the other hand was analyzed through the thematic approach. It was revealed that Mentees who go through the mentorship programme face various challenges in relation to attitudes of mentors, some teachers as well as community related challenges. However, unpreparedness of some teachers to work collaboratively with mentees and absenteeism of mentors were the major challenges confronting mentees in their mentoring programme. The study recommended that Authorities of Colleges of Education should put in place a training programme for their mentors on their roles in the training of the mentees. Such training will equip mentors on their roles in the training of the mentees as well as reduce conflict between mentors and mentees.

**Keywords:** mentorship, teacher education, supervision, support system, mentors

### **1. Introduction**

Teacher education in Ghana has been going through a process of change and development. This change and development is taking place in response to the need to provide quality teachers for the education of the youth at all levels of the country's educational system. This has become increasingly more demanding with respect to a rapidly changing society that needs a new crop of students who are molded to play new roles for the development of society. Aboagye (2002) reveals that educating more citizens develop their mentality and capabilities which lead to high productivity and

freedom from mental slavery. Proficient teacher education, according to Duodo (2002), depends on the quality of instruction given to them in the schools they were trained in and the kind of mentoring they undergo in their place of internship and stations. It is not surprising then, that despite the best efforts of teacher-education programmes, *“teachers are much more likely to teach as they have been taught throughout their schooling than as they have been taught in teacher-education programmes”* (Watson, 1995, p.2).

The main concern of most countries is to improve their educational system and the academic life of their students. Lookheed and Verspoor (1991) explained that quality education mostly depends on how well teachers are trained and supervised since they are one of the major contributors to education delivery. Aboagye (2002) explained that getting quality teachers depends on the quality of education and training giving to them. Hence quality teacher education has been seen as a crucial factor for effective educational outcomes in moving any nation forward.

The importance of teacher education has led many governments, including that of Ghana to place much priority on the development of education. The importance of teacher education in Ghana was further emphasised by the pronouncement in 1998, by the then Deputy Minister of Education responsible for Basic Education, that reform of teacher training was also on the agenda, alongside devolution of control, curriculum reform, competency-based training, and a decentralization of the educational bureaucracy in the country (Kyeremeh, 1998). Teachers make or break educational programme (Nacino-Brown, Oke & Brown, 1990). This means that quality teacher education should be taken seriously since teacher development starts at the training institution and continues throughout their working life.

Teacher education in Ghana has gone through a number of changes over the years. Several courses were offered at the training colleges leading to the certificates:

- 1) Two-year Post-Middle Teacher certificate 'B'
- 2) Two-year post-'B' Teacher Certificate 'A'
- 3) Four-year Post-Middle Teacher Certificate 'A'
- 4) Two-year Post-Secondary Teacher Certificate 'A'
- 5) Three-year Post-Secondary Teacher Certificate 'A'.

Currently the Diploma in Basic Education (DBE) programme which is offered by the various Colleges of Education is also scheduled for three years. Teacher trainees spend the first two years on the college campus and the final year outside campus. In the first year, trainees are taught foundational courses related to subjects taught at the basic level. During the second year, curriculum studies integrated with methodology (demonstration lessons and campus-based practice teaching, on-campus teaching practice) courses are offered to prepare them for their internship and field training.

The mentees are accommodated in groups in their various communities. They are expected to feed themselves, pay bills, travel to collect their allowances, among others (GES, 2001). Their duties include teaching, lesson notes preparation, marking of exercises and managing classroom. They are also expected to involve themselves in all co-curricular activities of the school. Mentees are to observe punctuality to school and good personal relationship with other mentees, staff and people of the community, link-

tutors and District Directorate of Education (DDE) officers. They are also expected to be involved in various community activities and even observe taboos with the exception of politics and tribal issues. Additionally, mentees are to write their project work and attend study circle meetings to study Distance Learning Materials (DLMs).

As part of the professional preparation of the teacher, the teacher trainee has to practice teaching before they are qualified as professional teachers. A National Education Forum on Pedagogical skills was convened by the Ministry of Education on the 17th to 19th of November, 1999. The outcome of the forum suggested that all teacher trainees should undergo a one year teaching practice as well as field training and also serve a year's probation under experienced teachers after the teaching practice (Edusah, 1999).

Again, as part of the implementation of the Free Compulsory Universal Basic Education (FCUBE) programme which states that most teachers should be proficient and well versed in teaching primary methodology (MOE/PREP, 1996), the epi-centre of quality education under the teacher education unit curriculum was reviewed to provide well-qualified teachers for basic schools. This brought about the introduction of the one full year internship programme in 1998/99 academic year. Mentees stay in the communities of the practice schools other than that of their colleges and undertake school-based training whilst school authorities also use this opportunity to assess their students. When a novice teacher starts work in a school, he or she is usually expected to take on the same responsibilities as veteran colleagues and is often disadvantaged by being allocated the least desirable and most difficult teaching assignments. At the same time he or she is expected to come to terms with and absorb a set of established rules, relationships, ways of behaving and understanding that give a particular school its unique character (Bullough, 1989). Commencing teaching resembles a process of transition or rite of passage that is often described as 'reality shock' (Veenman, 1984). The support provided to beginning teachers at this time is critical to the quality of their immediate professional experiences as well as to their long-term professional learning, hence the introduction of mentorship programme.

Teacher education plays a crucial role in empowering a group of people to assist the greater majority of individuals to adapt to the rapidly changing social, economic and cultural environment to ensure the development of human capital required for the economic and social growth of societies. The underlying principle of teacher education in Ghana is to provide teachers with better knowledge and skills, together with better incentives to use their knowledge and skills for the benefit of children, through the creation of an accessible, integrated teacher education and training system which provides a structure for continuous professional development throughout their teaching careers (MOE, 1994). It is said that if teachers acquire the professional competence and attitudes that enable them to effectively perform their multiple tasks in the classroom, in the school and in the community, teachers become the single most important contributing factor in ensuring quality education provision (Dave & Rajput, 2000). A critical aspect of this professional competence is the mentoring programme which entreats the final year student teachers in colleges of education to have practical

experience as teachers in a classroom setting. It is the heart of teacher education and an inseparable aspect of any professional training.

The benefits of mentorship component in any teacher education programme cannot be overemphasized. According to Anamuah-Mensah (1997), the benefits include strengthening the development of specific teaching competencies, providing opportunities for self-reflection, providing opportunities for sharing experiences with a mentor, supervisor and peers, promoting problem solving capacity and team skills in student teachers and an appreciation of the life of the whole school as distinct from teaching in individual classroom, encourage formation of learning communities and promotion of team work, providing opportunity for student teachers to establish themselves as generative and innovative teaching professionals through authentic participation in school and community activities and meeting real pupils/learners and real situations enables student teachers to develop a repertoire of skills in dealing with different learning situations.

Notwithstanding these tremendous benefits of mentorship to the student teacher, their future learners, our society and the country as a whole, very little seem to be known of the experiences of the mentees on the field. As a tutor in college of education, almost every year some mentees complain vehemently about various difficulties they encounter ranging from attitude of some of the heads of the schools they are sent to, attitude of some of the mentors as well as the community members they lived with. It is against this background that this study seeks to explore the challenges of mentees at the Offinso College of Education.

## **2. Objectives**

Specifically the study sought to:

1. Identify the activities that teacher-mentees are exposed to by their mentors during mentoring programmes.
2. Identify the support systems provided to the mentees during the mentorship programme.

### **2.1 Research questions**

The following research questions were formulated to guide the study:

- 1) What activities are the teacher mentees at Offinso College of Education exposed to by their mentors during the mentoring programmes?
- 2) What are the support systems put in place for the teacher mentees at Offinso College of Education?

### **2.2 Literature Review**

The chapter touched on theoretical framework of the study as well as the conceptual framework of the study. The major theory on which this study was grounded was constructivist theory of learning. On the other hand the conceptual review focused on related relevant existed literature.

### 3. Theoretical Framework of the Study

The main theory on which this current study was grounded is the constructivist paradigm of learning. Constructivism, according to Richardson (1997) is the lens that is used to examine the world and thus provides a manner in which the events of teaching and learning are described and understood. In the early 19th and 20th century the role of the teacher was seen as being to impart knowledge to the learner, whilst constructivism provides the platform to create knowledge and understanding (Richardson, 1997). Knowledge and skills were thought to be obtained through formal education and training. The constructivist viewpoint considers what happens “inside the minds” of individuals (Klasen & Clutterbuck, 2002:12).

In this study the constructivist theory of learning was deemed appropriate because, Gagnon and Collay (2005) revealed that constructivist learning is grounded in learners constructing their own meaning to achieve a particular task. Campbell and Brummet (2007) posits that to cultivate the culture of learning in a mentoring context, teacher educators should reposition their way of thinking in line with constructivist perspectives of learning. Also Klasen and Clutterbuck (2002) supported the use of this theory in a research which is related to teacher’s mentorship because; they are of the opinion that mentoring is deeply embedded within the constructivist viewpoint.

Constructivist theory underpinned this study because, Tomlinson (1995) advises that for pre-service teachers to become skilful at teaching they need two types of learning achievement. This includes learning to understand and clarify the complex elements and procedures that are involved in any related aspect of teaching and, how to integrate the elements necessary for teaching.

#### 3.1 The Concept of Mentorship

The concept of mentorship is thought to originate in Greek mythology. *“In the Odyssey by the Greek poet, Homer, Odysseus one of the characters, was to go and fight in the Trojan War. He was leaving behind his son, Telemachus and realized that he might be away for quite a while. While he was away Telemachus would need coaching and guidance, he therefore hired a trusted friend, with the name Mentor to be his son’s tutor”* (Clawson & Kram, 1984). Carl Hempel (1952:9) suggests that in order *“to determine the meaning of an expression...one would have to ascertain the conditions under which the members of the community use – or, better, are disposed to use – the expression in question”*. Often the concepts presented are suggestive, identifying the attributes of mentoring rather than stipulating the meaning of the concept itself and, in particular, its boundary conditions. More than a few researchers fail to even provide a definition of mentoring (Allen & Johnston, 1997; Burke & McKeen 1997; Chao 1997; Green & Bauer 1995; Tepper & Taylor, 2003).

The few formal, stipulated definitions provided in the mentoring literature sometimes do not have the coverage or plasticity required for research to move easily to new topics. They suggested that many of the current problems in conceptualizing mentoring and, consequently, developing theory, stem from an inattention to the conceptual needs of a growing field of study. Conceptual development of mentoring

has for some time been stunted. Concepts and, thus, theory seem held hostage to early precedent. Its contemporary popularity notwithstanding, serious research on mentoring began relatively recently (Kram, 1980). While it is impossible to identify a single work and say categorically that it is the beginning of mentoring research, one can make a good argument that Kram's dissertation (1980) and her 1983 *Academy of Management Journal* paper provided a beginning to the contemporary research tradition. The 1983 article is still the most frequently cited journal article on the topic of mentoring and her conceptualization of mentoring has been either directly quoted or reworked only slightly in many subsequent studies. In her seminal paper, Kram identified four stages of mentoring, but at no point provided an exacting definition. Eby, Butts, Lockwood and Simon (2004), noted that mentoring involves an intense relationship whereby a senior or more experienced person (the mentor) provides two functions for a junior person (the protégé), one function being advise or modelling about career development behaviours and the second function being personal support, especially psycho-social support.

### **3.2 Structure of Mentorship Programme**

Mentoring programmes encompass various aspects that require meticulous planning, implementation and monitoring for effective results (Hamilton, 2003). According to Hamilton (2003), at the initial phase of the mentoring programme the following aspects need to be communicated to the mentor, mentee and the supervisor of the programme. Firstly, the rationale of the mentorship programme; secondly the objectives; thirdly the responsibilities of the participants and lastly the regulation regarding confidentiality and other issues which may arise (Hamilton, 2003). The lack of these considerations could pose risks for an organization as pointed out by Klasen and Clutterbuck (2002). A mentorship programme that lacks explicit objectives and details can cause frustration and ultimately lead to poor mentoring, thus an attempt to introduce a follow-up programme could be rejected by the potential participants to the programme.

Furthermore, Kardos and Johnson (2008) note that not all mentoring programmes are carefully structured and mentors are not always aware of what is expected of them. Hence mentoring programmes that are disorganized are not a useful tool for the mentor and mentee and should be avoided as they will serve no purpose for the effective development of the mentee. It is thus evident that if mentor teachers are not aware of the purpose of a mentor programme it could influence their role as mentors negatively (Frick, Arend& Beets, 2010). A vital step when developing a mentoring programme is to assess the needs and expectations of the mentees and mentors, otherwise the danger is that the programme can be underutilized and consequently be ineffective (Klasen & Clutterbuck, 2002). Garvey and Alfred (2000) suggest that the following considerations be taken into account when developing a mentoring programme: (a) The role of the mentor must be specified and clear;(b) The organisation must understand the purpose of mentoring; (c) Mentoring is a process and it facilitates the learning of the mentee; (d) Both the mentor and the mentee must be committed; (e) Mentoring requires hard work and (e) the focus of the mentorship

programme must be on the mentee (Garvey & Alfred, 2000). Mawoyo and Robinson (2005) alluded to the fact that a mentoring programme should address the specific needs of the mentee.

### 3.3 Characteristics of a Good Mentorship Programme

A good mentorship programme gives all the responsibilities and describes the role of the mentor (Rowley, 1999). Many times mentors do not know how to help their mentees. They are confused about their role; are they more of a guide, instructor, advisor, friend or all of the above. Frick, Arend, and Beets, (2010) described mentoring as a complex role that encompasses criticism and praise, pressure and nurturing, logistics, organization, and persistence. Many teachers that are serving as mentors have not participated in a formal mentoring training programme. Heeralal and Bayaga (2011) were of the view that this prevalent aspect of school based mentoring programmes presents special challenges that are further exacerbated when mentor teachers receive no or inadequate training and only token support for their work. They may find the role of mentor especially complex and confusing. They are unsure of how to share their years of teaching experience without being overbearing (Ganser, 2002). Some mentors express concerns about being seen as interference rather than a helpful guide (Ganser, 1995). It is vital that mentors know what the expectations of them are. This will alleviate concerns about the role of the mentor and where they fit in with the mentee. Mentoring encompasses so much more than simple support and help. Danielson (2002:184) describes the typical mentor support as including, *“assistance in planning and delivering lessons, working with students with special needs, interacting with parents and staff, and providing encouragement.”* It is important that the mentor have the training in order to know how to fulfil the needs of the novice teacher. The training can range from a short orientation to extensive training (Ganser, 2002).

Frick, Arend and Beets (2010) described three characteristics of a good mentor programme. First, a mentor programme requires formal training for all mentors, it provides specific examples of the roles and responsibilities expected of a mentor, and it requires mentors to document all conferences and activities involving the mentee and mentor. If a mentor does not have clear expectations and high quality training then it minimizes their ability to help and support beginning teachers (Ganser, 2002). According to Huling-Austin (1992), research has also shown that teachers should be trained in schema theory, how to discuss the subject matter with the mentee. The mentor should focus on how they solve problems and try to explain the organization of their thinking to their mentee. Records indicate that in the beginning stages of the mentee/mentor relationship focus on providing information about the system rather than curriculum and instruction (Korthagen, 2004). As a result, mentors need to be trained in how to incorporate subject matter in their conversations with their mentees. Mentors may also need to be trained in how to collaborate with other teachers. After years of working in isolation they need to work on developing the skills to mentor novices (Korthagen, 2004).

### **3.4 Role of teacher training institutions in mentorship programme**

According to Dreyer (1998) a country that neglects the standard of how they train their teachers will eventually influence the standard of their education negatively. Recent studies have revealed concerns regarding the quality of teacher preparation (Martinez, 2004; Campbell and Brummet, 2007; Frick, Arend & Beets, 2010). Martinez (2004) places the blame on teacher training institutions for the poor quality of teachers. Similarly, Campbell and Brummet (2007) accused teacher training institutions of continuously reproducing the status quo. The challenge remains for teacher training institutions to therefore rethink their teacher education programmes in order to ensure better quality teachers.

Research conducted by Quick and Siebörger (2005) has shown that, despite mentoring having so much potential to assist student teachers during teaching practice, it does not always yield the desired outcomes. In their view, there were disparities in the role expectation of mentors and teacher training institutions during teaching. Schools that these student teachers are attached, on the one hand, expected teacher training institutions to take a bigger level of responsibility regarding the supervision of student teachers and also to provide feedback to mentors regarding the development of the students. Rather, teacher training institutions wanted schools to take sole responsibility for the professional development of students during teaching practice (Quick & Siebörger, 2005). Their study showed that responsibilities should be shared fairly between schools and the training institutions.

According to Campbell and Brummet (2007), teacher training institutions lecturers' primary mentoring roles are those of "coach, critical friend and co-inquirer". As coaches, lecturers should assist student teachers through discussions to ascertain what they know and provide strategies for understanding teaching and learning. Whilst supporting pre-service teachers' ways of thinking, as critical friends, lecturers should challenge the student teachers' practices and actions. As co-inquirers, lecturers should see student teachers as learning partners. It can be argued that one of the core purposes of a teacher education programme is to influence the actions and thinking of pre-service teachers (Campbell & Brummet, 2007).

Moreover, teacher education programmes should assist student teachers to develop effective teaching skills and to comprehend the requirements of the teaching profession. A tool that can assist teacher training institutions to achieve this objective is mentoring. Several studies strongly argue that mentoring can be used as a valuable tool to enhance teacher preparation (Maynard & Furlong, 1993; Van Wyk & Daniels, 2004; Martinez, 2004; Frick, Arend & Beets, 2010). Hence the question remains what role should teacher training institutions play to implement an effective mentoring programme?

Mentoring programmes continuously need to be monitored. Regular meetings should be held with the mentor and mentee, and a level of commitment is necessary from all the participants to ensure an effective mentoring programme. Hence the structure and implementation of teacher education mentoring programmes need careful consideration, and teacher training institutions are saddled with the major task of how



to implement an effective mentoring programme. Mentoring student teachers does not merely involve attaching them to a mentor but, rather, ensuring that meaningful mentoring takes place. Dreyer (1998), notes that a careful selection criterion for mentors must be in place to train mentors. The training must equip mentors to assist, coach and direct pre-service teachers. Echoing this sentiment Mawoyo and Robinson (2005) asserted that, when mentor training takes place, mentors should learn how to nurture, develop and understand the needs of student teachers. However, if mentor training does not take place, mentors will rely on their teaching experience to mentor the mentees. Thus clear guidelines are important for mentors to know precisely how to guide student teachers (Mawoyo & Robinson, 2005). It is therefore necessary for lecturers in the teacher training institutions and mentor teachers to work together in developing a mentoring programme conducive for teacher development (Maphosa, Shumba & Shumba, 2007).

In light of this, Martinez (2004) emphasises that mentoring should be structured according to the needs of the mentee. Moreover, Martinez suggests that mentoring programmes should be examined carefully to provide “convincing evidence” that mentoring has the potential to improve the quality of teacher education. Campbell and Brummet (2007:52) argue for a “social learning structure” where pre-service teachers, mentors and lecturers create a common set of goals, unpack problem solving methods and are willing to learn from one another. They perceive the latter stakeholders as a “community of learners”. Frost and Frost (1993) contend that schools and teacher training institution have the option to maintain the status quo or to enhance professionalism. This author argues that the second option can only be achieved if the expectations of mentoring mentees are raised to develop critical pedagogy for both mentee and mentor. Furthermore, Frost believes that the second option is the teaching profession’s hope for the development of quality teachers. The views expressed by this researcher on the development and implementation of teacher education mentoring programmes centre around the needs of the mentee to ensure the facilitation of their professional development and growth. Therefore it can be argued that the mentees’ needs should be a key component when structuring an effective mentoring programme. In light of the aforementioned, the needs of the mentee can be assessed during their teaching practice.

In conclusion, Quick and Siebörger (2005) proposed three important aspects that could improve mentoring pre-service teachers during their teaching practice experience. Firstly, ongoing communication between mentors, lecturers and the teaching practice co-ordinators is important and can be facilitated by arranging meetings between the various stakeholders. Secondly, teacher training institutions lecturers should visit the schools more than is currently required of them to meet with the mentors and to observe lessons of the mentee. Thirdly, teaching practice could greatly improve if lesson presentations by students are observed by their subject lecturers.

### **3.5 Roles of a mentor in mentorship programme**

Literature reviewed indicates several roles of the mentor to facilitate the professional development of a mentee (Tomlinson, 1995; Hamilton, 2003; Portner, 2003; Campbell & Brummet, 2007; Michael & Ilan, 2008). A mentor's role is multifaceted and fulfilling a mentor's role should not be taken lightly (Maphosa, Shumba & Shumba, 2007:297). Mentors are referred to as counsellors, role models and advisers who share their experience with inexperienced individuals and provide the mentee with information on the logistics of how the place of work functions. The mentor's primary role is to purposefully bring the mentee to a standard of acceptable professionalism (Portner, 2003:7). A mentor can function optimally in their primary role by assessing, relating, guiding and coaching. The last two functions "*draw upon the eclectic body of knowledge that informs the mentoring process and are carried out through a variety of skills and behaviours*" (Portner, 2003:7). A mentor typically assists the mentee to understand the realities of the workplace and how to utilize their strengths to best influence situations (Hamilton, 2003:3). Corbett and Wright (1993) sum it up and state that the school-based mentor's role is not merely an administrative one or attending meetings, but encompasses collaborating with the mentees and lecturers.

Also, mentors play the role of coach in that they assist the mentee to locate resources, to improve their understanding of subject knowledge and to expand their skill of teaching (Portner, 2003). The foregoing can be achieved if the mentor shares their experiences of teaching, providing the mentee with examples of teaching methods and creating a pathway where mentees can, through self-reflection, take ownership of improving their teaching. According to Hamilton (2003), coaches need to be knowledgeable regarding the skills involving recognizing what the mentee is doing wrong and providing detailed steps for mentees to improve their performance. To enable this notion, mentors should be able to provide feedback that the mentee can understand, practice and be motivated to act on.

Furthermore, the role of the mentor is to provide expert advice to the student teacher about the elements of their lesson presentation and to give suggestions for improvement. Similarly, Hamilton (2003) contends that the "wisest" role of the mentor would be to showcase their subject knowledge to a mentee. For example, the mentor shows the mentee how a lesson presentation is done following a particular teaching method, whilst the mentee observes the mentor who tells the mentee beforehand what the lesson will entail. The aforementioned is reflective of a teacher that models exemplary behaviour that is expected of a teacher. Another role of a mentor is to guide the mentees as opposed to dictating how to teach (Oetjen & Oetjen, 2009). Mentors need to develop an understanding of how student teachers learn to teach specific subject content and generate skills to aid them effectively.

Moreover, they need to develop an understanding of what the pre-service teacher is attempting to do in the classroom thus figuring out how teaching works (Tomlinson, 1995). This view is supported by Oetjen and Oetjen (2009) who stated that mentors should act as a guide to enable the student teachers to make appropriate decisions on how to embark on their task as teachers. Hence a mentor's role is not to

illustrate the perfection of teaching but in fact create awareness that teaching is complex and ever-changing. Mentors teach a range of classes in a school, and within the limitation of their own timetable they have to arrange observation and teaching periods for pre-service teachers for a particular time period. The major concern for mentors is to ensure that mentees are given an opportunity to create an awareness of possible problems, are given assignments that are challenging, and that a wide range of sufficient experience is obtained (McIntyre & Hagger, 1993). Hence it is vital that the mentor guides the mentee towards independence to create their own understanding of teaching and learning strategies (Portner, 2003). Decisions regarding teaching and learning should be driven through reflection thus empowering the mentee to make informed decisions and take suitable action for future situations regarding teaching and learning. The aim of guiding the mentee is to wean the mentee away from depending on the mentor for ongoing guidance and suggestions. The objective of weaning the mentee is to make the mentor's role redundant, and to achieve this goal the mentee must display a level of autonomy, to show confidence when acting on decisions and to reflect on the accuracy of their actions (Portner, 2003).

In conclusion, despite the increasing attention of mentoring mentees, Hamel and Jaasko-Fisher (2011) argue that the position mentor teachers hold in the teacher fraternity continues to be vague. In their view finding teachers who are capable of mentoring student teachers is a challenge due to the mismatch of role expectations between the mentor and mentee.

### **3.6 Role of a mentee in mentorship programme**

Recent literature pays attention to the role of a mentee as well. For mentees to experience optimal benefits of mentoring they should be aware of their role expectation and practice these expectations to the best of their ability (Karel & Stead, 2011). In a study conducted by Beard (2007), he emphasises that colleges of education together with their students should assume responsibility for ensuring that the internship will be a value-added experience. The responsibility of the students is to be clear about what their roles and objectives will be during the internship and find suitable work places that are aligned with these objectives. For students to become aware of their role as mentees they should be empowered through workshops on how schooling, teaching and the curriculum are structured (Long, Moran, Harris & Ryan, 2007).

Furthermore, mentees can also hamper the mentoring relationship if they do not comply with the requirements of reflecting and talking with their mentors (Hamilton, 2003). This perspective is given weight by Johnson (2007) who adds that regardless of appointing the most competent mentor, a mentee can display behavioural traits that could lead to conflict. For example, the mentee could have a low self-esteem and could perceive critical feedback from the mentor as punitive. A mentee that is interested in learning will seek critical feedback from a mentor and will accept it without being defensive (Karel & Stead, 2011). If the mentee is not in agreement with the mentor's feedback it is important that a discussion is pursued for clarification. On the other side

of the coin the mentor is also required to motivate the rationale behind the feedback provided to the mentee (Nillas, 2010).

It has also been shown by Hamel and Fischer (2011) that mentees can be perceived as an additional burden to the mentors' workload. Hence mentees should tread carefully so that they are not intruding upon a mentor's work environment. It is therefore important that a mentee acknowledges the mentor's input and concern for the mentee's pursuit for learning. For mentees to illustrate a genuine interest in learning they should show initiative for seeking opportunities that are not confined to what is expected from them in the written mentorship policy, for example, offering their services to assist with the extra-mural activities or assisting marginal learners with additional classes (Karel & Stead, 2011).

### **3.7 Relationship between Mentees and Mentors in mentorship programme**

It is important to mention that every mentoring relationship is unique, just as every individual is unique. Although each person develops unique perspectives of how to improve instructional practices for the benefits of their students, it is significant to mention that the beginning of a positive mentoring relationship between a mentor and mentee will influence the success of the outcomes of any implemented programme (Feiman–Nemser, 1996; Jones & Straker, 2006). Yendol-Hoppey & Dana (2007) supported this stance with the argument that, by establishing a trusting relationship with the mentee, the mentor can capitalise on the mentee's ability to be responsive to coaching sessions.

Clutterbuck (1991) summarises the criteria needed for fulfilling the role as a successful mentor. According to Clutterbuck (1991:36), a mentor must:

- 1) Manage the relationship;
- 2) Encourage the mentee;
- 3) Nurture the mentee;
- 4) Teach the mentee;
- 5) Offer mutual respect;
- 6) Respond to the mentee's needs.

### **3.8 Mutual Benefit of Mentoring to Mentor and Mentee**

According to Smith (2002), the relationship between a mentor and a mentee is essential to successfully assist new teachers. Through these relationships, beginning teachers will be able to better handle the day-to-day challenges of a classroom. Collaborative mentoring involves the mentor and mentee working together as equals in the mentoring programme. The mentor acts as a probe and mirror, as in the non-directive mentoring, but also participates in the problem solving process by offering solutions and proposing actions (Vonk, 1993). Wildman, Magliaro, Niles and Niles (1992) also reported that mentors can provide assistance by sitting in on parent conferences, planning together, allowing the mentee to observe class, and helped to set up class routines.

According to Phillip - Jones (1998), one will leave the world a better place if he or she makes time to help others. He emphasizes that sharing your knowledge and wisdom developed from many years of working can make a significant change in a person's life and this is what happens in mentoring. Relationships are developed in organizations both unilaterally and bilaterally. Power is not just a gun, a baton, a hundred dollar bill that can be passed from hand to hand but a relationship among human beings. A unilateral relationship is one-sided in that one human being is influencing or affecting another. A bilateral relationship, in contrast, is interactive; one human being can both influence and be affected by another.

Phillip-Jones (1998) further explained that both mentors and mentees benefit from the mentoring programme if there is a cordial relationship. To achieve this, critical measures need to be in place to enable both develop and grow professionally and personally. He listed the following as some of the measures:

- 1) Purpose - both mentor and mentee need to develop an agreed understanding of the purpose on why they are together and meeting. There is common agreement on the work that will be undertaken, and there is recognition of when the purpose has been met and goals of the relationship have been met.
- 2) Communication - occurs in a manner that is mutually agreeable and within agreed timeframes. A number of active communication skills are required to enable an effective partnership including, active listening and responding; monitoring of nonverbal language; clarifying questions and concepts; and providing opportunity for feedback.
- 3) Trust - is critical and includes maintaining confidentiality of information, honesty to act and follow through on promises and sharing of yourself to explore possibly difficult questions/issues.
- 4) Process – the programme occurs in a staged approach – planning; building relationships/negotiating agreement; developing and maintaining the momentum; and ending the relationship.
- 5) Progress – the mentee must take responsibility for the progress of the mentoring relationship. The mentee works actively to firstly identify appropriate goals and build competencies to reach those goals and identifying interesting learning experiences and explores these with the mentor.
- 6) Feedback – the way of receiving feedback has been agreed to and the information received reinforces the efforts of both.

Positive mentor-mentee relationship would help to facilitate a flourishing teaching experience, hence it is important to discover ways mentors and mentees can contribute to the relationship development (Margolis, 2007). A positive mentoring relationship where mentors employ personal attributes can help mentees to reflect on practices towards achieving student outcomes (Sempowicz & Hudson, 2012), yet the process begins with forming the mentor-mentee relationship in teaching and in other occupations (Bradbury & Koballa, 2008; Gibson, 2004; Gormley, 2008). Mentors can gain personal benefits through a mentoring programme (Huling & Resta, 2001). Mentors can

develop strong connections with mentees and a sense of esteem from the mutual efforts and satisfaction in what they create together (Bainer, 1997).

### **3.9 Support Systems for Mentees**

In addition, beginner teacher mentoring is more likely to be successful where it takes place within schools which are characterized by collegial and learning cultures (Edwards, 1998; Lee & Feng, 2007); where both mentors and mentees have access to support outside of the mentoring relationship, such as from other teachers in the school or from external networks of peers (Whisnant, Elliott, & Pynchon, 2005); and where mechanisms exist that enable mentees and mentors to initiate the establishment of an alternative pairing, without blame being attached to either party, where they feel that the relationship is not (or is no longer) productive (Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, 1999).

## **4. Methodology**

### **4.1 Population**

Polit, Beck and Hungler (2004:289) define population as 'the entire aggregation of cases that meet a designated set of criteria'. The target population is the aggregate of cases about which the researcher would like to make generalizations (Polit, Beck & Hungler, 2004). The target group for this study was the 2015 mentorship group with a population of 152 (92 males and 60 females). All the 152 students consented to their participation.

### **4.2 Sample Size and Sampling Techniques**

The study employed mixed research design that use multistage sampling to select a sample size of 76 mentees. was selected through multi-stage sampling techniques. Multi-stage sampling approach requires the use of more than one sampling technique when selecting sample size.

This technique was used because it was relatively easy to identify and allocate the units (male and female). Also, this technique was appropriate because it ensures that the resulting sample was distributed in the same way as the population in terms of the stratifying criterion (Howit & Cramer, 2011).

A proportion of 50 per cent was drawn from each strata using simple random sampling. Simple random sampling, also a probability sampling approach, ensures that each unit of the two strata has equal probability of inclusion in the sample. The lottery method, one of the strategies used in simple random sampling was used. In this regards 46 pieces of paper with the inscription, "YES" were folded whiles another 46 with the inscription 'NO' were also folded for the male mentees to pick. With the females, 30 pieces of papers with inscription 'YES' were folded and another 30 pieces of papers with 'NO' were also folded. All those who picked 'YES' were the people who participated in the study. This selection process was done on the day all the mentees reported to school immediately after their internship programme. This approach, according to Howit and Cramer (2011) is appropriate as it ensures fair representation of

the sample and it also generates a sample that reflects the population that it purports to stand for.

In the interview phase, judgemental sampling technique was used to select 20 male teacher mentees and 10 female teacher mentees. Judgmental sampling is a [non-probability sampling technique](#) where the researcher selects units to be sampled based on their knowledge and professional judgment.

## 5. Presentation of Findings and Discussions of Results

**Research Question 1:** What activities are mentees exposed by their mentors during the mentoring programmes?

The research question sought to understand the various activities mentees were exposed to in the course of their mentorship programme. The findings on these activities according to the questionnaire data and the interview were presented below. According to the questionnaire data, respondents were exposed to various activities. The activities respondents responded to in this study included, preparation of lesson and lesson delivery with mentor, the giving of exercises and scoring them, being given opportunity to manage class, working on project work with students, involvement in co-curricular activities, sitting in class when mentor is teaching and delivering lesson without the mentor as represented in Table 1.

**Table 1:** Activities respondents were exposed

	Disagree		Neutral		Agree		Total	
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
1. Conducting of exercises and scoring	0	0	0	0	72	100	72	100
2. Preparation of lesson and lesson delivery	2	2.8	0	0	70	97.2	72	100
3. Given opportunity to manage class	5	6.9	4	5.6	63	87.5	72	100
4. Project work with students	8	11.1	2	2.8	62	86.1	72	100
5. Sporting activities	10	13.9	0	0	62	86.1	72	100
6. Sit in class when mentor is teaching	20	27.8	0	0	52	72.2	72	100
7. Delivered lessons without the mentor	20	27.8	0	0	52	72.2	72	100

**Source:** Fieldwork 2015

According to Table 4.2, mentees from Offinso College of Education were exposed to various activities during their mentorship programme. As shown by the table, all the respondents, 72 (100.0%) agreed they were exposed to conducting of exercises and scoring. Another activity the mentees were exposed to was lesson preparation. Out of 72 respondents, 70 (97.2) agreed they were exposed to preparation of lesson. Furthermore, out of the total of 72 respondents, 63 respondents, representing 87.5% agreed they were given opportunity to manage a class independently, 5 (6.9%) disagreed and 4 (5.6%) were neutral. Project work with students was another activity mentees were exposed to. With reference to project work with students, out of 72 respondents, 62 (86.1%) agreed they were exposed to the activity, 8 (11.1%) disagreed and 2 (2.8%) were neutral. Besides out 72 respondents, 62 (86.1%) agreed they were exposed to sporting activities but 10 (13.9%) disagreed. In addition, 52 (72.2%) agreed they sat in the class when

mentor was teaching while 20 (27.8%) disagreed. Finally, out of the total of 72 respondents, 52 (72.2%) agreed they were exposed to delivering lessons without the mentor as against, 20 (27.8%) who disagreed.

On the other hand, commenting on the activities participants were exposed to, the interview data revealed two themes. These included classroom related activities and non-classroom activities. On the classroom related activities, the participants revealed they were exposed to lesson preparation, lesson delivery and marking of exercises. Two of them indicated:

*"The major activities I experienced during the mentorship programme were lesson preparation and teaching. Throughout the programme, I worked on the lesson plan and my mentor vetted it. I then used the vetted lesson plan to teach". FP2*

*"Throughout the mentorship programme, I planned lessons, taught the students and gave exercises and marked them. These were my daily activities in my staying in the school". MP3*

On the other hand, the data revealed that participants were also exposed to non-classroom related activities. These activities according to the data included sports and games, students' project works and supervision of students to clean the school compound. Two participants had these to say:

*"I was actively involved in the students' sports training programme. Apart from being in charge of my class physical education on the field, I assisted in training of the school's football and volleyball team". MP8*

*"I was part of masters on duty for a whole month. Primarily, I supervised students early morning to clean the compound as in sweeping and sometimes weeding. This has introduced me to the activities I will be doing after my internship programme and has increased my confidence level". FP7*

The results revealed that there were some activities teacher mentees were exposed to during their internship programme and these activities included writing of lesson plan, attending cycle meeting, marking of exercises, attending school gathering like assembly, staff meeting just to mention a few.

### **Research Question 2:** What are the support systems put in place for teacher-mentees?

Both the questionnaire and the interview data revealed various support systems available to mentees from Offinso College of Education. According to the questionnaire, the support systems available to the mentees were orientation for mentees on life at mentorship programme, contacts of supervisors available to mentees, mentors having meeting with mentees regularly, basic amenities made available to mentees,



accommodation provided by the school and teaching materials provided by the school. Table 2 presents the findings of the questionnaire.

**Table 2.** Support Systems for Mentees

	Disagree		Neutral		Agree		Total	
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
1. Orientation for mentees on life at mentorship programme	20	27.8	0	0	52	72.2	72	100
2. Mobile contacts of supervisors available to mentees	15	20.8	0	0	57	79.2	72	100
3. Mentors have meeting with mentees regularly	30	41.7	0	0	42	58.3	72	100
4. Basic amenities are available to mentees	30	41.7	0	0	42	58.3	72	100
5. Accommodation was provided by the school	20	27.8	0	0	52	72.2	72	100
6. Teaching materials are provided by the school	10	13.9	0	0	62	86.1	72	100

**Source:** Fieldwork 2015.

According Table 2, out of 72 respondents, 52 (72.2%) respondents saw the orientation given them before their mentorship programme as support system, while 20 (27.8%) disagreed. Another support system respondent responded to was the availability of the supervisors' mobile contact. The table revealed that out of the total respondents, 57 (79.2%) of them agreed to that as a support system while 15 (20.8%) of them disagreed. Again, out of the total respondents, 42 (58.3%) of them agreed having regular meetings with their mentors was a support system while 30 (41.7%) of them disagreed. Furthermore, out of the total respondents, 42 (58.3%) agreed basic amenities were provided them during their mentorship programme, while 30 (41.7%) disagreed. Also, while 52 (72.2%) respondents agreed accommodation was provided by the school, 20 (27.8) disagreed their schools provided accommodation for them. Finally, out of the total respondents, 62 (86.1%) of them agreed that teaching materials were provided by the school, while 10 (13.9%) of them disagreed. The interview also allowed the participants to express their views on the support system available to mentees during the mentorship programme. Two major themes emerged from the data and these were support for professional development and support for social life.

On the support for professional development, most of the school mentees were attached to mentors who were always available and assisted and trained them during their mentorship programme. Besides, mentees were also supported in relation to their professional development through the provision of some teaching and learning materials such as chinks, text books, notebooks, pens and other resources, as evident from some of the comments of the participants.

*"The school has made available one of the experienced teachers to mentor me. I have really learned a lot of skills from him. Not only that, I was provided with one notebook and pen by the head teacher of the school". MP11*

*"When arrived at the school, even two experienced teachers were ready to guide me during the programme. Although one was my mentor, other teachers too, do assist me anytime my mentor was not around".FP1*

Another support systems available to the mentees according to the data was related to social support. These included students fetching water for mentees on a daily basis, provision of accommodation for mentees and the involvement of mentees in recreational activities.

*“Throughout the mentorship programme I have never carried the bucket to fetch water. The headmaster has instructed some the students to fetch water for me on a daily basis. Even the room I lodged in was given to me free of charge by the community”. FP1*

*The community members were very helpful. Days that I pick bucket to fetch water a parent would instruct a child to collect the bucket to fetch the water for me. They were very supportive in various ways. MP13*

The support systems put in place for mentees were really helpful and clear to the mentees. Both the interview and the questionnaire revealed the support systems really helped the mentees.

## **6. Summary**

This discussion has focused on the activities mentees were exposed to during their mentorship programme which included preparation of lesson and lesson delivery with mentor, given of exercises and scoring, managing class, involvement in co-curricular activities just to mention a few. The benefits mentees derived from these activities also included social skills which exposed mentees to know how to relate with people from different background, the behaviours of people and how to effectively relate with students. It also enables them to develop new teaching skills, as well as developing skills in assessing students. In addition, the various challenges mentees faced which includes delay in the provision of distance learning materials and manuals, inadequate teaching and learning materials, lack of library facilities in attachment area, unclear and unachievable goals set by mentors and absenteeism of mentor during the internship programme as well as the support system (fetching water for mentees on a daily basis, provision of accommodation for mentees and the involvement mentees in recreational activities) available to mentees enable them to cope with the challenges they face during their internship.

## **7. Conclusions**

The following conclusions were drawn from the study: Mentees from Offinso College of Education were exposed to various activities which focused on the enhancement of their teaching profession in the future and benefits of these activities to the mentees have led to the acquisition and practice of various teaching skills as well as the enhancement of mentees social skills. Again mentees from Offinso College of Education were faced with various challenges during their mentorship programme but they were

not left without support but rather both the authorities of their college and the school they had their mentorship programme did provide some support for them.

### 7.1 Recommendations

Looking at the findings above, the following recommendations were made:

1. Authorities of Colleges of Education should put in place a training programme for their mentors on their roles in the training of the mentees. Such training will equip mentors on their roles in the training of the mentees as well as reduce conflict between mentors and mentees.
2. There should be periodic orientation to help remind mentors on the need to be patient with their mentees.
3. Mentees should not be complacent and disrespectful to their mentors and other staff in the school. This will help mentees to receive the appropriate guidance from their mentors as well as the support other teachers on the staff.

### 7.2 Suggestion for Future Study

It will also be beneficial if future study could look at the challenges facing mentorship programme in Ghana.

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