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Preservice Teachers' Professional Experiences during Internship at the University of Education, Winneba, Ghana

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Abstract: This study examined the effectiveness of how preservice teachers of the University of Education, Winneba are mentored when on internship. The study employed the sequential explanatory mixed-methods research design, utilizing a researcher-made close-ended questionnaire and interview guide to collect data. A simple random sampling technique determined 125 preservice teachers in the biology, chemistry, and physics departments for the quantitative phase of the study. Ten preservice teachers participated in the qualitative phase of the study. Quantitative data was analyzed using descriptive statistics. Qualitative data was categorized into themes generated from the research questions. The results revealed that preservice teachers have mentoring needs that were not adequately addressed by the mentors. Mentoring preservice teachers in the typical classroom situation is critical for professional development as it aims at inculcating in them practical experiences in teaching to enhance their abilities and develop their knowledge and skills in the areas studied. Mentors and mentees, therefore, need to know what their associated roles are and how to interact for a positive impact. Mentors should be engaged based on their specialization in the subject area, their rich experience and their willingness to mentor preservice teachers.

Keywords: Mentoring; internship; teacher education; mentor; preservice teacher.

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Introduction

Teacher preparation program is of utmost importance to teacher training institutions. It includes mentoring preservice teachers for them to teach effectively in their future career. Mentoring preservice teachers has been advocated as a reform

in teacher education since the late 1980s. Preservice teachers are trained in both theoretical and practical aspects of teaching. The practical aspect involves one semester of peer teaching at the university and another semester of internship teaching in a senior high school.

During this time, preservice teachers are attached to experienced teachers or lecturers who act as mentors. Mentoring, according to Bigelow (2002) and Haney (1997) involves developing in teacher trainees' teaching skills and strategies. This training is achieved through a nurturing relationship between a mentee who is less experienced and a mentor who is more experienced. In this relationship, the mentor who serves as a role model or advisor provides guidance to the mentee.

According to Yeatman and Sachs as cited in Carpenter and Matters (2003), teacher education programs are presently expected to develop a link between theory and practice so that the training of student teachers becomes informed by a more practically grounded and broadly informed theory. In spite of this expectation, past criticisms still remain that teacher education is irrelevant to the "real world" (Roth as cited in Carpenter & Matters 2003) of teaching and fails to concentrate on the practical expectations of teaching. It is argued that there is a gap between the theory that is taught in the classroom and the teaching practice that is linked to the classroom (Verspoor, 2008; Wolfenden, 2012). Graham and Thornley (2000) argued that this results in student teachers failing to make the link between the two domains. Zachary (2011) proposed effective mentoring during the period of pre-service teacher training as one of the measures that could bridge the gap between the theory and practice of teacher training programs.

Preservice teachers have mentoring needs which when met could equip them to be effective teachers after training. These needs include understanding the curriculum, school policies and assessments, writing lesson plans, articulating pedagogical knowledge (such as teaching strategies, classroom management, motivating students and dealing with unexpected situations) and providing direct and detailed feedback about teaching performance (Hudson, 2002).

Literature on teacher education points out that mentoring plays a significant role in the training and development of teacher trainees within teacher education programs as well as student teaching practice in schools, which serves as the most significant factor in the shaping of student teachers' experience of training to be a teacher (Tang, 2003). The preservice teacher's abundance of experience is mostly attributable to the mentor teacher in accordance with his or her function as a mentor.

According to Bray and Nettleton (2006), mentoring is one of the most effective ways of equipping student teachers during teacher training. Carver (2009) asserted that a mentor or a mentoring team is responsible for various responsibilities and roles, from providing the preservice teacher with a basic orientation of school procedures, norms, routines, policies and expectations to assisting the preservice teacher well integrate and design a standard-based curriculum that is responsive to the student's learning needs. According to Zeichner (2010), mentors of preservice teachers are expected to assist preservice teachers to study how to link what they learned theoretically with what they do in the classrooms. Mentoring has been discovered to be an effective way of developing professionals in most professions (Tim, 2009). Hudson (2002) pointed out that mentors have the responsibility of providing constructive guidance (such as sharing teaching experiences, giving clear advice and constructive feedback on mentees' teaching strategies) and giving mentees more opportunities to teach.

In effective teacher education, mentoring can never be overlooked. Preservice teachers are assigned to experienced teachers (mentor) in different schools for a considerable period of time for practical teaching experience. During this period, the experienced teacher engages the student teachers (mentees) in teaching and other classroom activities in order to perfect the art of teaching. The experienced teacher has responsibilities that include those of a coach, role model, advisor, guide and counsellor, among others. Internship is aimed at allowing interns to acquire professional experience in a real-life environment. Internship involves not just practicing teaching but rather experiencing good practices with students in a variety of ways with the questioning and thoughtful guidance of an experienced mentor for the period of mentorship.

According to Blank and Sindelar as cited in Hudson and Nguyen (2008), mentors appear to be a unique blend of intuitive sensitivity and technical expertise. Although all mentors are teachers with exceptional ideas about teaching and mentoring, the presence of a mentor alone is not enough. The mentor's knowledge and skills on how to mentor are crucial to the mentoring process (Ganser, 1996). According to Hobson, et al. (2012), mentoring of preservice teachers does not automatically occur with the assignment of a student teacher with an experienced teacher and the university supervisor. More so, the supervision and evaluation of student

teachers by mentors and university supervisors in schools does not equate with mentoring. Rather, educative mentoring, according to Feiman-Nemser (2001) and Schwille (2008), is one that goes beyond typical emotional support and it embraces prospects in which student teachers are involved in the genuine task of collaboratively teaching and reflecting with a more experienced teacher (mentor).

Educative mentoring is of two types: mentoring during the act of teaching which includes coaching, stepping in, co-teaching, demonstrating and mentoring before or after the act of teaching which comprises brief interactions, lengthier debriefing sessions, co-planning sessions, analysis of videotaped teaching and shared journaling (Schwille, 2008). These types of educative mentoring are what most mentors do not engage in. Instead, all they do is mark interns' lesson notes and supervise their teaching.

Mentoring in its very sense is a two-edged sword. The mentees are not only affected by mentoring but the mentors who provide quality-mentoring benefit as well. Benefits according to Cronin (2019) include leadership skills development, mastery of the art of delivering feedback, exposure to new and different perspectives, and becoming a good leader. According to Hudson and Hudson (2010), the challenges mentors face includes a lack of time to observe and interact with the mentees and the tussle to provide appropriate feedback and establish clear goals for the mentee.

A number of studies have been conducted in the area of preservice teacher mentoring in order to improve mentoring in various teacher training institutions. Simsar and Dogan (2020) carried out a study to establish mentor teachers' mentoring practices in science teaching according to preservice early childhood teachers' views. The results showed that most of the preservice teachers reported that their mentor teachers demonstrated limited mentoring practices per the system's requirement for science teaching. The preservice teachers also pointed out that their mentor teachers mostly showed mentoring practices on personal attributes, pedagogical knowledge, modeling and feedback factors. It was concluded that knowing and understanding the mentoring skills of early childhood teachers in system requirements, pedagogical knowledge, modeling, giving feedback and personal attributes would have an important

growth on preservice early childhood teachers' science teaching skills. In another related study, Phang et al. (2020) sought to determine roles played by mentor teachers in the preservice teachers' teaching practicum. Findings showed that mentor teachers played moderate roles in mentoring preservice teachers; mentor teachers perceived themselves to play many roles yet regarded certain roles as unnecessary and unimportant. It was recommended that universities, secondary schools and government agencies involved in education must address the importance of producing quality teachers by improving the quality of mentoring programs.

Heerlal (2014) also carried out a study to establish the mentoring needs of preservice teachers during teaching practice in a South African University. The findings revealed that the greatest mentoring needs of preservice teachers lie in the areas of assessment, lesson preparation, administrative matters, classroom management, lesson presentation and discipline. The study recommended that mentors be provided with training so that they can be of assistance to the preservice teachers in these areas.

In order to produce quality teachers, the University of Education, Winneba in 1999, restructured its teacher education into a four-year degree program for pre-service teachers to have adequate time to go through mentorship. Partnerships were established with a cross-section of public and private schools and colleges of education as a means to set up quality systems to facilitate the professional growth of student teachers. This internship program is based on the Collaborative School Model (CSM) with some of the guiding principles that interns will interact with a cohort of peers, have the opportunity and be encouraged to participate in a whole school experience, and tap into professional development opportunities from mentors (Institute of Teacher Education and Professional Development, 2018). Mentors have spelt out responsibilities to ensure interns are mentored, and these include pre and post observation discussion of lessons with interns, helping Interns with lesson planning, assessment techniques, interpretation of assessment data, classroom management techniques and differentiated instructional strategies, among others. During the supervision of final year students in their various schools of internship, the researchers realized from the way student teachers taught that they had deficiencies with regard to effective teaching strategies.

Furthermore, during post-internship interaction with students upon their return from the internship programs, the presentation of their philosophies coupled with their reflective practice indicated that they were not really mentored but just monitored and supervised. The purpose of this study, therefore, was to find out if preservice teachers of the University of Education, Winneba are taken through the essentials of mentoring by the mentors they are assigned to during their internship. The study was guided by the following research questions:

1. What preparatory process do mentors take preservice teachers through before they start practicing teaching?
2. How does the mentorship provided for the mentees by mentors align with what the university stipulates?
3. What activities were mentees involved in to develop instructional capabilities together with their mentors?
4. What is the perception of respondents on the benefits gained from the teaching practice experiences?

Methodology

Research Design

This study used the sequential explanatory mixed-methods design. This method integrates both qualitative and quantitative methods of data collection which can help gain a more complete picture of a phenomenon than a stand-alone qualitative or quantitative method (Creswell et al. 2003). According to Creswell (2012), using both quantitative and qualitative research data provides a better understanding of the research problem than either type by itself. Again, the use of mixed methods design becomes necessary when one type of research (qualitative or quantitative) approach is not enough to address the research problem or answer research questions. Explanatory sequential mixed methods research design begins with the collection and analysis of the quantitative data followed by qualitative data. The qualitative data was analysed in sequence to help explain or elaborate on the quantitative results obtained in the first phase (Creswell & Clark, 2011).

Population and Sampling

The population of the study involved 350 final year (level 400) preservice teachers in the Faculty of Science Education of the University of Education, Winneba. For the purpose of this study, a simple

random sampling technique was used to select 125 preservice teachers in the biology, chemistry and physics departments for the quantitative data. A simple random sampling technique was used because it is simple, it lacks bias and it allows for generalizations to be made about the larger population (Horton, 2022). A purposive sampling technique was later used to select ten preservice teachers from the initial sample, who did their internship in Winneba and were supervised by two of the researchers, for the qualitative data. Three out of these ten are females while seven are males. These students spent one semester out of their eight semesters on internship in various educational institutions from the basic level to the senior high school level. Each student teacher was attached to a mentor (a trained and experienced teacher who had gone through a mentorship training organized by the University of Education, Winneba in their respective schools of practice to be mentored.

Instruments

Data was collected using a semi-structured interview guide and a structured close-ended questionnaire. A 6-item semi-structured interview guide was developed for the preservice teachers to collect the qualitative data. The items were based on the experiences of the mentees during the internship, the main roles their mentors played and the challenges they faced during their internship, if any. To collect the quantitative data, a 21-item questionnaire was used. Nine of the items were Likert scale questions and eleven of the items required respondents to provide a YES or NO response. The questionnaire was based on preservice teachers' experiences with their mentors during off-campus internship, and this was intended to evaluate the support mentees received from their mentors.

Validity and Reliability

The content and face validity of the study instruments were done by senior lecturers and professors in the Faculty of Science Education of the University of Education, Winneba, and their comments were used to improve the questionnaire and interview guides. The reliability of the questionnaire was computed using the Cronbach alpha coefficient reliability (Alpha = 0.56) which falls within the accepted range of 0.5 and 1.0 (Cho & Kim, 2015). Trustworthiness of the interview data was ensured through member checking, triangulation of data obtained, and rich thick description of the study findings.

Data Analysis

Quantitative data was analyzed by means of descriptive statistics, frequency counts, simple percentages and tables. The interview was audiotaped, transcribed and read over several times to acquaint with the data collected. The qualitative data was coded inductively, organized and presented according to the research questions raised to support to triangulate findings obtained from the quantitative data. The preservice teachers were numbered 1 to 10. Excerpts from the interview data were therefore reported using preservice teachers 1 to 10 (PT1 – PT10).

Ethical consideration

The University of Education, Winneba provided ethical approval for this study. Through an invitation letter and a direct explanation in the classroom, the goal of this study and the procedures for data collection, analysis and reporting were communicated to the preservice science teachers. Before they signed the consent form to participate in the study, the preservice teachers were allowed to ask any questions they had. The researchers used pseudonyms for all participants to ensure anonymity and confidentiality of findings. Participants were informed that they could withdraw from the study at any time without needing to provide a reason and that all acquired data would be kept confidential and anonymous. All ethical concerns were addressed to guarantee that

there were no conflicts of interest that could compromise the validity (Atkins & Wallace, 2012) or credibility (Corbin & Strauss, 2008) of the study.

Results and Discussion

This section presents the analysis, results and discussions of the study. It was guided by research questions.

Demographics of Respondents

The background data of the sample indicates that 99 (79%) males and 26 (21%) females participated from three departments in the Faculty of Science Education. Out of the 125 preservice teachers, 23 (18%) were trained teachers from the colleges of education while 102 (82%) were not trained teachers. They were those who entered the university just after secondary education. The trained teachers had between two and eight years of teaching experience before they enrolled for further teacher training program in the university.

Research Question 1: What preparatory processes do mentors take preservice teachers through before the mentees start practicing teaching?

The first research question sought to establish preparatory processes the mentors take the preservice teachers through before the mentees start practicing teaching. To answer this research question, a questionnaire was used to collect data. Results are indicated in Table 1.

Table 1: Preparatory Processes Mentees Were Taken Through

| SN | Preparatory process | YES | | NO | |
|----|--|-----|----|----|----|
| | | f | % | f | % |
| 1 | Mentees were given orientation about essential routines and policies | 90 | 72 | 35 | 28 |
| 2 | Mentees observed their mentor for the first three weeks before they started teaching | 47 | 38 | 78 | 62 |
| 3 | Mentees had pre-observation discussion with their mentors to clarify the focus of the lessons to be taught, the learning objectives and strategies | 55 | 44 | 70 | 56 |
| 4 | Mentees had post-observation discussion with their mentors to evaluate collaboratively the learning outcomes | 44 | 35 | 81 | 65 |

Results from Table 1 show that the majority (72%) of the participants indicated that they were given orientation about essential routines and policies of the school. Orientation prepares preservice teachers for their effective stay in the school, prepares them for challenges they are likely to face and helps them to appraise and reflect on their own teaching practices (Botha, et al., 2022). However, lesser than half (38%) of respondents agreed to have observed their mentors for the first three weeks before they started teaching while the majority (62%) disagreed

they observed their mentors. This suggests that just a few mentees observed their mentors for the first three weeks before they started teaching. Preservice teacher observation is essential since it can give one useful information about how to teach and how classes function. Jones and Smith (2019) claim that preservice teachers get the chance to observe successful teaching tactics, classroom management techniques and student engagement techniques through structured observations of experienced educators. They get more pedagogical

knowledge from this first-hand experience, which also helps students prepare for their future careers as teachers by enabling them to see how theory is used in actual teaching situations. The minority (44%) reported that mentees had pre-observation discussions with their mentors to clarify the focus of the lessons to be taught, the learning objectives and strategies while the majority (56%) disagreed. This suggests that the clarification was made to just a few students while the rest did not receive such a service.

Finally, slightly more than a quarter of respondents agreed that mentees had post-observation discussions with the mentors to evaluate collaboratively the learning outcomes while the majority disagreed. This suggests that post observation discussions were extended to just a few students while the rest did not receive such a service. The combination of preservice teacher observation and subsequent pre and post-observation discussions develop reflective thinking, which results in enhanced instructional practices and professional growth, according to recent research by Davis et al. (2021). Preservice teachers can evaluate their teaching techniques critically, pinpoint areas for development and seek out helpful criticism through the process of monitoring classroom interactions and having guided talks with mentors or veteran instructors. This reflective cycle encourages change depending on student feedback, promotes a greater understanding of pedagogical decisions, and eventually aids in the creation of more productive teaching methods.

Considering the fact that 82% (according to demographic data) of the sampled preservice teachers are not trained, orientation by mentors, observing mentors teach coupled with pre and post-observation discussion should have been one sure way to further expose preservice teachers to effective teaching strategies and enables them to bridge the gap between theory and practice, but most of these preservice teachers were deprived of this opportunity. Mentees' need for concrete feedback, constructive criticism, constant direction and advice on teacher professionalism during the planning and performance of their daily work can only be achieved with their regular and consistent meetings, working and interaction with mentors.

Research Question 2: Does the mentorship provided align with what the university stipulated?

The second research question sought to establish whether the mentorship provided align with what the university stipulated. To answer this research question, a questionnaire and an interview guide were used to collect data from the field. Results are presented in Tables 2 and 3.

Interaction with Mentors

One of requirements stipulated by the university was the interaction between the mentors and the mentees in terms of pre-observation discussions, post-observation discussions, observation of lessons by mentors, observation of the mentors' lessons by mentees and meeting before or after school hours.

Table 2: Number of Times Mentees Interacted with Mentors (N=125)

| SN | Item | Seldom | 3 to 4 times weekly | 5 or more times weekly |
|----|--------------------------------------|----------|---------------------|------------------------|
| 1 | Pre-observation discussion | 92(74%) | 28(22%) | 05(4%) |
| 2 | Post-observation discussion | 100(80%) | 21(17%) | 04(3%) |
| 3 | Observation of my lessons by mentor | 70(56%) | 48(38%) | 07(6%) |
| 4 | Observation of my mentor's lessons | 70(56%) | 44(35%) | 11(9%) |
| 5 | Meeting before or after school hours | 94(75%) | 22(18%) | 09(7%) |

As indicated in table 2, majority of respondents (56 to 80%) seldom received pre-observation discussions, post-observation discussions and observation of lessons by mentors. They also had limited opportunity to observe the mentors' lessons and meeting before or after school hours. Table 2 further shows that only 17 to 35 percent of respondents interacted with the mentors three to four times weekly while three to nine percent interacted with the mentors five or more times. These findings imply that the interaction between

mentors and mentees was limited as very few teachers in training had interacted with the mentors three or more times during the time of teaching practice. According to Johnson and Smith (2018), preservice teachers' development of practical teaching abilities and pedagogical knowledge is greatly aided by their mentors' and preservice teachers' dynamic engagement. This was also emphasized by Anderson et al. (2022) that regular and meaningful engagement between mentors and preservice teachers is essential for creating a

welcoming learning environment and encouraging reflective teaching practices. Mentors, therefore, should as much as possible, plan their periods of interactions with mentees, should always also avail themselves for these interactions which have immense benefit for both parties.

Reception of Assistance from Mentors

Table three indicates the rate of assistance the mentees received from mentors during the time teaching practice period.

Table 3: Frequency of Assistance Received

| SN | Assistance offered | Always | | Sometimes | | Never | |
|----|--|--------|----|-----------|----|-------|----|
| | | f | % | f | % | f | % |
| 1 | Lesson planning | | | | | | |
| 2 | Design of formative and summative assessment | 48 | 39 | 54 | 43 | 23 | 18 |
| 3 | Interpretation of test data | 45 | 36 | 51 | 41 | 29 | 23 |
| 4 | Classroom management technique | 36 | 29 | 46 | 37 | 43 | 34 |
| 5 | Differentiated instructional strategies | 42 | 34 | 44 | 35 | 39 | 31 |
| 6 | Building confidence in the classroom | 53 | 42 | 45 | 36 | 27 | 22 |

Table 4: Activities Mentees Carried Out with Mentors to Develop Instructional Capabilities

| SN | Activities | Yes | | No | |
|----|---|-----|------|-----|------|
| | | f | % | f | % |
| 1 | Team planning and team-teaching activities | 47 | 38 | 78 | 62 |
| 2 | Constructive feedback and suggestions regarding lesson plan | 20 | 16 | 105 | 84 |
| 3 | Constructive criticism on observed teaching and professional behavior | 30 | 24 | 95 | 76 |
| 4 | Experiment with new teaching ideas and styles | 45 | 36 | 80 | 64 |
| 5 | Supervision apart from the frequent informal observations of teaching | 53 | 42 | 72 | 58 |
| 6 | Organized periodic conferences and counselling sessions | 44 | 35 | 81 | 65 |
| 7 | Development of portfolio and action research projects | 52 | 41.6 | 73 | 58.4 |

Table 3 shows that the majority of respondents had always or sometimes received assistance from mentors in terms of lesson planning, design of formative and summative assessment, design of formative and summative assessment, classroom management technique, differentiated instructional strategies or differentiated instructional strategies. Much as the majority always or sometimes received assistance, between 18% and 34% of respondents never received any kind of assistance from mentors in terms of formative and summative assessment, design of formative and summative assessment, classroom management technique, differentiated instructional strategies or differentiated instructional strategies.

To ascertain how well mentors carried out these responsibilities, an interview was conducted with ten preservice teachers. Six respondents indicated that their mentors never had time to assist them in developing any teaching skills. They admitted that their mentors never assisted them in any of the areas mentioned in Table 3. When asked to talk about how often they were assisted during the period of teaching practice, PT1 (Female preservice teacher) had this to say:

These teachers were just waiting for us to come so they could hand over their classes

to us. My mentor welcomed me, introduced me to his students, showed me the laboratory and wished me well. He came for my lesson notes once in a while to mark without any discussion. I was on my own throughout the period. My yellow book was with him till I requested it in order to fill my portion when the need arose. I can't however tell if I was mentored or not.

PT 3 (Male preservice teacher) also had this to report:

The mentors don't really have time for us. It appears we go to ease them of their stress. My mentor occasionally meets me just to ask about how I'm faring and if the students are cooperating with me. He, however, made sure he marked my lesson notes on a weekly basis. I never got the opportunity to observe his lessons though he observed mine on two occasions throughout the period of internship.

According to Smith and Brown (2019), mentors are essential in assisting preservice teachers with their professional development, by providing them with constructive criticism and individualized support. Carter and Johnson (2021) in a study found that

mentors give preservice teachers helpful classroom insights, instructional ideas and individualized coaching, all of which help them manage their classes and deliver education in a more successful way. Mentors therefore should be committed to this call as mentors and put in their maximum effort in assisting preservice teachers to develop professionally.

Therefore, a number of respondents who did not receive assistance from mentors would suggest compromised quality in the management of the teaching practice sessions that require attention from those responsible.

Research Question 3: What activities were mentees involved in in to develop instructional capabilities together with their mentors?

This research question sought to determine activities mentees were involved in in to develop instructional capabilities together with their mentors as appears in table 4.

As seen in table 4, minority of respondents had indicated to have been involved to develop instructional capabilities together with their mentors in terms of team planning and team-teaching activities, constructive feedback and suggestions regarding lesson plans, constructive feedback and suggestions regarding lesson plan, experiment with new teaching ideas and styles, supervision apart from frequent informal observations of teaching, organized periodic conferences and counselling sessions and development of portfolio and action research projects. On the contrary, the majority of respondents ranging from 58.4 to 84% were not involved in developing instructional capabilities together with their mentors. Therefore, involvement of mentors and mentees to develop instructional capabilities was highly limited.

This is supported by the information from the interview schedule where pre-service teachers were asked to talk about the nature of activities they were involved in to develop instructional capabilities together with their mentors. For instance, PT2 said:

I had nothing like team planning or team teaching with my mentor that could lead him giving me feedback, suggestions or criticisms. How can he then encourage me to experiment with new teaching ideas? He supervised me only once although the university called for six supervision sessions. Conferences and counselling, I have not heard of that before.

Likewise, PT5 had the following to report:

My mentor had two sessions of team planning and team teaching with me. He gave a few suggestions on new teaching ideas coupled with constructive criticisms. I was lucky to have been supervised four times. She took the opportunity to counsel me whenever I approached her with a challenge. No conference nor counselling session was organized officially.

According to a recent study by Anderson et al. (2022), mentor-mentee cooperation through shared lesson planning and reflective dialogues considerably improves instructional tactics, resulting in better teaching techniques and student learning results. Smith and Johnson (2018) stressed that mentoring relationships between mentors and mentees produce a mutual process of knowledge acquisition in which mentors impart their knowledge while mentees offer new viewpoints, encouraging the growth of diverse teaching skills. It is important for teamwork between mentors and mentees to be predominant and deepened since it is one of the sure ways to develop teacher professionalism in teachers in training.

Research Question 4: What is the perception of respondents on benefits gained from the teaching practice experiences?

This research question sought to establish perception of respondents on benefits gained from the teaching practice experiences as seen in table 5.

Table 5: Benefits Mentees Derived from Internship Program

| SN | Benefits | Agree | | Disagree | |
|----|--|-------|----|----------|----|
| | | f | % | f | % |
| 1 | I'm satisfied with the accessibility of my mentor | 57 | 46 | 68 | 54 |
| 2 | My mentor has been a valuable resource for equipping me as a teacher | 60 | 48 | 65 | 52 |
| 3 | The mentorship program has developed confidence and effectiveness | 60 | 48 | 65 | 52 |
| 4 | I felt well-qualified for my teaching assignments during the internship. | 60 | 48 | 65 | 52 |

As seen in table 5, the majority of respondents disagreed while the minority agreed that they are satisfied with the accessibility of their mentors, that their mentors have been valuable resources for equipping them as teachers, that the mentorship program has developed their confidence and effectiveness in teaching and that they felt well-qualified for teaching assignments during the internship.

During the interview sessions, the PT6 had this to report on the experiences during the teaching practice:

I went out there to practice and learn how to teach well but had no one to learn from. It was as though my mentor was just waiting for me to take over from him. I was on my own throughout the period of my internship. If there was anything I learned, I did it on my own. I had no one telling me what to do or not to do, no guide nor encouragement whatsoever. I can't say for a fact that I have confidence in myself as a teacher because I had no one to look up to so I can't say I feel qualified as a teacher (a male preservice teacher who is not a trained teacher).

Furthermore, another respondent (PT7) had this to reveal on the teaching practice experiences:

My mentor was easily accessible but was busy with so many things. He occasionally had time for me. Sometimes I sought help from other teachers in the department who were willing to help. I am somehow confident but I don't feel well qualified as a teacher.

These findings provide an alarming situation that teachers in training were generally not satisfied with the teaching practice assistance provided by their mentors. There findings are in harmony with those by Taghreed and Mohd (2017) in Malaysia, which revealed that mentor teachers did not pay much attention to the needs of pre-service teachers and got upset easily whenever meetings were held between the two parties. The study of Goh and Matthew's (2011) in Malaysia also revealed that mentors were perceived as problematic rather than helpful and posed as overly strict figures who placed too many expectations on pre-service teachers. Preservice teachers, when effectively mentored and better prepared to teach in contemporary society,

can foster a sense of motivation and confidence in them because, through effective mentoring, they develop practical skills together with qualities such as resilience, efficacy and a disposition toward continual improvement.

Conclusions and Recommendations

Conclusions

Mentors are supposed to take preservice teachers through activities to prepare them for the actual teaching in the classroom when on internship. However, much is not done during this preparatory period. This shows that preservice teachers have mentoring needs, not adequately addressed by the mentors assigned to, because mentors are either not accessible for mentoring or not skilled enough to mentor. Mentoring preservice teachers requires a passionate, helpful, experienced and knowledgeable mentor with communicative capabilities. Mentees rely on these competencies to develop professionally and pedagogically. Articulating pedagogical knowledge such as differentiated instructional strategies, classroom management, developing confidence, motivating students, interpretation of test data and dealing with unexpected situations were high on the preservice teachers' list of needs. However, the majority of the mentees were not involved in activities that sought to develop instructional capabilities together with their mentors. They were left to manage situations on their own, which could be a recipe for unprofessionalism. A greater number of the preservice teachers were generally not satisfied with the teaching practice assistance provided by their mentors. They lacked confidence in themselves and felt less qualified as teachers.

Recommendations

Mentoring preservice teachers in the typical classroom situation is critical for professional development. Mentors and mentees need to know what their associated roles are and how to interact for a positive impact. The university should play a major role by ensuring more effective mentoring within practicum experiences according to guidelines that outline desirable mentoring qualities and practices. The university supervisors should go to the schools periodically to reinforce the mentoring role of the mentors. A periodic refresher orientation for mentors is required to update the mentors on current and changing trends. The time has come for UEW to take a critical and upward review of inducements given to the mentors. This

would go a long way to motivate them more in their role of assisting interns to develop high-quality teacher professionalism.

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