



Mode of Recruitment and Perceived Competence Levels of Mentors: The Case of Central Western Zone Colleges of Education in Ghana

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Abstract

The study examined the mode of recruitment and the perceived competence levels of mentors of student-teachers of colleges of education in the Central-Western Zone of Ghana. The cross-sectional and the descriptive survey designs were blended to address the objectives along with the mixed method strategy. Questionnaire and interview guide were used to collect data from 1223 respondents for the analysis. Frequencies, percentages and Wilcoxon rank sum test were used for the quantitative analysis while the qualitative analysis was done by thematic content analysis. The findings established that the major requirements for mentors were at least three years of service, professional qualification in teaching and mandatory training. The mode of recruitment of mentors was less formal, mentors' appointments were mainly verbal from the head teachers of the schools of attachment and majority of the mentors had no certification in mentoring. Also, mentors perceived themselves as competent and their views were supported by their mentees and head teacher though the colleges representatives held a divergent view. It was recommended that the colleges need to invest into mentor training and certify mentors after training, give formal appointment to mentors and move for the introduction of mentoring as full course for the student teachers.

Keywords: Competence level of Mentors; College of Education; mentoring programme; mode of recruitment and student teachers.

INTRODUCTION

Mentoring is a nurturing process which a more skilled person, serving as a role model, teaches, sponsors, encourages, counsels and befriends a less skilled or less experienced person for the purpose of promoting the latter's professional development (ATA, 2010). The definition stresses the experience or competencies of the mentor, while the distinguishing feature of the mentee is inexperience, at least, in the teaching profession, in the context of this study. The assumption that, the mentoring teacher has the competencies to mentor because he or she possesses professional qualification and experienced in terms of the number of years taught, is a strong restrictive assumption that requires critical evaluation in the mentoring relationship. The major issue of interest has to do with the kind of relationship that the mentors can foster with the mentees to demonstrate evidence of competencies in mentoring. That is, does an experience teacher automatically make a competent mentor in the teaching environment or there is more to mentoring than professional qualification and years of experience? The ATA manual on mentoring posits that, such a positive correlation

between years of teaching experience and mentoring experience cannot be easily expected in reality since the mentors move from expert teachers to novice mentors, and then to expert mentors when the right conditions exist as presented in Figure 1.

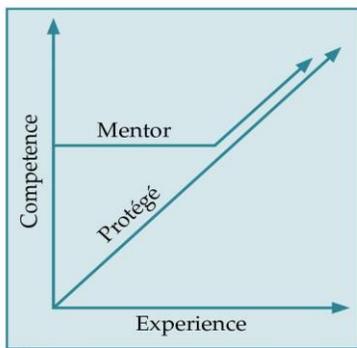
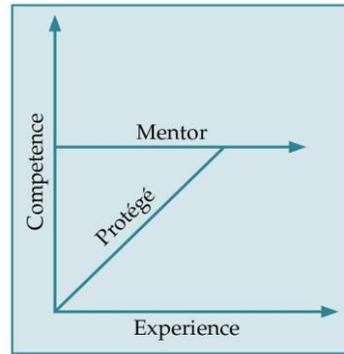
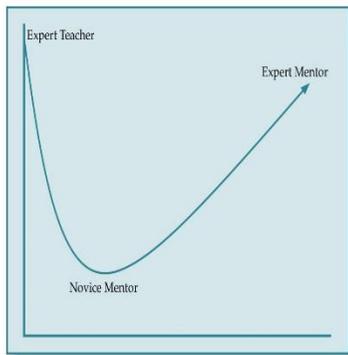


Figure 1: The Journey from competency Figure 2: Case of Incompetency Figure 3: Case of Competency

According to ATA (2010), the transition from each level to another requires a formal training for the mentors. The need to ensure that the competencies of the mentoring teacher are enhanced stems from the fact that the capabilities of the mentoring teacher can set a ceiling to the professional growth of mentees as well as determining the level of conflicts in the mentoring relationship. Figures 2 and 3 present the relationship between mentoring competencies, teaching experience and the professional development of mentees. Figure 2 explains how the mentee can steadily grow to the level of the mentor, but both may remain static over time if the mentor is not competent enough to re-direct the relationship or no system exists to foster the growth of the relationship as in the case of informal mentoring. Figure 3 suggests that, after the convergence, the competencies of the mentor or the existence of a system can ensure the progress of both the mentor and the mentee. That is, the mentors grow further in both competencies and experiences, even during the mentoring process that allows for the mentees to access more support from the mentors.

Competency, as used in this study, refers to the ability of the mentoring teacher to exhibit the right quality of a good mentor to ensure successful implementation of the mentoring process. It has been established, both empirically and theoretically that, the competencies of the mentoring teacher have great consequences for the successful transformation of the mentee (Thornton, 2014). Thornton concluded in her study that, the potential for the student teacher (mentee) to be transformed into an 'educational leader' depends largely on the levels of training and support received by the mentors, the underlying school culture and how the school leader perceives mentoring. Thornton placed training first because of the importance

that is attached to the competencies of the mentoring teacher. While Wilson (2014) drew attention to an important implication of not ensuring the competencies of the mentoring teacher beyond the possible adverse effects on the professional development of the mentee, Wilson (2014) recognised that the primary goal of a teacher is ensuring the pupils' achievement. As a result, any activities they undertake related to teacher education, such as taking the role of mentor, can be a diversion from this primary goal of pupils' achievement to the goal of enabling the student-teacher to develop. Also, Jaspers, Meijer, Prins and Wubbels (2014) examined the possibilities and challenges that mentor teachers perceive when they (sequentially and simultaneously) combine the teaching and mentoring roles. Mentoring teachers were found to perceive two challenges while simultaneously performing both roles in the same classroom: to transfer (or not) responsibility for the class and pupils to the student-teacher and to intervene (or not) in classroom procedures. Mentor teachers may feel that, being the teacher of the pupils was their primary task, and being a mentor of the student-teacher was generally perceived as an aside and additional task. The major means to avoid making the pupils' development a substitute to mentees development is to ensure that, the mentoring teacher is properly trained and well-experienced to create a complementarity between the two actors. That is, a well-trained mentor can make the mentees' development a direct function of the pupils' academic achievement through collaborative teaching and mentoring. Somehow, Rogers (2007) also indicated that, lack of experience and professionalism on the part of the mentor could result in most of the work done by the mentees without any meaningful learning taking place.

The argument has not always been on the need for a mentor to be qualified in mentoring to be a good mentor to a mentee. The mentoring Guide of Manchester Metropolitan University (2018) asserted that, mentoring is not the same as training, teaching or coaching, and therefore, a mentor does not necessarily need to be a qualified trainer or an expert in the role the mentee carries out. Here, the guide alluded to circular experience, commitments and common sense that may be enough for one to be a mentor. This position is mostly in isolation since most authors are of contrary views.

LITERATURE REVIEW

In the specific case of Ghana, an empirical finding by the study of Azure (2016) indicated that, student-teachers, pay attention to their mentors in the schools of attachment than what they learned in the classroom at the colleges. The theories student-teachers learn in colleges are easily overlooked under prevailing classroom situation during the teaching practice period. Hence, the teaching philosophies held by student-teachers may be sacrificed under field conditions in favour of the philosophies of their mentors (Allsopp, DeMarie, Alvarez-Hatton & Doone, 2006). This may point at the crucial role that mentors and their competencies hold in the holistic development of student-teachers. That is, if attention is not paid to the recruitment and competencies of the mentors in the schools of attachment, the mentoring process will end up undoing whatever gain the colleges have attained in developing the student-teachers. In their study, Ehrich, Hansford and Ehrich (2011) conducted a review on student-teachers' mentoring and concluded that, "In some cases, poor mentoring can be worse than no mentoring at all" (p.25), but a competent mentor would have a lot to add to the student teachers' development process. Also, Ligadu (2012) discovered that most mentees agreed that their positive development in their professional areas was due to both professional learning and psychological mentoring support provided by mentors in their roles as guides and advisors and to the mentors' knowledge of content and pedagogical experience.

Also, Esia-Donkoh, Amihere and Addison (2015) studied the perception of 188 mentees of 2013/2014 final year students of the Department of Basic Education, University of Education, Winniba (UEW), Ghana, on the Student Internship Programme (SIP) they

undertook in the first semester of the 2013/2014 academic year. The results indicated that, the student teachers were uncertain as to the kind of support they were given by their partnership schools, but they generally agreed that they gained adequate instructional skills from their mentors to assist them in the “real world”. Even though the students generally disagreed that they experienced challenges, they specifically indicated that the one semester SIP was inadequate. The findings further revealed no significant difference in the views of the students on the instructional skills gained in terms of gender and the type of basic school (public or private) the internship was undertaken. The study recommended that, all head teachers and mentors should be given regular training and orientation on the programme. In addition, Bukari and Kuyini (2015) indicated that there is limited knowledge about the theories of teaching and learning among both the trained teachers and the mentors in schools, resulting in lack of professionalism among the mentors, who often show inappropriate attitudes and behaviours towards mentees. It comes out clear from Bukari and Kuyini (2015) who concluded that, most mentors fail to act as agents of change in the mentoring process which greatly affects their ability to exhibit competencies in their mentoring.

Further, Galamay-Cachola, Aduca and Calauagan (2018) studied the mentoring experiences of mentoring teachers and mentees using qualitative design. The findings indicated that, the mentors perceived that they greatly mentored student-teachers, in terms of, personal attributes, system requirements, pedagogical knowledge, modelling and feedback that were validated by the student-teachers except in the area of system requirements wherein they were moderately mentored. Provision of continuing professional education for cooperating teachers to enrich their skills of mentoring student teachers and giving more time for post-conference were recommended by the study. Other empirical evidence found that, the mentoring teachers were less experienced in mentoring. Others like Yüksel (2019) found that, the student-teachers' professional guidance expectations were not met and the mentor teachers were not seen enough due to the incapable knowledge on the teaching methodology. In the same study, it was emphasised that, the mentor teachers did not provide enough guidance for the student teachers, and they had negative attitudes towards student-teachers and also lacked the "teacher training" skills. The study was emphatic on the level of incompetence of the mentoring teacher both in teaching methodology and mentoring capabilities.

In Zimbabwe, Majoni and Nyaruwata (2015) examined the challenges in achieving effective mentoring during teaching practice in the teacher education institutions. The student-teachers and mentors were purposively sampled. The results showed that, a number of factors affected the quality of mentoring, including competencies of mentors, selection of mentors, lack of readiness on the part of student teachers to do practical teaching and lack of effective communication between the colleges of education and the schools of attachment. The study recommended that mentors should be trained to enhance their skills in mentoring. Likewise, Ngara and Ngwarai (2012) identified lack of preparation for the mentoring role, disabling traits of mentees and mentors and lack of time to achieve optimum mentoring as challenges facing the mentoring process.

METHODOLOGY

The cross-sectional and the descriptive survey designs were blended to address the stated objectives along with the mixed method strategy. The analyses used the mixed method approach by adopting both quantitative and qualitative analysis. Frequencies and percentages based on responses from the questionnaire were used to assess the competencies levels of the mentors while the mode of recruitment of the mentors was collaborated by the qualitative responses of the teaching practice coordinators and the vice principals during the face-to-face in-depth interview. The views of respondents were also compared through the use of Wilcoxon ranksum test. The qualitative responses were analysed through the data

reduction method and thematic content analysis of the core issues that emerged in the interview responses. The total sample size of the study was 1223 respondents from four colleges of education in the Central -Western Zone of Ghana. They consisted of 810 mentees, 405 mentors and 4 vice principals and 4 teaching practice coordinators. One crucial issue this study took into consideration was the validity and reliability of the questionnaire. A reliability test of the questionnaire based on the Cronbach's alpha test was conducted and a scale reliability coefficient of 0.8507 was achieved. The average inter-item correlation was 0.2627, while number of items in the scale were 22 and the decision was very good.

A total of 1,215 questionnaires were supposed to have been administered to mentees and mentors. However, the researcher added 5% of each questionnaire during the data collection (Mentees=41 and Mentors=21) to make up for spoilt or incomplete questionnaires. Hence, a total of 1277 questionnaires were administered and 1258 questionnaires were retrieved, representing 98.51% response rate. The valid questionnaires from the buffer of 5% were used to replace incomplete and spoilt questionnaires to ensure that the composition and expected total sample of 1,215, including 810 mentees, 405 mentors in the four colleges and the selected schools of attachment in Komenda, Foso, Wiawso and Enchi enclaves were achieved and used for the analysis of the study. The success rate of the retrieval of the questionnaires could be attributed to the personal administration of the instruments and the decision to add 5% of each questionnaire to serve as a buffer. The interviews of the college vice principals and the teaching practice coordinators were conducted after the administration of the questionnaires. This provided the opportunity for the inclusion of relevant issues that were not adequately covered by the questionnaires in the interview guide. Due to the novel corona virus (COVID19) pandemic and its associated challenges, the interviews were conducted online through phone calls. This was after interviewees or the participants had given the researcher their consent upon the researcher's explanation of the situation and humble request.

Ethical consideration was highly upheld in this study. Prior to the administration of the questionnaire and the conduct of the phone interviews, sufficient information, with respect to the purpose and objectives of the study were clearly explained to respondents and key informants. The researcher also ensured that, research ethics, such as informed consent, anonymity and confidentiality, avoidance of deceptive practices, provision of the right to participate and withdrawal, honesty and integrity were fully complied with. All the respondents were above 18 years which by the Constitution of Ghana, have the ability to consent to being part of the study. The questions asked were carefully scrutinised to ensure that they did not pose any physical, emotional or psychological threat to the respondents. The study ensured that every online or offline material used were duly referenced or acknowledged. Data obtained was carefully protected and results were presented in all honesty to achieve high scores on the scale of value free research.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The views of the vice principals, teaching practice coordinators and mentors were presented on how the selection of mentors was done and the outcomes were synthesised for consistency. The respondents in the four selected colleges of education were asked to state how the schools of attachment and mentors were usually selected before posting of mentees were done. A participant from college one narrated the selection process:

The Teaching Practice Committee in collaboration with the Heads do what we call scouting. So, with the scouting, we move to the respective schools of attachment that we have designated to take data as in; the names of the professional teachers there, their qualifications and the number of years they have taught. So, with this, we come back, and as a committee, we identify those who meet our criteria and select them. Then afterwards, letters are issued

to the respective schools for invitation to participate in mentorship training before they start mentoring the students. We also look at teachers whose behaviours are worth mentoring... Some might have taught for several years, but their behaviours are not worth mentoring. So, such teachers are also disqualified. (Participant from College 1)

The participant from college 3 also gave an extensive account of how the selection of the mentors was done by the college:

Our mentors are selected, in collaboration with the heads of the schools of attachment. First, we send letters to the heads of the schools so that we are able to determine the number of teachers who are in the school, their various qualifications and the number of years of service. Mentoring is an exercise which should be done by somebody who is experienced. Such individual, therefore, gets to be understudied by a trainee on the job. So, if you are a fresh teacher, then you wouldn't be very fit to mentor. Once we know the number of teachers who can fit our purpose, we schedule training workshop for them. For the training workshops, it is mandatory for even those who have mentored before. So, we consider three main things: one's qualification, teaching experience (at least, three years) and one's conduct, in terms of attitude and values. (Participant from College 3)

The modalities of college two and four on the selection processes of mentors for the student teachers were also presented:

We write to the various schools of attachment through the District Education Directorate so that err... the head teacher will select the teachers who qualify. Normally, one should have about three years' experience as a professional teacher with good character before one would qualify to come for an orientation or workshop to qualify to be appointed as a mentor. Again, one would have to come for a workshop to be taken through how to mentor the students before one would qualify to be a mentor. (Participant from College 2)

First of all, one should be a professional teacher, that is; someone who has completed a course at college of education and has taught for two or three years before one qualifies to be a mentor. In addition to the years of teaching experience, one must be a highly disciplined teacher, someone who does his or her work well and one who is punctual to school before one is assigned a mentee. This is done by both the Teaching Practice Coordinator of the college and the lead mentors in the schools of attachment. (Participant from College 4)

Generally, the responses were from the representatives of the four selected colleges converged on a number of issues, regarding how schools of attachment and mentors were selected. The outcome indicated that, the selection of the schools of attachment depended on the availability of trained teachers who had taught for at least, three years. Hence, a basic school with more qualified teachers is better placed as an attachment school than the one with less qualified teachers. The result implied that, a basic standard measure for a mentor to be selected was that, the mentor must, at least be, a trained teacher with enough teaching experience. It was also clear from their narratives that, the colleges collaborated with the heads of the basic schools to determine the competencies of the mentors before the school was selected to receive mentees from the colleges. Another striking observation was the fact that, for the colleges, the schools of attachment were issued with letters (specifically to the heads of the schools of attachment), but the mentors did not receive any such letters. This implies that, the final selection of mentors fell on the head teachers, who must select mentors and decide which mode to communicate to them. The decision to leave the final

stage of mentor appointment to the heads could be inferred from the part of the selection process that required that, the behaviour of the mentor was factored into the selection process. Clearly, the head teacher was the best person to decide on the teacher whose conduct was suitable for mentorship.

Another consistency identified from all the participants was the need for an individual who wished to be considered for the role as a mentor to attend a mandatory training workshop on mentoring before the students were eventually posted to their schools. This happened to be the first and major direct engagement of the Teaching Practice Units of the colleges with the mentors. The basic conclusion was that the requirements for one to be selected as a mentor included being a trained or professional teacher, having taught for, at least, three years, be of a good conduct and having participated in a mandatory training. The mentors were asked to indicate how their appointments were communicated to them and the outcome suggested that 328 (81%) received their appointments verbally and the remaining 77 (19%) received their appointments through written letters from the head teachers. The appointment process of mentors could, therefore be considered as predominantly informal in nature, despite the rigorous process outlined by the colleges of education.

The outcome on professional qualifications and number of years of teaching experience of mentors were assessed since they were the major requirements for selecting mentors. It was found that most of the mentors had had professional training in education with 222 (54.81%) having Bachelor Degree in Education (B.Ed.), 156 (38.52%) possessing Diploma in Education, 12 (2.96%) possessing Master's Degree in Education and 4 (0.99%) had Certificate 'A' in Education. The remaining 11 (2.72%) of the mentors had HND, which is non-professional qualification in education. The results suggested that, 394 (97.28%) of the mentors had professional qualification in education which resonated with the initial position of the colleges of education in the selection process which gave preference to trained and professional teachers. Regarding mentors' years of teaching experience, it is revealed that, 102 (25.2%) mentors had been teaching for 3 years or below. Again 106, (26.2%) had served as teachers for between 4 and 7 years and 109 (26.9%) mentors had served as teachers between 8 and 11 years in their teaching carriers. The study also showed that 43 (10.6%) and 45 (11.1%) of the mentors had taught for between 12 and 15 years, and 16 years and above respectively.

With respect to the question on how long mentors had taught before being assigned the responsibility of mentoring, 203 (50.1%) of the mentor respondents indicated that they had taught for 3 years or less before being assigned the responsibilities of mentoring. Accordingly, 138 (34.1%) and 28 (6.9%) said they taught between 4 and 7 years, and between 8 and 11 years before they started mentoring while 36 (8.9%) of the mentors had 12 years or more teaching experience before they were given the responsibility to mentor student teachers. Moreover, on the issue of how long respondents (mentors) had been mentoring, the results indicated that 226 (55.8%) and 111 (27.4%) of the mentors had been mentoring for 3 years or less, and between 4 and 7 years in their teaching career respectively. In addition, 49 (12.1%) had mentored for between 8 and 11 years, 12 (3.0%) had mentored for between 12 and 15 years while 7 (1.7%) of them had mentored for 16 years or more. From the statistics, it was obvious that most mentors did not teach for a longer period before they were assigned the role of mentoring. The general conclusion from the analysis on the years of teaching experience was that, most of the mentors were at the threshold of qualifying as mentors or below the threshold of, at least, three years of teaching experience before they were recruited as mentors. This observation clearly has negative implications on the competencies of the mentors in their first few years of being appointed as mentors. The last major condition the colleges gave on gauging the competencies of the basic school teachers they selected as mentors was mandatory training. The rigour of such training was assessed from the mentors' perspective and the outcome indicated that 148

(36.54%) mentors out of the total mentors sampled indicated that, they had had some form of formal training in mentoring, while the remaining 257(63.46%) have had no formal training in mentoring. However, it emerged from the study that only 48 (32.43%) mentors of those who said they had had formal training indicated that they had formal certificates in mentoring. This implies that, about 100 (88.15%) of the mentors had no certificates in mentoring. Notwithstanding, as many as 322 (79.50%) mentors felt that they qualified to mentor, despite having no formal training in mentoring. The revelation from the mentors about their lack of formal training cast some doubts about the rigorousness of the mandatory training provided by the colleges of education. The implication is that; the mentors did not consider the process as a formal training in mentoring; this might be due to the fact that they were not awarded certificates for the said training.

Considering the level of disparity between the kind of mentors the colleges actually sought to select and those the head teacher actually engaged as mentors in the end, there was the need to assess the level of trust in the competencies of the mentors from the college point of view. Below are extracts from the responses of the representatives of the colleges of education:

“That one, I may say partly yes and partly no, in the sense that some are up to the task, doing exactly what they have been trained to do. Some too you will see some sort of lackadaisical traits in their behaviours. It’s like the moment the students come; they don’t even want to show their presence to mentor them”. (Participant from College 1)

“Oh! It’s a human institution we are working in, so, certainly, we may have some who would work as expected of them and others who will do otherwise for some reasons”. (Participant from College 3)

“Not all the mentors, some of them are given the nod to mentor, but as they go on with their work, you will see that they are not competent and if that happens, we take the mentees from them and give them to another person”. (Participant from College 4)

The respondents were moderate on their acknowledgement of the mentors’ lack of requisite competencies, but the respondent from the College 4 was emphatic about the competencies of some of the mentors. The respondents indicated that, a close collaboration between the heads of schools of attachment and the college coordinators mostly help to identify extreme cases of incompetence. The respondent recounted situations where some mentees had to be withdrawn from particular mentors and re-assigned to other mentors due to their incompetence. The general observation was; the colleges of education did not fully believe in the competencies of the mentors though they had moderate trust in them to deliver.

The mentors were given the opportunity to evaluate their own level of competencies and the results show that, 73 (18%) of the mentors believed that they had very high knowledge in mentoring while 260 (64%) believed that their knowledge in mentoring was high, 61 (15%) felt that their knowledge in mentoring was average and the remaining 13 (3%) held the view that their knowledge in mentoring was very low. It was clear from the responses that, the mentors considered themselves as having enough knowledge on mentoring as opposed to the actual picture painted earlier, in terms of the level of formal training and certification in mentoring.

Arguably, a mentor’s decision to strive to improve his or her competencies depends largely on his or her views about his or her current performance as a mentor. The study juxtaposed the views of the mentors about their overall performance as mentors with that of the mentees to control for biases in self-reporting. The results indicated greater convergence between the

views of the mentors and mentees on the performance of the former. It was clear from the results that, 155 (38.3%) and 223 (55%) of mentors rated their performances as very good and good, while 3 (0.7%) and 12 (3%) rated their performances as poor and very poor respectively. The remaining 12 (3%) could not rate their own performance. From the mentees standpoint, 396 (48.9%), 298 (36.8%), 46 (5.7%) and 25 (3.1%) of the mentee respondents rated their mentors' performances as very good, good, poor and very poor respectively. The other 45 (5.5%) indicated that they were not sure of their mentors' performance. Mentors generally believe in their competencies; and their views were supported by their mentees. The willingness of the mentors to upgrade their knowledge on mentoring was assessed and results reveal that 117 (29%) of the mentors indicated their willingness to upgrade their knowledge on mentoring even if it means personally financing the training or the education process. About 275 (68%) of the mentors were willing to upgrade their knowledge if they do not have to pay for the cost of training themselves. However, only 13 (3%) of the mentor respondents said they were not interested in any training in mentoring. The outcome implies that most mentors were ready to avail themselves for further training on mentoring provided the cost of training will not fall on them.

Mentors' competencies levels on professionalism, communication and ability to induct mentees were assessed by posing common statements to both the mentors and mentees. The views of the mentees were sought mainly to serve as a check on the views of the mentors. The mentors' views were considered consistent if the views were relatively closer to that of the mentees since both in practice were privy to the issue under consideration. The mentors strongly agreed (median=5, IQR=1) to the statement that, they established good rapport and trust with mentees during the mentoring period, but the Mentees just agreed to the statement (median=4, IQR=1). The median comparison test confirmed that, the views of the mentors and the mentees differed significantly at the five percent significance level ($Z=-3.199$, $p=0.0014<0.05$). The extended probability further indicated that, the probability that the median of the mentors was higher than that of the mentees was 55%. This simply suggests that, the probability that mentors will accept that the mentors establish good rapport and trust with mentees during the mentoring period is 10% (55% - 45%) more than that of the mentees.

Again, mentors and mentees agreed to the statement that, the former demonstrated professional integrity in the mentoring process. The median comparison test, however, indicated that the null hypothesis that, the median values were identical could be rejected at the 5% significance level ($Z= -6.527$, $p\text{-value}= 0.0000 < 0.05$). Interestingly, it was further observed that the probability that the views of the mentors were stronger than that of the mentees was about 60.8%. The mentors strongly agreed to the statement that, mentors provide direction and guidance on professional issues, such as networking but the mentees just agreed to the statement. The hypothesis confirmed the statistically significant difference between the views of the mentors and the mentees ($Z= -4.081$, $p\text{-value}=0.0000<0.05$, Probability=56.9%). On how the guidance was provided, both mentors and mentees agreed that, mentors provide appropriate resources and suggested appropriate sources, such as electronic contacts materials to mentees. Besides, both mentors and mentees agreed that, the former assist the later to have a better understanding of academic routes necessary to achieve their career goals. In addition, mentors demonstrate great content knowledge and expertise in the areas of academic needs of the mentees. The median test suggests that the mentors always held a stronger view on the issues than the mentees.

The results on mentors' ability to communicate effectively with their mentees suggest that both mentors and mentees agreed to the statement that mentors were always accessible and available for the lesson supervision and discussions. Notwithstanding, the extended analysis suggested that the mentors agreed more to the statement than the mentees ($Z= -4.076$, p -

value=0.0000<0.05, Probability=56.7%). The mentors agreed to the statement that the mentors regularly communicate with their mentees on matters of great concern to the mentoring engagement while the mentees moderately agreed to the statement. The median test confirmed the statistical significance of the difference observed and the fact that mentors agreed more to the statement than the mentees ($Z=-3.229$, $p\text{-value}=0.0012<0.05$, Probability=55.4%). Both mentors and mentees agreed that mentors asked questions that were self-reflective to their mentees. No significant statistical difference was observed between the median values ($Z=-1.343$, $p\text{-value}=0.1793>0.05$) which indicated that the views of mentors and mentees on this issue were identical. Finally, the mentors strongly agreed to the statement that mentors give quick and effective feedback to mentees, but the mentees just agreed to the statement. It was observed that the probability that the mentors felt they gave timely response to their mentees was about 53.9% which indicates their strong agreement than the mentees.

Again, comparison of the views of the mentors and the mentees on the mentors' skills to induct mentees into the teaching profession was done. The results revealed that, the mentors strongly agreed to the statement that, they supported mentees to identify their strengths and weaknesses in the teaching and learning process during the mentoring period, while the mentees just agreed to the statement. The observed difference was statistically significant at the 5% significance level ($Z=-6.236$, $p\text{-value}=0.0000<0.05$, Probability =61.1%). Both mentors and mentees agreed to the statement that mentors supported their mentees to reflect upon their weaknesses and suggested measures for improvement. Again, the views of the mentors were stronger than that of the mentees ($Z=-4.678$, $p\text{-value}=0.0000<0.05$, Probability=57.7%). On the statement that mentors provided constructive and useful criticisms to the mentees' work, the former agreed, while the later moderately agreed to the statement. The difference was found to be statistically significant at the 5% significance level ($Z=-7.363$, $p\text{-value}=0.0000<0.05$, Probability=61.9%). It was observed that, both mentors and mentees agreed to the statements that mentors motivated mentees to improve upon their work output, the former challenged the later to perform tasks in a friendly manner, and mentors challenged mentees to extend their abilities beyond the classroom (mentors median= mentees median=4). Though the median values were identical, the interquartile range indicates wider spread in the distribution of mentors than that of the mentees, which explains the median test's significant statistical difference between the views at the 5% significance level in all the cases.

It was revealed that; mentors were mostly appointed through verbal appointments from the head teachers of the schools of attachment. Very few mentors were appointed through written appointment letters, which also came from the head teachers of the schools of attachment. It was clear that, the colleges of education did not directly deal with the mentors, in terms of their selection, but rather dealt with the head teachers of the schools of attachment who in turn appointed mentors for the student teachers. This finding could be explained by the organogram of the Ghana Education Service, which makes it difficult for any institution to deal directly with a teacher at the basic school level without the involvement of the district directorates, through the head teachers.

Concerning competencies of the mentors from the angle of academic and professional qualification most of the mentors had professional and academic qualifications of degrees and diplomas in education that make them good to serve as mentors. It was further observed that, a greater percentage of them had no formal training in mentoring, while a significant proportion of those with some form of training had no certificates to that effect. This observation cast some doubt on the rigorousness of the mandatory training provided by the colleges as part of the selection process. That is, the responses from all the colleges identified mandatory training as an indispensable act in the selection process. However, the colleges never hinted on certifying the mentors which might be the reason the mentors did

not see the process as a formal training session in mentoring. Also, the content of the training curriculum might have stressed clinical supervision, though the mentors were not only supervisors. Hence, a good proportion of the mentors indicated that, they had no certificates in mentoring including those who indicated to have received some form of formal training in mentoring. Despite having no formal training in mentorship or no certificates to show as evidence of formal training, a large proportion of the mentors described themselves as qualified mentors. Hence, on the ground of formal training in mentoring and certification, it was concluded that the mentors were less qualified to mentor student teachers in the Central - Western Zone colleges of education.

The study further found that, the perceptions of the mentors about their competencies and performances were in sharp contrast to their actual qualification as gauged from their levels of training in mentoring and certification. This could as well be explained that mentors had every right to consider themselves as competent, the very moment the school administration identified them as fit for the position of mentors. The implication could be that, they might have less incentive to seek certification in mentoring since the absence of such certificate did not deny them the mentoring opportunity, and its possession might not add to their remuneration. The findings about the competencies of mentors were consistent with the outcome of earlier studies, but contradict the position of some empirical studies. Majoni and Nyaruwata (2015) identified the competencies of mentors as one of the major challenges facing the student-teachers' mentoring in Zimbabwe which is also an emerging economy like Ghana.

The mentors unanimously agreed that further training in mentoring would improve their performances and they were willing to undertake further training if only they did not have to bear its cost. The observation that the mentors needed further training to improve their mentoring capabilities had been observed and recommended by a number of studies. Asuo-Baffour, Daayeng and Agyemang (2019) recommended that, mentors of student teachers in Ghana must be trained to improve their effectiveness and competencies as mentors which was affirmed by the mentors in this study. Thornton (2014) made the conclusion that, the potential for mentees to be transformed into an 'educational leaders' depended largely on the levels of training and support mentors received. According to Esia-Donkoh, Amihere and Addison (2015), in the Ghanaian context, on a successful mentoring of student teachers in Ghana, explains that there should be a regular training and orientation for the mentors. The study also found that, the mentors usually had good attitude towards the mentorship programme. The outcome was however, contrary to the findings of Yüksel (2019) who found a negative attitude of the mentors towards the mentoring process and lack of requisite training skills for mentoring while Bukari and Kuyini (2015) also confirmed the negative attitude of mentors towards the student-teachers' mentoring process.

Findings on the competencies levels of the mentors relating to professionalism, effective communication and induction of mentees into the teaching profession revealed that, both mentors and mentees, generally agreed on the competencies of mentors on issues relating to professionalism, communication and induction skills, during the mentoring process. The results indicated that the mentors generally believed that they were competent when it came to the issue of providing their mentees with professional guidance. This was not surprising because most of the mentors were professional teachers who followed a similar path like what the mentees were, currently undergoing. The views of the mentors about their competencies and the fact that the mentees confirmed them was consistent with the positions of Izadinia (2015), who observed that, there was no serious dispute between the ideas of mentors and mentees on issues that included competencies just as Galamay-Cachola, Aduca and Calauagan (2018) also observed that, the views of mentors and mentees converged on their competencies in areas such as pedagogical knowledge, modelling and feedback during the mentoring period.

The outcome of the current study, however, contradicted the findings from other studies both within and outside Ghana, but with similar focus. First, Bukari and Kuyini (2015) were sceptical as to whether the observed differences were expressions of ignorance or signs of confusion amongst the major players on the best way to run the practical aspect of the teacher-training programme. Further, Gökçe and Demirhan (2005) had earlier reached similar conclusion about the views of the mentors and mentees. The study also revealed that, the mentors mostly held a stronger view of their competencies than the mentees, even where they both agreed to an issue. The implications of this finding were that, either the mentors might be overrating their competencies levels or the mentees were down playing the services of their mentors. Though this was difficult to determine empirically in this study, it was theoretically possible. The same questions were posed to both mentors and mentees in the attempt to minimise response bias known in accompanying self-reporting on Likert scale (Kahneman, 2011). Existing empirical evidence suggested that, biases were present in both self-report and assessment of others (Paulhus et al., 2003; Plieninger & Meiser, 2014). According to Wetzel et al. (2016), self-reporting has higher tendency of being lenient on issues, while reports by others may be harsh on the same issues. Therefore, much as mentors have the tendency to exaggerate their strengths and downplay their weaknesses; the mentees were more likely to accentuate their weaknesses and downplay the strengths of their mentors. This explains why the mentors mostly had strong agreement to positive issues, while the mentees just agreed or moderately agreed to the same issue on the average.

The results confirm the position of Wetzel et al. (2016), on response biases. The major observation from the responses from both mentors and mentees was that, the views did not deviate much, which confirms the consistency of the outcome. That is, in most cases, where the mentors strongly agreed to a statement, just as the mentees agreed to the same statement which generally indicated acceptance. The views of the mentors could, therefore, be said to have been collaborated by the mentees which suggested general acceptance of competencies of the mentors in the area of professionalism, communication and induction, when dealing with mentees during the mentoring process.

CONCLUSION

The observation that the mode of selection of mentors was less formal implied that the contractual link between the mentors and the colleges of education was weak and could reduce the level of influence that the colleges could exert on the mentors where necessary. The findings that the competencies of the mentors could not be guaranteed, but they still exhibited high levels of commitment to their work in most cases implied that mentors were ready to contribute their quota to support the training of modern teachers and with the right kind of support, they could be very good mentors. Finally, it could also be concluded from the results that the mentors had the academic and professional competencies in teaching, but lacked the professional competencies by way of specific training in mentoring.

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