

# Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) of Physical Education Student-Interns' Experiences: Challenges and the Role of Mentors

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**Abstract**— The study explored lived experiences of physical education (PE) student interns' experiences, challenges and the role of mentors during internship. The participants were 12 PE students and nine mentors who completed four months (one semester) internship in Ghana. These participants were purposively sampled and interviewed using semi-structured interview guide. The conversations were audio-taped, transcribed, member checked and peer reviewed. The data were analysed using Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA). The findings showed revealed: (1) most student interns did not get the chance to observe their mentors within the first three mandatory weeks, (2) student interns' lesson plans were not regularly vetted, (3) mentors seldom gave student interns constructive feedback, (4) logistic challenges, (5) institutional challenges, (6) technical challenges, (7) psychological challenges, (8) most student interns needed further mentoring in career development. It is recommended that teacher education institutions give mentors regular training and orientation to better equip them for effective mentoring of PE student interns.

**Keywords**— Challenges, feedback, Ghana, internship, pedagogical skills, phenomenological analysis.

## I. INTRODUCTION

Learning the act of teaching has been a key focus of research in teacher education for the past years because of the major impact it has on quality education. According to Garrett, Wrench and Piltz (2007), teaching is challenging but a rewarding experience especially when it is seen as a complex procedure that brings together a variety of knowledge, skills, and competencies applied in quality curriculum implementation. The process of learning to teach becomes highly beneficial when student interns are offered the opportunity to practice how to teach under the supervision of experienced mentors during internship. Irrespective of how an internship programme is organised, it is seen as a place of gaining real experiences of the teaching profession and teacher identity (Uusimaki, 2013). In addition, the emphasis is on what student teachers should know and be able to do rather than just knowing. This quest and expectations of 21<sup>st</sup> century teacher has placed inevitable demands and constant search for best practices for professional growth and development of teachers (Lund & Tannehill, 2015).

Effective teaching requires good preparation in subject matter knowledge, instructive skills, right character, and ability to make good judgment. The goals of student internship are to create a reciprocal, collaborative, and develop relationship with schools or colleges; to promote the development of a professional learning area where everybody involved can gain through collaboration, cross fertilization, and reflection; and to assist school improvement through the establishment of a mentoring force in school. According to the Institute for Teacher Education and Continuing Professional Development

(ITECPD) (2018), internship offers students the opportunity to: practice the principles of teaching and learning in the school context, develop practical understanding and appreciation of the major teaching roles, enhance their understanding and awareness of the realities of teaching and working in a school. Moreover, the period helps them to develop an understanding of children and young people, and skills to respond appropriately to their needs, interests and capacities, develop skills in professional decision-making and capacities for reflective learning and self-evaluation, and to develop professional attitudes and qualities of adaptability, sensitivity to the school and the students they teach. Internship therefore gives the interns the opportunity to experience the reality of how physical education curriculum is implemented. It serves the needs and expectations of student interns, university institutions and partnership schools where student interns are placed for internship (Lam & Ching, 2007). Thus, it is the expectations of all stakeholders that internships will help the average teacher to become good, and a good teacher to become a great one (Zhao & Zhang, 2017).

The University of Education, Winneba (UEW) admission statistics for 2002 to 2012, indicate that about 80% of the physical education (PE) student interns who went through the one-year internship programme were trained teachers who taught at the basic school level for three or more years before gaining admission to the PE programme at UEW. However, this trend has changed— currently, about 70% of the PE interns had no teaching experience prior to university education apart from one semester (four months) of on-campus peer teaching. This means that this group of student interns would lack pedagogical

content knowledge in the future if they were not properly mentored during internship. Sweitzer and King (1999) explained that internship has five predictable stages which every intern needs to successfully go through for effective professional development. These stages include anticipation stage, disillusionment stage, confronting stage, competence stage and culmination stage. The anticipation stage involves the beginning stage of internship where the intern thinks about the good things he or she is going to experience during internship. As the intern starts the internship, he or she approached with disillusionment. At this stage, the intern begins to wonder about the reality of the interns' programme especially things he or she theoretically thought to work end up not applicable. This is the most critical stage mentors need to explain all questions and support the intern in both knowledge and psychosocial. The third stage is characterized with exploring best ways to positively resolve issues that trigger disillusionment. Here, the interns try to find out from any trusted person about how to solve a particular problem. Finally, culminating stage crowns the uniqueness of the interns about the professional career he or she is inducted. Interns at this stage develop their own understanding of the profession based on all the real experiences during internship.

The stages are developmentally progressive in that the development of one serves as a firm foundation for developing the other. When students are not properly inducted by experienced and effective mentors during internship, they could be affected by psychological issues such lack of career satisfaction and teacher attrition (Makela & Whipp, 2015; Whipp & Rengelly, 2016).

In the last decade, there has been concerns in Ghana about how teacher training institutions are preparing teachers because many teachers who graduate and are posted to schools lack content pedagogical knowledge (Agbenyega & Duku, 2011). Another challenge is that most of the physical education teachers currently in the senior high schools in Ghana have become coaches instead of teaching physical education. This might be due to low pedagogical knowledge, content knowledge and self-confidence (Ali & Mohammed, 2018; Ntim, 2017), but it is these teachers who are supposed to mentor the interns. Also, there is limited discussion of professional internship consultancy development and comprehensive knowledge base on practitioner maturation. As the forgoing issues have a link with teacher preparation and career development as well as directly affect the quality implementation of curriculum for national development, there was the need to conduct research for immediate attention. Therefore, this study sought to explore lived experiences of PE student interns' challenges and the role of mentors during internship for consultant training and career development research.

### *1.1 Literature Review*

The aim of the study was to explore lived experiences of PE student interns from the University of Education, Winneba (UEW), Ghana, their challenges and role mentors play during internship. To achieve this, the researchers sought to determine what internship was about. In this direction, the section looked

at the concept of internship, the role of a mentor, challenges faced by student interns during internship, theory underpinning the study.

#### *1.1.1 Internship*

Gault, Leach and Duey (2010) define internship as a professional training interns undergo in a vast array of academic discipline or in an organization either as regular or part-time placement for career development under the supervision of a mentor. The intent of internship is to grant interns an opportunity to understudy experienced mentors in their subject areas for career related skills development. Internship is therefore a period where students are placed under experienced professionals to expose interns to experiences needed for effective practice of the profession. In this direction, supervision is seen as the major practice of mentors in development of interns during internship period.

Supervision of student interns during internship is grouped under three main divisions namely clinical supervision, developmental supervision and differentiated supervision (Belhlo, 2011). Clinical supervision is usually influenced by a behaviorist approach and focuses on external behaviour to bring a positive change for professional development of student interns. Developmental supervision also based on individual developmental stages and is divided into three stages: directive, collaborative and non-directive. Directive clinical supervision is usually applicable for the low pedagogical skill level student interns placed under an experienced mentor. Collaborative clinical supervision is used for the moderate pedagogical skill level student interns who have basic pedagogical knowledge as well as content knowledge and can depend on average mentoring to become a beginning teacher. Non-directive supervision is also applied to student interns who have high pedagogical knowledge, content knowledge plus experience but need orientation on current practices about the profession. Finally, differentiated supervision focuses on mentoring and supervision based on individual differences. The underlying principle of this model is individual differences. These types of supervision are supposed to be known by all the stakeholders of internship so that the appropriate one is used by mentors for effective professional development of interns. However, it seems mentors pay little attention to student interns in discharging their responsibilities due to inadequate training and retraining (Mohammed, 2015).

#### *1.1.2 Role of a Mentor*

In light of on-going discussion, a mentor is a trained and experience teacher who is trusted with the responsibility to coach, guide, counsel and to network the student interns on career development in his or her subject area (Beverly et al., 2017). Mentors play the role of critical friend, role model, listener and catalyst in assisting the student interns to gain experiences needed by a physical education teacher for effective curricular implementation (Ingersoll & Strong, 2011). Mentors are supposed to supervise interns teaching formatively at least six times and university supervisors at least two times within the one semester internship period (ITECPD, 2018). The four key players of the internship programme are the student intern, the head of mentoring institution, the university supervisor and the mentors who serve as the hob of the

programme. These key players need to effectively perform their responsibilities as prescribed for the success of the programme. For interns to be adequately and effectively developed, there is the need for collaborative effort between the lecturers and the mentors in the field. This is because as interns learn how to teach by observing and imitating their mentors, they need team guidance from mentors and the university supervisors to validate their philosophies about teaching. In acquiring this, feedback is the most important rewarding element in supervision of interns (McKnight, 2013). The positive feedback if well implemented by mentors can bring tremendous change in interns' acquisition of teaching skills and values.

Mentors have profound impact on teachers' professional leadership capacity with reference to personal characteristics, pedagogical skills, content knowledge and self-efficacy in teaching (Law, 2013). Some researchers hold the view that the most important thing intern teachers need in the mentoring process is pedagogical and content knowledge guidance because mentoring is the main determinant of success in the teaching profession (Cakir & Kokabas, 2016). In the mirage of mentoring, Ambrosetti and Dekkers (2010) observed that even though mentoring in a professional workplace is context specific, clarity about what mentoring is, who mentors and how it occurs are still scarce and illusive.

Even though internship programme is a viable medium for pre-service teachers to encounter the realities in the classroom, there seems to be varying concerns about acceptable duration of the internship that supports interns' professional development. Arbaugh, Abell et al. (2007) were of the view that if internship is organised for one full year duration, it would provide interns the "perfect" chance to develop their pedagogical content knowledge in assessment, content and conceptions about teaching. Similarly, Poattob et al. (2017) revealed that the one semester internship was not enough to equip interns with the competencies needed for effective teaching. On the contrary, Staketangei et al. (2017) believed that the duration of an internship programme is not the issue, but the mentors' readiness and ability to effectively maximize internship time in helping student interns acquire the basic teaching experiences is the matter. The literature provides basis for further investigation regarding how PE should be plan and executed.

### *1.1.3 Challenges Faced by Student Interns During Internship*

Globally, internship has been identified with several challenges such as inadequate content and pedagogical content knowledge of mentors and low institutional support, the double role of mentors as assessors and supervisors, inadequate feedback to interns and lack of training of mentors on current expectations of the internship programme (Gamsle et al., 2012). Du-Babcock (2016) indicated that internship improves interns' classroom teaching efficacy.

In Africa, Arbaugh et al. (2007) were of the view that if internship should be organised for one full year duration, it would provide interns the "perfect" chance to develop their pedagogical content knowledge in assessment, content and conceptions about teaching. In the contrary, Staketangei et al. (2017) believed that the duration of internship programmes is not the issue, but the mentors' readiness and ability to

effectively maximize internship time in helping student interns acquire the basic teaching experiences is the matter. In addition, most partnership institutions and mentors viewed interns as cheap labour to fill vacancies. This means that interns found in this context would not be satisfied with the quality of teaching practice since there were no opportunities for them to discuss their teaching problems with the supervisors (Kasli & Ilban, 2013). This indicates that the kind of mentoring structure employed by an educational institution has a great impact on the kind of teachers it produces. When mentors are carefully selected, given good training, and enough time, they effectively help interns develop the necessary skills. With all these arguments, an internship programme is still seen as essential component of training future teachers to improve their content knowledge, pedagogical knowledge and workplace soft skills for life long teaching career (Gault, Leach & Duey, 2010; Iwu, 2021). Internship exposes student-interns to the real teaching context to bridge the gap between theory and practice (Iwu, 2021)

In Ghana, it was revealed that low remuneration of mentors, and the one semester of four-month internship was a serious challenge to equip interns with the competencies needed for effective teaching (Poattob et al. 2017). Other studies have also shown negative correlation between pedagogical content knowledge and subject matter content knowledge of beginning teachers (Kasli & Ilban, 2013; Ntim, 2017). For further support, it was highlighted that teachers' inability to teach and motivate the adolescent students to stay active for life seem to emanate from ineffective internship programme (Nyawornota et al., 2018). The next is the theories that underpinned this study.

### *1.2 Theoretical Framework*

Experiential learning theory by Kolb 1984 which underpins this study, highlights the internship stages student intern are supposed to go through under the guidance of trained mentors before they become effective professional teachers. The stages are reflective observation (reflective/watching dimension), abstract conceptualization (thinking dimension) and active experimentation (doing dimension), concrete experience (feeling dimension). The use of experiential learning literature might assist mentors and supervisors in their interactions with interns, help mentors reflect on and improve their mentoring practices, and stimulate studies that contribute to a broader understanding of professional internship consultant development (Moore, 2010; Hurst, Thye & Wise, 2014).

The experiential theory operates on the role of purposive experience in learning by creating the most effective conditions for teaching and learning through the linkage of real-world experience to the intended learning goals (Kuh, 2008). Within the role of purposive experience, competency model (mastering skills and principles of a profession), performance model (effective dispensation of complex, technical and professional work), and cognitive model (knowledge and understanding of actions in environment) come into play (Bukari & Kuyini, 2015) for quality preparation of teachers. By this, interns observe how teaching and learning is organised practically as well as merge the gap between theory and practical. The theory is also unique, in that

every student intern will be successful provided he or she is inducted into the professional learning cycle by an experienced mentor knowing the entry level of the intern through interaction (Gault, et al., 2010).

The experiential learning theory also develops strategies which contributed to high impact in student teachers' internship and community-based learning experiences (Kuh, 2008). In this regards, positive relationship, communication, accessibility, trust and teamwork become the key elements for the success of the internship programme. The results would culminate in effective planning of internship programme, orientation of student interns, stakeholders as well as training and retraining of mentors for quality preparation of teachers for effective implementation of PE curriculum. In the context of preparation of student interns, experiential theory of learning explains that for the student interns to acquire proficient teaching experience, they need to do: i. reflective observation by watching mentor's lesson presentation, ii. abstract conceptualization on how to plan and present a lesson, iii. write lesson plan and try out how to teach under mentor's guidance (active experimentation) and iv. finally, gains the experience to teach with little or without guidance. In support of this theory, Du-Babcock (2016) explained that the best way to bridge the gap between theory and practice is to provide student interns authentic pedagogical content knowledge through the application of theoretical knowledge in a similar context of the profession they are being prepared to work.

The second theory that supports this study is the situational learning theory which emphasizes the application of skills in real-life context for the development of workplace experience necessary for career survival (Lave & Wenger, 1991). According to the authors, main purpose of internship is today's internship is to offer student interns the opportunity to acquire skills that will help them to understand and succeed in an ever-changing work place context and ethos. The situational learning focus on learning the theory before practicing for safety (knowing and doing) and practicing in the real context to gain the needed workplace experiences (doing and knowing).

Previous literature highlighted the main contributions to effective teacher preparation as positive mentor and student interns' interactions, good relationships among teaching staff, university supervisors, students, and specific events outside of the training programmes (McKinney et al., 2008; Russell, & Russell, 2011). Studies have been conducted actively with sport psychology consultant's development and other professionals from western countries (Tod, 2007), but not much research has been conducted in challenges impeding quality mentoring of PE student interns in developing nations like Ghana. The study therefore examines the real-life experiences of PE student interns during internship and how prepared student interns are to begin their teaching career after internship for consultant training. The study was therefore guided by the following objectives:

1. To explore the role mentors play in physical education student interns' preparation and development during internship.
2. To identify the challenges physical education student interns face during internship.

3. To investigate the preparedness of physical education student interns as beginning teachers after internship.

## II. RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

The holistic nature of interpretative phenomenology is based on the humanistic model, which focuses on assessing the lived experience of a person in his or her unique environment and context (Biggerstaff & Thompson, 2008). This approach entails getting a rich and thick description of an individual's lived experience in relation to a phenomenon of interest, internship (Patton, 2002). Interpretative phenomenology allows PE student interns to speak freely about their lived experiences, challenges of the internship programme and the role of their mentors. The data were also collected using semi-structured interview guide and later analysed with interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) that explored in detail the participants' views on their internship (Willig, 2008). IPA is suitable for investigating how people "perceive their real feelings and how they make meanings of their personal and social world (Gay, 2009). Observation of participants' lessons, portfolio and their daily interactions with mentors and students was also used as a form of getting additional data, for triangulation.

### 2.1 Participants

The participants were 21 comprising 12 student interns (eight males and four females) and nine mentors (six males and three females) who took part in 2019/2020 UEW internship programme in selected senior high schools in Ghana. The participants were purposefully sampled in accordance with IPA guidelines (Smith & Osborn, 2003). Their ages ranged between 22- 48 years for students and 31-57 years for mentors. The average ages for student interns and mentors were  $M=32.4$  years and  $M= 38.2$  years respectively. According to Willig (2008:17) "qualitative tend to work best with relatively small numbers of participants due to time consuming and labour-intensive nature of data collection and analysis". In addition to the quality of usable data that will be obtained from each participant, fewer interviews are needed to be conducted before reaching the saturation point (Pitney & Parker, 2009). The researchers used purposive sampling because the level 400 PE interns and their mentors who took part in 2019/2020 academic year UEW internship and could give credible data for the study (Fraenkel, Wallen & Hyhn, 2015).

### 2.2 Instrument

We conducted a pilot study using a semi-structured interview with a 46-year-old professional PE teacher who had his internship in 2019/2020 academic year but had not yet become a mentor. The interview guide was developed in line with the literature on challenges of interns and the role of mentors. A pre-determined schedule was used because the researchers wanted to gather the same information from the participants as efficiently as possible (Patton, 2002). The pilot interview lasted for 25 minutes. The data gathered helped the researchers to make some changes to improve the research questions and interview guides used for the current study.

Some of the open-ended questions were: 1. *How were you introduced into teaching during internship?* 2. *Were you given feedback after your mentor has supervised your lesson?* 3. *Which challenges affected your professional development during internship?* 4. *Are you well prepared as a beginning PE teacher? Which areas of teaching do you need support as a beginning physical education teacher?* The questions allowed for in-depth probing, clearing up ambiguities and testing of the limits of the interviewee's knowledge (Cohen & Manion, 2004). The questions were also specific enough to elicit relevant responses from the interviewees and allowed the interviewer to evaluate the adequacy of his or her responses (Miller & Cannel, 1989).

### 2.3 Data Collection

We observed ethical issues by seeking a consent from each participant using a form which included the purpose, significance, mode of data collection and confidentiality statement. The consent form was given to every participant to read and decide whether to participate in the study. We introduced ourselves to the interviewees and declared the study purpose to able us build trust and establish rapport with the participants (Fraekel, Wallen & Hyun, 2015). Participants were allocated pseudo-codes to mask their identity. For example, the 11<sup>th</sup> student intern was labelled as (SI-11) and 5<sup>th</sup> mentor as (M-5).

The interviews took place at the upper chamber of HPERS gymnasium. This is quite place that prevents intrusion and provides for comfortability and confidentiality. Finally, the researchers conducted 25-30 minutes' interview for the participants according to the scheduled time table. During the face-to-face interview session, audio was recorded with the permission of the participants. In addition, notes were taken for clarity of data for the study.

### 2.4 Data Analysis

We transcribed each audio recorded conversation verbatim and gave them back to five participants to read through to ensure that their views were captured appropriately (Creswell, 2014). This gave participants the opportunity to cross-check whether their views were captured accurately, so the necessary corrections could be made and to gain a holistic sense of the data. The transcribed texts were examined and coded by the first and second authors. Any disagreements were resolved by the third author who independently coded the transcribe text.

Several readings and re-reading were done at the first step for texts familiarization, and to identify preliminary themes and gaps in the text. We proceeded to group the themes together as clusters, where we had to move back and forth to restructure the themes into structure. Finally, the themes together with quotations that illustrated each theme were tabulated in a summary table as findings. Some of the themes that could not capture the phenomenon relating to lived experiences of PE interns in line with our research questions were excluded by the fifth author.

Trustworthiness of the study was established by researchers setting aside their beliefs and notions about the phenomenon (bracketing) under investigation (Patton, 2002). The study design, implementation, data analysis and interpretation were

informed by most widely accepted qualitative research literature (Creswell & Plano, 2011; Saldana, 2016). In addition, the interview guide was given to senior lecturers and a professor who specialized in qualitative study for review. To ensure credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability, the transcripts were given to five participants to check whether the transcribed data corresponded with their responses (member checking) (Given & Saumure, 2013). Moreover, the coded results were also submitted to external auditors to examine, and their feedback were used by the authors to refine their coding. Finally, the manuscript was given to a senior lecturer with qualitative expertise to do the peer debriefing to ensure that the study was conducted in an appropriate and systematic manner (Pitney & Parker, 2009).

## III. RESULTS

The study sought to explore lived experiences of PE student interns' challenges and the role of mentors during internship for consultant training and career development research. After the interviews, the codes were transcribed verbatim and codes were used to analyse the data (Merriam, 2009). Several themes emerged from PE student interns and their mentors on the role mentors played in student interns' preparation and development and challenges facing the interns.

### 3.1 Preparation and development

The findings indicate that most student interns did not get the chance to observe their mentors within the first mandatory two weeks. When the student interns and their mentors were asked whether the student interns were well inducted into the first two weeks of mandatory observation of their teaching before they started teaching, the participants said these:

*"...I only observed two practical lessons of my mentor before I started teaching. So, I did what I could after giving me classes to teach when he is not around..."* (SI 2).

*"...I have introduced him to the classes I teach as a new PE teacher. After that I asked him to observe me for the first three weeks. Later I planned a lesson and did team teaching with him to gain confidence before I left some classes for him to teach. I wish other mentors did same..."* (M- 4).

The findings indicated that mentors some of the time did not vet student interns' lessons plans prior to them teaching the lessons.

On whether the mentors vetted their lesson plans prior to teaching, most interns and mentors responded in the affirmative, but with varied concerns:

*"...My mentor often vetted my lesson plan and gave me further suggestions about how to go about my lesson presentation and class management. Yes, I recopy into my note book before I use it to teach. Later, my mentor asked me to write direct into my lesson note book and submit for vetting"* (S I- 5).

*"Oh! Yes. I always vet my mentee's lesson plans anytime I am in school. Some interns feel they are okay and don't need to be corrected..."* (M -3).

Furthermore, the findings showed that mentors sometimes gave feedback. However, the value of the feedback depended on how and when the feedback was given to the student intern as well as the applicability of the feedback. The interns said the following regarding the usefulness of the post-teaching feedback they received from their mentors:

*“Yes. My mentor gave me feedback on my teaching. It was mostly verbal and few written feedback. The feedbacks helped me to improve on how to manage my class time, how to control the class, how to ask question and many more. They were really helpful. They only problem was that they were inadequate, not systematic and most at time not specific”* (S I - 9).

*“I often give my student intern feedback immediately after observation of her lesson. It depends on the type of feedback you give to your intern. If you give specific feedback with evidence to your intern, he or she will appreciate and put it into practice”* (M- 3).

### 3.2 Challenges student interns faced during internship

The participants spoke about the most challenges student interns faced during internship when they interviewed. The findings indicated that student interns faced different level of challenges during internship. These challenges were context specific and not limited to the mentor. The challenges included logistics, institutional, technical, and psychological.

The most challenges student interns faced during the internship were reflected by conversations during the interview:

*“... Many challenges and frustration. Staff and students have no respect for PE. They see PE as waste of time. There are few equipment and materials to work with...”* (SI -1).

*“...I must say that the school has few facilities, equipment and materials, making planning and teaching very difficult. The worst is that all the PE periods on the timetable are placed in the afternoon...”* (M-6).

### 3.3 The readiness of student interns after internship

The findings indicated that most student interns were not ready to take over as beginning PE teachers because they did not have enough pedagogical experience. The following were the responses from both mentors and student interns during the interview.

*“... Having an experience and cooperating PE teacher ready to collaborate with me at the beginning of my career will be an advantage...”* (S I- 5).

*“...Not too ready. As a direct student who entered the university without initial teaching experience, I thought, internship period would have help me to gain enough teaching experience. I will be glad if I am posted to a small school with experience PE teacher to give further mentoring at least a year or two...”* (S I- 12).

*“Most of the student Interns are not ready to be left alone in schools without experience teachers especially those who were not trained teachers. All*

*the student Interns need at least one year further mentoring under an experience mentor”* (M - 2)

## IV. DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

In the present study, an attempt was made to explore the challenges P.E. student interns experienced during internship and how prepared student interns are to begin their teaching career after internship for consultant training. The findings (1) most student interns did not get the chance to observe their mentors within the first three mandatory weeks, (2) student interns' lessons plans were not regularly vetted before teaching, (3) mentors seldom gave student interns constructive feedback, (4) logistic challenges, (5) institutional challenges, (6) technical challenges, (7) psychological challenge, (8) most student interns need further mentoring in career development.

### 4.1 Introduction of student interns to teaching during internship

On the issue of how student interns were introduced to teaching during internship, the findings indicated that student interns experienced less observations of their mentors, some vetting of lesson plan and most student interns received inadequate feedback on their teaching.

Perhaps, the mentors had less capacity to deliver and mentor student teachers effectively. This might be the cause of beginning teachers not having adequate pedagogical content knowledge to effectively support students learning (Ntim, 2017; Nyawumata et al., 2018). However, Hurst et al. (2014) believed that during internship mentors help student interns to attain work experience, refine their professional development and career preparation skills in order to become more effective teachers in future.

Although the mentors introduced interns to the heads of the schools, the staff, and students as a many other things fell short. Many interns did not have the opportunity to observe the teaching of their mentors before interns started their own teaching. Moreover, mentors did not plan their lessons and also did not regularly and systematically teach for interns to observe, as streamlined in the University of Education (UEW) internship handbook by Institute for Teacher Education and Continuing Professional Development (ITECPD, 2018). The implication is that since interns could not observe enough lessons of their mentors in order to imitate, reflect and practice, they will end up with experimenting and mastering wrong pedagogical skills and concepts which will inevitably lead to frustration, burnout and attrition in the early years of teaching career.

The finding further revealed that although mentors vetted interns' lessons, they did so irregularly. For instance, most of the lessons vetting occurred after the interns had finished teaching such lessons. This does not help the intern, as he or she needs feedback from their vetted lesson plan and the mentors to even effect corrections before going on teach. Plausibly, mentors lack the capacity to carry out some of these duties to the later. This is supported by Uusimaki (2013) with a finding from Australia that mentors did not see certain actions about mentoring as important due to lack of mentorship training or their own weakness. Thus, mentors need further mentoring

training if effective and efficient mentoring of UEW PE interns is to be properly achieved.

In addition, pre and post observation teaching conference between mentors and their interns were very important aspects of mentoring. These conferences support interns with specific feedbacks to enable interns reflect and improve their professional development. However, the findings indicated that mentors failed to perform both pre and post teaching conferences with their interns. Unfortunately, such low-level internship training would limit the career development of the interns, which goes to impact negatively on their further students. For instance, earlier researchers observed that regular and positive feedback during pre-conference and post-conference give interns confidence in lesson delivery as well as career growth and development (Gamsle, 2012; Staketangei, 2017).

#### 4.2 Challenges student interns face during internship

Furthermore, the findings on challenges student interns faced during internship indicated logistics, institutional, technical, and psychological challenges.

Logistics are essential for the proper teacher preparation. However, it was observed that student interns encountered difficulties such getting appropriate teaching learning materials and equipment as well as facilities for teaching practical PE lessons (Gamsle et al., 2012). These challenges may affect student interns' philosophy of teaching, profession development as well as contribute to future attrition (Gamsle, et al., 2012). It is a known fact that student interns will only become effective teachers when they are given the opportunity to apply their content knowledge to gain hands on experience (Gault, Leach & Duey, 2010; Ntim. 2017). Therefore, inadequate logistics retard interns' professional development and need to be considered.

Besides logistic challenges, there are various institutional challenges including lack of staff and administration support for the teaching of PE and value for sports and games, which affect how effectively interns carry out their internship for career development. We found that some institutions lack adequate number of teachers and require the interns and use them as stop gaps for teaching their students. Therefore, in such schools, much attention is not given to the goals of internship programme negatively affecting teacher preparation and further career development. For example, an intern narrated; "it might be that most institutions and mentors request for student interns to fill the gaps of under staffing in the schools". In line with this, Kasli and Ilban (2013) pointed out that most mentors and partnership institution viewed internship as a source of cheap labour. This notion seems to influence mentors to focus on interns' accomplishment of duty for their gain rather than guiding them to develop the process for professional development.

Again, the findings of this study showed technical challenge. This challenge included pedagogical knowledge and reflective knowledge. The adequacy of mentors' knowledge in key areas mentioned above could lead to effective preparation and development of student interns during internship. Mentors are supposed to model current standard, competencies, values,

research and professional commitment, to trigger the desire of interns to seek for experiences beyond their immediate reach in order to become effective and efficient teacher in life. Probably, most of the PE mentors do not have the desire of teaching PE but rather coaching. As a result, mentors are not very confident to challenge the student interns by modeling and giving specific feedbacks for quality development of student interns (Gamsle et al., 2012; Poatob et al., 2017). Thus, when mentors are carefully selected based on their performance, given good training, and have enough time to work rigorously with interns, not only would they help average teachers to become good, but also help good teachers to become great ones (Zhao, & Zhang, 2017).

#### 4.3 Level of student interns' preparedness

Our findings also revealed that most of the student interns had inadequate pedagogical skills and confidence to teach as beginning teachers. The interns might have experienced limited mentor-intern interaction which was necessary for appropriate career preparation. Moreover, the four months' period of internship may be limited for effective interaction such as setting realistic and achievable goals by the mentors and interns for proper teacher preparation. This finding is consistent with Sweitzer and King (1999) who explained that internship has five predictable stages which every intern needs to successfully go through for effective professional development. Every stage of internship has significant impact on the quality of teachers produce. Research has also revealed that no matter how eager and interest of a mentor about mentoring, without professional yearly training, mentors will never be effective in helping interns to become better teachers (He, 2010). Similarly, some scholars argued that the one semester of four months' internship was not enough to equip interns with competencies for effective teaching (Poattob, et al. 2017; Arbaugh et al. 2007). In contrary, Staketangei et al. (2017) disclosed that it is not the length of internship that matters but the effectiveness of the process. Furthermore, Ali and Mohammed (2018) indicated that psychological challenges occur due to the failure of both mentors and student interns to work as a team in goal setting, internal motivation, confidence, punctuality, regularity and adherence to personal responsibility. In the absence of such attributes, there will be high rate of teacher attrition due to lack of self-motivation and job satisfaction. Internship improves student interns' confidence and pedagogical skills unless it lacks effectiveness (Du-Bubcock, 2016)

## V. LIMITATIONS

Though this study highlighted the challenges and the preparedness of PE student interns, the findings of this study are subject to at least two limitations. First, the study is of limitation because we used a small sample size and predominantly the male gender of student interns. In addition, the inability to include mentors as participants may also limit the comprehensive understanding of the study. However, the depth and breadth of participants' experiences in the present study may enhance understanding of others in comparable situations. Future research should explore the real experiences

of mentors and the factors that promote good relationship between intern and mentor during internship.

## VI. IMPLICATIONS

The findings of this study will influence other institutions like security service, law schools, clinical psychologists who organise internship as a means of preparing effective and efficient labour force for national development. This in effect will enhance literature on best practices and effective ways of organising internship programme across all institutions. The findings will also help PE mentors and lecturers in HPERS department of UEW to adopt and adapt best strategies that will bring about effective preparation of P.E student interns during internship for sustainable career.

## VII. CONCLUSIONS

The objective of the study was to explore the challenges PE student interns experienced during internship and how prepared student interns are to begin their teaching career after internship. We concluded that many of the interns did not experience “best” of induction into teaching by their mentors. Beyond this are the logistical, institutional, technical and psychological challenges faced by the student interns during the period of internship. These challenges impede the quality preparation and development of PE student interns for effective implementation of PE curriculum. In this regards, positive relationship, communication, accessibility, trust, positive feedback and collaboration are the key elements for the success of the internship programme. These interns may lack the skill and confidence to teach as a beginning teacher since the step-by-step induction into teaching was not done properly. Though the university is producing PE teachers every year for the country’s pre-tertiary educational systems, these teachers are likely to be very ill equipped for effective delivery of the PE curriculum.

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