




**JOURNAL OF
EDUCATIONAL DEVELOPMENT
AND
PRACTICE (JED-P)**



Vol.1 Number 1 December 2003



**Published by the:
Institute of Education – University of Cape Coast**

Counselling During Off-Campus Teaching Practice in Ghana: Deficiencies and Implications

Frederick Ocansey
Counselling Centre, University of Cape Coast, Ghana

Abstract

The study investigated the frequency and perceived quality of counselling services provided by faculty supervisors to undergraduate teacher-trainees in the Faculty of Education at the University of Cape Coast during off-campus teaching practice. It also examined trainees' feelings and reactions to the counselling services offered them. The sample comprised 480 male and 170 female undergraduate teacher-trainees who had returned from off-campus teaching practice. Data was collected with questionnaire and analyzed with percentages and chi – square (χ^2) at the 0.05 level of significance. The results revealed that while the majority (66%) of trainees received and benefited from post-lesson presentation counselling, a significant proportion(34%) of the trainees neither received nor benefited from the experience. Pre-lesson presentation counselling was scarcely offered. Findings also indicated that most (86%) trainees felt anxious, scared or nervous during supervision and showed resistance in the counselling sessions with their supervisors. Implications of the findings for improvement of the counselling component of the teaching practice experience, including the need to equip supervisors with basic counselling skills are examined.

Teaching practice is an experience of guided teaching in which the student-teacher assumes increasing responsibility for directing the learning of a group of pupils/students over a specified period of time. It is that phase of the pre-service education of teachers in which the student-teacher brings together educational theory and actual teaching practices and procedures under competent supervision (Olaitan & Agusiobo, 1981). The essence of the teaching practice exercise is to provide opportunities and guidance in a school setting for a student-teacher to develop in himself/herself professional competencies, and the personal characteristics, understanding, knowledge, and skills of a teacher. In this regard the supervisor's guidance role is of paramount importance.

Although the goal of helping the supervisee develop into an effective teacher may appear simple, it can be an anxiety-provoking experience. Supervision-induced anxiety causes the supervisee to respond in a variety of ways, with some of the responses being defensive (Bradley & Gould, 1994). Such resistance could either discourage supervisors from holding counselling sessions (Tamakloe, 1988) or guidance conferences (Olaitan & Agusiobo, 1981) with supervisees during teaching practice, or make them develop hostile or lukewarm attitude towards the supervisees.

The Faculty of Education at University of Cape Coast, Ghana turns out large numbers of professional graduate teachers into the Ghana Education Service (GES) each year. As part of the training of the teachers, they are exposed to between 12 to 14 weeks of intensive on-campus teaching practice (six credit hours a week) before they are sent out to the first and second cycle schools for off-campus teaching practice, which often lasts for five weeks. During both the on-campus and off-campus teaching practice sessions, faculty lecturers and other senior members are assigned to supervise the teacher trainees. One of the important components of the work of the supervisors is the implicit requirement for them to hold pre-and post-lesson presentation guidance/counselling sessions with each trainee when it gets to their turn for teaching. This is to strengthen and boost the confidence of the nervous student as well as to calm and reduce the anxiety level in the over-anxious student.

Olaitan and Agusiobo (1981) observe that if the experiences in student teaching are to have maximum effect, the student must be guided by one who is competent in teaching. They point out that it is important, then, that teacher-trainers should not only be able to demonstrate what should be done, but they should also be able to discuss with the students specific learning situations in which the students find themselves. This requires that teacher-trainers should be able to analyze student-teachers' teaching activities as they relate to actual teaching situations.

In spite of the crucial role counselling plays in the success of the supervisee's acquisition of professional role identity (Bernard & Goodyear, 1992; Bradley, 1989), observation seems to show that it is played down by both supervisors and supervisees. Review of literature reveals the dearth of well-researched information on the provision and

management of counselling/guidance during teaching practice in Ghana, particularly at the University of Cape Coast to enable one draw any meaningful conclusions. Baah (1987) made an effort to evaluate the teaching practice programme at the University of Cape Coast in his undergraduate project work. Pecku (1976) also tried to examine the problems of the supervisor as he tried to reach out to the student-teacher while Brew-Riverson (1972) discussed the principles of teaching practice supervision in Ghana.

To date, however, no empirical studies have been published that more formally evaluates the counselling component of the practical training of undergraduate teacher- trainees.

Thus, the purpose of this study was to examine the provision of counselling services during off-campus teaching practice and to determine its deficiencies, if any, and thereby make recommendations for its improvement. To this end the following research questions were posed to guide the study.

1. Do supervisees receive pre-lesson presentation counselling from their supervisors?
2. Do supervisees receive post-lesson presentation counselling from their supervisors?
3. How do supervisees rate the value of counselling, if any, offered by their supervisors?
4. How do supervisees perceive the attitudes of their supervisors towards them?
5. Do supervisees show resistance during pre- and post-lesson presentation counselling?
6. What form of resistance, if any, do supervisees demonstrate?

Method

Participants

Participants comprised 480 male and 170 female (N=650) undergraduate final year students in the Faculty of Education, University of Cape Coast who had just returned from Off-Campus Teaching Practice. Ages of the participants ranged from 22 to 51 years (M=29.4 years, SD=6.9). They were enrolled in the following undergraduate Bachelor of

Education (B.Ed) programmes: Psychology (117), Foundations (113), Arts (66), Social Science (123), Social Studies (40), Home Economics (17), Physical Education (12), Population and Family Life Education (45), Science (29), Maths (20) and Primary Education (68). Participants were distributed throughout the country for the teaching practice as follows: Central Region (197), Greater Accra Region (93), Eastern Region (56), Western Region (70), Ashanti Region (162), Brong-Ahafo Region (40) and Northern Region (32).

Instrument

The measuring instrument was a 20-item questionnaire designed by the researcher for the study. The instrument was validated through extensive use of the relevant literature and expert advice of three specialists in the fields of Assessment, Teaching Practice Supervision and Counsellor Education Supervision. The instrument yielded a test-re-test (two weeks interval) reliability of $r=0.82$.

Procedure

The list of names of 1,200 students who had just returned from teaching practice was obtained from the Teaching Practice Unit. A sample of 700 students were selected through multi-stage stratified sampling. They were first stratified according to the regions where they had their teaching practice, then again stratified into their academic programmes and then further stratified according to their sex. The individual respondents were eventually selected through the simple random sampling (Table of random numbers) method. The researcher personally administered the questionnaire to the participants during their lecture periods. Six hundred and seventy-four of the questionnaires were retrieved giving it a 96.3% return rate.

The returned questionnaires were first of all edited and 24 of them were rejected because the respondents indicated that they did not receive any external supervision during the off-campus teaching practice. Thus 650 of the returned questionnaires were used for the analysis. Percentages and the chi-square of controversial opinion were the main statistical tools used.

Results

Information was elicited from respondents to determine whether they received pre-lesson presentation counselling or not and the perceived impact of such counselling, if any, on respondents. Table 1 presents the results.

Table 1
Supervisees' exposure to and evaluation of pre-lesson presentation counselling

Exposure	No.	%	X ²	Decision
Received counselling	63	10.0		
Did not receive counselling	587	90.0	422.4	Significant
Total	650	100		

Evaluation				
Extremely beneficial	13	20.1		
Beneficial	38	60.0		
Not beneficial	6	9.5	70.3	Significant
Not at all beneficial	2	3.2		
Don't know	4	6.0		
Total	63	100		

X² at 0.05

Table 1 indicates that only 10% of the respondents obtained pre-lesson presentation counselling during the off-campus teaching practice. Of the number that received counselling 80.1% felt that it was helpful to them in their teaching. Only 13% did not find counselling beneficial. The differences in the exposure of supervisees to counselling and the differences in the evaluation of their experiences were all significant.

Respondents were further asked to report on whether they received post-lesson presentation counselling or not, and their evaluation of such counselling. Table 2 shows that 66.3% had some form of counselling and the majority (68.9%) of them felt that it was beneficial.

It is however significant that 36.9% of the supervisees did not find the counselling they received from their supervisors beneficial.

Table 2

Supervisees' exposure to and evaluation of post-lesson presentation counselling

Exposure	No.	%	X ²	Decision
Received counselling	431	66.3		
Did not receive counselling	219	33.7	69.1	Significant
Total	650	100		
Evaluation				
Extremely beneficial	45	10.4		
Beneficial	209	48.5		
Not beneficial	107	24.8		
Not at all beneficial	52	12.1	267.2	Significant
Don't know	18	4.2		
Total	431	100		

X² at 0.05

Table 3 presents data on how supervisees perceived the attitudes of their supervisors towards them during the practice teaching. While 56.5% saw the supervisors as friendly the rest (43.5%) perceived them as indifferent, lukewarm or hostile. Also while 9.2% of the supervisees perceived their supervisors presenting themselves as helpers, the majority (90.8%) of the supervisors were perceived as having presented themselves as superiors or as people who knew everything.

Table 3
Supervisees' perceptions of their supervisor's attitude towards them and relationship with them

Attitude of Supervisors	No.	%	X^2	Decision
Cordial	367	56.5	394.7	Significant
Indifferent	164	25.2		
Lukewarm	83	12.8		
Hostile	36	5.5		
Total	650	100		
Relationship with Supervisors				
Superior-subordinate	315	48.5	382.5	Significant
Helper-helpee	60	9.2		
Knower-knowee	254	39.1		
Learner-learner	21	3.2		
Total	650	100		

X^2 at 0.05

The study also sought to find out how supervisees felt when faculty supervisors visited and counselled them during the practice teaching exercise. This was to determine whether supervisees showed any resistance during their encounter with their supervisors. Table 4 shows that 56.2% of supervisees experienced anxiety while almost 30% felt nervous or were scared when supervisors visited them. A small proportion (10.2%) of the supervisees however felt happy about the visit of their supervisors.

Table 4 also indicates that the majority (52.9%) of the supervisees felt inadequate as teachers during counselling sessions with their supervisors when their performances were discussed. This confirms the assertion by Fuller cited by Arends (1991) that, when people first begin thinking about teaching, and when they have their first classroom encounters with children, they wonder and worry about their interpersonal adequacy, and whether or not their students and their supervisors are going to like them.

A significant proportion (17.9%) of supervisees also had the premonition that they were going to be given low marks by their supervisors and were, therefore, afraid during discussion with them.

Table 4
Supervisees' feelings during teaching practice

Feelings when Faculty Supervisor visited	No.	%	X^2	Decision
Happy	66	10.2		
Nervous	108	16.6		
Scared	86	13.2	539.7	Significant
Anxious	365	56.2		
Indifferent	25	3.8		
Total	650	100		

Feelings During Post-Lesson Presentation
Counselling

Feeling of inadequacy	228	52.9		
Feeling of equality with the supervisor in teaching skills	38	8.8		
Feeling of superiority to the supervisor in teaching skills	19	4.3		
Feeling of fear of receiving negative evaluation	77	17.9	656.5	Significant
Feeling of flattery from supervisor (s)	28	6.6		
Other feelings	41	9.5		
Total	431	100		

X^2 at 0.05

Supervisees' resistant attitudes and the frequency of their occurrences are presented in Table 5. The table reveals that the most frequently occurring resistant attitudes of supervisees were 'submitting to supervisor(s)' and 'display of helplessness or dependency' which recorded 82.6% and 84.3% respectively. It is also significant that as high as 27.4% and 22.0% of supervisees resorted to projection tactics of either blaming some external factors or their supervisors as means of resisting supervisor's authority. It is also noteworthy that over 15% of supervisees reported that they were at certain times defensive during discussions with their supervisors.

Table 5
Supervisees' attitudes of resistance during post-lesson presentation counselling (N=431)

Attitude of Resistance	F	%
Defensive in discussions with supervisor(s)	65	15.1
Saying something nice about the supervisor(s) (ie. Use flattery to inhibit supervisor(s) evaluative focus)	55	12.8
Submitting to supervisor(s) (ie. Behave as though the supervisor(s) has/have all the answers to the issues raised)	356	82.6
Turning the table (ie. Direct the focus of the discussion away from your skills to prevent the supervisor focusing on painful issues)	32	7.5
Pleading fragility and appearing brittle by accepting that you are not good	47	10.9
Helplessness or dependency (absorb all information provided by the supervisor)	363	84.3
Self-protection or projection tactics (ie. blame external problems for your ineffectiveness)	118	27.4
Tried to prove that the supervisor "is not so smart"	17	4.0
Controlling the situation by asking the supervisor(s) questions on the lesson presented and your performance	87	20.1
Asking others for help to plead with the supervisor(s) on your behalf	22	5.2
Selectively sharing information about your performance to obtain positive evaluation from the supervisor(s)	46	10.6
Blaming the supervisor for your poor performance.	95	22.0

Discussion

Majority (90%) of the supervisees never had any pre-lesson presentation counselling. This confirms the findings of Baah (1987) which indicated that majority (74%) of supervisors never had any discussion with student-teachers before they presented their lessons. This reveals a deficiency in the counselling component of the professional training of graduate teachers. When supervisees were asked to assign reasons for their supervisors failure or inability to provide them with pre-lesson presentation counselling, the most frequently supplied reason was that supervisors did not seem to see pre-lesson presentation counselling as

a necessary part of their work. Others also reported that, preliminary counselling could not be provided because supervisors often came to their classrooms when they had already started their lesson presentation. Follow-up interviews conducted with some faculty supervisors confirmed the speculations and observations of the supervisees. It would seem then that supervisors do not place much importance on pre-lesson presentation counselling for their trainees. Needless to say, such perceptions ought to be re-examined. Supervisees need the pre-lesson presentation counselling to calm their anxiety, nervousness and the tension in them so as to give them confidence to teach (Shertzer & Stone, 1976). It must be recognized that the presence of the lecturer-supervisor in the classroom of the teacher-trainee has intimidating effect on the latter. Pre-lesson presentation counselling could provide a feeling of relief and freedom to the teacher-trainee. It is worthy of note that most (60%) of the supervisees who benefited from pre-lesson presentation counselling reported that it was helpful to them.

The study revealed that majority (66.3%) of the supervisees were exposed to post-lesson presentation counselling. Interestingly, this finding tallied with what Baah (1987) found. This was quite encouraging. However, a significant proportion (33.7%) of supervisees did not receive post-lesson presentation counselling during the teaching practice period. As reported by the supervisees, their supervisors often left their written comments in the lesson plan notebook or gave the reports to them and rushed out to other classrooms or schools to supervise other students. The students believe that their supervisors were always hard pressed for time. This view was also corroborated by the supervisors who were interviewed. Thus, time constraint is here identified as vital to the provision of effective counselling to supervisees. Notwithstanding this excuse, the attitude of the supervisors towards post-lesson presentation discussion with their students further highlights the lack of emphasis they place on the counselling component of the teaching practice supervision exercise.

Post-lesson presentation counselling provided to trainees were generally beneficial to them. This implies that supervisors' promptings and information given to supervisees assisted them to improve on their professional competency. This underscores the relevance of counselling in the training of professional teachers. What is disturbing, however, is the

finding that 36.9% of supervisees who received post-lesson presentation counselling did not find it beneficial.

Majority (56.5%) of the supervisees perceived the attitude of their supervisors to be cordial. This is good since such attitude of supervisors is necessary to facilitate effective transmission of professional teaching skills. It is significant to observe, however, that 43.5% of the supervisees perceived the attitude of their supervisors towards them to be indifferent, lukewarm or hostile. These rather negative perceptions (of supervisees towards their supervisors) are further reflected in supervisees' evaluation of their relationship with their supervisors of which 48.5% and 39.1% described it as 'superior-subordinate' and 'knower-knowee' relationships respectively. These may only be mere perceptions of the supervisees but they are nonetheless not helpful in effective training of professionals.

Supervisees generally, felt anxious, nervous or scared on the visit of Faculty supervisors. This confirms the observation by Olaitan and Agusiobo (1981) that, many student-teachers are emotion-laden. Such feelings do not promote effective performance by the supervisees. What is more, such feelings could impede any counselling process initiated by the supervisors, no matter how well-intentioned it may be. The few trainees who felt happy were probably those who had a good interpersonal relationship with the lecturers on campus.

The study revealed that, students had resistant feelings during discussion with their supervisors; the most frequently occurring one being the feeling of inadequacy. This is followed by the feeling of fear of receiving negative evaluation from their supervisors. Strangely enough, some (13.1%) of the supervisees reported that, they felt equal or even superior to their supervisors in teaching skills during discussion with them. These feelings, which are usually not expressed verbally, could have profound negative impact on the success of counselling sessions supervisors hold with their supervisees.

The range of resistant attitudes supervisees reported to have been demonstrated are quite interesting. The study revealed that the resistant attitude displayed by supervisees ranged from extreme submissiveness through subtle manipulations to extreme hostility.

Majority (82.6%) of the supervisees revealed that they sometimes behaved submissively before their supervisors while an equally large proportion (84.3%) of supervisees also played 'helplessness'. It must be

noted that these were role plays. The supervisees merely made those pretences, or put up façade.

The attitudes displayed were not genuine or authentic expressions of the supervisees' feelings and thinking about their encounters with their supervisors. They put up those pretences just to win the sympathy of their supervisors with the hope of obtaining good marks. The manipulative resistant attitude supervisees employed included the use of flattery on their supervisors, pleading frigidity, controlling the situation by asking their supervisors questions orchestrated to cause them to doubt their own competencies, directing the focus of their discussions with their supervisors and getting people to influence the supervisors on their behalf.

In a significant number of cases (49.4%) the supervisees reported having used hostile resistance including blaming the supervisors or other external problems (e.g., academically weak students, large class size, inadequate instructional materials) for their poor performance. Olaitan and Agusiobo (1981) have observed that some student-teachers are very aggressive and some are easily frustrated. These behaviours tend to hinder the student-teacher from respecting and coping with the feelings and views of others. Counselling thrives on genuineness and to the extent that these resistant attitudes are based on pretences, they are bound to frustrate the counselling process.

Counselling Implications

Doubtlessly, the counselling component of the off-campus teaching practice supervision in Ghana needs to be strengthened to play a more positive role in the training of professional teachers. Time constraint which appears to be one of the major impediments to effective discussion between supervisors and supervisees ought to be closely looked at. Appropriate advance planning needs to be put in place by the Teaching Practice Unit and the supervisors to overcome the time constraint they face. Supervisors need to keep in mind that both the pre-lesson and post-lesson presentation counselling sessions are essential components of the teaching practice supervision exercise. Such a mental set would, hopefully, guide supervisors to make time available to counsel supervisees.

Supervisors need to understand that their guidance role is one essentially requiring skill and understanding in establishing good personal relationships between themselves and the student teachers. For effective counselling, supervisors will require student-teachers to discuss their problems and ideas freely with them. The realization by the students that the supervisors' are decision-makers on their success or failure in practice teaching may prevent them from doing so. Students might also fear any bias their confession to the supervisors might create on their assessment. In view of this, supervisors should endeavour to make the students feel that they come to help them but not to find faults with them.

In-service training on essential counsellor-attitudes and basic counselling skills need to be organized periodically for all faculty supervisors to equip them adequately for discussions with their supervisees during practice teaching. Supervisors need to learn and adopt appropriate counsellor attitudes including but not limited to friendliness, sympathy, pleasantness, broadmindedness, altruism, understanding, sense of humour, patience, objectivity, tact and fairness. They also need to be equipped with skills like rapport building, empathy and concretizing to facilitate their discussions.

Supervisors need to be prepared adequately to deal with supervisees' resistant attitude. Although resistance is a common occurrence in supervision, counteracting resistance is not simple. It has been observed that a positive supervisory relationship grounded by trust, respect, rapport, empathy is essential for counteracting resistance (Bradley, 1989; Mueller & Kell, 1972). Viewing resistance as a perceived threat, Liddle (1986) advocated that, the conflict be openly discussed and the focus should be on identifying the source of anxiety (or threat) so that it could be appropriately handled. Kadushin (1968) stated that, the simplest way to cope with supervisees' resistance exhibited in games is to refuse to play. He concluded that it is more effective to share awareness of game-playing with the supervisee and focus on the disadvantages inherent in game-playing rather than on the dynamics of the supervisee's behaviour. Bauman (1972) has recommended the use of interpretation or ignoring resistance exhibited by supervisees. Masters (1992) has suggested positive reframing for reducing resistance. This includes empowering the supervisees and increasing their self-esteem by

equipping them adequately to perform, or modelling effective methods of coping with thoughts, feelings, and behaviours.

It must be recognized that regardless of purpose, resistance in supervision is a common experience and will be encountered irrespective of the supervisors' skill level. The ability of the supervisor to take resistance and turn it into a supervisory advantage may be the hallmark for determining success or failure in supervision.

It is also crucial for the success of the teaching practice experience that the relationship between supervisors and supervisees be carefully and appropriately defined. The relationship must be viewed as helper-helpee relationship but not as a superior-inferior relationship. Both supervisors and supervisees need to have a positive attitude devoid of suspicion towards each other.

The supervisor needs to be aware that the purpose of student-teaching is to help the student-teacher grow, rather than frustrate his professional aspirations. He should realize that the student-teacher depends on him for some help in his professional training. He could help the student-teacher through constructive criticisms of his teaching. Competence is achieved through practice and experience, hence the student-teacher just entering the teaching profession should not be condemned for his ignorance, but he should be helped to find his faults and correct them through sympathetic criticisms (Olaitan & Agusiobo, 1981). It is only when this is recognized that, resistance, fear and anxiety among supervisees can be reduced to the barest minimum to ensure maximum level of success for the teaching practice exercise.

References

- Arends, R. I. (1991). Learning to teach. New York: MacGraw Hill.
- Baah, L. D. (1987). Teaching practice at University of Cape Coast. Unpublished (B. Ed.) project work, University of Cape Coast, Cape Coast.
- Bauman, W. F. (1972). Games counsellor trainees play: Dealing with trainee resistance. Counsellor Education and Supervision, 11, 251-256.
- Bernard, J. M. & Goodyear, R. K. (1992). Fundamentals of clinical supervision. Boston: Allyn and Bacon.

- Bradley, L. (1989). Counsellor supervision: Principles, process, and practice. (2nd ed.). Muncie: Accelerated Development Press.
- Bradley, L. J. & Gould, L. J. (1994). Supervisee resistance. In E. Digest. Clearing house on counselling and student services. April, 1994, 322-344.
- Brew-Riverson, E. H. (1972). Principles of teaching practice supervision in Ghana U.C.C. Faculty of Education Bulletin, 3, (1), 20-22.
- Kadushin, A. (1968). Games people play in supervision. Social Work, 13, 23-32.
- Liddle, B. (1986). Resistance in supervision: A response to perceived threat. Counsellor Education and Supervision, 26, 117-127.
- Masters, M. A. (1992). The use of positive reframing in the context of supervision. Journal of Counselling and Development, 70, 307-310.
- Mueller, W. J. & Kell, B. L. (1972). Coping with conflict: Supervising counsellors and psychotherapists. New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts.
- Olaitan, S. O. & Agusiobo, O. N. (1981). Principles of practice teaching. New York: John Wiley & Sons, Chichester.
- Pecku, N. K. (1976). Reaching the student-teacher: The problem of the supervisor. The Oguaa Educator, 7, 116-124.
- Shertzer, B. & Stone, S. C. (1976). Fundamentals of guidance. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company.
- Tamakloe, E. K. (1988). Guidelines for students on teaching practice. Accra: Adwinsa Publication Ltd.