

# Supervisors' Remarks in Teaching Practice: the Perspectives of History Student-Teachers

Charles Adabo Oppong

Department of Arts & Social Sciences Education, University of Cape Coast, Ghana  
kindtheman@yahoo.co.uk  
c.oppong@rocketmail.com

## Abstract

Teaching practice is very germane to the training of prospective teachers as it is a process of producing competent teachers. Rosemary, Richard and Ngara (2013) acknowledge that there are many mechanisms that are put in place to make the exercise (teaching practice) a beneficial experience to trainee-teachers' and supervisors' remarks is a part of one of such mechanisms. In the University of Cape Coast, supervision of the trainees (student-teachers) is done by the University lecturers who observe student-teachers and give their remarks on lessons taught by trainees. The remarks of supervisors, therefore, become critical in shaping trainees to turn out to be effective teachers. Given the relevance of supervisors' remarks, the researcher sought to examine the perspectives of History student-teachers on the remarks given by supervisors during teaching practice. A qualitative research method was followed. Focus group discussions with twenty-four (24) History student-teachers who were in the final and penultimate years of graduation were used to collect the data for the study. Data were presented qualitatively using thick descriptions. Regardless of differences in the reaction of participants on supervisors' remarks on their lessons, majority of them accepted the remarks given by their supervisors. By and large, participants regarded supervisors' remarks as indispensable element in their development as knowledgeable teachers. Nevertheless, conflicting remarks from supervisors on a lesson taught were viewed as affecting the effectiveness of the supervision exercise. Among other things, the study recommends that supervisors must have a sound knowledge of the subject matter they are supervising, and knowledge about subject-specific methodology which will enable them to provide useful remarks.

**Keywords:** key words, Teaching practice, student-teachers' reactions, supervisors' remarks

## 1. Introduction

Teaching practice occupies a key position in the programme of teacher education and it is the common professional element in the preparation of student-teachers (Kudiewu, Osei, Agyei & Ameyia, 2013), since it (Teaching Practice) serves as the student-teacher's initiation into the real-life world of the school (Ngidi & Sibaya, 2003). It also enables student-teachers put into practice the theories they have been taught in their preparatory class. During teaching practice, student-teachers are observed by University or College supervisors where remarks given by supervisors provide information on the strengths and weaknesses of the student-teacher and the various areas that need improvement. That is, observation remarks play a central role in teaching practice in general and particularly in the professional life of student-teachers (Preece, 1979) and these remarks come in diverse ways. As Calder (1989) notes, supervisors' remarks have tremendous effects on student-teachers in teacher education.

Obviously, observation remarks are bound to have considerable uplifting (positive) or demoralizing (negative) impact on student-teachers in terms of their self-image and their academic standing within the teaching community. A good performance may boost student-teachers' self-image and confident level hence he/she will feel valued and respected among his/her students and that of supervisors. In a similar situation, poor remarks/performance usually affects student-teachers confidence and relationship with the supervisors as well as his/her reputation in the classroom. The idea of observation remarks by supervisors is clearer by looking at some of the intents of supervisors' remarks which provide:

1. student-teachers with the opportunity of establishing an appropriate teacher students relationship;
2. student-teachers the experience to develop method of control;
3. various means of using the right ways of asking questions;
4. information on how to avoid mannerism that hinders effective teaching; among others.

Despite these well-known objectives of supervisors' remarks, it has been increasingly noted that supervisors' remarks could be more demoralizing than constructive. Sternberg (1998) notes this and indicates that the damage caused by being extremely critical in the supervision of student-teachers' lesson far outweighs the merits of observation remarks. This in most cases calls on student-teachers to react in diverse ways towards the remarks giving by supervisors during teaching practice. This reaction is not different in the case of History student-teachers of the University of Cape Coast who went through the teaching practice programme as part of their University programme. This study, therefore, examines the reaction of, and impact of supervisors' remarks on

History students-teachers after their teaching practice exercise. It is important to point out that the study was triggered by two main issues.

Firstly, the issues raised by History student-teachers after their teaching practice concerning supervisors' remarks which the researcher noted with concern were key for the researcher. Secondly, because of the scanty research attention to this issue in this country (Ghana), and the importance being placed upon teaching practice, there is an increasing need for more understanding about the experiences of student-teachers. For teacher educators, such a study could lead to a review of policies and practices related to teaching practice. As Ryan (1980, p.116) stated, "we know very little about the relationship of our training and what is really going on in the minds and emotions of our students." Increased importance is being placed on the student-teachers' perceptions of their teaching practice experience for a number of reasons. These two reasons marry to warrant an investigation of this nature. The study specifically seeks to:

1. examine the reactions of History student-teachers on remarks made by supervisors during teaching practice.
2. identify the impact of the supervisors' remarks on student teachers.

## **2. Relevant Related Literature**

This section reviews literature on the central issues identified for investigation. This includes the reactions of student-teachers on remarks made by supervisors and the impact of these remarks on student teachers during teaching practice. This is done to help situate the findings in its rightful context for programme and policy renewal or the otherwise of it.

### **2.1 Student-teachers' reactions to supervisors' remarks**

Assessment of student-teachers by supervisors causes some degree of anxiety and stressfulness among student-teachers which in turns cause student-teachers to react. However, a comfortable working relationship between supervisors and student-teachers may lead to positive learning experience for the student-teacher. Student-teachers often react and complain that they forget the content-matter and feel nervous when supervisors sit at the end of the classroom and supervise. The behavior of student-teachers changes, comfort level becomes low and they find themselves in artificial situation where their main consideration remains to get good remarks in record files (Gantt & Davey, 1973). The pressure of doing things correctly and managing classroom activities properly makes them tense and apprehensive while teaching (Capel, 1997). A typical experience by Tung of Singapore-a student-teacher cited by Master (1997), clearly reveals the following: "After the lesson, I was a bit nervous to speak to my supervisor because I wondered what she would say about the lesson. I felt the lesson had gone well, but you will never know what another more experienced teacher will say about it." "Also, my supervisor gives me very little feedback about my teaching. So I feel that I don't get to learn much from her, so the fact of being supervised just plays as a negative factor rather than anything constructive" (p. 179). These reactions suggest two critical things. The respondent communicated his/her panic in that he/she did not know what the supervisor might have observed and commented which gave her/him a reason to avoid seeing the supervisor. This situation could be that supervisors' remarks are sometimes not motivating and could demoralize a student-teacher. In the second quote, the respondent registered his/her displeasure in relation to the fact that feedbacks from supervisors were not detailed to make known his/her strengths and weaknesses as well as areas that need improvement.

This circumstance does not advance the objectives for which students are made to do teaching practice. As required, supervisors are expected to provide comprehensive remarks on student-teachers' teaching to help provide insights into their teaching with the ultimate aim of identifying areas of improvement or otherwise.

In a like manner, Stephenes (1996) points out how student-teachers can sometimes be overwhelmed by a feeling of panic knowing that they cannot adequately perform a particular task. Indeed, teaching is a multi-tasking activity which demands effective advance preparation. Student-teachers have to spare time for activities like preparing lesson plan and teaching aids, assessment of students' works, among others. All these exhaust them. Some student-teachers do report of sleepless night during teaching practice, as they have to prepare lesson plans and teaching aids for three-four periods next morning. Others who are not able to take the mental stress often think of giving up training. Mental and emotional stress is also felt when not very favourable remarks are written on their records books by their supervisors (Stephenes, 1996).

Preece (1979), however, indicates in his study that the positive side of supervisors' remarks during teaching practice periods, was that it gives student-teachers a sense of accomplishment. They (student-teachers) learn to take responsibility, gain confidence and improve upon their classroom management skills. Above all, all the communication skills get improved. The following comment by a student-teacher cited by Preece (1979) describes a student-teacher's reaction to and acceptance of his/her supervisors' remarks: 'I never realized that I used the word 'ok' so many times when I teach until I was told by my supervisor. I now try to catch myself before I say 'ok' and this usually works' (p. 46). The reaction of this student-teacher suggests that supervisors' remarks are not limited to such issues as pedagogical content knowledge of trainee teachers but it boarder on all

aspects of teaching. In essence, teaching practice programme is not about giving remarks on theoretical knowledge of various theories of teaching used in the classroom only; rather it also serves as a worthwhile experience in the making of an inspiring teacher.

In Kourieos' (2012) study, the participants also showed dissatisfaction with their supervisors relative to their limited knowledge of the subject matter they were supposed to give feedback on and most importantly the lack of constructive feedback they received from supervisors. The supervisors were negatively criticised by five participants, who argued that the fact that they were not specialized in the subjects they were asked to evaluate prevented them from giving student-teachers any useful advice or feedback on the methods or activities they used which were specific to the particular subject. The finding suggests that supervisors assigned to observe student-teachers are sometimes not specialists in the discipline that student-teachers go out to teach. This situation can be disturbing in the sense that supervisors will find it difficult to constructively give comments that will help the learning situation of the teacher-trainee within the context of the practicum he/she is undertaking. A similar result was also found in the study of Kudiewu, et al., (2013) which indicates that supervisors gave conflicting remarks on the same lesson because of the different backgrounds of supervisors.

### **2.2 The impact of supervisors' remarks on student-teachers and their teaching**

Many writers and educators agree that teaching practice is a vital complement to theoretical course in preparing teachers in that any theory on teacher preparation which does not have an ultimate practical application is a mere jargon. Farrant (1983) supports this assertion by stating that, the aim of teacher training colleges is to produce teachers, and this demands not only knowledge, but experience of how to put theories into practice.

Mensah (1991) admits that the purpose of students teaching is generally, to provide opportunities under guidance for the student-teachers to develop and evaluate their competencies in major areas of teaching. Therefore, supervisors' remarks on student-teachers cannot be underestimated. These remarks are considered as a process of assessing student-teachers with the aim of determining their strengths and weaknesses in order to help them (student-teachers) build on their strengths and minimize things that are deemed inappropriate in teaching. Reasonably, the remarks of supervisors help bring student-teachers back on track when such remarks suggest better ways of improving classroom teaching (Farrant, 1983).

Pecku (1976) opines that, the counseling duties (remarks) of the supervisor could start even before the student-teacher begins his/her lesson. The supervisor must assist the student-teacher to clarify his/her objectives and method of teaching. This ensures that student-teachers start their lesson with confidence. One can realize that supervisors' remarks actually help in turning student-teachers theoretical course into practical application in classroom situation and help build confidence and self-esteem in student-teachers. Student-teachers are, therefore, likely to value the comments of their supervisors. This was the case when Calder (1989) found that most student-teachers acknowledged the impact of supervisors' remarks as satisfying and valuable experience.

Ogonor and Badmus's (2006) study identifies the benefits student-teachers accrued from supervisors' remarks during teaching practice. The authors revealed that student-teachers thoroughly enjoyed the teaching practice exercise, the process enabled them to assess taught lessons, determine their strengths and flaws, thereby taking positive action in subsequent lessons. In addition, they stated that they had a sense of fulfillment as teacher-trainees after taking corrective measures as they were excited to see the remarks and had a feeling of satisfaction. There was also an indication in the responses of the participants that they accepted both comments that commended and those which criticized them. Indeed, Kiggundu (2007) acknowledges the importance of both positive and negative remarks of supervisors as they lead to effective learning of student-teachers. Thus, for good or ill, this experience has a significant impact on the student-teacher who must juggle the responsibilities of teaching (and all that entails) while establishing and developing relationships with supervisors (Koerner & Rust, 2002), and it is also known that supervisors can play a critical role in helping student teachers make sense of their work in ways that will translate into future practice (Orland, 2001).

The finding of Kourieos (2012) is also worth noting. This was related to the comments of two student-teachers regarding the impact of supervisors' remarks which indicated that it did not seem appropriate:

Personally, I would like the TP supervisors to give us more constructive feedback. For example, I would like to know the criteria based on which I am evaluated. Getting a grade which I don't know what represents is not helpful at all! It's really not a matter of getting A, B or C but a matter of knowing how the supervisor ended up giving me this grade.

My biggest problem is, not knowing what I do wrong. I need to have the opportunity to talk to the TP supervisor otherwise I don't see how I can develop into a good teacher. If I continue getting B, it's obvious that I do something wrong, and if they don't tell me what I do wrong I cannot improve, so for me the TP as it is now doesn't serve its purpose (p. 60).

It is obvious from the responses that student-teachers were, thus, generally deprived of comprehensive remarks on their teaching (Ong'ondo & Borg, 2011), which meant that they were unlikely to develop their pedagogical content knowledge, an essential skill for every professional teacher. The respondents also felt that this pattern

was related to lack of content and content-specific pedagogy due to perceived limitations in their supervisors' knowledge base in relation to the subject-matter and pedagogical-knowledge, findings which also emerged in the studies of Borko and Mayfield (1995), and Nilsson and Van-Driel (2010). This inevitably turned the teaching practice into a stressful, disempowering and unproductive experience for student-teachers whose aim became to please 'significant others' in order to get a good grade which made their transforming into a teacher a difficult and sometimes impossible task to be accomplished (Kourieos, 2012). It was clearly evident from the participants' responses that they felt they would have profited more from post-teaching discussions in which they would have had the chance to explain and discuss their views and perceptions of their teaching with their supervisors. In other words, they preferred the supervisors' remarks to be more constructive and reflective, a finding which was also found in a study carried out by Hyland and Lo (2006).

### **3. Methodological consideration**

The qualitative method was employed to conduct the study. The focus of qualitative research is the nature or essence of things (Gall & Borg, 2007). One of the major strengths of qualitative research, write Miles and Huberman (1994, p. 10), is that it is "fundamentally well suited for locating the meanings people place on the events, process and structures of their lives". Individuals' perspectives do emerge in qualitative research in response to questions that focus on the assumptions people make about their lives and things that they take for granted (Bogdan & Biklen, 1998; Rogers, 1984). In this study, the researcher operates from the implicit assumption that perspectives of History student-teachers on supervisors' remarks on their teaching practice are shaped not so much by the physical setting as by the ways in which the various participants in the experience interpret their roles in action (Erickson, 1986; Hatch, 1985).

Twenty-four History student-teachers who did teaching practice during the 2012/2013 teaching practice exercise in Senior High Schools in different parts of the country [Ghana] were chosen by simple random sampling. The method of analysing data was adopted from Marais and Meier (2004). The analysis of the data was approached in two stages. The first stage focused on segmenting the data into categories and counting of responses. The categories were consolidated into themes. The second stage focused on comparing the themes related to students' reactions and the impact of supervisors' remarks on students during teaching practice respectively. Data were presented qualitatively using thick descriptions.

#### **3.1 Limitation**

Since this study is specific to History student-teachers, it is highly likely that it will only indicate something about this group of students. As the study just involved participants who study History, findings may not be generalised to other subject areas and institutions elsewhere. Notwithstanding, the picture maybe a replica of what obtains in the minds of student-teachers elsewhere in teacher education.

### **4. Results and Discussion**

This section of the paper presents the results and discussion of the study. The issues are organized in line with the themes identified as the focus of the study.

#### **4.1 Student-teachers reactions to supervisors' remarks**

Reaction of student-teachers on supervisors' remarks on teaching practice programme is a natural phenomenon in teacher preparation. This is because, it is natural for human beings to react to anything concerning their work. In fact, Kudiewu, Osei, Agyei and Amenya (2013) note that student-teachers may respond to supervisors' remarks in many different ways. Some may be finding the remarks stimulating and may have a clear sense of what the purposes of such remarks are and what they are supposed to do. Others may find some of the remarks insufficiently challenging or demotivating and may be paying minimal attention to the remarks. The point is that, when commenting on student-teachers teaching, and particularly on specific lessons they have taught, it is natural for History student-teachers to focus on their success, or lack of it.

This was exactly the case with regard to History student-teachers reactions to remarks concerning their teaching. Respondents' views were not unanimous on this issue (reaction of History student-teachers on supervisors' remarks). Some of the participants in this study indicated that they accepted the remarks made by supervisors in good faith because they are aware of themselves as learners under instruction. Comments such as the following were typical in the discussions: "I accepted it on a whole; I know I have short-comings and that I'm still learning to be an effective teacher," "The remarks were very constructive, therefore I was more receptive to supervisors' critique which enabled me make the necessary adjustments in subsequent lessons,"

"I was not surprised of the remarks given by my supervisor because this was a big class of 50 students and it was first time of handling such number of students. For the following observations the supervisor asked me to focus and improve on classroom management and how to accomplish this was for me to know how to control them. So he outlined some classroom management techniques which were worthwhile. So I accepted them because his suggestions helped me in my subsequent teachings,"

“Oh, my reaction was very positive because I was very pleased with the remarks. The supervisors who came to observe me teach suggest that I should try to liven up the lessons a bit because they noticed my lessons were a bit tight. That is true, I guess, but I always feel a bit scared when they observe me and I think I am different and more relaxed when I teach the class by myself. Most of them [supervisors] also suggested that I try to set more of a non-threatening learning environment for the class, and I should try to inject more humor into the lessons. I think this too is related to my nervousness of being observed when teaching. Anyway, I relaxed in my next lessons. However, the supervisors commended me on a lot of things such as my subject matter knowledge, questioning skills and the general methods I used to teach. So, I accepted all that were said.”

The responses of the participants succinctly point to the fact that the remarks of their supervisors, those that were on areas that they did well as well as those suggesting areas of improvement, were well received by these History student-teachers. Reasonably, these participants accepted that they are not perfect and even practicing teachers, as research has shown, are not perfect teachers (Lortie, 1975), therefore, the need to accept the remarks in good sense so as to become effective teachers in their later professional lives. This confirms the findings of MacKinnon (1989) and Preece (1979) which showed that student-teachers agreed that supervisors' remarks gave them sense of accomplishment and that they (student-teachers) learn to take responsibility, gain confidence and improve upon their classroom management skills. It can be argued to some extent that learning takes place through the remarks made by supervisors and this play an important part in practice teaching exercise. Students, therefore, look forward to having their own lessons observed, but essentially it is the feedback they get through this process which becomes relevant to their development as teachers.

As it was noted in the preliminary comment on this theme, there were others who indicated that they did not always accept hook, line and sinker of the remarks of supervisors. They noted that, they sometimes make supervisors know that they disagree with them. Such comments came through: “I don't always accept the remarks given. In some instances, I let the supervisor know that I'm not happy about the remark.” “...not entirely, sometimes, I tried to argue out my points especially when I know what I did was correct,” “No, there is no point in accepting whatever the supervisor remarked when I think otherwise. These responses contrast the opinion of Kourieos (2012) that supervisors seem to be dominant figures who are 'in control' of the learning process while student-teachers are expected to agree with their opinion and ultimately follow their prescription, or at least give this impression. In fact, this assertion was also consistent with the studies of Hyland and Lo (2006), and Gebbard and Oprandy (1999) which found that the pre-service teachers accepted the dominant role of supervisors in the post observation process due to the assessing roles the latter held, which forced student-teachers to accept their remarks rather than disagree and negotiate. Such a situation could be a recipe for producing teachers who are not knowledgeable and undemocratic in the classroom. Intelligibly, the issues that they would not get clearly or misunderstood will be with them throughout their period as practicing teachers and also, most likely to repeat such practices in the classroom by not accepting students views or contribution during instructional periods. In such circumstance, Richards (1989) indicates that the supervisor fails to be regarded as a teacher educator capable of providing a supportive environment with enhanced learning opportunities where student-teachers are helped to identify areas of development, to become willing to examine themselves and their teaching, to become better at noticing and to develop complex, discerning and 'robust reasoning' (Scaife & Scaife, 1996).

As a follow-up to probe the reasons of these respondents on why they reacted in the manner in which they have identified, they indicated inconsistency in the remarks of supervisors who observed them during teaching as well as what they were taught in their methods of teaching class by lecturers on campus. This, according to them, confused them as to what they were supposed to do. The comment of one discussant is illustrative:

“We sometime realised a lot of inconsistencies and conflicting remarks of the supervisors who supervise us to the extent that you wouldn't know what to do. So, we sometimes ignore some of these remarks. Such remarks were so different from what we were taught in our methods of teaching class. Again, sometimes our attempt to seek clarification met the displeasure of most supervisors, so the better we ignore such distasteful remarks.”

This finding corroborates Kourieos' (2012) finding where student-teachers showed dissatisfaction with their supervisors' remarks relative to their limited knowledge of the subject matter they were supposed to give feedback on and most importantly the lack of constructive feedback they received from them. In a similar sense, the participants indicated the fact that their supervisors were not specialized in the subjects they were asked to evaluate which prevented them from giving student-teachers any useful advice or feedback on the methods or activities they used which were specific to the particular subject. The finding of this study and Kourieos' study suggest that supervisors assigned to observe student-teachers are sometimes not experts in the subjects that student-teachers go to teach. A comparable result was also evident in the study of Kudiewu et al., (2013) which indicated supervisors gave conflicting remarks on same lesson taught because of different backgrounds of supervisors. This situation can be disturbing in the sense that supervisors will find it difficult to constructively give comments that will seek to help the learning situation of the teacher trainee within the context of the

practicum he/she is undertaking, and as Mayer and Austin (1999) note, the success of any practicum is dependent, to a large extent, on the supervisors and their supervision practices such as their remarks.

This finding, obviously, shows that the remarks of supervisors sometimes do not congregate around similar stuffs. This outcome could be related to differences in orientation on the part supervisors. It could also be that supervisors may have different subject backgrounds which could influence them a lot when observing students who are not in the same discipline with them. Be the reasons assumed or not, differences in the remarks of supervisors can have serious implications on the preparation of teachers. This is because, such remarks can have indelible impressions on student-teachers since teachers' beliefs and values are most occasioned during this stage of their training (Lortie, 1975).

Regarding the issue of student-teachers reaction to remarks that praises them, respondents were indifferent. Almost all the respondents expressed similar opinions concerning supervisors' remarks which encourage their effort. Respondents cited moment of joy, excitement and happiness as feelings which characterized their reactions to such remarks and stated that the ultimate goal of every student-teacher was to get such remarks. According to them, such remarks were indications of how they were progressing, and as Orland (2001) rightly says, the main intent of supervisors' remarks is to help student-teachers develop as competent teachers.

#### **4.2 The impacts of supervisors' remarks on student-teachers**

Another focus of this study was to find out the effects of supervisors' remarks on student-teachers during the teaching practice period. There were differing views among discussants on this issue. That is, a significant feature of this theme was that it was not one to which students expressed with indifference. Feelings were definite - either enthusiastically positive or negative. Some respondents admitted that they benefitted from the remarks given by their supervisors. They noted that the remarks really strengthened them and that it exposed them to the nitty-gritties involved in teaching which have built their confidence for the future task as teachers. The comments below are worthwhile: "In fact, the remarks of the supervisors have really helped me as a teacher trainee. First of all, the comments have shaped my teaching by helping me put into practice what I was taught. It has also given me a lot of confidence,"

"The comments of the supervisors have had a positive impact. For example, the remarks made me realized that I usually ignore the right side of the classroom not only with my gaze, which is usually focused on the left of the room, but also with whom I ask questions to as well, which is also to the left side of the room as well. My whole body language looks as if I am facing left and, of course, I cannot then see the students on the right and especially in the front rows,"

"The remarks of the supervisors have had an impact on my teaching. It has helped me implement the theoretical issues that I learnt in school with what in real classroom situation. The remarks have indeed given me confidence."

Feelings of confidence in teaching were acknowledged by students as a consequence of the combination of theoretical inputs and direct constructive remarks given by supervisors. That is, links between theory and practice were emphasized by supervisors so that student-teachers could draw close professional links between the universities and the secondary schools where they are prepared to function as teachers (Ogonor & Badmus, 2006). This further confirms the evidence that schools and the Universities or Colleges of Education can mutually plan and execute a satisfying and successful teacher education programme combining field and methodological components (Gantt & Davey, 1973).

The enumerated benefits of the remarks by the respondents are further confirmed by the study of Ogonor and Badmus (2006) which revealed that student-teachers thoroughly enjoyed the teaching practice exercise, the process enabled them to assess taught lessons, determine their strengths and flaws, thereby taking positive action in subsequent lessons. The remarks of the supervisors were therefore fulfilling and valuable to the participants as Calder (1989) found in his study that most student-teachers found supervisors' remarks to be a satisfying and valuable experience. In addition, they stated that they had a sense of fulfillment as teacher-trainees after taking correcting measures as they were excited to see the remarks and had a feeling of satisfaction. There was also an indication in the responses of the participants that they embraced both comments that commended and those criticized them. Indeed, Kiggundu (2007) acknowledges the importance of both positive and negative remarks of supervisors as they lead to effective learning of student-teachers. Thus for good or ill, this experience has a significant impact on the student-teacher who must juggle the responsibilities of teaching (and all that entails) while establishing and developing relationships with supervisors (Koerner & Rust, 2002).

There were others who expressed the opinion that they were not enthused about some of the comments the supervisors made and that it did not have any positive impact. Some of the opinions expressed include: "Some of the comments were very demoralising, in that it appeared as if I did not do anything at all in my teaching," "A lot of contradictory remarks were made by the supervisors and so they got me confused. Such remarks did not help me at all and I still hold onto what I was taught." The crux of their submission was as a result of varying remarks from supervisors. This was due to the existence of different supervisors with their individual difference on

teaching which influenced their supervision during the off-campus teaching practice programme. The finding of Kourieos (2012) confirms the finding in this paper. In Kourieos' study, student-teachers did not see supervisors' remarks as something remarkable. It is obvious from the responses that student-teachers were thus generally deprived of comprehensive remarks on their teaching (Ong'ondo & Borg, 2011). Obviously, student-teachers' experience of their practical training under these circumstances could lead to oppressive feelings of inadequacy and difficulties in developing self-confidence (Lantz in Rushton, 2001). Again, it has been established in numerous studies that inadequacy and inconsistencies in supervisors' remarks and training could reduce the effectiveness of practical teaching (Ismal, Halse, & Buchanan, 2000) and can lead to a negative experience of teaching practice (Marais & Meir, 2004).

## 5. Conclusion and Recommendations

The findings drawn from this study support the notion that supervisors' remarks serve as a catalyst in History student-teachers' process of learning to teach. The role of supportive, constructive and credible remarks has indeed been appreciated by the participants. Although this was the case, it is suggested that the nature of talk between the supervisor and the teacher learner in post observation should be done in a conducive and friendly atmosphere as there were responses that indicated supervisors' displeasure in relation to attempts made by student-teachers seeking clarification on supervisors' remarks. It is believed that, such an atmosphere would enhance teaching and learning.

There is considerable agreement that the major purpose of the practicum is to link theory with practice. However, there is much less agreement about the extent to which these purposes are being achieved (Turney, Eltis, Hatton, Thew, Towler, & Wright, 1982). This is so because the study revealed that most of the remarks from supervisors were inconsistent and inadequate as well. This suggests the likelihood of not assisting History student-teachers in effectively practicalising theoretical issues learnt in the classroom. It has, therefore, become evident that supervisors must have a sound knowledge of the subject-matter they are supervising, knowledge about subject-specific methodology which will enable them to provide useful feedback, skills in engaging student-teachers in awareness-raising activities in meaningful and non-threatening ways.

Though too small to permit generalisations, this study could prompt teacher educators and researchers to look beyond the reaction and impact of supervisors' remarks on History student-teachers to a deeper analysis of the linkages between student-teachers classroom teaching and their engagement with co-curricular activities in their practicing schools. Secondly, a comparable measurement of attitudes of student-teachers during teaching practice and first year actual teaching experiences would be necessary to assess the long-term effects of supervisors' remarks on students' teaching.

## References

- Bogdan, R., & Biklen, S. (1998). *Qualitative research for education*. Boston: Allyn & Bacon.
- Borko, H. & Mayfield, V. (1995). The roles of the cooperating teachers and university supervisor in learning to teach. *Teaching and Teacher Education* 11(5), 501-518.
- Britzmann, D.P. (1988). On educating the educators. *Harvard Educational Review*, 58(1), 85-94.
- Calder, I.A. (1989) *Study and Learning Strategies of Students in a New Zealand Tertiary Institution*. Unpublished D.Phil. Thesis, University of Waikato.
- Capel, C. E. (1997). *School experience in teaching education*. University of Bristol.
- Erickson, F. (1986). Qualitative methods in research on teaching. In M.C. Wittrock (Ed.), *Handbook of research on teaching*. New York: Macmillan.
- Farrant, J. S. (1983). *Principles and practice of education*. Hong Kong: Sheck Wah Tony Printing Press Ltd.
- Fuller, F. & Bown, O. (1975). Becoming a teacher. In K. Ryan (ed.), *Teacher Education: 74<sup>th</sup> Yearbook of the National Society For The Study Of Education*, (Part 2, pp. 35-57). Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Gall, M. & Borg, W. R. (2007). *Educational research: An introduction*. 4th ed. New York. Longman.
- Gantt, N. W & Davey, B. (1973). *Pre-student teachers react to field-supplemented methods courses*. Washington D.C.: Association of supervision and Curriculum Development.
- Gebhard, J.G. & Oprandy, R. (1999). *Language teaching awareness: A guide to exploring beliefs and practices*. Cambridge: CUP.
- Hyland, F. & Lo, M.M. (2006). Examining interaction in the teaching practicum: Issues of language, power and control. *Mentoring and Tutoring* 14(2), 163-186.
- Hatch, J.A. (1985). The quantoids versus the smooshes: Struggline with methodological rapprochement. *Issues in Education*, 3(2), 158-167.
- Ishmael, N., Halse, C & Buchanan, J. (2000). Teaching practice in the republic of Maldives: Issues and challenges. *Pacific Asian Education* 12(2): 40-56

- Kiggundu, E. (2007). Teaching Practice In The Greater Vaal Triangle Area: The Student Teachers' Experience. *Journal of College Teaching & Learning*, 4(6), 25 - 36
- Koerner, M & Rust, O. F. (2002). Exploring Roles in Student Teaching Placements. *Teacher Education*, Quarterly, spring 35-58
- Kourieos, S. (2012). The impact of mentoring on primary language teacher development during the practicum *Elited*, 15(Winter), 57- 64.
- Lortie, D.L. (1975). *School teacher*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- MacKinnon, D. (1989). Living with conformity in student teaching. *The Alberta Journal of Educational Research*, 35 (1), 2-19.
- Master, J. (1997). *Perspectives of teachers, principals, and supervisors on teaching practice*. New York: Longman Press.
- Mayfield, V. (1995). *The roles of the cooperating teacher and university supervisor in learning to teach*. London: Sage Publications
- Marais, P & Meier, C. (2004). Hear our voices: student teacher's experience during practical teaching. *African Education Review* 1(2) 2004 pp. 220-233.
- Mayer, D. & Austin, J. (1999). *It's just what I do: Personal practical theories of supervision in the practicum*. Paper presented at the 4th Biennial International Cross-Faculty Practicum Conference of Association of Practical Experiences in Professional Education. Christchurch, 19-22 January.
- Mensah, S. K. E. (1991) "Organization and supervision of student teaching." University of Cape Coast *Institute of Education Journal*. 2 (1). 498.
- Miles, M.B., & Huberman, M. (1994). *Qualitative Data Analysis: An Expanded Source Book* (Second Edition). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Ngidi, D. P. and Sibaya, P T (2003). Student teacher anxieties related to Practice teaching. *South African Journal of Education* , 23(1) 18-22.
- Nilsson, P. & Van Driel, J. (2010). Teaching together and learning together – Primary science student-teachers' and their mentors' joint teaching and learning in the primary classroom. *Teaching and Teacher Education* 26, 1309-1318.
- Ogonor, O. B & Badmus, M. M (2006). Reflective Teaching Practice among Student Teachers: The Case in a Tertiary Institution in Nigeria. *Australian Journal of Teacher Education* 31(2), 1 - 11
- Ong'ondo, C.O. & Borg, S. (2011). 'We teach plastic lessons to please them': The influence of supervision on the practice of English language student teachers in Kenya. *Language Teaching Research* 15(4), 509-528.
- Orland, L. (2001). Learning to mentor as learning a second language of teaching. *Cambridge Journal of Education*, 31(1), 53e68.
- Pecku, N. K. (1976) "Reaching the student teacher: The problem of the supervisor" *The Oguua Educator*. Vol. 7. Cape Coast, U. C. C. Press.
- Preece, P. F. W. (1997). Student teachers' anxiety and class control problems on teaching practice: A cross lagged panel analysis. *British educational research journal*.
- Richards, J.C. (1989). *Beyond training: Approaches to teacher education in language teaching*. Retrieved on 10/05/2013 from <http://search.epnet.com> pdf.
- Ryan, K. (1980). Inside the black boxes: The process of teacher education. In G.E. Hall, S.M. Hord & G. Brown, (eds.) *Exploring Issues in Teacher Education: Questions for Future Research*. Austin: University of Texas.
- Rogers, V.R. (1984). Qualitative Research Another Way of Knowing. In P.L. Hosford (Ed.), *Using What We Know About Teaching*. Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.
- Rosemary, N., Richard, N. & Ngara, R. (2013) Teaching Practice Supervision and Assessment as a Quality Assurance Tool in Teacher Training: Perceptions of Prospective Teachers at Masvingo Teacher Training Colleges. *European Social Sciences Research Journal*, 1(1), 126-135.
- Rushton, S (2001). Cultural assimilation: A narrative case study of student-teaching in an inner-city school. *Teaching and Teacher Education* 17 (2), 147-160
- Scaife, J.A. & Scaife, J.M. (1996). A general supervision framework: applications in teacher education. In Trafford, J. (ed.). *Learning to Teach: Aspects of Initial Teacher Education* (pp. 57- 82). Sheffield: University of Sheffield, Division of Education.
- Stephens, P. (1996). *Essential mentoring skills: A practical handbook for school based teacher educations*, Cheltenham: Stanley Thorness.
- Sternberg, R. J. (1998). A balance theory of wisdom. *Review of General Psychology*, 2, 347-365.
- Turney, C., Cairns, L., Eltis, K.J., Hatton, N., Thew, D., Towler, J. & Wright, R. (1982). *The practicum in teacher education. Research, practice and supervision*. Sydney: Sydney University Press.



This academic article was published by The International Institute for Science, Technology and Education (IISTE). The IISTE is a pioneer in the Open Access Publishing service based in the U.S. and Europe. The aim of the institute is Accelerating Global Knowledge Sharing.

More information about the publisher can be found in the IISTE's homepage:

<http://www.iiste.org>

## CALL FOR JOURNAL PAPERS

The IISTE is currently hosting more than 30 peer-reviewed academic journals and collaborating with academic institutions around the world. There's no deadline for submission. **Prospective authors of IISTE journals can find the submission instruction on the following page:** <http://www.iiste.org/journals/> The IISTE editorial team promises to review and publish all the qualified submissions in a **fast** manner. All the journals articles are available online to the readers all over the world without financial, legal, or technical barriers other than those inseparable from gaining access to the internet itself. Printed version of the journals is also available upon request of readers and authors.

## MORE RESOURCES

Book publication information: <http://www.iiste.org/book/>

Recent conferences: <http://www.iiste.org/conference/>

## IISTE Knowledge Sharing Partners

EBSCO, Index Copernicus, Ulrich's Periodicals Directory, JournalTOCS, PKP Open Archives Harvester, Bielefeld Academic Search Engine, Elektronische Zeitschriftenbibliothek EZB, Open J-Gate, OCLC WorldCat, Universe Digital Library, NewJour, Google Scholar

