

**Original Research Article**

**THE EFFECTIVENESS OF SUPPORTED TEACHING IN SCHOOLS IN COLLEGES  
OF EDUCATION CURRICULUM: THE FACTS, FEARS AND MYTHS**

**Abstract**

The purpose of the study was to deep dive into: how effective Colleges of Education (COE) in Ghana practice the Supported Teaching Schools (STS) programme; the challenges faced in implementing the programme; and how the challenges are managed by COE to still train pre-service teachers to exhibit high standards in knowledge, conduct, and practice in the schools worthy of 21st century teachers. A trend study was adopted with an exploratory design. A stratified sampling technique was employed to select 6 Colleges for the study. It can therefore be concluded that pre-service teachers practice sole visit to schools for STS programme. Therefore, the pre-service teachers' reflective journals contain literature reports which might not necessarily reflect the activities observed or discussed. Some COE lack means of transport to convey pre-service teachers to and from partner schools. It is therefore recommended that, STS programme be organized for pre-service teachers to benefit from all the days' teaching and learning, and co-curricular activities in a week in the basic schools. Training for all lead mentors, mentors and students to successfully implement the STS policy should be deepened. Also, the government of Ghana should supply the requisite logistics to COE for the successful implementation of the programme. Supervision by tutors of COE should be structured and intensified to pre-service teachers during the STS programme to make their reflective journals report to cohere into practicable daily school activities.

KEY WORDS: Supported, Teaching, curriculum, Fact, fears, myth,

## **Introduction**

Basic teacher education in Ghana has undergone several changes (Buaben, Ntow and Otami (2020). These changes are not static but still undergoing restructuring in an attempt to produce teachers that will improve teaching and learning outcomes (Mereku, 2019). Acheampong (2003) described these developments of the teacher education as chequered, as the programmes are designed to meet emergency situations and needs of the country. These needs of basic education are changing over time and therefore require more institutional training to upgrade the level of teaching.

The pre-school teachers require practical skills in teaching the core competencies in basic education (Mereku, 2019) for learners to develop conceptual understanding. Hence, one of the remarkable changes in the teachers' education reforms is the introduction of four year Bachelor of Education (B.ED) programme in the colleges of education. The curriculum of the programme in the colleges of education has a component which seeks to transform initial teacher education and secure the training of highly qualified, motivated new teachers who would be able to inspire their learners to achieve better outcomes in basic education. As a result, more practices are needed to equip the trainees with the requisite skills and expertise to fit in their vocation. Hence, the teacher trainees need to practice Supported Teaching in Schools (STS), one of the four pillars of the B.ED programme, to gain hands-on experience and build their confidence as teachers (Transforming Teacher Education and Learning (Transforming Teaching Education and Learning (T-TEL)/ Ministry of Education (MOE) (2018a). This involves being placed in a classroom under the tutelage of an experienced teacher-mentor to develop the requisite skills, knowledge and attributes essential for nurturing honest, creative and responsible citizens in

Ghana's Basic Schools as appropriate evidence against the three domains of the National Teachers' Standards (NTS) (T-TEL/ MOE, 2018a). All these are in line with the tenet of the domain of National Teachers' Standard (NTS) that seeks to improve teachers' professional attitudes and values, professional knowledge and professional practice (MOE, 2017a).

During the programme, the teacher trainees observe their mentor's teaching techniques, participate in classroom activities and lessons, and gradually take on more responsibilities, such as planning and leading lessons, grading assignments, and managing student behaviour (T-TEL/MOE (2020/2021a)). According to T-TEL/MOE (2018a), the programme seeks to allow the teacher trainees to put theory in practice, receive feedback on their teaching and make adjustments to improve their skills. It also enables them to develop professional relationships with their colleagues and gain an understanding of the wider school community. Ultimately, supported teaching is essential for the successful development of teacher trainees and for the improvement of education as a whole.

There are concerns about the quality of this aspect of the new educational reform. Mereku (2019) identified generic and subject-specific competences required by the basic school teacher to mentor the teacher trainees as a challenge for the programme. Mereku also lamented on the capacities of the colleges to meet the increasing demand for basic school teachers as a concern and as a worrying situation that needs attention. Buaben, Ntow and Otami (2020) identified the placement schools for the STS programme, poorly equipped and inadequate mentoring staff as possible challenges that may affect the programme. Dankwah, Nyarko and Mensah (2021) in their study identified transportation, improper orientation programme, inadequate supervision and insufficient teaching and learning resources as challenges thwarting the success of the STS. Azuuga and Aduko (2022) identified pre-service teachers lack of skills of

reflective practice, inadequate curriculum resources and ill-equipped classroom furniture as challenges militating the implementation of the programme. Turner, Calvert and Carlson (2019) viewed stakeholders buy-in as barriers against successful implementation of the programme. However, the colleges of Education in Ghana have defied all odds to embraced the four year B. ED programme with all its intended successes and all unforeseen challenges. The success of the STS programme depends on how these challenges are handled.

The purpose of the study was to deep dive into: how effective Colleges of Education (COE) in Ghana practice the STS programme; the challenges faced in implementing the programme; and how the challenges are managed by COEs to still train pre-service teachers to exhibit high standards in knowledge, conduct, and practice in the schools worthy of 21<sup>st</sup> century teachers.

### **Nature of Supported Teaching in Schools/ implementation of STS**

The STS programme, which replaces the off-campus teaching practice, has about 30% (165) credit hours and assessment in the Colleges of Education Curriculum (T-TEL/MOE, 2018a). According to T-TEL/MOE, (2018a) pre-service teachers are allowed to do one day supported teaching in schools within every week for a 6 week duration in every semester from level 100 to 300 (first semester) to interact with teachers, mentors, pupils and discuss observations in the school (including challenges and recommendation) and put their findings into their STS journal for assessment. In the level 300 second semester programme, the pre-service teachers stay off campus for 6 weeks for co-planning and co-teaching programmes in partner schools. The level 400 extended teaching programme is characterized with 12 weeks practice off college campus. These are the expected periods of College-Based, School Based Training for pre-service teachers across the duration of study (T-TEL/MOE, 2018a).

Each academic year has its intended purpose/target which builds on the outcome of the previous year. According to T-TEL/MOE (2018a):the first year, termed as ‘beginning in teaching’ is characterized with the pre-service teachers experiences in inclusive education as a cross-cutting issues in schools, school curriculum, and approaches to teaching, expectations for the learning and progress of learners in different subject. In the second year (developing teaching), the students teacher is expected to identify and assess weaknesses and barriers of learning for learners and carry out small-scale action classroom enquiry under the guidance of mentors (T-TEL/MOE, 2018b). The third year, embedding teaching, seeks to equip the student-teacher with the skills to co-plan and co-teach groups of learners and whole classes and carry out small-scale classroom enquiries and provide evidence of working towards meeting the NTS (T-TEL/MOE, 2020/2021a).In year 4, extended teaching,pre-service teachers plan, teach, and assess their learners independently and with increasing consistency; exhibit the ethical codes of conduct, values and attitudes expected of a teacher; carry out extensive action research projects and provide evidence of meeting the NTS fully (T-TEL/MOE, 2020/2021b).

To accomplish all facets of the programme, each College of Education has its specific day(s) within the week in each semester, incorporated into colleges’ timetable, for students to visit respective partner schools for the programme and return for a reflective practice (T-TEL/MOE, 2020/2021; Ananga, 2021). Priya, Prasanth and Peechattu (2017) see the reflective practice as a tool for pre-service teachers to explore themselves to enable them develop professionally. There is the need for all students to visit basic schools at the designated day(s) and report to account for the visit. Figure 1 presents the yearly programme and intended outcome of the STS

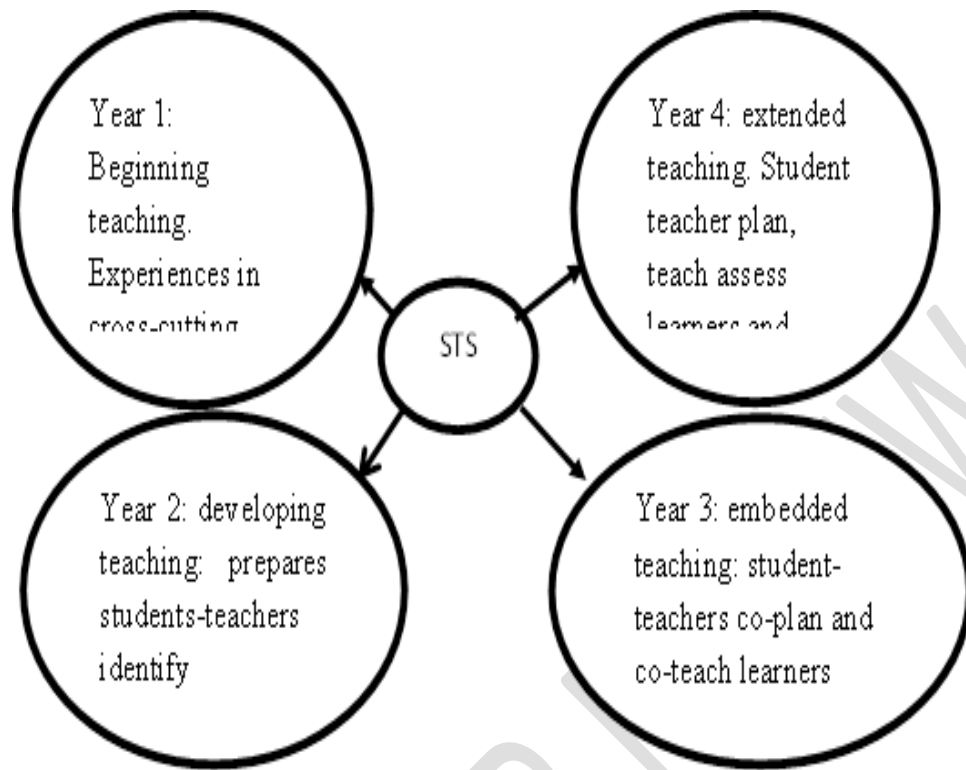


Figure 1: The yearly programme and intended outcome of the STS

### **Assessment of the STS in Colleges of Education (COE)**

Assessment of the STS in COE is strongly guided by the National Teacher Education Assessment Policy (NTEAP) (MOE, 2017b). The NTEAP is planned to certify that all teachers completing their initial teacher training are assessed against the National Teachers' Standards (NTS), Ministry of Education (MOE), 2017a). Therefore, the policy provides criterion for assessment and grading of pre-service teachers, teachers based on their professional values and attitudes, professional knowledge, professional practices and other cross cutting issues (MOE 2017a.).

The policy directs that progression from one level to another in COE depends largely on passing STS (T-TEL/MOE, 2018a). Hence, an overall weighting of 30% is recommended for STS across the four years in terms of credit hours and assessment (MOE, 2017b). According to

NTEAP, this weighting indicates the importance placed on extended periods of STS and the emphasis on more interactive learner focused approach to training teachers through formative assessment of course work with focus on performance. According to Ananga, (2021), these are aimed at supporting pre-service teachers to provide the appropriate evidence against the three domains of the NTS in the classroom through the exhibition of the requisite skills, knowledge and attributes essential for nurturing honest, creative and responsible citizens in Ghana's Basic Schools. College tutors, lead mentors and mentor assess pre-service teachers base on the NTS and the NTEAP.

According to Ferdinand (2020), assessment of students on STS in each semester is based on their findings in the schools during the observations, which includes their challenges and recommendations. Therefore, pre-service teachers are scored and graded based on attendance to reflective practice seminars after visiting to schools, reports from school in STS journals and punctuality to schools of practice.

### **Study Question**

The study tried to answer the following question:

How effective is the STS programme and its accompanied reflections to improve teaching standards?

### **Methodology**

A trend study was adopted with an exploratory design. Pandey and Pandey (2015) described a research design as the plan for a study that is employed as a guide in gathering and analyzing data. According to Pandey and Pandey (2015) exploratory research design is used when little is written on an issue that is studied. This design was considered appropriate for the

study since the Supported Teaching in School (STS) Programme is the first of its kind in Ghana. The population for the study was all Colleges of Education in Ghana. A stratified sampling technique was employed to select 6 Colleges of Education affiliated to the University for Development Studies. These colleges have similar characteristics from their mentor university. They shared the same curriculum and submitted themselves to the scrutiny of the university in progress of student-teacher learning and skills acquisition across the study period, mentored placement, integration of subject specific pedagogy of assessment of trainees. They equally have shared pro-poor vision of training practically oriented, research and field based teachers based on the NTS to contribute positively to make the new B.ED programme rich in content and practice. They common ideology of providing training that would equip teachers with the innovative skills and knowledge that would have positive influence on the children they teach.

Open-ended questions were used to elicit information on the STS programme in Colleges of Education, challenges faced by pre-service teachers in the practice of the programme and suggestions for the way forward for the programme in Colleges of Education in Ghana. A meta-analysis was also done on the pre-service teachers reflective journals to ascertain coherence with daily school activities. The information obtained was put into themes to describe the situation at hand.

### **Practicing STS in Colleges of Education**

Information from colleges of education indicated a COE choosing just one specific day in a week for the STS programme for all levels throughout the year. For instance, information from **College 1** states that: “...All pre-service teachers move out for the STS programme on only Wednesday, a day tutors hold their Professional Development Session (PDS)”. In some COE,

one specific day in a week for each level is selected for the STS programme throughout the year. According to **Colleges 2, 3, 4 and 6** respectively. “*levels 100, 200 and 300 students move out for the STS programme on Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays respectively. From College 5, “First year pre-service teachers move out for the STS programme on Monday while the second year pre-service teachers move out on Thursday”*”. The selection of a particular day in the week for the programme has the ability to make the expected observations, discussions, reporting and recommendation inflexible, as the same information will be provided every day and week.

All COE rotate the partner schools for the pre-service teachers every semester while maintaining the specific day for the programme. The idea of allowing pre-service teachers to practice the STS programme in more than one school for a year has the ability to help them encounter different experiences in the different learning environments.

The statements: “*pre-service teachers report to partner schools late because of distance*”. They are posted to such basic schools to ease congestion and also to improve their interaction with mentors and pupils” (**Colleges 1, 2, and 6**) suggest that some partner schools are far from the COE. Also, “*Some pre-service teachers walk more than 5 kilometres to and from their partner school every STS day*”. All these problems suggest that some COE do not have buses or they have them but no fuel to convey pre-service teachers to and from schools of practice”. The far distances have the propensity to make the pre-service teachers tired, which can affect their performance and reflection.

The lead mentors and mentors in the partner schools are trained a day, due to time, resources and the mentoring requirements. The training might not be enough to equip them with guiding principles of the programme. The mentors might not be able to critically guide the pre-

service teachers' experiences in cross-cutting issues, co-planning, co-teaching, planning and teaching.

Academic counselors hold reflective sessions with the pre-service teachers after STS programmes. Each pre-service teacher always presents an elaborate STS reflective journals to be scored and graded at the end of the semester.

A cursory study of some pre-service teachers' reflective journals revealed that activities in the reports which supposed to be similar in content in the partner schools have varied information. For instance, in school 'A' a student-teacher reports "*organize general quizzes, sports competition, observe special days in the school*" as the wider school life. A second student in the same school indicated that "*sporting activities are frequently organized to enhance the physical fitness of students. Opening days, speech and prize giving days, graduation ceremonies and PTA meetings are also organized. Awards are also given out and or awarded in the various games and ceremonies carried out*". The question is, are all these activities carried out on the Tuesdays that they visited the schools? On staff meetings, while some pre-service teachers were explaining the concept of staff meeting, some were describing vividly what transpired. Some pre-service teachers who attended the same partner schools equally presented varied co-curricular activities. When some pre-service teachers indicated activities such as "*sports, competitions, debates, cultural activities and quizzes competition with other school*" others indicated *excursions, speech and prize given day, school sports, mock trials and debating clubs*. These reports suggest that the pre-service teacher might not have understood the content of co-curricular activities. Some of the activities mentioned can best fit academic activities. In addition, the reports indicated scheduled weekly, monthly, termly, and yearly activities instead of daily routine activities. The content of the reflective journal might consist of information which

might not necessarily reflect the observed experiences in the partner school; as the visits are days specific in nature.

### **Implications and conclusion**

The key objective of the Supported Teaching in School Programme (STS) is to adequately assist pre-service teachers to develop professional skills, attitudes and values, professional knowledge and professional practice of teaching including knowledge of inclusivity, equity, and support for learners learning progress in the classroom. However, the implementation of the STS programme can be subject to a number of criticisms, the most common of which concern the method of selecting days for the visit. Pre-service teachers visit partner school once a week on only one specific day(s) for a whole year. Therefore, the student teacher reports on only what is observed on only one day continuously for every semester and or the whole year. Reporting on tasked activities for just one specific day in a week continuously, over a period of time is likely to make the student teacher a one-way learning process teacher. Pre-service teachers who visit partner schools on days that they do sports, have staff meetings, have English language or any subject respectively on time table would only be reporting on only that specific event for the whole semester/year. There is therefore the great fear that reports on pre-service teachers reflective journal will only comprise literature report and not on observed information. Therefore the idea of sound grounding of teachers both in academic disciplines, pedagogy mastery and subjects based methodologies would be affected.

Factually, pre-service teachers are detailed to observe school routines and how they are managed. Meanwhile, some pre-service teachers report late to partner schools owing to the fact that the distant is far or the college lacks means of transport to send them. There is the fear that

some parts of pre-service teachers report on reflective journal would be fictitious which might not be accurate with what would be observed.

Empirically, for pre-service teachers to learn well, the mentors must be sufficiently trained to be capable of imparting and modeling desired knowledge, skills and attitudes in the mentees. However, most COE trained the lead mentors and mentors for only a day. The insufficient training given to mentors have the potency to negatively affect the guiding principles underpinning the STS programme. Therefore, mentors may not be well equipped to be able to discuss the basic school curriculum effectively with mentees.

The myth of the programme is that pre-service teachers write and present concrete STS reflective journals which covers all facets of what is to be learned in each trimester or semester for scoring and grading. Therefore, the fear is that, reports of the programme on reflective journal might be fictitious, which may impede the pre-service teachers' development of professional values and attitudes, professional knowledge and professional practice. It can therefore be concluded that pre-service teachers practice sole day visit to schools for STS programmes. Also, they report in their reflective journals might not reflect the activities observed or discussed. There is therefore the possibility that the pre-service teachers' reflective journals contain literature reports.

### **Recommendation**

The STS programme should be organized for pre-service teachers to benefits from all the days' teaching and learning, and co-curricular activities in the basic schools. Colleges of education can select one week from the semester for STS programme of which each student teacher would be able to experience and report on daily routine teaching and learning activities and co-curricular activities in the schools rather than the sole reporting every semester. Alternatively, the STS days on the colleges' time table can be varied from day to day to enable them benefit from each day's

activities. In terms of the STS policy, there is the need to deepen further training for all lead mentors, mentors and student teachers if they are all expected to practice and implement the STS programme as intended. There is also the need for the government of Ghana to do the needful in supplying the requisite logistics such as buses for the successful implementation of the programme. Supervision by tutors of COE should be structured and intensified to pre-service teachers during STS programme to make their reflective journals report to cohere with practicable daily school activities.

## REFERENCES

- Acheampong, K. (2003). *Teacher Training In Ghana – Does it Count? Multi-Site Teacher Education Research Project (MUSTER) Country Report One*. Sevenoaks: DFID Education Publications Despatch.
- Ananga D. E. (2021). Teachers' Standards in Ghana's Initial Teacher Education Programme: Some Implementation Issues and Challenges. *Journal of Educational Issues* ISSN 2377-2263 2021, Vol. 7, (1). From URL: <https://doi.org/10.5296/jei.v7i1.18488>
- Azuuga, I. E., & Aduko A. E. (2022). Challenges of Colleges of Education Internship Programme in Ghana: The Case of Gbewaa College of Education, *Higher Education Research*. Volume 7(2), April 2022, pp. 57-63. doi: [10.11648/j.her.20220702.15](https://doi.org/10.11648/j.her.20220702.15)
- Buabeng, I., Ntow, F. D., & Otami, C. D. (2020). Teacher education in Ghana: Policies and practices. *Journal of Curriculum and Teaching*, 9(1), 2020. <https://doi.org/10.5430/jct.v9n1p86>
- Dankwah, A. E., Nyarko, A. I. & Mensah, D. D. (2021). Support Teaching in Schools: Perceptions of Teacher Trainees. *Social Education Research*. Volume 2(2)/2021/ 289. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.37256/ser.222021581>
- Ferdinand, E. (2020). *How the supported Teaching in Schools for the colleges of education shall be implemented*. Retrieved from <https://educationghana.org/> on 21<sup>st</sup> June, 2023.
- Mereku, D. K. (2019). Sixty years of teacher education in Ghana: Successes, challenges and the way forward. *African Journal of Educational Studies in Mathematics and Sciences* Vol. 15, (2), 2019 DOI: <https://dx.doi.org/10.4314/ajesms.v15i2.669>
- Priya M., Prasanth M., Mr. Prince, J. Peechattu J. P. (2017). Reflective Practices: A Means To Teacher Development. *Asia Pacific Journal of Contemporary Education and Communication Technology (APJCECT)* ISBN: 978 0 9943656 82; ISSN: 2205-6181 Year: 2017, Volume: 3(1), [www.apiar.org.au](http://www.apiar.org.au)

- T-TEL/Ministry of Education-Ghana (2018a). *Four-Year Bachelor of Education Degree Supported Teaching in School. School Placement Handbook (Year One): Professional Development Programme*. Ministry of Education-Ghana
- T-TEL/Ministry of Education-Ghana (2018b). *Four-Year Bachelor of Education Degree Supported Teaching in School. School Placement Handbook (Year Two): Professional Development Programme*. Ministry of Education-Ghana
- T-TEL/Ministry of Education-Ghana (2020/2021a). *Four-Year Bachelor of Education Degree Supported Teaching in School. School Placement Handbook (Year Three): Professional Development Programme*. Ministry of Education-Ghana
- T-TEL/Ministry of Education-Ghana (2020/2021b). *Four-Year Bachelor of Education Degree Supported Teaching in School. School Placement Handbook (Year Four): Professional Development Programme*. Ministry of Education-Ghana
- Ministry of Education. (2017a). *National Teachers' Standards for Ghana: Guidelines*. Accra, Ghana
- MoE. (2017b). *National Teacher Education Curriculum Framework: The Essential Elements of Initial Teacher Education*. Accra, Ghana.
- Pandey, P. and Pandey, M. M. (2015). *Research Methodology: Tools and Techniques*. Romania, Bridge Centre
- T-TEL Professional Development Programme. (2018). *Four-Year Bachelor Of Education Degree Supported Teaching in Schools (School Placement Handbook)*. Ministry of Education, Ghana. pp. 1-5. <https://t-tel.org/download/doc-45>
- Turner, L., Calvert, G. H & Carlson, A. J. (2019). Supporting Teachers' Implementation of Classroom-Based Physical Activity. *Translational Journal of the ACSM*. 4(17). September 1, 2019 from <http://www.acsm-tj.org>.