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## IMPACT OF NATIONAL TEACHERS' STANDARDS ON QUALITY AND EFFECTIVE EDUCATION DELIVERY

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### Abstract

**Purpose:** The study focused on the impact of the National Teachers' Standards on quality and effective education delivery.

**Methodology:** The study adopted a mixed methods approach. In all, 20 tutors and 500 students were selected from 10 Colleges of Education in the Northern part of Ghana using purposive and quota sampling procedures. Data were collected using questionnaire and semi-structured interview guide. Quantitative data were analysed using mean and standard deviation while the qualitative data were analysed using thematic analysis.

**Findings:** The results showed that the student-teachers explained concepts clearly using examples familiar to learners, employed a variety of instructional strategies that encourages learner participation and critical thinking and paid attention to all learners, especially girls and students with Special Educational Needs, created a safe, encouraging learning environment and used appropriate disciplinary methods in the classroom. From the results, it was concluded that the student-teachers were positively impacted by the National Teachers' Standards in their teaching practices.

**Unique Contributions to Theory, Practice and Policy:** Tutors in Colleges of Education increase their training of student-teachers in terms of keeping of records about learners since this found to be an area that needed improvement. Ghana Tertiary Education Commission together with the National Teachers' Council should encourage and ensure that Colleges of Education are implementing the National Teachers' Standards effectively to better prepare student-teachers. Future researchers can adopt the Reform Theory of Action as used in the current study and use the findings of the current study as support for the theory.

**Keywords:** *National Teachers' Standards, Effective Education Delivery, Quality*

## INTRODUCTION

Since the beginning of the 21st century, school effectiveness research has been increasingly dominating the evidence base informing education policies (Larsen, 2010). In recent times, there are globally more education policies directed towards revising teacher education and introducing teaching standards (Révai, 2018). Teaching standards have been examined and compared (Toledo et al., 2017; Kleinhenz & Ingvarson, 2007), and the evidence on their impact on teacher education extends to a growing number of localised contexts (Chung & Kim, 2010; Tummons, 2014; Page, 2015; Kriewaldt, 2012; Ceulemans, Simons & Struyf, 2012).

One of the main purposes of teacher standards is quality control, which is why quality assurance tools accompany standards in many countries (Toledo, Révai & Guerriero, 2017). These can involve assessing teacher candidates, teachers and teacher education programmes based on data collected through observations, interviews, student performance and feedback, or manifested in documents, portfolios, etc. Also, standards are generally seen as the imprints of teachers' competences that describe what teachers should know and be able to do (Ingvarson, 2002; Toledo et al., 2017).

Teachers' standards are important because the standards represent shared ideas and values which positively impact on the professionalism and quality of their work as teachers (Ingvarson, Kleinhenz, Khoo & Wilkinson, 2007). This means that essence of teaching and the professionalism required of teachers are clearly made known through teachers' standards. Evans (2020) confirmed that teachers' standards set out a minimum of what teachers should be doing and as such the standards are important in teacher education. The argument is therefore clear that teaching standards are very relevant because of the strong relationship that they have with learning outcomes as they are used to streamline instruction and ensure that teaching practices deliberately focus on agreed upon learning targets (OECD 2013).

There is a growing concern over the quality of students' performance with most researchers claiming that the level of performance of teachers was the major factor contributing to the performance of students (Hattie, 2008; Barber & Mourshed, 2007; Hanushek & Rivkin, 2006; Rockoff, 2004). In dealing with concerns about teacher performance, several countries have introduced teaching standards to define the minimum expectation of teachers (Kleinhenz & Ingvarson, 2007). In the view of Sergiovanni and Starrat (2002), professional teaching standards can provide a useful framework for teachers to reflect on their practice and talk to each other about their work.

Teachers are the school variable that most impacts student achievement, and so any education reform that does not consider teacher education is not deemed effective (OECD, 2005). They represent a valuable human resource and play an important role in the development of the national economy (Vedika, 2016). Teachers are responsible inspiring and challenging students to achieve their potential and as such their preparation and subsequent development require the highest possible standards in knowledge, conduct and practice in their workplace. In this sense, establishing a quality teaching workforce capable of effectively developing the competences of students and helping them reach their potential has been a main underlying objective of education reforms in many countries recently (OECD, 2015).

## **Problem Statement**

In Ghana, ensuring high standards in the preparation of teachers is critical for the effective professional practice of the Ghanaian teacher (Ananga, 2021). Because of this, the National Teachers Standards was introduced. The National Teachers Standards represents the first ever collectively agreed standards to guide teacher preparation and education practice (Kelvin, 2021). The Standards have been developed as a professional tool to guide teacher educators, student-teachers and other stakeholders in education to identify in clear and precise terms what teachers are expected to know and be able to do, qualities they are expected to possess and some behaviour they are supposed to exhibit.

The Standards are aspirational in their vision, positively embracing the promises and challenges of the 21st century for Ghana. More importantly, they support Ghana in meeting Goal 4 of the Sustainable Development Goals for 2030 to ‘ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote life-long learning opportunities for all’ (Ananga, 2021). In contributing towards this goal, the Standards are also realistic and relatively few in number so as to be achievable and user-friendly. The development of the Standards was informed by a review of international teaching standards to help improve the quality and professionalism of teachers in Ghana.

However, there is evidence that the quality of education in Ghana at the basic level keeps reducing (Amakyi & Ampah-Mensah, 2016). One major factor identified to be a cause of such poor quality is the level of quality, method of teaching and professionalism of teachers (Adu-Agyem & Osei-Poku, 2012; Adu-Gyamfi & Otami, 2020). This is a problem that needs attention otherwise the education system will keep churning out poor-quality students which may have long-lasting impact on the nation.

Since the National Teachers Standards was implemented, one major recent study evaluating it was that of Ananga (2021) who examined the National Teachers Standards (NTS) for teachers in Ghana with particular focus on the initial teacher education (ITE) programme, and how tutors and student teachers (mentees) apply the NTS and revealed that few of the student-teachers (mentees) demonstrate application of the NTS. The current study however focused on the impact of the National Teachers’ Standards on quality and effective education delivery. Also, this study was important because a broader understanding of the interplay between professional standards and teacher education can usefully inform the direction of new policies.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **Theoretical Background**

The study is founded on the Reform Theory of Action propounded by Loeb, Knapp and Elfers (2008). The concept of “theory of action” comes from the organizational theory work of Argyris and Schön (1974). Theory of action speaks on what an institution does and how it does it. Thus, it involves the set of assumptions about the way the world works or how it may be changed that may guide, explain, or justify the change (Argyris & Schön, 1982). In the view of Elmore (2004), a theory of action connects “big ideas” to the “fine grain of practice”. In relation to policy reforms in education, Loeb et al. (2008) developed and spoke of Reform Theory of Action. The theory is based on the assumption that that in education, teachers are the main drivers of reforms. This

means that if new reforms are introduced in education, teachers are the ones who would ensure the success of the reforms.

Loeb et al. (2008) indicated that teachers are essential in reforms because of some key assumptions. These are: Teachers will pay attention to the reform and become familiar with the standards and what they imply for practice (Wilson & Floden, 2001); Teachers will take the reform seriously, as will their supervisors, who will exhort teachers to meet the demands of the policy, and offer support, as needed (Stecher, Chun, Barron & Ross, 2000); Teachers will adjust their instruction to align with the standards and associated assessments (including preparation for assessment) (Stecher et al., 2000); Teachers will expect all of their students to succeed—and believe that they are capable of succeeding. However, in case of students' struggles, teachers will adjust their teaching practice to maximize the students' chances of success (Kannapel, Aagaard, Coe & Reeves, 2001).

From the assumptions, it is clear that teachers are those who will drive the success of changes and reforms in education. The study of Knapp and Meadows (2005) which was based on Reform Theory of Action found that there are discernible impacts on teaching practice, particularly in terms of adherence to best standards of teaching. They indicated that the Reform Theory of Action helped them to assess whether student-teachers adhered to new standards required of them. The theory is considered relevant in the current study because the study focuses on how student-teachers use the knowledge acquired from the NTS in their teaching practice. Since the NTS was developed with the reforms in education as a background, it can be said that teachers are those who are supposed to drive the success of new reforms in education. On this basis, the Reform Theory of Action was considered relevant in the current study.

### **Ghana National Teachers' Standards**

Standards are conceptualized from two perspectives, as either a flag, i.e. statements of an agreed value, and as a measure, i.e. a level of performance on a number of criteria (Ingvarson, 2002). As a flag, standards are seen as representation (knowledge statements) while as a measure, standards are seen as performance (knowledge practices) (Mulcahy, 2011). Every profession has a set of standards that guide the profession. According to Révai (2018), professional standards can be seen as policy tools, in that their purpose is to achieve certain policy objectives, in particular to regulate teachers' professional learning and practice throughout their career. In terms of coverage, standards can be "generic (same professional standards for all the profession's branches) or specific (distinctions among the profession's branches, such as grade level or subject taught)" (Toledo, Révai & Guerriero, 2017, p. 81).

In Ghana, the Transforming Teacher Education and Learning (T-TEL) programme (Note 1) which was implemented between 2014 and 2020, placed emphasis on improving the classroom practice of teacher educators through activity-based teaching and learning using teaching and learning materials (TLMs), and group work. Underpinning the six-year T-TEL programme and the education reform was the view that participatory and active learning, using appropriate TLMs to foster learner-centred pedagogy, can impact the quality of teaching and learning in Colleges of Education and subsequently the basic school classrooms (National Teachers Council, 2018). As claimed by Musset (2010), in ensuring that teachers are fully playing their roles, they need to be

equipped with the appropriate skills during their training. The skills would empower teachers to demonstrate high standards in terms of knowledge, conduct, and practice at the workplace.

Colleges of Education in Ghana have seen several reforms. As part of these reforms, the National Teachers Council in 2018 developed the National Teachers' Standards. The National Teachers' Standards represents the first ever collectively agreed standards to guide teacher preparation and practice in the country. The NTS was developed as a professional tool to guide teacher educators, teachers, student-teachers and other stakeholders in education to identify in clear and precise terms what teachers are expected to know and be able to do, qualities they are expected to possess and some behaviour they are supposed to exhibit (National Teachers Council, 2018).

The Standards set a clear baseline of expectations for the professional knowledge, practice, conduct, attitude, rights and obligations expected of teachers working in schools at the pre-tertiary level (Kelvin, 2021). Therefore, all teachers completing their initial teacher training are assessed against the National Teachers' Standards. A significant point to note is that the National Teachers' Standards replaces the diversity of standards which were used in the various institutions offering initial teacher education and/or providing continuing professional development with a consolidated set of national standards to ensure that student-teachers' training and development is guided by the same set of standards across various institutions.

The NTS covers three main domains which are Professional Knowledge, Professional Values and Attitudes, and Professional Practice (National Teachers' Council, 2018). The main areas covered under the three domains are shown below:

Professional Knowledge

Knowledge of Educational Frameworks and Curriculum

Knowledge of Learners

Professional Values and Attitudes

Professional Development

Community of Practice

Professional Practice

Managing the Learning Environment

Teaching and Learning

Assessment

In this study, the researchers focused on the elements of professional practice. This is because the focus of the study was to find out if the NTS has affected quality of education delivery in terms of the practices of student-teachers during their off-campus teaching practices. The NTS was designed to improve the quality of teachers delivery and students' performance and is therefore valid to be used as a reference tool for student-teachers, teacher educators, in-service teachers, head teachers, mentors, school inspectors and all who are working at training student-teachers.

## **Past Empirical Review**

Freytag, Hölzer and Sonntag (2017) evaluated how specific teaching standards were applied after a workshop (10 teaching units) focusing on teaching communication skills with simulated patients. Trained observers used a validated checklist to observe 60 teaching sessions (held by 60 different teachers) of a communication skills course integrating simulated patients. The observations showed that more than two thirds of teaching standards were met by at least 75% of teachers. The researchers concluded that teachers' adherence to basic teaching standards was already satisfying after a one-day workshop.

Similarly, a study by Mulcahy (2012) conducted in Australian schools addressed the relationship between the development of professional standards for geography teachers and teachers' professional learning. The study showed that teacher learning happened through meaning-making, i.e. reflecting on, thinking and talking about what accomplished teaching means. Mulcahy concluded that professional standards improved the teaching practices of teachers in geography.

In the study of Kyriakides and Creemers (2011), it was revealed that professional teachers who adhere to standards of teaching have to constantly provide feedback to students in terms of assessing them. They added that that teachers are expected to organise and manage the classroom environment in such a way that it would be conducive for teaching and learning. The findings are similar to earlier studies by the same authors. For instance, Kyriakides and Creemers (2008) revealed that it is a requirement for teaching standards equip teachers to make their lessons interactive through questioning and answering which encourages participation of learners. In a similar light, Kyriakides, Creemers and Antoniou (2009) revealed that professional teachers should adhere to proper standards of teaching by making sure that teaching and learning is participatory.

Egeberg, McConney and Price (2016) found a similar thing that effective classroom management is so much more than just rules, rewards and consequences but involve creating a safe atmosphere for learning. Contrary to all the studies, the study of Ananga (2021) revealed contrasting findings. Ananga adopting a mixed methods approach to the collection of data from participants (368 tutors, 3,600 students of whom 408 are mentees), revealed that not all of the tutors in Colleges of Education in Ghana apply the NTS in their practice as expected. Ananga also found that few of the student-teachers (mentees) demonstrate application of the NTS.

From the review, it is clear that there have not been many studies in Ghana about the National Teachers' Standards (NTS) since its implementation. This current study therefore does a good work in assessing the impact of the NTS on student-teachers. Additionally, a gap realized from the literature was that most of the studies were carried out on teachers who are already professionals and teaching while student-teachers were mostly ignored. However, by focusing the current study on student-teachers, any gap in the implementation of the NTS can be identified and improved in the Colleges of Education.

## **METHODOLOGY**

### **Approach, Design and Participants**

Mixed methods approach was adopted for the study. Mixed methods approach involves using both quantitative and qualitative approaches in a single study (Creswell & Plano-Clark. 2007).

Specifically, concurrent triangulation mixed methods was adopted. In this method, researchers gather both quantitative and qualitative data at the same time and then analyze the two to see if there is convergence, difference, or any mix of the two. This might take the form of confirmation, denial, cross validation, or corroboration. The design was suitable for the study because it helped to accurately bring to light from different sources and perspectives, the impact of the National Teachers' Standards on quality and effective education delivery. The study focused on student-teachers and tutors in Colleges of Education in the Northern part of Ghana. Specifically, student-teachers and tutors from 10 colleges of education were involved in the study. These are Bagabaga College of Education, Bimbilla College of Education, St. Vincent College of Education, Tumu College of Education, Gwewaa College of Education, St. John Bosco College of Education, Tamale College of Education, NJA College of Education and McCoy College of Education.

In all, 20 tutors and 500 student-teachers were involved in the study. For the qualitative part of the study, two tutors each from the 10 colleges were sampled for the study using quota sampling. However, for the quantitative part of the study, 50 final year student-teachers from each of the 10 colleges making a total of 500 were sampled. The sampling procedures used were purposive and quota sampling.

In using purposive sampling, final year student-teachers were purposively targeted in this study because they have taken part in off-campus teaching practice and as a result had experiences relating to teaching and the national teachers' standards. After this, a quota of 50 students was then taken from all the 10 colleges. The sampling procedures used were considered advantageous because they helped to obtain data from participants who have the information needed in the study.

### **Data Collection Instrument, Procedures and Analysis Plans**

Quantitative data were collected using questionnaire adapted from the instrument of Ananga (2021) while qualitative data was collected using an interview guide. Questionnaire was used because it is very good for obtaining information about practices, and enquiring into opinions and attitudes of the respondents in the study. The content validity of the questionnaires was ascertained through expert review and opinion. The questionnaires were reviewed by experts in measurement and assessment as well as educationists like principals in some colleges of education. Reliability of the questionnaires was also established by using Cronbach Alpha to find out the internal consistency of the questionnaire. After piloting the questionnaires with 50 tutors and 100 student-teachers who were not involved in the main study, reliability co-efficients of 0.801 and 0.791 were obtained for the questionnaire of the student-teachers and tutors respectively. Data trustworthiness of the qualitative data was established using credibility, dependability, transferability and confirmability.

Qualitative data were collected using a semi-structured interview guide. This helped obtain in-depth information from the participants. On a whole, the data were collected within a period of a month. The researchers gathered the data with the help of some trained assistants. Participants were not allowed to take questionnaires home in order to ensure high return rate. At the end, 100% return rate was observed. Regarding the interview data, two tutors each (20 in total) from the 10 colleges were interviewed for the qualitative part of the study. Consideration was given to ethical issues such as informed consent, anonymity, confidentiality and autonomy.



Quantitative data were analysed mainly using means and standard deviations. The data were scored on the scale: “1=Strongly Disagree, 2=Disagree, 3=Agree and 4=Strongly Agree”. The mean and standard deviation were used to analyze the data. Mean scores of 2.5 and higher were considered high, meaning that respondents frequently agreed with the stated assertion. Mean ratings below 2.5, on the other hand, were considered low, implying that the respondents disagreed with the specific claims. The qualitative data were however analysed using thematic analysis.

## RESULTS

The student-teachers were assessed on the measures of the National Teachers’ Standards (NTS). Specifically, they were assessed in terms of how the NTS has affected their teaching, classroom management and assessment practices. The results obtained are presented in this section.

### Impact of the NTS on Teaching and Learning

The results concerning the teaching and learning activities of the respondents are presented in Table 1.

**Table 1: Teaching and Learning**

Statement	Mean	SD
I employ a variety of instructional strategies that encourages learner participation and critical thinking.	3.56	1.03
I pay attention to all learners, especially girls and students with Special Educational Needs, ensuring their progress.	3.46	0.99
I employ instructional strategies appropriate for mixed ability, multilingual and multi-age classes.	2.95	0.85
I set meaningful tasks that encourages learner collaboration and leads to purposeful learning.	3.10	0.75
I explain concepts clearly using examples familiar to learners.	3.76	0.98
I produce and use a variety of teaching and learning resources including ICT, to enhance learning.	3.45	1.11
Mean of Means	3.38	0.95

Source: Field survey (2021)

From Table 1, it can be seen that the respondents were of the view that they explained concepts clearly using examples familiar to learners ( $M=3.76$ ,  $SD=0.98$ ) and employed a variety of instructional strategies that encourages learner participation and critical thinking ( $M=3.56$ ,  $SD=1.03$ ). The respondents indicated also that they pay attention to all learners, especially girls and students with Special Educational Needs, ensuring their progress ( $M=3.46$ ,  $SD=0.99$ ). During teaching and learning, the respondents further produced and used a variety of teaching and learning resources such as ICT ( $M=3.45$ ,  $SD=1.11$ ). The mean of means of 3.38 also give the indication that generally the teaching and learning activities of the student-teachers were in line with the National Teachers’ Standards.

The interview with the tutors brought to light some results. The results were in three thematic areas. These were: “using variety of instructional techniques”, “using different and concrete teaching materials”, and “making teaching and learning collaborative”.

#### *Using variety of instructional strategies*

The tutors revealed through the interview that their observations showed that student-teachers used variety of instructional strategies during their teaching. This was evident in some of the comments below:

*“Most of the student-teachers used different instructional strategies during their teaching. This was a good thing I observed.”* – Tutor 2

*“Sometimes the student-teachers used group-work and at other times they used discussions in their teaching. They used variety of instructional strategies and this was helpful.”* – Tutor 11

*“I think the NTS has impacted the student-teachers positively. They adopt different instructional strategies at different times to suit the content that was taught.”* – Tutor 14

#### *Using different and concrete teaching materials*

The respondents interviewed indicated that student-teachers used varied and concrete teaching materials during their period of teaching. The tutors argued that student-teachers used teaching materials which were appropriate for the level of learners that they taught. Most of these materials were concrete to make teaching and learning easier. Some of the critical comments are quoted below:

*“I have observed that most of the student-teachers used concrete materials during their teaching. They varied these materials too.”* – Tutor 20

*“The student-teachers chose concrete materials that made the teaching of concepts easier. This was exactly with the NTS.”* – Tutor 12

#### *Making teaching and learning collaborative*

Finally, the tutors who were interviewed indicated that student-teachers made teaching and learning collaborative. This means learners were not considered passive receivers but rather active collaborators in the classroom. Some of the actual statements are quoted below:

*“One key thing I observed about the student-teachers is that they mostly encouraged collaboration in the classroom.”* – Tutor 17

*“Learners were not passive in the classroom because the student-teachers involved the learners greatly in the teaching process.”* – Tutor 4

### **Impact of the NTS on Management of Learning Environment**

The results in relation to the management of the learning environment are presented in Table 2.

**Table 2: Management of Learning Environment**

Statement	Mean	SD
I plan and deliver varied and challenging lessons, showing a clear grasp of the intended outcomes of their teaching.	3.01	1.16
I create a safe, encouraging learning environment.	3.75	0.85
I manage behaviour and learning with small and large classes.	3.54	0.97
I use appropriate disciplinary methods other than corporal punishment	3.45	1.06
I create a learning environment conducive for different kinds of learners	3.12	0.88
Mean of Means	3.37	0.98

Source: Field survey (2021)

It is shown in Table 2 that the respondents create a safe, encouraging learning environment ( $M=3.75$ ,  $SD=0.85$ ) and manage behaviour and learning with small and large classes ( $M=3.54$ ,  $SD=0.97$ ). The respondents also used appropriate disciplinary methods other than corporal punishment ( $M=3.45$ ,  $SD=1.06$ ) and created a learning environment conducive for different kinds of learners ( $M=3.12$ ,  $SD=0.88$ ). All of these are signs that the respondents managed the learning environment according to the National Teachers' Standards. With a mean of means of 3.37, it can be confirmed that the respondents managed the learning environment in ways as indicated in the NTS.

The tutors who were interviewed expressed views similar to the views of the student-teachers. Their views were categorized in two thematic areas. These were “creating and encouraging safe learning environment” and “using appropriate disciplinary methods”.

### **Creating and encouraging safe learning environment**

The tutors, during the interview, indicated that student-teachers created and encouraged a safe learning environment. They did not allow for inappropriate behaviours and disturbances during teaching and learning. For instance, one tutor made this revelation:

*“I went to supervise one student-teacher without his awareness and the way I met the learners was admirable. There was no disturbances and all the learners were quiet and discussing their topic for the day.”* – Tutor 5

*“I noticed that the student-teachers handled their classrooms very well. The learning environment was very conducive.”* – Tutor 13

### **Using appropriate disciplinary methods**

The tutors also noted that when learners misbehaved, the student-teachers used appropriate disciplinary methods. The student-teachers did not use corporal punishment and sometimes chose counselling in helping learners who were misbehaving. Some of the comments are quoted below:

*“The student-teachers did not use corporal punishment in dealing with learners who misbehaved. Mostly, the student-teachers talked to learners to change their misbehaviours.”* – Tutor 8

*“I noticed that the student-teachers used appropriate disciplinary methods in handling learners who misbehaved.”* – Tutor 7

### Impact of the NTS on Assessment Practices

The results in relation to the management of the learning environment are presented in Table 2.

**Table 3: Assessment Practices**

Statement	Mean	SD
I integrate a variety of assessment modes into teaching to support learning.	3.12	0.88
I listen to learners and give constructive feedback.	3.33	0.99
I identify and remediate learners' difficulties or misconceptions, referring learners whose needs lie outside the competency of the teacher.	2.98	0.57
I keep meaningful records of every learner and communicate progress clearly to parents and learners.	2.45	1.12
Mean of Means	2.97	0.92

Source: Field survey (2021)

Table 3 shows that the respondents listen to learners and give constructive feedback ( $M=3.33$ ,  $SD=0.99$ ) and integrate a variety of assessment modes into teaching to support learning ( $M=3.12$ ,  $SD=0.88$ ). The respondents also indicated that they identify and remediate learners' difficulties or misconceptions, referring learners whose needs lie outside the competency of the teacher ( $M=2.98$ ,  $SD=0.57$ ). These results show that the respondents demonstrated adherence to the National Teachers' Standards in their assessment practices. This was given further confirmation with a mean of mean score above 2.50.

The views of the interviewed tutors were categorized in two thematic areas. These were "using variety of assessment methods" and "giving constructive feedback".

#### Using variety of assessment methods

The respondents, who were interviewed, indicated that student-teachers used variety of assessment methods in assessing performance of learners. These were indicated in the actual statements of the respondents:

*"In assessing learners, I noticed that student-teachers used variety of methods. This helped them get a better view of the performance of learners."* – Tutor 15

*"Sometimes, the student-teachers used oral tests and sometimes gave class tests in assessing learners' performance."* – Tutor 14

#### Giving constructive feedback

The respondents also noted that student-teachers gave constructive feedback to learners. The tutors were of the view that they observed student-teachers give such feedback during their teaching and learning. For instance, one tutor made this claim:

*"I observed student-teachers respond constructively when learners gave answers which were incorrect. This was a very good act from them."* – Tutor 14

*"The student-teachers gave constructive feedback after assessing learners. This is what the NTS teachers in terms of assessment and I think the student-teachers learned from it."* – Tutor 20

## Discussion

The results showed that the respondents explained concepts clearly using examples familiar to learners and employed a variety of instructional strategies that encourages learner participation and critical thinking. The respondents also paid attention to all learners, especially girls and students with Special Educational Needs, ensuring their progress. In addition, the respondents produced and used a variety of teaching and learning resources such as ICT. From the views of the tutors, they confirmed that student-teachers used variety of instructional techniques, used different and concrete teaching materials and made teaching and learning collaborative. The results confirm the findings of researchers such as Kyriakides and Creemers (2008) that it is required that teaching standards equipped teachers to make their lessons interactive through questioning and answering which encourages participation of learners. In a similar light, Kyriakides, Creemers and Antoniou (2009) revealed that teaching and learning should be more participatory. From the results, it was evident that the teaching and learning activities of the student-teachers were in line with the National Teachers' Standards (NTS). According to the National Teachers' Council (2018), the NTS prescribes that teachers should employ a variety of instructional strategies that encourage learner participation and critical thinking. The NTS also prescribes that should consider learners with special needs and involve them during teaching and learning. This was found to be the case in the current study.

Further, the study revealed that the respondents created a safe, encouraging learning environment and manage behaviour and learning with small and large classes. The respondents also used appropriate disciplinary methods other than corporal punishment and created a learning environment conducive for different kinds of learners. The indication from these results is that the respondents managed the learning environment according to the National Teachers' Standards. The tutors confirmed this when they claimed that student-teachers created and encouraged safe learning environment and used appropriate disciplinary methods in managing the learning environment. These results are in line with the results of Egeberg, McConney and Price (2016) that effective classroom management is so much more than just rules, rewards and consequences but involve creating a safe atmosphere for learning. Similarly, Kyriakides and Creemers (2011) revealed that teachers are expected to organise and manage the classroom environment in such a way that it would be conducive for teaching and learning.

Finally, in terms of assessment, it was revealed that the respondents listen to learners and give constructive feedback and integrate a variety of assessment modes into teaching to support learning. The respondents also indicated that they identify and remediate learners' difficulties or misconceptions, referring learners whose needs lie outside the competency of the teacher. The tutors supported all of these by indicated that student-teachers used variety of assessment methods and gave constructive feedback during assessment of learners. The results support the findings of Kyriakides and Creemers (2011) that effective teachers consistently provide positive constructive feedback during assessment of learners. The results showed also that the student-teachers demonstrated adherence to the NTS in their assessment practices. For instance, the NTS gives the indication that teachers should give constructive feedback to students and also use variety of methods for assessment. These were all found to have been done by the student-teachers.

Generally, it is evident that the student-teachers in colleges of education adhered to the National Teachers' Standards. This means that they were positively impacted by the use of the NTS. This confirmed the finding of Freytag, Hölzer and Sonntag (2017) that teachers' adherence to basic teaching standards were improved after being trained using the standards. However, the findings contradicted that of Ananga (2021) that it was not all tutors and student-teachers who applied the NTS in their teaching. This contradiction could be as a result of differences in the instrument used in collecting the data.

## **CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **Conclusions**

From the findings of the study, it is concluded that student-teachers from Colleges of Education in the Northern part of Ghana were positively impacted by the National Teachers' Standards. They demonstrated adherence to the standards in their teaching, classroom management and assessment of students. This conclusion gives the indication that tutors in colleges of education are training student-teachers with the NTS and as such are preparing the student-teachers to become professional teachers who would teach in adherence to the NTS.

### **Recommendations**

From the findings of the study, it is recommended that some aspects of the NTS which were not fully demonstrated by the student-teachers need to be worked on. For instance, concerning the keeping of records about learners, there is need for tutors in Colleges of Education to train and equip student-teachers to improve their keeping of records about learners. Also, tutors in Colleges of Education should increase their training of student-teachers in the use of different instructional strategies for multicultural classes.

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