

Student-Teachers' Concerns: Predictors of Pre-Internship Results Among Level 300 Physical Education Students-Teachers of University of Education, Winneba, Ghana

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ABSTRACT

Pre-internship is a crucial component of teacher education programmes, which significantly contributes to the professional development of student-teachers. It is the first formal practical micro-teaching student-teacher experience under the supervision of their lecturers as a means of preparing them for a semester internship. However, student-teachers leave for internship with different levels of concerns that need to be resolved by the stakeholders during pre-internship for effective career development. This study aimed to determine which student-teacher concerns (self, task and impact) predict level 300 Physical Education (PE) student-teacher pre-internship results at the University of Education, Winneba-Ghana. A quantitative cross-sectional descriptive survey employing a census sampling technique was used to include all the 243 students who participated in the 2022/2023 academic year pre-internship in this study. The Teacher Concerns Questionnaire (TCQ) was adapted and used for data collection. Data was analyzed using an independent sample t-test and multiple linear regression. The findings revealed that participants who were untrained teachers showed a higher self-concern ($M = 19.47$, $SD = 5.31$), task concern ($M = 18.26$, $SD = 4.28$) and a higher impact concern ($M = 26.91$, $SD = 6.55$), than their trained colleagues ($M = 17.18$, $SD = 4.87$), ($M = 16.67$, $SD = 4.05$), ($M = 24.51$, $SD = 6.22$) respectively. However, it was also found that self-concern, task concern and impact concern did not statistically predict pre-internship final scores ($F(3,234) = .77$, $p > .05$, $R = .099$, $R^2 = .010$). Additionally, an R^2 of .010 indicates that the overall effect of self, task and impact concerns on pre-internship final score is only 1%. Also, zooming into the individual contribution of each concern variable, such as self-concern ($t(234) = -.248$, $p = .804$), task concern ($t(234) = -1.222$, $p = .223$) and impact concern ($t(234) = .808$, $p = .420$) explains why collectively they did not statistically predict pre-internship seminar final scores. This result demonstrates that during the pre-internship seminars, student teachers received constructive feedback and good mentoring from their university supervisors, which helped them address the majority of their concerns and enhanced their teaching experience. It is therefore concluded that student-teachers had most of their concerns resolved due to a good feedback system and effective monitoring by their university supervisors. However, since pre-internship teaching was purely peer teaching, the student-teachers might have been very conversant with their colleagues and would not see them as real students, hence showed no concern at all. It is recommended that a follow-up study on the same participants be carried out during their internship programme to find out if these concerns will surface.

Keywords: Concerns, Student teachers, Predictors, Pre-internship, Physical Education,

INTRODUCTION

Globally, education plays a crucial role in shaping the economic prosperity of a nation (Habibi & Zabardast, 2020), and its quality directly influences societal progress. A well-educated populace

contributes significantly to national development, making investing in systems that promote effective learning essential. Central to the success of any educational system is the quality of its teachers, whose preparation and professional development play a vital role in ensuring educational excellence (Loh & Hu, 2019).

In designing teacher education programmes, several key elements must be considered, including the qualities of student teachers, the effectiveness of instructional methods, and the achievement of desired learning outcomes (Magulod et al., 2020). Among these, the concerns and anxieties of student teachers can significantly impact both instructional quality and student learning (Kibriya & Jones, 2020). This is particularly evident during critical periods of teacher training, such as practice teaching and internships.

Anxiety is common among student teachers, especially as they near the end of their training and prepare for full-time teaching roles (Deng et al., 2018). Often, this anxiety stems from fears of failure or uncertainty about their ability to manage classrooms, plan lessons, and communicate effectively with students (Ma & Miller, 2021; Quansah et al., 2022). Although practice teaching helps student teachers develop key instructional skills, it can also present significant challenges (Sumantri et al., 2018). The final year of teacher education, particularly during the internship, is a time when anxieties are heightened (Köksal, 2019). According to Kelchtermans and Piot (2016), teacher professional development can be effectively understood through a concerns-based approach.

In response to these concerns, Fuller (1969) identified three stages of teacher concerns: self-related, task-related, and impact-related.

Self-Related Concerns (Concerns About Self)

These concerns are common among pre-service teachers who are primarily focused on their adequacy and survival in the teaching profession. They worry about their ability to manage the classroom, maintain student discipline, and meet expectations from supervisors and colleagues. The questions pre-service teachers are likely to ask are: Will I be liked by my students? Can I control the class? Am I competent enough?

Task-Related Concerns (Concerns About Teaching Tasks and Situations)

As pre-service teachers gain experience, their focus shifts from personal survival to concerns about effectively delivering instruction and managing the classroom. As a result, their worries may include lesson planning, instructional strategies, time management, and assessing student learning. The questions they will ask may include: How can I make my lessons more engaging? How do I handle classroom disruptions? Am I covering the curriculum effectively?

Impact-Related Concerns (Concerns About Student Learning and Outcomes)

Finally, in this stage, pre-service teachers who have developed self and task concerns will be more focused on the impact of their teaching on students' learning and development. Their concerns are mostly about meeting the diverse needs of students, fostering critical thinking, and ensuring long-term educational benefits. At this stage, the questions they are likely to ask may include: Are my students truly understanding the material? How can I support struggling learners? Am I making a lasting impact on their lives?

These stages reflect the progression of student teachers' focus, from personal anxieties about their abilities to task-related concerns about their teaching methods and, finally, to the impact of their teaching on students. The duration and intensity of each stage vary depending on factors such as the internship environment, the mentor's experience, and the quality of feedback provided (Seibu et al., 2023). Fuller's model was adapted because it helps us to understand how pre-teachers' concerns evolve and can guide the training and professional development of 21st century teachers.

The pre-internship seminar at the University of Education, Winneba (UEW) is a second-semester course designed to prepare level 300 student teachers for their level 400 internship. Under the guidance of lecturers, this course ensures that student teachers are well-prepared for the challenges of their final year of training. Despite the critical nature of this period, little is known about the specific concerns of student teachers at this stage of their professional development. Therefore, this study aims to investigate the stages of concern among

level 300 Physical Education student teachers at UEW as they prepare for their pre-internship.

Research Questions

1. What are the major concerns of level 300 Physical Education student-teachers about the pre-internship course?
2. What are the mean differences in self-concern, task-concern, and impact concern scores between trained and untrained Level 300 Physical Education student-teachers?
3. To what extent do teacher concerns (self-concern, task concern, and impact concern) predict pre-internship final scores among Level 300 Physical Education student teachers?

METHODS AND MATERIALS

Design

A quantitative descriptive survey design was conducted for this study, targeting level 300 physical education students from the Department of Health Physical Education Recreation and Sports (HPERS) at the University of Education, Winneba (UEW).

Participants

The total population consisted of 243 student teachers comprising 208 males and 35 females with an average age of 28 years. Among them, 142 were not trained teachers, and 101 were trained teachers with an average teaching experience of 3 years. A census sampling technique was employed to select all participants, as the population size was manageable for comprehensive sampling (Ogah, 2013).

Instrument

The study utilized the Student Teacher Concerns Questionnaire (STCQ), adapted from Fuller and Borich in 1992 with 45 items and modified to 20 items by the current study's authors. The instrument focused on teaching status, and other 16 items measuring teaching concerns. These concerns were categorized into self-concern (four items), task concern (seven items), and impact concern (five items). The instrument's internal reliability coefficient was established at .75.

Data Collection and Analyses

Before data collection, permission was obtained from the Head of the HPERS Department to conduct the study during the pre-internship seminar course for the 2021/2022 academic year, before the course commenced. On the day of data collection, participants were briefed on the study's purpose and informed that their participation was voluntary, no item on the questionnaire would reveal their identity, the data was for research purposes only and they could withdraw at any time without any form of victimization. Those who agreed to participate were given questionnaires to complete and return to the researchers. Pre-internship seminar scores were collected at the end of the semester. The return rate was 100%, and all returned questionnaires were coded and entered into SPSS (v20) for analysis. The data from the survey and the pre-internship seminar final scores of student teachers were analyzed for the study.

Demographic data and student teachers' concerns were analyzed using frequencies and percentages. In examining the differences between student teachers' teaching status by their teaching concerns, an independent sample t-test was performed. Additionally, multiple linear regression was computed to determine which student teachers' teaching concerns (self, task and impact) predicted their level 300 pre-internship teaching score.

RESULTS

Table 1 presents the major concerns of level 300 Physical Education student teachers at the University of

Education, Winneba, about their pre-internship seminar. These concerns were grouped into three main categories: self-concerns, task concerns, and impact concerns. Student teachers were particularly concerned about their personal performance and how they would be perceived during the internship. A significant number (28.8%) were very concerned about their teaching abilities, reflecting anxiety about their competence in a classroom setting. Concerns about doing well with their supervisor were also notable, with 32.5% expressing very concerned and another 21.4% concerned about meeting supervisory expectations. Additionally, 33.8% were very concerned about feeling adequate as teachers, while 34.2% were equally concerned about being accepted and respected by colleagues.

Table 1 also showed that many student teachers expressed high levels of concern about the practical aspects of their role. Class control was a key issue, with 30.9% feeling very concerned about maintaining discipline, and a further 26.3% concerned. Another significant issue was the lack of instructional materials, where 39.0% were very concerned, and 23.9% were concerned. Feeling under pressure was also a common worry, with 35.0% of participants reporting that they felt very concerned about being under constant pressure. Interestingly, concerns about non-instructional duties and working with many students were moderately distributed, with 35.4% and 24.3% respectively expressing worry.

Regarding the impact of their teaching, a considerable proportion of student teachers were anxious about meeting student needs and supporting their growth. Concerns about diagnosing student learning problems were prevalent, with 34.2% concerned and 30.9% very concerned. Similar concerns emerged in relation to challenging unmotivated students, where 29.2% were concerned and 24.3% were very concerned. Additionally, a significant number of 36.2% were very concerned about guiding students towards intellectual growth, with 30.9% expressing the same level of concern for emotional growth. Finally, 31.8% were very concerned about ensuring that all students are getting what they need from the educational experience. The details are found in Table 1.

Table 1: Major concerns of level 300 Physical Education student teachers about the pre-internship seminar

Concerns	Not Concerned	Little Concerned	Moderately Concerned	Concerned	Very Concerned
	n (%)	n (%)	n (%)	n (%)	n (%)
Self-concern					
Concerns about my teaching	12 (4.9)	51 (21.0)	43 (17.7)	67 (27.6)	70 (28.8)
Doing well with my supervisor	14 (5.8)	25 (10.3)	73 (30.0)	52 (21.4)	79 (32.5)
Feeling more adequate	20 (8.2)	29 (11.9)	47 (19.3)	65 (26.8)	82 (33.8)
Being accepted and respected by colleagues as a good teacher	14 (5.7)	17 (7.0)	68 (28.0)	61 (25.1)	83 (34.2)
Task concern					
Maintaining the appropriate degree of class control	7 (2.9)	36 (14.8)	61 (25.1)	64 (26.3)	75 (30.9)
Lack of instructional material	5 (2.1)	31 (12.8)	54 (22.2)	58 (23.9)	95 (39.0)
Feeling under pressure much of the time	10 (4.1)	33 (13.6)	43 (17.7)	72 (29.6)	85 (35.0)
Too many non-instructional duties	18 (7.4)	53 (21.8)	86 (35.4)	60 (24.7)	26 (10.7)
Working with too many students each day	13 (5.3)	44 (18.1)	86 (35.4)	41 (16.9)	59 (24.3)

The routine and inflexibility of the teaching situation	11 (4.5)	37 (15.2)	58 (23.9)	94 (38.7)	43 (17.7)
Meeting the needs of different kinds of students	13 (5.3)	29 (11.9)	58 (23.9)	59 (24.3)	84 (34.6)
Impact concern					
Diagnosing students' learning problems	13 (5.3)	19 (7.8)	53 (21.8)	83 (34.2)	75 (30.9)
Challenging unmotivated students	8 (3.3)	38 (15.6)	67 (27.6)	71 (29.2)	59 (24.3)
Guiding students toward emotional growth	6 (2.5)	32 (13.2)	65 (26.7)	65 (26.7)	75 (30.9)
Guiding students towards intellectual growth	8 (3.3)	32 (13.2)	43 (17.7)	72 (29.6)	88 (36.2)
Whether each student is getting what he or she needs	13 (5.3)	45 (18.5)	54 (22.2)	54 (22.2)	77 (31.8)

N = 243

To determine the difference in student teachers' teaching status by their teaching concerns, an independent sample t-test was calculated. The results show a statistically significant difference in self-concerns, $t(241) = 3.477$, $p = .001$, task concern, $t(241) = 2.961$, $p = .003$, and impact concerns, $t(241) = 2.894$, $p = .004$. The results further indicated that untrained student teachers showed greater concern about self ($M = 19.47$, $SD = 5.31$) than trained teachers ($M = 17.18$, $SD = 4.87$). Task concerns were also higher among untrained teachers ($M = 18.26$, $SD = 4.28$) than trained teachers ($M = 16.67$, $SD = 4.05$) as well as impact concerns for untrained teachers were higher ($M = 26.91$, $SD = 6.55$) than trained teachers ($M = 24.51$, $SD = 6.22$). Further details can be seen in Table 2.

Table 2: Differences in student teachers' concerns based on teaching status

Concern	Untrained	Trained	Df	t	p
Self-concern	$M = 19.47$, ($SD = 5.31$)	$M = 17.18$, ($SD = 4.87$)	241	3.477	.001
Task concern	$M = 18.26$, ($SD = 4.28$)	$M = 16.67$, ($SD = 4.05$)	241	2.961	.003
Impact concern	$M = 26.91$, ($SD = 6.55$)	$M = 24.51$, ($SD = 6.22$)	241	2.894	.004

To predict pre-internship seminar final scores from self, task, and impact concerns of teachers, multiple linear regression results showed no statistically significant prediction of pre-internship teaching practice $F(3, 234) = .77$, $p > .05$, $R = .099$, $R^2 = .010$. Individually, self-concern ($t(234) = -.248$, $p = .804$), task concern ($t(234) = -1.222$, $p = .223$) and impact concern ($t(234) = .808$, $p = .420$) did not statistically predict pre-internship seminar final scores. The details are presented in Table 3.

Table 3: Results showing the extent to which pre-internship teaching score is predicted by teaching concerns of student teachers

VARIABLE	B	Beta	T	P
Constant	76.195		41.767	.572
Self-concern	-.021	-.017	-.248	.804

Task concern	-.215	-.139	-1.222	.223
Impact concern	.089	.089	.808	.420
R	.099			
R ²	.010			

DISCUSSION

The study examined student teachers' concerns and their impact on teaching career development. The results of this study revealed that student-teachers expressed concern over classroom management which aligns with the findings of Lee (2018) that beginning teachers' concerns centered on classroom management and student engagement. Also, the findings revealed a statistically significant difference in self-concerns ($t(241) = 3.477$, $p = .001$), task concerns ($t(241) = 2.961$, $p = .003$), and impact concerns ($t(241) = 2.894$, $p = .004$).

These results align with Fuller's (1960) assertion that teachers' concerns follow a natural sequence rather than being a consequence of the quality of the teacher education programme. This means that student teachers' concerns mostly start with self-concerns, and task-concerns before the impact-concerns, which must be addressed accordingly. According to Conway and Clark (2003), such concerns are typical and reflect a developmental trajectory that new teachers undergo. Unsurprisingly, student teachers express these concerns during their first formal teaching practice during the internship seminar. This indicates that resolving self-concerns is essential before progressing to other stages of concern (Caires, et al 2012, Kennedy, 2016). Therefore, in pre-internship seminars (on-campus teaching) supervisors should gradually guide student teachers through these stages to ensure quality career development. Otherwise, unresolved concerns may affect their future career growth and development.

Regarding participants' concerns based on their training status, untrained teachers exhibited higher self-concern ($M = 19.47$, $SD = 5.31$), task concern ($M = 18.26$, $SD = 4.28$), and impact concern ($M = 26.91$, $SD = 6.55$) compared to their trained counterparts: self ($M = 17.18$, $SD = 4.87$), task ($M = 16.67$, $SD = 4.05$), and impact ($M = 24.51$, $SD = 6.22$). This difference may result from the trained teachers' application of general pedagogical knowledge and prior teaching experience (Shulman, 1987). This finding highlights the need for university teachers to use varied supervisory styles and philosophies to accommodate the diverse developmental levels of student teachers, ensuring quality preparation and development during pre-internship teaching practice (Feiman-Nemser, 2001).

Again, self-concern, task concern and impact concern on student-teacher pre-internship teaching scores showed no statistical prediction ($F(3,234) = .77$, $p > .05$, $R = .099$, $R^2 = .010$, and Adjusted $R = .003$). An R^2 of .010 represents the proportion of variance. This indicates that, collectively self-concern, task concern, and impact concern explained only 1% of student-teachers' pre-internship teaching scores. This indicated that student teachers resolved most of their concerns and improved their teaching experience based on effective mentoring and quality feedback from their university supervisors during the pre-internship seminars (Korthagen, 2004). It might also mean that supervisors' awareness of student teachers' concerns, and the ability to help them resolve their concerns contributed to the results (Glickman, et al, 2018).

CONCLUSION

To conclude, it was evident that level 300 Physical Education student-teachers at the University of Education, Winneba face some challenges in practice after the theoretical knowledge acquisition phase of their training in teaching practice. These challenges include self-esteem, competencies, and task management as well as the impact that the student teachers believe they can make on the students. Concerns in this area relate to anxiety about teaching ability, concern about classroom management, and the ability to cater for different learners. Offering better supervision, guidance and assistance in planning their pre-internship seminar is likely to mitigate most of these problems and boost their self-esteem towards practical teaching.

Again, it is worth mentioning that the untrained teachers' concern levels are practically higher due to the absence

of adequate subject pedagogical knowledge training and teaching experience.

Finally, the developmentally appropriate mentoring and efforts put in by the student teachers to resolve their concerns determined the pre-internship seminar scores.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Concerning the anxiety of student teachers, there is a persisting absence of mentorship structures, a lack of necessary resources, and inadequate pre-internship seminar content that addresses the practical realities of teaching like students' diversity and classroom management. This would, in turn, reduce the student teachers' level of anxiety and increase their efficacy in teaching.

Also, the Department of Health, Physical Education Recreation and Sports should focus on the development of subject-specific pedagogical knowledge and other aspects such as improving the chances of exposure to teaching practices quite early on to enable student-teachers room for practical teaching opportunities especially one who has no enough teaching opportunities in-between practical teachings in the room and the demands of active teaching position within.

Again, pre-internship seminars and mentoring of the PE student teachers should be able to give appropriate coping and discerning strategies by focusing on them as active participants who exert themselves instead of their issues in helping advance their career paths and blossom both the individual and the career. It is recommended that a follow-up study on the same participants be carried out during their internship programme.

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