

## The Perception of Instructors and Learners' in Expertise Building in Vocational Courses in Ghana

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### Abstract

*The main objective of the study was to ascertain the perception of instructors and learners regarding the role of supervision on expertise building in building construction course in vocational institutes in Ghana. The study adopted a descriptive survey research design and it was carried out at Cape Coast Technical Institute. Utilizing a simple random sampling technique, 90 students were selected while purposive sampling was adopted in the selection of the 10 teachers for the study. This means, in all, 100 participants were selected for the study. A questionnaire was the major instrument for data collection for the study. The result of the study shows that the teachers and several students strongly believe and were convinced that supervision of instruction can be instrumental to the development of expertise in building construction. It facilitates students understanding of valuable aspects of building construction; develop the right attitude and requisite skills. Given the above findings, it is recommended that instructors should be abreast the latest pedagogical approach in building construction to acquaint teachers with a practical yet simple way of imparting requisite skills in building construction students. Also, teachers of building construction should be cooperative with supervisors, be open and willing to adopt the constructive recommendation of supervisors and refrain from teaching student in an autocratic manner. It is also important for building construction teachers to be abreast with the latest information on building construction to build students' expertise valuable for the labour market.*

**Keywords:** *Perceptions, expertise, vocational, instructors, instrumental.*

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### Introduction

Among the varied technical courses offered in the twenty-three public Technical Institution across the country is Building Construction trade (Ghana Education Service, 2011). According to Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET, 2011) division of the GES, building construction trade is an aspect of TVET programmes aimed at providing individuals especially youth relevant productive and entrepreneurial skills that will prepare them for self-employment. This course will provide students with practical knowledge, skills and attitude relating to the world of work to facilitate their integration into various sectors of economic and social life. The national policy on TVET programmes or courses as stipulated by GES is to promote and develop youths' entrepreneurial skills to effectively eradicate poverty in all its manifestations.

In his study, Amaniampong (2014) posits that technical institute aids the development of expertise, technology transfer and skills development to enhance national development. In essence, TVET should facilitate the ability of learners to acquire creative thinking, flexible problem solving, collaboration and innovative skills they will need to successfully compete in the labour market and survive in life.

Pacific Policy Research Center (2010) also indicated that TVET also fosters human resource development in a country by the creation of skilled manpower which facilitates industrial productivity with a resultant rise in national living standards. This form of education covers courses and programs in engineering, architecture, town planning technology and most importantly building construction.

The objective of building construction is to provide adequate training and disseminate requisite skills to students in technical schools to enable them to secure employment as builders in

corporations and become self-reliant economically. This course also equips students with functional and requisite skills, knowledge and attitude that are instrumental to being a proficient tradesman in the building industry. In summary, the goal of building construction programme includes:

- i. To provide an individual with requisite skills, knowledge and values to perform a specific function in the building industry to become self-reliant and useful in the labour market after graduation.
- ii. To provide a piece of individual valuable information to facilitate his or her development intellectually and enhance his or her ability to make informed decisions in all aspects of life.
- iii. To empower an individual who graduates from the institute with the heightened interest of acquiring higher vocational training to augment his or her skills in building construction technology.

Attainment of the above-mentioned objectives, according to Eze (2015), is capacity building on at all educational level, because it enhances the ability of an individual to perform very well in their chosen career and be self-reliant as far as requisite skills are concerned. On an individual basis, capacity building, according to Njoku (2008) entails shaping behaviours, attitudes, imparting knowledge and developing requisite skills of a student and at the same time improving the level of participation, knowledge exchange and ownership.

Blaise and Blasé (2013) posit that such building capacities requires formative supervision which brings out the best in a student, encourages interactive and peer learning, growth and changes and respect learner's knowledge and abilities. Categorizing formative supervision, Glickman (2012) indicated there are three types, namely: directive, non-directive and collaborative supervision. Of the three forms of supervision, collaborative supervision is described as superlative and dynamic because it is required that supervisor become an active member of the interaction process and help teachers and students in problem-solving and decision-making processes coupled with the provision of practical solutions to learning-oriented problems.

For the present study, instructional supervision which is formative is considered an effective aid to capacity building in the building construction trades skills acquisition process. Baffour-Awuah (2011) indicated that instruction supervision is directed towards improving the teaching and learning process. Improvement of classroom instruction with the ultimate goal of expertise building ensures:

- i. Highly equipped and functional workshop
- ii. Implementation of curriculum content in all its forms
- iii. Improvement in teachers' classroom practice and professional development
- iv. Acquisition of requisite skill in building construction trade.

These goals of supervision are relevant to national development and the achievement of requisite skills in building construction by learners in technical/vocational institutes, hence ineffective supervision will inadvertently reduce teachers' performance and professional development which will ultimately retard learners' progress in the building construction trade.

## **Statement of the Problem**

Several studies (Njoku, 2008; Glickman, 2012; Eze, 2015) adduced reason for lack of employment among graduates from technical/vocational institute in such trades as building construction as the production of hundreds of graduates annually beyond what labour market can absorb. Also, Ezegebe (2002) intimated that several graduates do not have requisite skills because there was no proper supervision of teaching and learning. Instructors are not adequately supervised to improve their teaching approach and emphasis on the acquisition of requisite skills by learners. Looking at the situation, Aina (2011) asserts that due to lack of proper supervision in technical institutes several graduates from these schools do not have the needed competencies or expertise to qualify them for a decent job in their trades. Hence, it is worthwhile conducting an in-depth investigation into the perception of instructors and learners regarding the significant role of instructional supervision in expertise building.

## Objectives of the study

The main objective of the study is to ascertain the perception of instructors and learners regarding the role of supervision on expertise building in building construction course in vocational institutes in Ghana. Specifically, the study will cover the following:

- i. Decipher instructors and students' perception of the contribution of instructional supervision to expertise building in vocational institutes
- ii. Ascertain instructors and learners' perception of the types of supervision for expertise building in building construction

## Research Questions

The study was guided by the following research questions:

1. What are the instructors and learners' perception of the contribution of instructional supervision to expertise building in vocational institutes?
2. How do instructors and learners perceive the types of supervision suitable for expertise building in building construction?

## Significance of the Study

The relevance of the present study cannot be overemphasized with the alarming rate at which several students graduating from the technical institute with little or no employable skill in the world of work, hence findings of the study will provide relevant information on channeling instructional supervision towards building requisite skill in students upon completion of the building construction course.

Finding of the study will be relevant to supervisors, school administrators and other stakeholders of education involved in Technical and Vocational Education and Training because it will facilitate the rapid integration of practical approaches teachers can adopt during teaching and learning to aid students' acquisition of requisite skill for the building industry and self-employment. Result of the study will also add to the literature on the development of expertise in building construction through effective supervision of instruction in TVET institutions in Ghana.

## Review of related literature

### Concept of Vocational Courses

**Technical/Vocational Institutes**, according to Boakye (2012), are educational institution charged with the responsibility of providing practical training in scientific and technical subjects. In Ghana, educational reform policies stipulate the establishment of these institutes in all the ten regional capitals following as stipulated in Ghana constitution. The tenet of this law empowers vocational institute in the following ways:

- i. To provide education through full-time courses in the field of electrical/electronic engineering, mechanical engineering, building construction, tourism and hospitality, business and such other areas as may be determined by TVET division of GES for the time being responsible for such education;
- ii. To encourage study in technical subjects at the second cycle level; and
- iii. To provide an opportunity for individual and national development in vocational issues.

In the '60s following the industrial development policy and rapid technological progress in a broad range of areas in Ghana, vocational education became a necessity for the country (Boakye, 2012). This need has not yet abated in Ghana, because in their study, Amedorme, Agbezudor and Sakyiama (2014) indicated that this form of education or technologically oriented education forms a sound footing for technological advancement of any nation, especially developing nation like Ghana. Essentially, vocational education was solely established with the objective of training graduates for skill acquisition and practical knowledge necessary for industrial and technological advancement. Anane (2012) indicated that graduates from the vocational institutes are expected to occupy middle-level manpower required by any country especially in the context of industrial development.

Vocational graduates are trained to use more hands than minds to solve problems that are confronting their nation. Literature (Boakye, 2012; Anane, 2012) revealed that practical training provided at technical/vocational institutes is indispensable to national growth and should not be compromised in any way because it involves Competency-Based Training which is

suitable for Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) inherently associated with the development of requisite skills for the labour market. In other words, technical/vocational graduates receive practical training that Agodzo (2005) described as "do-it-yourself" learning, these graduates pass through training that emphasizes practical work that is demonstrated in the specific tasks he or she can do and is required to do. In effect, competency-based training at vocational institutes is all about gainfully engaging students in practically oriented tasks with the sole aim of developing expertise to survive the ever-increasing competition in the real world.

Okumephuna (2008) indicated that technical/vocational system of education is vastly different from the university and that a developing nation like Ghana needs more vocational graduates since vocational education is purely techno-scientific oriented. TVET system of education is meant to produce technocrats with the sole aim of improving the technological slant of the country for upward progression. Omega (2012) and Okumephuna (2008) posit that unlike predominantly theoretical university education, TVET education is 60 per cent practical and 40 per cent theoretical.

Hence, vocational education should not be negatively compared to the university because their mission, vision and objectives are vastly different from each other and with a developing nation, practical-oriented education will speed up the rate of technological advancement than purely theoretical learning which sometimes do not come to grips with reality (Salawu, 2005). Amedorme et al. (2014) indicated that some authors see TVET as a comprehensive institute offering professional, career-focused programs specializing in industrial, practical, or mechanical arts and applied sciences. This definition underscores the relevance of these institutes in Ghana because it encompasses student practical understanding of the real world, encourages career focus, program development, emphasizes collaborative research and learning with the ultimate goal of national techno-economic development (Ghana News Agency, 2006).

## **The relevance of Effective Supervision in TVET**

To build expertise in building construction, it is paramount that both the government and stakeholders in education make concerted effort to improve the quality of schools and the achievements of students since learning outcomes depend on the mode of instruction and its effectiveness. In his study, Barro (2006) posits that national development and economic growth can only be achieved via higher quality of education and De Grauwe (2001) posits that such type of education depends largely on how teachers are trained and supervised because of their key position in pedagogy. Among other things, De Grauwe stated: "national authorities rely strongly on the school supervision system to monitor both the quality of schools and key measures of its success, such as student achievement (p. 39).

In their study, Sergiovanni and Strarratt (2002) posit that supervision and monitoring of instruction at schools cannot be overemphasized because it develops the expertise of teachers and enhances classroom practices which are crucial to students' academic achievement in any subject. Sergiovanni and Strarratt further indicated that the nature of supervision and monitoring is very contributive to students' academic achievement because it revolves around a collaborative effort between the supervisors and teachers through effective dialogue with the sole aim of improving classroom instruction and practice sessions.

Fisher (2002) further stated that employing effective supervision of instruction, supervisors can adequately influence and reinforce teaching practices with resultant improvement in student learning and the development of requisite skills. This often requires supervisors to carefully study performance and appropriate data regarding classroom instruction to provide meaningful feedback and direction to teachers coupled with appropriate inspection, control and evaluation of their activities (IIEP/UNESCO Module 2, 2007). With these processes in place, classroom instruction will undoubtedly exert immense influence on the teaching and learning process to the benefit of students ultimately.

Fisher (2002) further indicated that effective supervision and monitoring is critical to the objective of providing equal access to quality educational programs for all students irrespective of their background. It behoves supervisors or administrators to emphasize the importance of the appropriate and well-organized program to all teachers, clearly delineating how teachers can employ diverse teaching techniques to meet the ever-changing needs of the students and to provide them employable skills in their respective fields including building construction.

Tesema (2014) posits that supervisors should see to the enabling of individual teachers become an implementer of effective teaching. In all, Tesema intimated that supervisors should be concerned with the following:

- i. Ensuring curriculum implementation
- ii. Providing direct technical support to teachers
- iii. Providing on-the-job training to teachers
- iv. Conducting teacher performance evaluation
- v. Conducting formative education program evaluation coupled with
- vi. Monitoring and coordination

Baffour-Awuah (2011) intimated that in Ghana, the Ministry of Education has the overall responsibility for education sector policy formulation, planning, monitoring and evaluation, while the Ghana Education Service (GES) is saddled with the responsibility of service delivery such as the deployment of teachers, allocation of textbooks, and supervision of schools and teachers. The collaborative efforts of the education sector of the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports and the Ghana Education Service in the implementation TVET, established in 1992 by the Government of Ghana.

Effective supervision in TVET oriented institutions is anchored or lies within the jurisdiction of the Inspectorate Division at headquarters and Inspectorate Units at regional and district offices. At each level of education, supervisory structures and practices are kept in place to improve instruction; hence responsible

personnel involved in supervision in school are given ample training and equipment to augment their competencies and skills via in-service training courses and workshops at the national, regional and district levels. This means all personnel occupying supervisory positions must be abreast effective management techniques to hone their supervisory practices especially in supervising instruction on the building construction course.

## **Methodology**

The study adopted a descriptive survey research design in eliciting relevant information regarding the study. The study was carried out at Cape Coast Technical Institute. Population for the study comprised 120 individuals with 110 being the SS3 learners/students and the remaining 10 being their instructors/teachers. Using simple random sampling technique, 90 students were selected while purposive sampling was adopted in the selection of the 10 teachers for the study. This means, in all, 100 participants were selected for the study. A questionnaire was the major instruction for data collection for the study. Since perception is related to emotion, the four-point Likert scale (Strongly Agree, Agree, Strongly Disagree, Disagree) was employed in preparing the question to identify the degree of intensity. Descriptive statistics through mean and standard deviation involving the use of tables and percentages were used for analysis.

## **Results and Discussion**

**Research Question One:** What are the instructors and learners' perception of the contribution of instructional supervision to expertise building in vocational institutes?

The focus of this question is to elicit relevant information regarding the perception of both teachers and students concerning the value of supervision of instruction in TVET classes to improving teachers' pedagogical approach with the overall purpose of expertise building in students. Responses of the participants are presented in Table 1.

**Table 1.** Perception of participants on the value of supervision to building expertise in students

S/N	Item	Students			Teachers		
		Mean	Standard Deviation	Remarks	Mean	Standard Deviation	Remarks
1.	Facilitate instructor's ability to utilize practical approach to classroom practice	3.56	0.64	A	3.92	0.92	A
2.	Helps students acquire valuable requisite skills for the labour market	3.76	0.69	SA	3.72	0.79	SA
3.	Provide a solid footing for implementing the contents of the curriculum of building construction course in the pedagogical process.	3.52	0.60	SA	3.71	0.89	SA
4.	Supervisors provide useful and constructive criticism to augment teachers' knowledge for imparting employment initiatives	3.10	0.82	D	3.89	0.91	SA
5.	Enhances students' dexterous ability within the context of building construction	3.40	0.77	D	2.46	0.71	SA
6.	Enhances students' interest in course thereby improving their commitment to succeed in building construction	3.12	0.81	SA	3.62	0.82	SA
7.	Constructive criticism provided by the supervisor can help teachers utilize teaching tools and equipment appropriately	3.29	0.75	SA	3.75	0.61	SA

n=100 Field Survey, 2017.

Findings from Table 1 shows that on several items both teachers and students agreed that supervision of TVET instruction can be very instrumental in building needed expertise in students for the labour market. However, students did not share teachers' perception on items 4 and 5 indicating they do not perceive supervision to in helping their teachers impart employment initiatives to them and they do not acquire needed dexterous ability within the context of building construction.

Results from Table 1 shows that the teachers and several students strongly believe and were convinced that supervision of instruction can be instrumental to the development of expertise in building construction. It facilitates students understanding of valuable aspects of building construction; develop the right attitude and

requisite skills. Result also shows that supervision helps in the implementation of the content of the curriculum and improve students' attitude towards the course and aids teacher's ability to make an informed decision about classroom activities. This result tally with the finding of Anyagre (2016) and Baffour-Awuah (2011) studies that the focus of supervision is to identify and improve factors affecting or hindering the teaching and learning process.

### Research Question Two

How do instructors and learners perceive the types of supervision suitable for expertise building in building construction?

The crux of the research question is to elicit and ascertain instructors and learners' perception of what constitutes the right type of

supervision that will enhance expertise building in the building construction course. The

responses of the participants are presented in Table 2 below.

**Table 2.** Perception of participants on the right type of supervision to building expertise in students

S/N	Item	Students			Teachers		
		Mean	Standard Deviation	Remarks	Mean	Standard Deviation	Remarks
1.	A supervisor is effective when he or she is very interactive not coercive	3.34	0.72	A	3.71	0.83	A
2.	A supervisor is effective when he or she is collaborative and not hierarchical	3.58	0.81	SA	3.85	0.91	SA
3.	A supervisor is effective when he or she is very democratic and not authoritarian	3.32	0.70	A	3.87	0.86	SA
4.	A supervisor is effective when he or she involved teachers in supervision.	3.40	0.81	A	3.92	0.96	SA
5.	A supervisor is effective when he or she does not distance himself/herself from the teacher	2.98	0.60	A	3.28	0.72	SA
6.	A supervisor is effective when he or she is patient and descriptive	3.52	0.79	SA	3.87	0.86	SA
7.	A supervisor is effective when he or she is interested in augmenting teachers' professional knowledge in pedagogical approach	3.26	0.65	A	3.91	0.94	SA

n=100 Field Survey, 2017.

Data presented in Table 2 revealed that both the teachers and the students agreed on all the 7 items contained in the table demonstrating what they perceived as constituting the characteristics of an effective supervisor. Results from Table 2 (Item 1) showed that both the student (Mean =3.34) and Teachers (Mean=3.71) concurred with the notion that supervisors should be interactive and not coercive. In line with this result, Tucker and Stronge (2015) indicated that when supervisors refrain from seeing teachers are incompetent but as aspiring, then they can interact very well with them to horn teachers' skill in imparting employable initiative to students and very familiar with the subject-matter of building construction and quite ready to take on challenges in the teaching and learning process.

Finding from Table 2 (Item 2) demonstrated that both the student (Mean =3.58) and Teachers (Mean=3.85) concurred with the notion that

supervisor is effective when he or she is very collaborative and do not see himself or herself as superior to the teachers. The finding of a study by Baffour-Awuah (2011) and Anyagre (2016) tally with the finding of the study that collaborative effort is needed on the part of the supervisor and supervisees in achieving the focus of TVET and in building expertise in the student so that they can be confident and can survive in the labour market.

Results from Table 2 (Item 3) showed that both the student (Mean =3.32) and Teachers (Mean=3.87) agreed with the notion that supervisor is effective when he or she is democratic and very welcoming rather than being authoritative or opinionated. When a supervisor is authoritative, according to Glickman (2012), he or she makes it difficult for the teacher to develop needed professional knowledge and approach to pedagogy because they will not feel comfortable around the

supervisor who feels he or she can just be issuing commands without cognition of the condition of those he or she is supervising.

Results from Table 2 (Item 7) showed that both the student (Mean =3.26) and Teachers (Mean=3.91) agreed with the notion that Supervisor is effective when he or she is interested in augmenting teachers' professional knowledge in pedagogical approach. Such a supervisor, according to Anyagre (2016) and Cobbold, Eshun, Bordoh and Kofie (2015), could go the extra mile to see that teachers get the import of his or her constructive criticism to facilitate its integration into the teaching and learning process in the classroom about building construction. To be noted is that such supervisor will stop at nothing to see that the teachers are abreast latest pedagogical approach to classroom practice and how students' requisite knowledge can be built so that when they can be easily assimilated into the labour market due to possession of requisite skill and expertise in building construction.

## Conclusion and Recommendations

The study critically examined the relevance of vocational courses in the two phases, individually and nationally. Ample explication was made with the important role and function of Technical and Vocational Education and Training within the Ghanaian context. This division of GES is primarily geared toward actualizing entrepreneurial learning of students upon admission into the tertiary institution and later into the world of work or labour market. TVET, according to the reviewed literature is highly important and instrumental to the production of graduates that are self-reliant and very pragmatic in activities requiring the manipulation of building construction tools in the accomplishment of construction projects. The result of the study shows that the teachers and several students strongly believe and were convinced that supervision of instruction can be instrumental to the development of expertise in building construction. It facilitates students understanding of valuable aspects of building construction; develop the right attitude and requisite skills. Result also shows that supervision helps in the implementation of the content of the curriculum and improve students' attitude towards the course and aids teacher's ability to make an informed decision about

classroom activities. The study also showed that to facilitate the building of requisite skills and expertise in building construction, supervisors need to be interactive, democratic, result-oriented and keenly interested in improving teachers' professional knowledge which in turn will improve classroom instruction with the ultimate goal of providing students with employable skills in the highly competitive labour market.

Given the above findings, it is recommended that instructors should be abreast the latest pedagogical approach in building construction to acquaint teachers with a practical yet simple way of imparting requisite skills in building construction students. Also, teachers of building construction should be cooperative with supervisors, be open and willing to adopt the constructive recommendation of supervisors and refrain from teaching student in an autocratic manner. It is also important for building construction teachers to be abreast with the latest information on building construction to build students' expertise valuable for the labour market.

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