East African Journal of Education Studies
eajes.eanso.org
Volume 8, Issue 1, 2025
Print ISSN: 2707-3939 | Online ISSN: 2707-3947
Title DOI: https://doi.org/10.37284/2707-3947

EAST AFRICAN NATURE & SCIENCE ORGANIZATION

Original Article

The Effect of Structured Coaching on Lecturers' Feedback Skill Development in National Teachers' Colleges in Uganda

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Article DOI: https://doi.org/10.37284/eajes.8.1.2587

Date Published:

06 January 2025

Keywords:

Teaching Practicum, Coach, Coachee, Supervision, Coaching.

ABSTRACT

This study investigated the effect of coaching on the feedback skills of lecturers in National Teachers' Colleges in Uganda, drawing on the theories of Cognitive Apprenticeship and Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory, which emphasize learning through guided experience and social interaction. The study was guided by a post-positivist world view and it employed a mixed-methods embedded approach, the research utilized a pretest-posttest control group design to assess whether there was a significant difference in the feedback skill of lecturers who received coaching compared to those who did not receive coaching. A sample of 128 lecturers was purposively selected, stratified, and randomly assigned to experimental and control groups. The experimental group received structured coaching sessions, while the control group did not. Quantitative data was collected using a self-administered questionnaire and an observation checklist while structured interview guides provided the qualitative data. The quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive statistics and inferential statistics through a t-test, while qualitative data were examined through content analysis. The post-test results revealed that the experimental group performed better, with a mean difference of 0.38078 points and a p-value of $0.000 < 0.05$ which is statistically significant. Participants from the experimental group in the interviews reported a positive contribution of coaching to their learning and skill proficiency. The hypothesis that there is no significant difference in the feedback skill of lecturers who received coaching compared to those who did not receive coaching was therefore rejected. It was concluded that coaching is significant for improving lecturers' feedback skills. It was therefore recommended that institutions should consider integrating coaching as a CPD for lecturers' capacity building in performance. Institutions should also design tailor-made coaching strategies to address individual gaps of lecturers and create communities of practice to establish a supportive network for more learning.

APA CITATION

Nawoova, S., Ndawula, S. & Waiswa, M. (2025). The Effect of Structured Coaching on Lecturers' Feedback Skill Development in National Teachers' Colleges in Uganda. *East African Journal of Education Studies*, *8*(1), 194-209. https://doi.org/10.37284/eajes.8.1.2587

CHICAGO CITATION

Nawoova, Sarah, Stephen Ndawula and Mark Waiswa. 2025. "The Effect of Structured Coaching on Lecturers' Feedback Skill Development in National Teachers' Colleges in Uganda". *East African Journal of Education Studies* 8 (1), 194-209. https://doi.org/10.37284/eajes.8.1.2587

HARVARD CITATION

Nawoova, S., Ndawula, S. & Waiswa, M. (2025) "The Effect of Structured Coaching on Lecturers' Feedback Skill Development in National Teachers' Colleges in Uganda", *East African Journal of Education Studies*, 8(1), pp. 194-209. doi: 10.37284/eajes.8.1.2587

Article DOI: https://doi.org/10.37284/eajes.8.1.2587

IEEE CITATION

S., Nawoova, S., Ndawula & M., Waiswa "The Effect of Structured Coaching on Lecturers' Feedback Skill Development in National Teachers' Colleges in Uganda" *EAJES*, vol. 8, no. 1, pp. 194-209, Jan. 2025. doi: 10.37284/eajes.8.1.2587.

MLA CITATION

Nawoova, Sarah, Stephen Ndawula & Mark Waiswa. "The Effect of Structured Coaching on Lecturers' Feedback Skill Development in National Teachers' Colleges in Uganda". *East African Journal of Education Studies*, Vol. 8, no. 1, Jan. 2025, pp. 194-209, doi:10.37284/eajes.8.1.2587

INTRODUCTION

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which address the educational demands of the twenty-first century, depend on high-quality education and qualified teachers (Rieckmann, 2018). The National Teachers' Colleges (NTCs) in Uganda are at the forefront of teacher training, with the responsibility of giving aspiring teachers the tools they need to practice effectively in the classroom. However, the conventional supervision techniques used in these institutions frequently fail to adequately prepare student teachers for the challenges of teaching in the real world, especially when it comes to acquiring crucial feed feedback skills (Wabyona, 2021). Both theoretical instruction and hands-on experience through a teaching practicum are components of pre-service teacher education. These practicums are essential because they give student teachers the opportunity to improve their instruction, put strategies into practice, understand student psychology, and apply theory to actual classroom settings (Ulum, 2022).

Historically, clinical supervision has been a cornerstone of teacher training, with its roots tracing back to the mid-20th century. Developed initially in fields like psychotherapy, clinical supervision evolved into a structured practice involving pre-observation conferences, detailed classroom observations, and post-observation feedback sessions (Bourgeois, 2006). Despite its structured nature, the traditional approach to supervision often lacks the dynamic, interactive elements necessary for effective feedback, as highlighted by modern educational theories (Caspi & Reid, 2002).

In the context of National Teachers' Colleges in Uganda, school practice is a major part of teacher preparation. The lecturers visit student teachers and observe their lessons. The college supervisor is expected to contribute to the professional development of the pre-service teacher by providing guidance and tutelage, where necessary after observing pre-service teachers' classroom teaching (Omilani & Ogbonna, 2023). The problem addressed in this study is the gap in fostering effective feedback skills among lecturers in NTCs. Reports from student teachers highlight several issues: the absence of pre-observation conferences, superficial class observations, feedback that is not easy to interpret and limited opportunities for receiving verbal feedback. Some supervisors' comments on the students' supervision reports are sketchy or entirely missing (NTC Kaliro, 2019).

These shortcomings are not isolated to Uganda, related literature reveals similar gaps in supervision practices globally, where feedback is often inconsistent, hurried, or entirely missing (Ngarwa & Magwa, 2018; Oppong, 2013; Nakpodia, 2011). Notably, the majority of lecturers continue to use the traditional feedback method, which frequently fails to meet the needs of students in terms of enhancing their educational experience (Mamoon, 2016). This lack of feedback during teaching practicums has serious repercussions since it hinders the growth of practical skills and leaves trainee teachers ill-equipped to handle the demands of classroom instruction. As underprepared teachers find it difficult to provide the high-quality instruction required to meet their students' needs, the lack of effective feedback not only impedes the professional development of student teachers but also feeds the cycle of educational underachievement (Ministry of Education and Sports, 2016).

According to Odundo et al. (2018), "teachers who are ill-prepared exhibit lower confidence, are indifferent to learner motivation, enforce strict classroom rules, and rely on extrinsic inducement and negative approvals to get learners to study". Consequently, this gap in supervision has fueled widespread concern over the quality of teacher graduates, many of whom are perceived as lacking the essential skills and professional ethics required for effective teaching (Omara et al., 2021). Previous

Article DOI: https://doi.org/10.37284/eajes.8.1.2587

studies mainly highlight the many challenges student teachers face during practicum. Nevertheless, the researcher has not been able to engage in studies that indicate how lecturers are supported to be able to provide feedback that enables student teachers to excel in their practicum and later in their careers. Given the critical role of feedback in teacher training and preparation, this study was motivated by the need to explore coaching as an intervention to enhance the feedback skills of lecturers in NTCs.

Objective of the study

The study examined the effect of coaching on the feedback skills of lecturers in National Teachers' Colleges in Uganda.

Hypothesis

There is no statistically significant difference in the feedback skill of lecturers who received coaching compared to those who did not receive coaching in National Teachers' Colleges in Uganda.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Theoretical review

The Cognitive apprenticeship theory developed by Collins, Newman and Brown in 1989 underpinned the study. The theory is that expert modelling and guided practice facilitate skill acquisition through four key processes: modelling, scaffolding, fading, and coaching. The theoretical framework aligned with the study's intervention design, where coaches demonstrated effective feedback strategies (modelling), provided structured support (scaffolding), gradually reduced assistance (fading), and offered targeted guidance (coaching). Apprenticeship is a process through which a more experienced person assists a less experienced one by way of demonstration, support, and examples (Dennen & Burner, 2008).

According to the theory, learning is a social process in which more knowledgeable people teach others through support, feedback, and directed involvement. According to Collins and Kapur (2014), the theory emphasizes authentic learning, providing cues, scaffolding, feedback, modelling, reminders, and raising the performance of the learners to expert. Here, apprentices collaborate with experts and integrate their existing knowledge to create a shared understanding of crucial processes (Schunk, 2012). Similar to a typical trade apprenticeship, a cognitive apprenticeship is a learning process in which experts and novices interact socially while completing a task. The focus is on developing cognitive abilities by engaging in real-world learning opportunities (Imiere, 2019).

In the study, coaching was done in context, emphasizing authentic activities. Through scaffolding, the coaches offered support that was tailor-made to the participants' level of performance and later the participants developed confidence in giving feedback to the student teachers. The participants, during the coaching process, were able to reflect on their thinking and learning process, leading to more effective performance. Through collaboration, the coaches and participants used dialogue to share experiences, challenges and strategies to support the acquisition of the feedback skill. This theory has coaching as one of the methods through which skill acquisition is by integrating modelling, guided practice and social interaction into the learning process. Coaches can help coachees move from novices to experts by focusing on cognitive aspects of skill development and providing structured support.

The study also adopted the Social cultural theory developed by Levi Vygosky 1978 which emphasizes the importance of social interactions in cognitive development. According to Vygotsky, learning is fundamentally a social process that operates on two levels: social interaction and the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD). Vygotsky posited that social interactions are fundamental to cognitive development. Initially, learners acquire knowledge and skills through interactions with others, such as peers or more knowledgeable individuals. Subsequently, they internalize these skills, integrating them into their own cognitive frameworks. This dual process highlights the importance of social context in fostering cognitive development. The participants collaboratively worked with the coaches to enhance deeper learning. The Zone of Proximity development (ZPD) of the participants was considered in identifying what the participants could do on their own before the

Article DOI: https://doi.org/10.37284/eajes.8.1.2587

coaching and how the coaches could support them to gain more expertise in the skill. These theories, therefore supported the basis of using coaching as an intervention to improve lecturers' supervision skills of feedback in National teachers' colleges in Uganda.

Feedback

The concept of giving feedback in education has philosophical and historical roots influenced by educational theories and practices over time. In the 5th century, Socrates emphasized dialogue and questioning that involved providing immediate feedback through discussion and inquiry. In the 20th century, behaviourists like Skinner highlighted the idea of reinforcement through feedback as a reward or correction to influence learning and behaviour (McLeod, 2018). Theorists like Jean Piaget and Levi Vygotsky emphasized the importance of social interactions and cognitive development in learning. To them, feedback was crucial for helping students understand their learning process and for scaffolding their development. In the late 20th century, constructivists used feedback to encourage self-assessment, reflection and deeper understanding. In the 1980s, with the rise of formative assessment, feedback was emphasized for its role in guiding students' progress. In this century, the advent of digital tools has allowed for immediate personalized responses through online platforms.

In educational contexts, feedback has evolved into a critical tool for teacher development, particularly within the framework of teaching practicums. Feedback is about giving information in a way that encourages the recipient to accept it, reflect on it, learn from it, use it, and hopefully make changes for the better (Obilor, 2019). Its importance is well-documented in the literature, with research consistently highlighting its role in enhancing student teachers' pedagogical skills (Mulryan-Kyne, 2020; Omilani & Ogbonna, 2023). According to Adele et al. (2021), feedback serves as both an educational tool and a means of social interaction between the learner and the supervisor. This feedback includes constructive advice and suggestions intended for implementation. As noted by Copland (2011) cited in Holi et al. (2013), such feedback plays a crucial role in the professional development of student teachers, as it helps them reflect on their teaching practices and make necessary adjustments to improve their effectiveness in the classroom. The balance of critique and encouragement in this feedback fosters growth and learning, ultimately enhancing the student teacher's skills and confidence. An instructor's feedback and coaching can have positive effects on novice teachers' skills (Cohen et al., 2020). The supervisors provide students with comments and suggestions that allow them to self-regulate and acquire new knowledge (Maes et al, 2022). Feedback sessions, particularly in the context of post-lesson conferences, are intended to provide constructive criticism that fosters self-reflection and professional growth (Becker et al., 2019).

Literature states that one significant way to enhance the student teachers' pedagogical practices is to provide them with supervisory productive learning conversations through which they can develop their teaching experience (Al-Jaro et al, 2020). A study by Juuti, et al, (2018) indicated that the supervisor's feedback was among the factors that contributed positively to student teachers' teaching efficiency. Al-Malki et al. (2020) examined the process of assessing the classroom performance of pre-service English language teachers in three higher education institutions in Oman. Findings show that feedback is a vital assessment practice that is provided by university supervisors and cooperating teachers to the pre-service teachers across the three institutions in Oman.

Despite its recognized importance, empirical studies show that the effectiveness of feedback during practicum supervision faces significant challenges. Studies suggest that the quality and timing of feedback are crucial, yet often inconsistent (Nash et al., 2017). Many supervisors fail to deliver specific, actionable feedback, resulting in superficial or even counterproductive interactions (Land, 2018; Prakash, 2024). Studies also reveal that feedback is often indirect, insufficiently detailed, and sometimes stress-inducing rather than supportive (Başaran & Savaş, 2021; Bjørndal, 2020). Supervisors may also provide feedback that is overly critical, which can lead to emotional distress and reduce the effectiveness of the feedback (Christophersen et al.,

Article DOI: https://doi.org/10.37284/eajes.8.1.2587

2016). Furthermore, there is a prevalent tendency for feedback to be conveyed in a monologist manner, where the mentor predominantly controls the dialogue. This approach often limits opportunities for the student teacher to engage in independent reflection or actively participate in the discussion (Loughland et al., 2021). Similarly, such a one-sided feedback dynamic may hinder the development of critical thinking skills in student teachers and reduce their ability to internalize and apply the feedback effectively. Furthermore, compounding these issues is the variability in supervisors' feedback skills, which often results from inadequate training and preparation for their roles (Kearney, 2023; Prakash, 2024). This deficiency not only undermines the feedback process but also adversely impacts the overall development of student teachers. As a result, they may enter the teaching profession lacking essential practical skills and reflective practices (Mpewe, 2019; Nawzar, 2019), which are very critical. Without constructive and interactive feedback, student teachers struggle to critically analyze their teaching methods, leading to gaps in their pedagogical knowledge and effectiveness.

Due to the identified gaps in the literature, it is evident that supervisors should be trained to develop the skills to provide effective feedback (Adelle et al, 2021). Research also indicates that supervisors need continuous professional development to acquire the competencies necessary for effective feedback, yet such opportunities are often lacking (Lakkala et al., 2017). These may be in the form of a commitment to improving one's knowledge and skills for one to remain competent in his/her profession for the benefit of themselves, their learners and the wider profession (MOES, 2017). Valencia et al. (2009) reported that the lack of preparation of cooperating teachers and/or university supervisors contributed to the lack of substantive support for the preservice teachers.

Coaching and skill development

Hollweck & Lofthouse (2021) define coaching as "a confidential and collaborative process through which coaches and coachees work together to reflect on current practices, as well as expand, refine and build new skills". Coaching, as a collaborative and reflective practice, is closely aligned with contemporary educational theories that highlight the significance of dialogue and mutual learning in professional development (Papay et al., 2016). There is an emerging evidence base that coaching is a powerful tool to support learning and development for students, teachers, school leaders and their educational establishments (Devine et al., 2012). This tool fosters an environment where both coaches and coachees engage in meaningful conversations that not only facilitate knowledge sharing but also promote critical reflection on skill development. Effective coaching involves the use of specific, well-crafted feedback that inspires self-reflection and continuous improvement (Marzano et al., 2011). It is proposed that pairing teachers with different strengths and weaknesses and encouraging them to coach each other is a promising strategy. (Papay et al., 2016).

Several studies have used coaching as an intervention in education to improve practice and yielded positive results. A study in Michigan found that a professional development program for first-grade teachers that included coaching outperformed programs involving seminars or seminars plus self-evaluation, in terms of improving pedagogy (Carlisle, et al., 2011). Hanno (2022), conducted coaching as a professional development approach involving ongoing individualized teacher-coach exchanges. Its results indicated that emotional support and classroom organization practices improved immediately after any coaching cycle. Warnock et al. (2022) investigated the benefits of instructional coaching to teachers as perceived by 11 secondary school teachers in the UK. Findings of the study suggested that teachers who participated in the study, improved relationships, awareness, reflectiveness and enhanced practice. They also developed a positive attitude, which captured a sense of increased confidence, motivation and positivity. The study confirmed that coaching was a useful way of supporting educators to enhance their practice. Amalia and Imperiani (2013) conducted a study with six university students in their seventh semester enrolled in an English instructional planning class at the English Education Department of UPI. These students participated in a mentor coaching program that provided on-site support. The results indicated that the participants significantly enhanced their

Article DOI: https://doi.org/10.37284/eajes.8.1.2587

knowledge, and made adjustments to their lesson plan formats and the activities included, reflecting a deeper understanding of instructional design.

However, some gaps emerge from the above studies. The available literature provides insights into the positive contribution of coaching in teacher education mainly focusing on supporting in-service teachers (Warnock et al., 2022; Hanno, 2022; Carlislen, et al., 2011; Papay et al, 2016; Okiror, 2017) and pre-service teachers (Stahl et al., 2016; Amalia & Imperani, 2013). The studies are also done in other countries and do not target teacher educators. There is however a contextual gap in using coaching to support supervisors of practicum in developing their supervision skills, specifically providing feedback to pre-service teachers. This laid the foundation for implementing coaching as an intervention to support supervisors in improving their feedback skills in this study.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design and Sample

This study employed an embedded mixed-methods design (QUAN + qual) with a randomized pretest-posttest control robust experimental approach. The quantitative strand utilized a quasi-experimental design (N = 128), and structured observations (N = 64) while the qualitative approach had semi-structured interviews (N = 20). A post-positivist worldview was adapted by integrating both quantitative (surveys) and qualitative methods (interviews, observation) to enable a comprehensive investigation into the effect of coaching on lecturers' supervision skills, addressing the complexity of social phenomena (Dawadi et al., 2021). This approach supports rigorous conclusions through methodological triangulation, where quantitative data validates constructed theories and qualitative data provides a deeper understanding and context (Creswell, 2014). The sample of participants was determined by using a sample size table by The Research Advisors (2006) where 128 participants and lecturers from four National teachers' colleges were purposively sampled from a population of 142. These participants were stratified and matched based on their supervision experience level and randomly assigned to either an experimental group, which received coaching, or a control group, which did not reduce biases.

Instruments

Instruments used included a self-administered questionnaire, through a survey, where participants made a choice from a 5-Likert scale to fit their status. These had to opt from; 1(strongly disagree), 2 (Disagree), 3 (Neutral), 4 (Agree) and 5 (Strongly agree). These items collected data on the self-declared proficiency of the participants skill on the feedback skill as a pre-test and post-test done before and after the intervention. The questionnaire, observation checklist and interview guide were checked by experts in teacher education to improve on individual items. The questionnaire was thereafter piloted in another college to assess its reliability. The reliability of the questionnaire then was attained using Cronbach's alpha (α) which was 0.84 and its validity was 0.81, both greater than the acceptable level of .70 (Taber, 2018). An observation checklist was also used to collect data during the observation of participants' behaviour against set standards as they supervised student teachers on practicum. The observation checklist had a scale of 1-5 where 1(Not observed), 2 (Unsatisfactory), 3 (Emerging), 4 (Satisfactory) and 5 (Outstanding). The observation checklist reliability was 0.786 while its content validity index was 0.84, both greater than 0.7 which indicates an acceptable level for research instruments. A Semi-structured interview guide was used to collect opinions about the coaching experience from a sample of 20 participants from the experimental group. These interviews were done after the intervention and the post-test.

Data Management

During data analysis, data from the questionnaire and observation was coded and entered into a computer using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) and descriptive data was displayed in tables as means, standard deviations, ranges and a t-test done for inferential statistics. Qualitative data was handled through thematic analysis to provide contextual insights. Member checking was done to ensure that the data presented and the conclusions drawn aligned with the participants' viewpoints.

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The intervention

The coaching intervention was carried out by internal coaches who have been trained to build the capacity to support their peers. The coaches were trained on the procedure to follow based on a coaching framework that was adapted from Kho et al. (2020), for uniformity. This had four stages of; pre-pre-observation conference, classroom supervision observation, post-observation conference and intervention. The coaches attended practicum sessions and observed the participants during their supervision of student teachers. Each coach had three observations, guided by the observation checklist with the same participants for consistency. The coach and coachees had post-observation sessions to reflect, feedback and plan for action. Research assistants were also trained to conduct and record the structured interviews, which they did after the post-test.

Ethical considerations

Ethics were meticulously observed, including, seeking approval from Gulu University Research Ethical Committee (GUREC) and clearance from Uganda National Science and Technology (UNCST). Administrative clearance into institutions and informed consent from the participants were obtained. The participants and institutions were given identification codes for protection to maintain confidentiality throughout the research process (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

RESULTS

Demographic Information

The demographics include; gender. Education level and years of supervision experience. In Table 1, the demographic profile of the study participants indicated that the modal percentage (80.4%) was of males with females being 19.6%. This demographic distribution reflects a predominantly male group. Regarding the highest level of education, the modal percentage was (76.6%), who hold a Bachelor's degree. In terms of supervision experience, it was (37.5%). With an experience of supervision of more than 5 years. This profiled a suitable group of participants for the study.

Table 1: Demographic Characteristics of the Respondents (*N* = 128*)*

Item	Category	Frequency	Percent
Gender	Male	103	80.4
	Female	25	19.6
	Total	128	100.0
Highest education level	Bachelor's degree	98	76.6
	Post graduate diploma	8	6.3
	Master's degree	22	17.1
	PhD degree	0	0
	Total	128	100.0
Years of Supervision experience	1 but less than 5	7	5.5
	5 but less than 10	48	37.5
	10 but less than 15	41	32
	15 and above	32	25

The effect of coaching on lecturer's feedback skills

To evaluate the effect of coaching on lecturers' feedback skills, both the experimental and control groups participated in a pre-test and post-test survey. This data was collected through a self-administered questionnaire which was used for both tests. This was analyzed as a unidimensional concept using 8 items. The results in Table 2 included the scores of the participants in the pre-test administered before coaching and the post-test, administered after the coaching intervention. The range between the pre-test and post-test scores for each item was calculated to get an insight into the level of change in each construct.

Table 2: Test scores for the Experimental and Control groups on feedback

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Feed backing (F)	Group	Pre-Test Score	Post-Test Score	Range
I can objectively analyze collected data.	EG	0.68	0.80	0.12
	CG	0.66	0.66	0
I can provide quality written feedback on all areas in the rubric	EG	0.81	0.91	0.10
	CG	0.79	0.81	0.03
I can provide construct oral feedback on all areas in the rubric	EG	0.75	0.86	0.11
	CG	0.76	0.77	0.01
I can give specific feedback to keep students on target for achievement	EG	0.77	0.94	0.17
	CG	0.78	0.78	0
I find it hard to give balanced feedback	EG	0.77	0.84	0.07
	CG	0.80	0.80	0
I can stimulate students to reflect on their taught lessons	EG	0.78	0.85	0.07
	CG	0.83	0.84	0.01
I can recommend students to make action plans for better practice	EG	0.77	0.84	0.07
	CG	0.78	0.79	0.01
I can easily give an objective overall mark	EG	0.78	0.90	0.12
	CG	0.79	0.80	0.01

The results from Table 2 reveal a significant enhancement in feedback skills among the participants in the experimental group who received coaching. All the ranges of the scores for the experimental group for each item increased, citing a positive change. The construct of giving students specific feedback to keep them on target for achievement had the highest range of 0.17 in the experimental group while the control group had no change. The data from the experimental group also indicates improvements in participants' ability to objectively analyze the collected data with a range of 0.12, delivering oral feedback had a range of 0.11 and giving an objective overall mark with 0.12. This demonstrates that coaching fostered a change in the skills of the participants in all constructs.

When asked how coaching had affected their performance, participants' responses indicated a significant contribution of coaching to their feedback skills. Participant MN3 expressed that,

> *I have many takeaways from the coaching sessions about feedback; giving feedback instantly, balancing it, and allowing the students to reflect on their performance preferably before I do. When I tried doing it after the coach's guidance, it felt more satisfying to the student.*

Participant, KL1 also indicated the contribution of working with a coach,

> *"It was challenging for me to summarize a student's overall performance in one short sentence. I worked with the coach and gained skills in making a compounded summary of my observations. Before this, I would always write a word or two about a small area for lack of insight. I was also supported in coming up with the marks in relation to the observations.*

KL15 also reported a change in perception after guidance, that,

> *Before the coaching, I focused feedback on areas to improve and I would not propose how to improve them. I always left that to the student teacher. I was guided on how to ask questions and propose options to support the student, without being so directive. I found supportive of action planning.*

Conversely, the control group, which did not receive coaching, showed minimal changes in feedback skill constructs between the pre-test and post-test with ranges changing between 0.1 to 0.3. There were three constructs of being able to analyze collected data, giving specific feedback to keep students on

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target for achievement and giving balanced feedback did not have any change. The slight variations in scores suggest that without the coaching intervention, participants in the control group did not experience substantial improvements in their feedback capabilities. This contrast underscores the effectiveness of coaching in developing feedback skills. Moreover, participant MN5 in the interviews said, "We surely needed to update our skills so that we are more supportive to the students when giving feedback".

Table 3: Descriptive statistics for the Pre-test scores for both groups

	Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Pretest -EG	3.0866	64	.45401	.05675
Pretest -CG	3.0631	64	.57694	.07212

Table 3 shows the descriptive statistics for the pre-test scores for participants in both the experimental and control groups. The results from Table 3 show the mean in the pre-test for the experimental group as 3.0866 which was higher than 3.0631 for the control group. The standard deviation for the experimental group was .45401 which was lower than .57694 for the control group, indicating that the scores for the experimental group were closer to the mean than those of the control group. The standard error of the mean for the experimental group of .05675 is lower than that of the control group of .07212 indicating more precision in the experimental group mean estimate.

Table 4: Descriptive Pre-test means for both groups on feedback

	Paired Differences					t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference				
				Lower	Upper			
Pretest- EG Pretest-CG	0.02344	0.38752	0.04844	-0.07336	0.12024	0.484	63	0.63

Significance at level (0.05)

Table 4 shows the paired sample test for the pre-test means for both the experimental and control groups to determine if the mean difference was significant. The mean difference of 0.02344 between the pre-test scores of the two groups was minimal, suggesting that participants in both groups started with comparable levels of proficiency. The standard deviation of *SD*=0.38752 indicates some variability in individual scores within each group, but the 95% confidence interval includes zero, indicating that the difference between the groups was not statistically significant. The t-value of 0.484 indicates that the difference is not large. The observed Sig (p) value of 0.63 is greater than the critical sig value of 0.05 ($p > 0.05$), indicating that any observed differences were not statistically significant. The purpose of the pre-test was to determine whether or not the means of both groups were significantly different and to provide baseline values regarding the variables measured prior to the coaching intervention. These results indicated that the difference between participants in each of the two groups was not a threat to the implementation of coaching.

Table 5: Descriptive statistics for post-test scores for both groups

	Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Post-test EG	3.473	64	0.44541	0.05568
Post-test CG	3.0922	64	0.55981	0.06998

Table 5 shows the descriptive statistics for the post-test scores of both groups which indicate that the mean for the experimental group 3.473 is higher than the one for the control group 3.0922 indicating that participants in the experimental group performed better on the post-test. The standard deviation for the experimental group was *SD*= .44541 while that of the control group was *SD*= .55981). This indicates that in the post-test, the scores for the experimental group were more tightly clustered around the mean

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than those of the control group with more variability. The standard error of the mean (SEM) for the experimental group of 0.05568 is lower than that of the control group of 0.06998. The lower SEM for the experimental group suggests that the sample mean is a more accurate estimate of the population mean for the experimental group.

Table 6: Paired sample test for post-test scores on feedback

	Paired Differences					t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference				
				Lower	Upper			
Posttest EG Posttest CG	0.38078	0.65902	0.08238	0.21616	0.5454	4.622	63	0

Significance level at (0.05)

Table 6 shows the results of a paired samples t-test comparing the post-test scores of the experimental and control groups. The mean difference between the post-test scores of the experimental and control group of 0.38078, indicates that, on average, the experimental group scored higher compared to the control group. The standard deviation reflects some variability in the differences between the pairs. The standard error mean of 0.08238 provides an estimate of how much the sample mean difference would vary from the true population mean difference. The narrow 95% confidence interval of 0.21616 to 0.54540 does not include zero, suggesting that there is a statistically significant difference between the groups. The degrees of freedom were 63 which is an appropriate sample for analysis. The t-value of 4.622 indicates a strong effect size. The observed Sig (*p*) value of 0.000 is lower than the critical sig. A value of 0.05 ($p = 0.000 < 0.05$) indicates that coaching had a statistically significant effect on the lecturers' supervision skills, confirming that this difference is unlikely to be due to random variation. These findings strongly suggest that the experimental group performed significantly better than the control group. The coaching intervention had a meaningful and statistically significant effect on the feedback skills of the lecturers in the experimental group. The hypothesis that stated that there is no statistically significant difference in feedback skills between the participants who received coaching and those who did not was therefore rejected.

Observation results

Table 7: **Participants' observation results before and after coaching**

	Before coaching			After coaching		
Feed backing	Mean	Overall mean	Std. Deviation	Mean	Overall mean	Std. Deviation
Uses exploratory questioning	2.97		1.345	4.45		.925
Allows student teacher to reflect on the lesson	3.53	3.77	1.112	4.63	4.07	.655
Gives constructive feedback to the student teacher	3.70		.903	4.78		.576
Gives specific feedback to the student teacher	3.94		.990	4.75		.535
Gives descriptive feedback to student teacher	3.08		1.276	4.55		.853
Gives balanced feedback to the student teacher	3.86		.941	4.75		.504
Feedback given is to keep student teacher on target for achievement	4.09		.750	4.75		.436
Makes recommendations for better practice	3.86		1.082	4.72		.603
Feedback covers all areas in the rubric	4.59		.495	4.92		.270
Provides an objective overall remark	4.08		.841	4.77		.527

Source: Primary data

Legend: 1.00 – 1.79 = Very Low, 1.80 – 2.59 = Low, 2.60 – 3.39 = Moderate, 3.40 – 4.19 = High and 4.20 – 5.00 = Very High

Article DOI: https://doi.org/10.37284/eajes.8.1.2587

The results from Table 7 indicate that the overall mean from observation of participants before coaching was *M*=3.77, indicating high which increased to *M*= 4.07 indicating high with a range of 0.3, after coaching. The aggregate standard deviation of *SD*=0.588 indicated more uniform responses from the participants after the coaching, compared to *SD*=0.974 before coaching. This notable improvement across various feedback constructs highlights the efficacy of coaching in enhancing feedback skills. The range of 0.3 between the means suggests a moderate improvement, affirming the positive effects of coaching on the lecturers' feedback skill proficiency. This notable improvement in the observations was also supported by some responses of participants from the structured interviews. These gave their experience regarding how the coaching they had received had facilitated change in their feedback skills. Participant MN3 expressed that,

> *"I surely always ask students to reflect on what they have done during the post-observation conference. I just wasn't taking the time to propose actual ways of improving on the identified deficiencies. I was encouraged by the coach to give time to support students' future improvement through joint action planning". I also realized that students sometimes had solutions to their problems, and just needed working with someone to get confident in trying them out"*

Participants also attributed their motivation to learn to the learning with their peers who took on the coach roles. Participant U6 reported that;

> *Through questioning, the coach made me discover the strategies I had not tried out. It was like helping me to reflect on a number of options to focus on in order to improve the way I gave feedback. Learning new strategies with the guidance of a colleague was motivating and opened an opportunity for trust between us for continued support and improvement.*

Notably, the small ranges observed in some areas were a result of challenges that participants highlighted, particularly related to time constraints. For instance, MB4 noted that,

> *The time available for supervision limits giving holistic feedback to each student, it is most times not even enough to propose specific effective changes in the students' practice.*

Likewise, U 10 reported that,

> *Giving feedback is challenging when I have several students to observe in different localities. It becomes hard to take into account the guidance I received during coaching. Offering balanced feedback is usually replaced with highlighting areas to work on, which leaves out the strength that a student can retain. Sometimes students expect us to give more about their positives.*

Participant MN21 expressed limitations in generating written feedback process, saying that,

> *Even after the guidance by my coach, I am not yet comfortable because I still feel that the feedback I write is not enough. I am more of a speaker, so my submission to students is mainly verbal, limiting the balance. I'll continue to consult the expert.*

Triangulating these findings from the survey, observations of practice and the structured interviews provided a holistic understanding of the study's outcomes. These findings underscore the importance of coaching in professional development programs, emphasizing its role in enhancing the quality of feedback provided by lecturers and ultimately improving the practicum experience for student teachers.

DISCUSSION

The results indicated a statistically significant difference between participants who received coaching and those who did not receive coaching, thus rejecting the null hypothesis. These results underscore the profound effect of coaching on lecturers' feedback skills, demonstrating that the structured coaching intervention led to significant improvements in critical areas such as providing specific, actionable, and constructive feedback. This is consistent with Stahl et al. (2016) who assert that through consistent cycles of performance, observation, feedback, and refinement, those coached cultivate their practices and gain both

Article DOI: https://doi.org/10.37284/eajes.8.1.2587

experience and expertise. Similarly, from the interviews, participants affirmed that the guidance provided by the coaches led to their change in performance and admitted that the changes were necessary. This is consistent with Cox et al. (2014) who affirm that "coaching is recognized as a powerful vehicle for increasing performance and achieving results".

From the observations of participants in the experimental group, results indicated a positive change in all items after the coaching intervention, indicating that the coaching received enabled them to focus on improving their skills. This is consistent with Podolcha et al. (2019) who reported that coaching enables individuals to identify some gaps in their knowledge and skills and construct an effective plan on how to achieve better results, supporting them through a range of work-based activities. The participants through the interviews confirmed that they benefited from the support of the coaches, especially in identifying gaps and change of practice by trying out strategies they agreed upon. This is also consistent with the cognitive apprenticeship which is a way of learning through experience guided by an expert (Imiere, 2019). These coaches in the sessions used their expertise by asking questions and empowering the participants to reflect on any gaps in how they give feedback, this later led to proposals for bridging these gaps. Similarly, studies indicate that open, collegial, but critical interactions and discussions among peers enhance professional learning and growth (Giles, 2018).

In contrast, the control group, which did not receive coaching, showed only modest improvements in feedback skills, emphasizing the need for structured, theory-driven interventions. The limited progress in the control group aligns with the theories supporting the study, particularly the Sociocultural Theory, which suggests that without the guidance and interaction provided by coaching, significant advancements in skill development are unlikely (Vygotsky, 1978). The static performance in some constructs like, providing balanced and constructive feedback further highlights the complexities of mastering these skills without the scaffolding that coaching provides. This also is realized from the experimental group participants' qualitative results from the interviews where they acknowledged that they had challenges before the intervention. Overall, the study affirms that coaching, grounded in learning theories like Cognitive Apprenticeship and Sociocultural Theory, which support learning through interactions is essential for enhancing lecturers' feedback skills.

CONCLUSION

Based on the discussion above, it can be concluded that coaching has a profound effect on lecturers' feedback skills in National Teachers' Colleges in Uganda. The significant difference between the means of the participants in the experimental group and those in the control group affirms that coaching is not merely an auxiliary support but a central component of effective professional development. By systematically engaging lecturers in regular and high-quality coaching sessions, institutions can significantly elevate the capacity of educators to supervise and mentor student teachers, thereby fostering a more effective and supportive learning environment. These findings align with existing literature that underscores the role of targeted professional development in improving educational outcomes.

The implications of these results are substantial for policymakers, educational administrators, and practitioners within the realm of teacher education. The evidence provided by this study supports the integration of structured coaching programs into the professional development strategies of teacher education institutions. Implementing such programs can lead to marked improvements in supervision practices, which, in turn, enhance the overall quality of teacher training. As the quality of supervision directly impacts the preparedness and effectiveness of future educators, investing in coaching initiatives can have a cascading positive effect on the broader educational system, ultimately benefiting students across various levels.

Recommendations

To address the varied challenges and strengths identified in the study, it is recommended that teacher education institutions design coaching strategies tailored to the individual needs of

Article DOI: https://doi.org/10.37284/eajes.8.1.2587

lecturers, adopting a flexible approach that accommodates different learning styles and preferences. Practitioners in teacher training should integrate technology for feedback provision to enhance efficiency and comfort, making the process more user-friendly. Additionally, institutions should cultivate a culture that values constructive feedback by implementing workshops, training sessions, and follow-up activities. This would foster a mindset where feedback is seen as a growth catalyst, ultimately leading to more impactful and lasting improvements through coaching interventions.

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