Educational
Research Association
Turkiye • 2008
EAB
www.eab.org.tr
iJERs

ORIGINAL ARTICLE

Stakeholder Perspectives on the Assessment of Teaching and Teacher Training in Ghana's Transnational Higher Education Landscape

Wisdom Kwaku Agbevanu[1][*] [ID]**, Hope Pius Nudzor[2],**

Michael Boakye-Yiadom[3], & Alfred Ampah-Mensah[4]

[1] Snr. Res. Fellow. Dr., Institute for Educational Planning and Administration, University of Cape Coast, Ghana.
[2] Assoc. Prof. Dr., Institute for Educational Planning and Administration, University of Cape Coast, Ghana.
[3] Snr. Res. Fellow. Dr., Institute for Educational Planning and Administration, University of Cape Coast, Ghana.
[4] Snr. Res. Fellow. Dr., Institute for Educational Planning and Administration, University of Cape Coast, Ghana.

Ethical Statement

Ethical review committee approval was granted (No: UCC-IEPA-ERC-2018-005, Institute for Educational Planning and Administration). Consent forms were distributed. All participants gave their informed consent.

Funding Information

The research leading to these results was supported by the British Council, Ghana (Grant agreement number unavailable).

Conflict of Interest

No conflict of interest is present in the conduction or the reporting of this study.

ABSTRACT

This article reports on an aspect of a British Council-Ghana sponsored research project that investigated transnational education (TNE) partnerships and the environment of distance learning in higher education institutions (HEIs) in Ghana. Using insights from self-administered questionnaires and semi-structured case study interviews conducted, the article explores how teaching and teacher training assessments are undertaken in Ghanaian HEIs. The findings reveal that (1) Ghanaian HEIs involved TNE partnerships use student satisfaction and engagement surveys as two key mechanisms to assess teaching and teacher training in their institutions, and (2) the focus of teaching and teacher training assessments in these institutions appears to centre on improving the quality of teaching delivery and curriculum improvement than concerns for the quality of students' learning. We conclude, therefore, that Ghanaian HEIs involved in TNE partnerships may have genuine intentions to improve quality of teaching and learning; however, these good intentions appear to be constrained by their lack of knowledge and expertise about innovative and resourceful ways of undertaking teaching and teacher training assessments generally in HEIs. This results in teaching and teacher training assessments in these institutions not being undertaken in tandem with learning to help teachers improve and refine their teaching practices to enhance students' learning.

Keywords: Assessment of teaching; teacher training assessment; transnational education partnerships; higher education; Ghanaian higher education institutions.

*Corresponding Author

Snr. Res. Fellow. Dr., Institute for Educational Planning and Administration, University of Cape Coast, Ghana.

Email: wisdom.agbevanu@ucc.edu.gh

INTRODUCTION

In the higher educational (HE) landscape of countries globally, the terms assessment, teaching and teacher training/education occupy venerable positions owing to their use as important vehicles to support and develop teaching and learning processes. The term assessment has, for example, been referred to generally to mean the wide variety of methods or tools that educators use to evaluate, measure, and document the academic readiness, learning progress, skill acquisition or educational needs of students (Christensen et al., 1991; Glossary of Education Reform, 2015). Put succinctly otherwise, assessment is seen and regarded as an integral part of instruction, as it determines whether the goals of education are being met. It also affects decisions about grades, placement, advancement, instructional needs, curriculum and, in some cases, funding (George Lucas Educational Foundation, n.d.). Teaching, in higher education institutions (HEIs), on the other hand, is held up in high esteem as a career and a highly skilled and worthwhile profession that gives all those who teach as well as those who are taught the ability to learn and progress within their specific areas of education. It is considered as not just a way to earn a salary and/or offering diversity, rather, its relevance is seen in terms of its role in always providing challenges and high satisfaction levels to its practitioners and students/learners alike (TDA – Teacher Training, n.d.). Teacher training or teacher education, in the same HE contextual frame, generally is viewed as referring to the policies, procedures, and provision designed to equip (prospective) teachers with knowledge, attitudes, behaviours, and skills they require to perform their tasks effectively in the classrooms, schools, and wider communities (Allen, 1940).

From the above, it becomes immediately evident that the essence of undertaking any assessment of teaching and teacher training in HE is fundamentally to ask the following hard questions, among others: 'Are teachers teaching what they ought to be teaching?' 'Are teachers receiving the training they are supposed to be receiving?' 'Are there ways to teach subjects better, thereby promoting better learning?' Indeed, answers to these important questions, as well as others, provide a basis for assessing teaching and teacher training in the context of HEIs. Inferring from this exposition, it follows therefore that teaching and teacher training assessments or evaluations can be used in a variety of ways to achieve a variety of purposes. First, teaching and teacher training assessment can be used to support, promote, and/or develop teaching and learning processes and activities of institutions of learning. Second, information from teaching and teacher training assessments can be used by HEIs to support and develop an exceptional teaching workforce. Third, and essentially, it stands to reason also that accurate assessments or evaluations based on quality data can help differentiate teacher performance, inform feedback, improve professional development, provide opportunities for advancement, and provide a rationale for teacher promotions.

Refreshing as this may be or sound, it is important to mention that many HEIs, particularly those found in low-income countries in sub-Saharan Africa, struggle to create and implement the type of reliable assessment system that meaningfully differentiates teaching, teacher training and performance, and provides teachers with opportunities for tailored support, development, and advancement. In the HE and/or tertiary education (TE) system in Ghana, which is the focus of this article, for example, assessment of teaching is considered as an important quality assurance issue which cuts across both public and private higher and/or tertiary institutions. It requires the use of various sources of evidence to evaluate the quality of teaching and learning of students. However, in many of these institutions, the quality of teaching is largely evaluated by students at the end of every semester with the help of student surveys as well as students' academic performance. The results of teaching evaluations are given to teachers as feedback and are only used often for appointment confirmation and promotion purposes with little or no attention given to the improvement of learning,

teaching and/or teacher training. Besides this, while the Statutes of Ghanaian universities stipulate the qualifications for teaching in the universities, no clear document or policy is guiding how the quality of teaching and teacher training should or needs to be evaluated and improved comprehensively. To complicate matters further, in the current context of transnational education (TNE) partnerships in Ghana, little empirical evidence exists on the methods used in assessing teaching, teacher training and the challenges that confront teachers in HEIs/TEIs.

These challenges present a serious gap in knowledge which has dire implications for the quality of teaching and learning in Ghanaian universities with TNE partnerships. It is against this backdrop essentially that this article is written to gauge understanding of how and why assessment of teaching and teacher training is undertaken in Ghanaian HEI/TEIs. Based on this general purpose, three key research questions were developed to guide our analysis of the data gathered, namely:

1. How do Ghanaian HEIs/TEIs involved in TNE partnerships assess teaching and teacher training?

2. What practices/procedures do Ghanaian HEIs/TEIs use to ascertain teaching and teacher training effectiveness at the point of recruitment of teaching staff?

3. What are the reasons for assessing teaching and teacher training in Ghanaian HEIs/TEIs?

Contextualising Teaching and Teacher Training: Insights from the Literature

To put the arguments of our article into proper perspective, our review of issues from related literature spans three key areas, namely: defining teaching and teacher training; assessment of teaching and teacher training in HEIs; and reasons for assessing teaching and teacher training in HEIs. For purposes of succinctness and clarity of thoughts, these themes are discussed one after another briefly.

Defining Teaching and Teacher Training

Teaching, according to Alexander (2017), is both a practical and an observable act, which comprises activities, interactions, and judgements, which are framed by space, student organisation, time, and curriculum, and by routines, rules, and rituals, and can thus be referred to simply as a cultural activity. Stellenbosch University (2013) describes teaching as engagement with learners to enable and/or enhance their understanding and application of knowledge, concepts, and processes. This process of engagement between teachers or facilitators and learners, according to Stellenbosch University, includes issues of design, content selection, delivery, assessment, and reflection on or about what is taught, delivered and/or facilitated on the one hand, and what is learned, on the other hand, Christensen et al., (1991) add to these useful definitions of teaching. According to Christensen et al., teaching consists of getting students involved in the active construction of knowledge and, good teaching requires a commitment to a systematic understanding of learning. Thus, to teach is to engage students in learning.

Clearly from the above exemplifications of the definition of teaching, it becomes discernible that the aim of teaching is not only to transmit information but also to transform students from passive recipients of other people's knowledge into active constructors of their own and others' knowledge. From this standpoint, several important points can be distilled and summarized to give an indication or serve as useful pointers to what teaching and learning process is or ought to be in institutions of learning. One, it is evident that the teacher cannot transform students without the students' active participation in the teaching and learning processes. Two, and related to the first point, it is also implicitly clear that teaching is fundamentally about creating the pedagogical, social, and ethical conditions under which students agree to

take charge of their learning, individually and collectively (Stellenbosch University, 2013). Three, and as TDA (n.d.) also argues, teaching is not just a way to earn a salary neither is it about the diversity it offers. Rather, it always provides challenges and high satisfaction levels to its practitioners and students/learners alike.

This clarification thus leads us next to the about what teacher training or what is known in some HE cycles and contexts as teacher education is or entails. Fundamentally, and as Good (cited in O'Neill, 1986) points it out, these two concepts are understood to be similar and therefore are used synonymously, but with some implicit difference at times in meaning relative to the scope and/or focus of/on the activities involved. Teacher training refers to the policies, procedures and provision designed to equip (prospective) teachers with knowledge, attitudes, behaviours, and skills they require to perform their tasks effectively in the classroom, school, and wider community (Allen, 1940; O'Neill, 1986). Teacher education, on the other hand, refers to the whole range of activities that constitute preparation for, and improvement of members of, the teaching profession. This includes pre-service education for those who have not had teaching experience and in-service education for those who are engaged in teaching. So, although used in the literature to denote the same processes relating to teacher preparations for teaching, some conceptual ambiguity can be said to exist between the meaning of the concepts 'teacher training' and 'teacher education'. Whereas teacher training suggests the development of a rather narrow proficiency in the skills or methods of classroom teaching, teacher education is defined in terms of education, not training, and connotes the broad professional preparation needed for the highly complex task of teaching in the modern world (O'Neill, 1986, p. 262). Most importantly, the point remains to be added forcefully that the elevation of quantitative and qualitative standards for the profession in recent times is reflected in the use of the term "teacher education" rather than the older term "teacher training".

Assessment of Teaching and Teacher Training in HEIs

The term assessment generally is defined as the systematic process of documenting and using empirical data to measure knowledge, skills, attitudes, and beliefs (Raza et al., 2015). In education, 'assessment' is taken to refer to the wide variety of methods or tools that educators use to evaluate, measure, and document the academic readiness, learning progress, skill acquisition, or educational needs of students (Christensen et al., 1991; Raza et al., 2015; The Glossary of Education Reform, 2015). For Raza et al. (2015) specifically, assessment is an ongoing process of setting high expectations for student learning, measuring progress toward established learning outcomes, and providing a basis for reflection, discussion, and feedback to improve university academic programmes. Stellenbosch University (2013) adds to these useful definitions by describing assessment simply but succinctly as the act of judging the amount of learning that has taken place as a result of learning and teaching.

As the literature notes aptly, assessment of teaching and teacher training is essential for everyone involved in the tenure and promotion review process to know how they are teaching effectively, taking feedback on board, and focusing on continuous improvement. Importantly, assessment affects decisions about grades, placement, advancement, instructional needs, curriculum, and in some cases, funding (George Lucas Educational Foundation, n.d.; National Education Association, n.d.). Thus, in the context of TNE particularly, assessment of teaching and teacher training in HEIs/TEIs forms an integral part of instruction, as it determines whether the goals of education are being met. As was indicated earlier in this article, the aim of assessing teaching and teacher training in HEIs/TEIs, in part, is to improve the quality of teaching and learning outcomes. In the sense that the definitions illuminated herein look at and/or conceptualise assessment as involving 'passing judgement' on the teaching and learning process, we choose to view and depict 'assessment' in the context of our article, as 'evaluation'. This is because evaluation goes beyond assessment as it

involves judging the value or worth of a student, of an instructional method, or an educational programme and making decisions (Bovill et al., 2015; Carnegie Mellon University, n.d.; Obanya et al., 2000).

Several methods identified as sources of evidence for assessing instructional effectiveness in the literature include student ratings of instruction, peer review of teaching and teaching portfolio and course portfolios. On the other hand, common forms of assessing evidence of teaching and teacher training comprise student questionnaires, peer review, and student outcomes (Berk, 2005; Stripling et al., 2019). In a critical review, Berk (2005), for example, identified 12 ways of measuring teaching effectiveness to include (a) student ratings, (b) peer ratings, (c) self-evaluation, (d) videos, (e) student interviews, (f) alumni ratings, (g) employer ratings, (h) administrator ratings, (i) teaching scholarship, (j) teaching awards, (k) learning outcome measures, and (l) teaching portfolios. Clearly, these strategies emphasize the view that assessing and improving teaching is best accomplished when multiple sources of evidence (e.g., self-reflection, student feedback, and peer observation) are well understood. Accordingly, making use of these multiple sources of evidence helps to obtain a holistic picture of a teacher's approach and effectiveness (Fry et al., 2016; Little et al., 2009; Stripling et al., 2019; University of Washington, n.d.). Felder and Brent (2004, p. 200) also argue that "a key to effective teaching evaluation is to collect data from multiple sources (triangulation), making sure that all education-related activities are rated by the people best qualified to rate them". In their teaching performance evaluation model, Felder and Brent identified, student, peer, instructor and/or self, administrator and/or committee ratings, and portfolio as the main components of their model of evaluation. However, and as Berk (2005) cautions, whatever combination of strategies are used, evaluators need to ensure that the accuracy of teaching assessment decisions hinges on the integrity of the process and the reliability and validity of the evidence collected.

Similarly, the preponderance of available research evidence indicates that assessment of teaching and teacher training can focus on an individual teacher or all teachers together, like the whole faculty, an institution or specific programme. In this way, the assessment purpose may be summative (i.e. to provide data for use in making decisions regarding reappointment, tenure, promotion, and for selection of award recipients), which gives the outcomes of the whole teaching and teacher training, or it may be formative (i.e. to improve the teaching of the instructor being evaluated), which provides an overview of teachers at the beginning of their teaching (Center for Research on Learning and Teaching [CRLT], n.d.; Darling-Hammond, 2006; Felder & Brent, 2004; Fry et al., 2016; Hoyt & Pallett, 2014; Little et al., 2009; Stripling et al., 2019;). Thus, by assessing teaching and teacher training, HEIs try to improve teacher's path towards teaching and students' path towards learning.

Reasons for Assessing Teaching and Teacher Training in HEIs

Several reasons for assessing teaching and teacher training in HEIs/TEIs have been documented over the years. One of these reasons is to ensure quality in learning and learning outcomes. As Goos and Salomons (2017), for example, argue, the quality of higher education is important for learning outcomes and later in life. Hence, an essential aspect of higher education quality is the quality of teaching assessment conducted periodically and consistently. Admittedly, it needs to be pointed out that there is less agreement in the literature regarding the issue of appropriate assessment of teaching quality. This notwithstanding, assessment of teaching is seen generally as an important measure of teaching quality in HEIs. Similarly, as literature (e.g., CRTL, n.d.; Darling-Hammond, 2006; Goos & Salomons, 2017; Little et al., 2009; Stripling et al., 2019) suggests, different strategies of assessing teaching and teacher training are used on a large scale to assess the quality of teaching in HEIs/TEIs as well as for comparing teacher performance across courses, departments, and even universities. Consequently, and as the authors (i.e., CRLT, n.d.; Darling-Hammond, 2006; Goos & Salomons, 2017)

suggest, teaching and teacher training assessments affect faculty promotions, students' applications, as well as students' course selection and, are used for published institutional teaching rankings and in auditing practices for demonstrating institutional performance. In particular, these practices have generated a large scientific literature on the assessment of teaching particularly students' evaluations of teaching (SETs), which spans across various disciplines such as education science, psychology, sociology, and economics (Goos & Salomons, 2017).

Besides, teaching and teacher training assessment scores are used by many HEIs to make promotion decisions, institutional ranking, and accountability. Other valid and/or legitimate reasons for assessing teaching and teacher training include, but not limited to: evaluating the tenure of academic staff, improvement of instruction, feedback on teaching and curriculum improvement, appropriate and adequate instructional techniques and developing a portfolio for job applications (CRLT, n.d.). Despite these important reasons for assessing teaching and teacher training, it needs to be admitted forthrightly that often the methods used in the assessing teaching and teacher training suffer from low response rates, particularly in the case of online evaluations. As a result, and as Goos and Salomons (2017) aptly point out, this may distort results thereby limiting the interpretations of teaching and teacher training assessments as a measure of teaching quality and rendering comparisons across teachers, courses, or departments problematic with varied response rates.

METHOD

Research Design

This article is an offshoot of a British Council, Ghana sponsored research project undertaken between 2019-2020 by the Institute for Educational Planning and Administration of the University of Cape Coast, Ghana (Nudzor et al., 2019). That original research project on which this article is based, investigated TNE partnerships and the environment of distance learning generally in HEIs/TEIs in Ghana. The rationale for this research endeavour essentially was to provide insights into the state of HE/TE in Ghana with the view to supporting both Government of Ghana and her international development partners in identifying the key areas where they could work to improve the quality of, and access to Ghanaian HEIs/TEIs, while at the same time providing her international development partners with value in the form of qualitative and/or economically beneficial partnerships.

In pursuit of this overarching research goal, and to help generate evidence-informed findings to address these research questions posed, a multiphase mixed-method research design, informed by exploratory and explanatory sequential designs was used to explore and understand in-depth existing TNE partnerships in Ghanaian HEIs/TEIs. The exploratory sequential segment of this design was characterised by an initial qualitative phase of data collection and analysis (mainly through document analysis and literature reviews to provide context for TNE partnership in Ghanaian HEIs/TEIs and to guide the development of data collection instruments), followed by a phase of quantitative data collection and analysis, with a final phase of integration or linking of data from the two separate strands (Berman, 2017; Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011; Subedi, 2016). The explanatory sequential segment of the multiphase mixed-method research design, on the other hand, consists of first collecting quantitative data and then collecting qualitative data thereafter to help explain or elaborate on the quantitative results (Subedi, 2016).

The justification for this design lies in the fact that the quantitative data and results provide a general picture of the research problem; but that more analysis specifically through qualitative data collection is needed to refine, extend, or explain the general picture (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011). The use of multiphase mixed-method research design helped, first, to collect and analyse qualitative data (in the form of document analysis and literature reviews) and then based on

the qualitative findings, to develop the quantitative aspect (i.e., survey) of the study. This process then led to the collection and analysis of quantitative data which was then followed by the collection and analysis of qualitative case study data from multiple sites, and finally, to the overall integration, interpretation and reporting of the findings of the study.

Setting and Participants

The sample for the research project on which this article reports comprised Ghanaian HEIs/TEIs, and regulatory bodies involved in HE/TE administration in Ghana. In selecting the sample, census, purposeful random, and criterion sampling techniques were employed. First, the census sampling technique was employed to study the entire population of HEIs/TEIs to profile them. Second, purposeful random sampling technique was used to sample one hundred and two (102) HEIs/TEIs for a quantitative survey. Third, the criterion sampling strategy (with the help of 'screening questionnaires' employed as the first phase of the survey) was used to select twenty-eight (28) HEIs/TEIs involved in TNE partnerships for the second phase of a quantitative survey regarding the nature and scope of their existing partnerships. Fourth, the purposeful sampling technique was used to select 17 HE/TE actors/officials for multi-site case study interviews regarding their respective institutions' experiences and roles in TNE partnerships. Thus, the various sampling techniques used enabled key actors and institutions with rich information about TNE partnerships within the HE sectors in Ghana to be sampled for in-depth study and analysis.

Instruments

Owing to the composite data collection intent embedded within the variant of the mixed-methods approach adopted for the study, data was collected using document review guide, self-administered questionnaires, and open-ended semi-structured interview guide. The document review guide, consisting mainly of a checklist, was designed, and used to identify and select relevant documents (e.g., policy documents and regulations, institutional reports, data files, journals on higher education and other written artefacts) needed for initial scoping and literature review for the study. Two sets of questionnaires were used to collect data from participating institutions. The first set of the questionnaire was used to screen 102 participating institutions regarding their involvement or otherwise in TNE partnerships. The second set of the questionnaire was used as a follow-up activity for the 28 HEIs/TEIs that indicated they were in some form of TNE partnerships regarding the nature and scope of their existing partnerships. The semi-structured open-ended interview guide, on its part, was used to collect relevant qualitative data through face-to-face interviews with 17 actors/officials (e.g., Representatives of Regulatory Bodies, International Relations' Offices/Registrar's Offices and Heads of Departments of HEIs/TEIs) involved in HE administration in Ghana.

Procedure

Data collection procedures relating to access to the HEIs/TEIs across the country was facilitated by the British Council, Ghana initial to the research team going to the field for data collection. This took the form of emails and letters sent by the British Council, Ghana to all the institutions to be involved in the study two clear weeks before the research team embarked upon the data collection. Besides, personal introductory letters were given to the field officers to be delivered to the institutions to enable them to grant them access to the HEIs/TEIs for data collection. In all, the country was divided into zones for data collection purposes, and research data were collected in three phases. Phase one involved a desk review of relevant policy documents, empirical literature, and technical and institutional reports to provide the context and theoretical support for the research. Phase two constituted a cross-sectional survey involving the collection and analysis of quantitative data from 102 HEIs/TEIs about their involvement (or otherwise) in TNE partnerships with reasons.

Phase three, which was sub-divided into two stages, comprised a follow-up survey conducted with 28 HEIs/TEIs, and in-depth multi-site case study interviews conducted with 17 officials selected regarding the nature and scope of their TNE partnerships.

Data Analysis

The analysis of data collected was undertaken based on the three phases of data collection outlined. First, the textual data collected through document and literature reviews were analysed thematically through processes of skimming (superficial examination), reading (thorough examination), and interpretation. Second, the survey data collected was organised and analysed using SPSS Version 20, and the findings presented using descriptive statistics (i.e., frequency tables and charts). Third, the analysis of interview transcripts generated through the multi-site case study interviews was analysed using NVivo 8 to store, code, categorise and analyse the data. The use of NVivo software facilitated a more nuanced comparison within and across cases using coded data as well as data storage (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992). Thus, the thematic analysis used generally in this study involved a careful, more focused re-reading and review of the data, which involved taking a closer look at the selected data and coding and categorising the data based on the data's characteristics to uncover themes pertinent to TNE partnerships in HEIs/TEIs in Ghana.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The presentation of research findings in this article is done according to the three research questions posed. For the article and owing essentially to the composite data collection and analysis methods employed, evidence marshalled to address the research questions are drawn mainly from questionnaires administered to the 28 HEIs/TEIs involved in TNE partnerships, and the open-ended semi-structured interviews conducted with 17 actors/officials of HEIs/TEIs engaged in HE administration in Ghana.

Research Question 1: How Do Ghanaian HEIs/TEIs Involved in TNE Partnerships Assess Teaching and Teacher Training?

This first research question sought to examine the ways/means by which HEIs/TEIs involved in TNE partnerships in Ghana assess teaching and teacher training. The quantitative findings to this research question are presented in Figure 1 using a column chart.

Figure 1. Number of HEIs/TEIs assessing teaching and teacher training in Ghana.
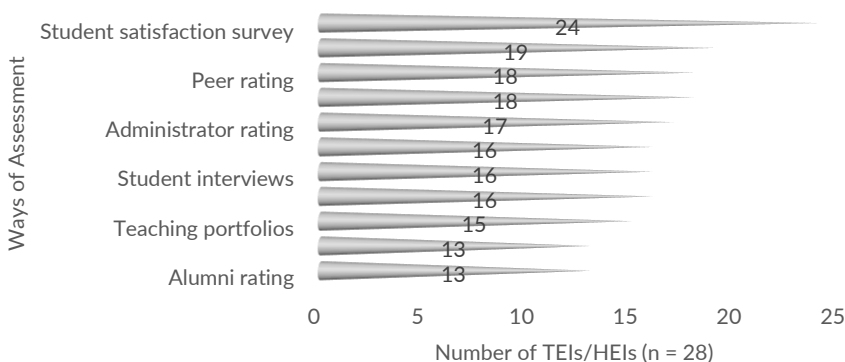
Evidence from Figure 1 shows that all the 28 HEIs/TEIs surveyed use a variety of ways/means to assess teaching. However, reading across the Figure, it becomes apparent that the major means by which the institutions assess teaching are through student satisfaction survey 24(85%), student engagement survey 19(67.9%), peer rating 18(64.3%) and external reviews 18(64.3%). The least means by which the institutions assess teaching, on the other hand, are through alumni rating 13(46.6%) and teaching scholarship 13(46.6%). This is particularly not surprising granted that the ways/means of assessing teaching that is rated low (namely: alumni rating, teaching scholarship, and teaching portfolios) could be said, arguably, to be 'innovative' and 'most recent' approaches introduced in recent literature (e.g., Berk, 2005; Felder & Brent, 2004; Little et al., 2009; Stripling et al., 2019; University of Washington, n.d.), and which HEIs, particularly those from developing nations such as Ghana, are being encouraged to adopt. In this sense, the findings in Figure 1 could be interpreted, at least in the basic sense, to mean that Ghanaian HEIs/TEIs still prioritised orthodox means/ways of assessing teaching practices.

Regarding the multi-site qualitative case study interviews conducted with the 17 official/actors of the Ghanaian HE/TE system, there were some seeming convergences relating particularly to the ways/means of assessing teaching. In these case study interviews, the interviewees appeared to corroborate the aspects of the findings illustrated in Figure 1 directly. Generally, the interviewees confirmed that their HEIs/TEIs assess teaching and teacher training through several ways, but emphasized student satisfaction surveys as the common or main means by which this is carried out in their institutions of higher learning. The ensuing excerpts illustrate this argument forcefully:

…Internally, at the end of every semester, questionnaires are given to students to fill about their various lecturers and then for administration, we also do our part. The President [Head of the Institution], even at times, moves with some of us to the various lecture halls. We stand from afar to listen to whatever they are doing (Senior Officer of Private HEI/TEI 6).

…We assess teaching from students' feedback at the end of the semester and in-between semesters. Also, we administer students' surveys. We also have Head of Departments and Deans as Coordinators, and it is part of their responsibilities to also observe teaching and the individual lecturers. And sometimes we do come to the lecture rooms to observe physically how they are teaching and the teaching method they employ… (Senior Officer of Private HEI/TEI 4).

Another interviewee pointed out succinctly how student satisfaction surveys, peer rating, external reviews, and administrative ratings are used normally to assess teaching in their HEI/TEI:

In our institution, we normally do student satisfaction surveys. We also involve students in surveys concerning the assessment of teaching. We also have peer rating, do teaching portfolios, and administrative ratings. Assessment is also done on teaching scholarships and student interviews. If we interview students and they are not happy with a particular lecturer or facilitator, we would know … and, through external reviews that we do. We send some of our exam questions, send marked scripts from all the departments for moderation, and review to external institutions and a report is sent to the Vice-Chancellor … (Senior Officer of Public HEI/TEI 3).

In yet another interview, one official/actor explained that they assess teaching through appraisal, peer-reviewing, and student satisfaction surveys conducted through the institution's Quality Assurance Unit. Besides these, he/she explained further that verification of academic qualifications of faculty of his/her institution, as a measure of ensuring that only qualified teachers are recruited, is done by regulatory bodies. In his/her own words, the interviewee explained

that:

> This [verification of academic qualification] is done at the point of entry into the institution. For your appointment into our institution as a lecturer, you have to come along with your original certificate, and the National Accreditation Board (NAB) and National Council for Tertiary Education (NCTE) [the two institutions now are known as the Ghana Tertiary Education Commission] have to undertake an audit checking the veracity of your certificates and all that to ensure that the right thing is done... (Senior Officer of Public HEI/TEI 6).

So clearly, the findings from the two data sources appear to endorse the admonition in the literature (e.g., CRLT, n.d.; Felder & Brent, 2004; Hoyt & Pallett, 2014; Little et al., 2009; Stripling et al., 2019) concerning ways/means/methods of assessing teaching using multiple sources of data. As the literature suggests, different ways/means/methods of assessing teaching and teacher training are used on a large scale to assess the quality of teaching in HEIs/TEIs as well as for comparing teacher performance across courses, departments and even universities (Goos & Salomons, 2017). Thus, overall, teaching and teacher training assessments can affect faculty promotions, students' applications, as well as students' course selection and, are used for published institutional teaching rankings and in auditing practices for demonstrating institutional performance.

As can be observed from the findings illustrated in this article, the Ghanaian HEI/TEIs involved in TNE partnerships have identified some useful ways/means for assessing instructional effectiveness, which includes student satisfaction surveys, student ratings of instruction, peer review of teaching, peer ratings, administrative ratings, and teaching portfolio and course portfolios. This is important because, as Goos and Salomons (2017) put it, feedback of/from teaching assessments should be used to measure teaching quality and to compare it across different courses, teachers, departments, and institutions. The findings illustrated, therefore, highlight the view that assessing and improving teaching is best accomplished when multiple sources of evidence—self-reflection, student feedback, and peer observation—are well understood and used. Thus, making use of these multiple sources of evidence helps to obtain a holistic picture of teachers' approaches to teaching and their effectiveness (Little et al., 2009; Stripling et al., 2019; University of Washington, n.d.).

Thus, these findings indeed illustrate the point that in the Ghanaian HE context, assessment of teaching and teacher training is viewed as an important quality assurance issue, which cuts across both public and private tertiary institutions and involves the use of various sources of evidence to evaluate the quality of teaching and learning of students. However, as the evidence suggests implicitly, (and as some authors, for example, Goos & Salomons, 2017, have argued), the quality of teaching and teacher training in Ghana (and in developing countries in general) appears largely to be evaluated by/through orthodox means, particularly via student surveys and students' performance indicators at the end of semesters. Other most recent and innovative means, such as peer rating, self-evaluation, teaching portfolio, administrators' ratings, seem to be used only minimally. The implication of this, therefore, is that the results of teaching evaluation are given to teachers as feedback on their teaching quality, and are often used for appointment confirmation and promotion purposes. Very little attention is given to how this feedback is used to improve teaching to be able to impact students' learning directly.

Research Question 2: What Practices/Procedures Do Ghanaian HEIs/TEIs Use to Ascertain Teaching and Teacher Training Effectiveness at the Point of Recruitment of Teaching Staff?

To address this question, the questionnaire items required respondents to select from a set of four options, appropriate

statements that indicate how their HEIs/TEIs examine the appropriateness of their prospective teaching staff relative to teaching and teacher training. The qualitative case study interviews, on the other hand, extended slightly from this focus to identify the several different methods and approaches that the HEIs/TEIs adopt to ensure that good quality teaching staff are recruited and retained to ensure and assure quality services delivery. The quantitative findings to this sub-research question are illustrated first in Figure 2.

Figure 2. Number of HEIs/TEIs using teacher effectiveness practices.
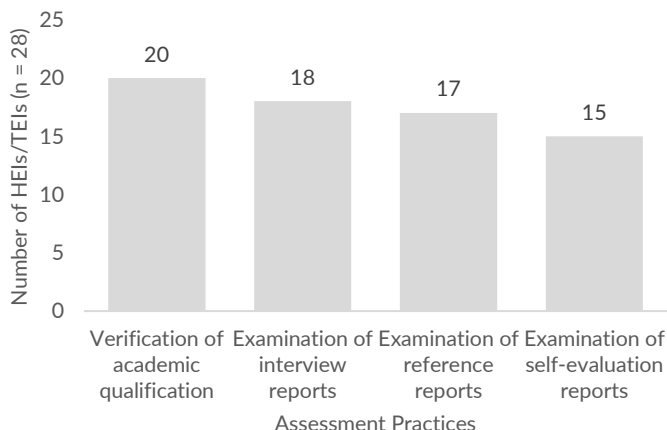
Figure 2 shows that the 28 HEI/TEI that indicated they were engaged in TNE partnerships generally employed verification of academic qualification in assessing teacher training more than the other three options. Twenty (20) out of the 28 HEIs/TEIs (comprising 71.8%) alluded to the use of verification of academic qualification as the first and foremost procedure/practice they adopt in assessing teacher training in their institutions. This is followed by an examination of interview reports of 18 (representing 64.3%), the examination of reference reports of 17 (constituting 60.7%), and examination of self-evaluation reports of 15 (representing 53.6%). Clearly, the evidence from Figure 2 shows that the HEIs/TEIs do not differ much (in terms of numbers), regarding the practices they employ to ensure that the effectiveness of teaching and teacher training are assessed in their respective institutions at the stage of recruitment of new staff.

The case study interviews conducted showed generally that the HEIs/TEIs assess the effectiveness of teaching and teacher training of their newly recruited teaching staff by adhering to several different methods and approaches. This is evident in the views of one interviewee who shared the plethora of approach used by his/her HEI/TEI in this regard:

> As I said before, we have verification of academic qualifications, examination and/or assessment of referee reports, the examination of interview reports because from time to time, we do promotions in which people (referring to staff) are interviewed. The verification process is done this way: a department makes a request for staff, then the applicant goes to the department to do a presentation to the academic faculty. After this, the whole department will assess you. So, if you qualify, then the department recommends you to the registry. Then, they (i.e., the department) will call the applicant for an interview. When the applicant is coming, we have requirements for the job application. So, normally the academic qualifications should be part, the original certificates or the certified copies should be part of the application (Senior Officer of Public HEI/TEI 3).

Another interviewee gave insights into the 'age-old' practice of his/her HEI/TEI in organising orientation courses for

their newly appointed teaching staff to gain further exposure and experience in how teaching in institutions of higher learning is or should be conducted:

> The College of Education in my institution has tried to develop this certificate course for new teachers... Newly-appointed lecturers go through this orientation and are trained. But we feel this should be institutionalised so that it is a regular way of horning the skills of our lecturers. During the recruitment process, we know that many people will state whether they have been teaching in the university system, and sometimes, during the teaching demonstration, when we realise you are good with the knowledge but not too good with delivery, then we flag you to go for the orientation course (Senior Officer of Public HEI/TEI 2).

The interviewees who represented regulatory bodies, on their part, explained that because of their position as regulators of the entire HE/TE system in Ghana, they do not have any direct role in assessing the effectiveness of staff that HEI/TEIs recruit internally. They argued that this notwithstanding, they have some general quality assurance guidelines which they apply remotely to ensure that HEIs/TEIs hire good quality teaching staff for quality education delivery. One of the regulatory body representatives put this aptly:

> When the curriculum is brought to us, we have certain requirements that need to be met. We make sure that those who are going to teach have terminal degrees. We also make sure that for any new programme, there are at least three lecturers, and one has to be a senior lecturer. We don't assess lecturers directly in faculties. As part of the quality assurance processes, students are supposed to evaluate their lecturers. So, we encourage students-teacher assessment. We also have peer assessment policy and so based on the feedback we get when we go there, we get to know what is happening. At times we go to the institutions and engage the students to get information to know how the teachers are faring... (Senior Officer of a Regulatory Body 2).

Thus, the evidence adduced from the interviews concerning research question two is interesting for two key reasons. One, the evidence has provided an understanding of the mechanisms that are used to check the quality of teaching experience and teacher training of newly recruited teaching staff in Ghanaian HEIs/TEIs. Two, the evidence gives credence to the view that HEIs/TEIs and their regulatory authority in Ghana do indeed have, and trigger several 'external' teacher quality assessment mechanisms to ensure that good quality staff are recruited and retained for quality services delivery (Abraham, 2017; Baryeh, 2009). As revealing as these are, the consistency with which these quality assurance mechanisms are applied amongst and across the HEI/TEIs is unclear from the interviewee accounts.

Research Question 3: What Are the Reasons for Assessing Teaching and Teacher Training in Ghanaian HEIs/TEIs?

This research question sought to understand from the perspectives of the HEIs/TEIs involved in TNE partnerships in Ghana their reasons for undertaking teaching and teacher training assessments in their institutions of higher learning. In the case of the questionnaire data collected for analysis, respondents were asked to select suitable options from a set of ten (10) statements put together from the review of literature on the reasons/purposes for assessing teaching and teacher training in HEIs. Figure 3 presents the quantitative findings to this research question.

Figure 3 illustrates the views of the 28 Ghanaian HEI/TEIs involved in TNE partnerships regarding the reasons/purposes for which teaching, and teacher training assessments are undertaken in their institutions of learning. According to the participating institutions, the four most prominent reasons/purposes for which teaching, and teacher training assessments are undertaken in their institutions are: '*assisting teachers in deciding and developing the ways,*

methods, techniques of teaching'; '*planning appropriate and adequate techniques of instruction*'; '*helping to collect feedback for teaching and curriculum improvement*'; and '*providing teachers with useful information on the quality of content and delivery*'. Twenty-one (21) out of the 28 HEIs/TEIs (representing 75.0%) alluded to these four reasons as the most prominent among the options provided. Following these four prominent reasons closely, twenty (20) of the HEIs/TEIs (comprising 71.4%) indicated '*helping to improve instruction*' as a reason for assessing teaching in their institutions; whilst nineteen (19) of the institutions (comprising 67.9%) said '*helping to formulate and reformulate suitable and realistic objectives of instruction*' and '*assisting in gathering data as part of personnel decisions, such as reappointments*' are the reasons/purposes for undertaking teaching and teacher training assessments in their institutions. At the bottom, sixteen (16) of the HEIs/TEIs (comprising 57.1%) indicated '*academic staff tenure*' and '*helping to develop a portfolio for job applications*' as the other reasons/purposes for assessing teaching and teacher training in their institutions.

Figure 3. Number of HEIs/TEIs and reasons for assessing teaching and teacher training in Ghana.
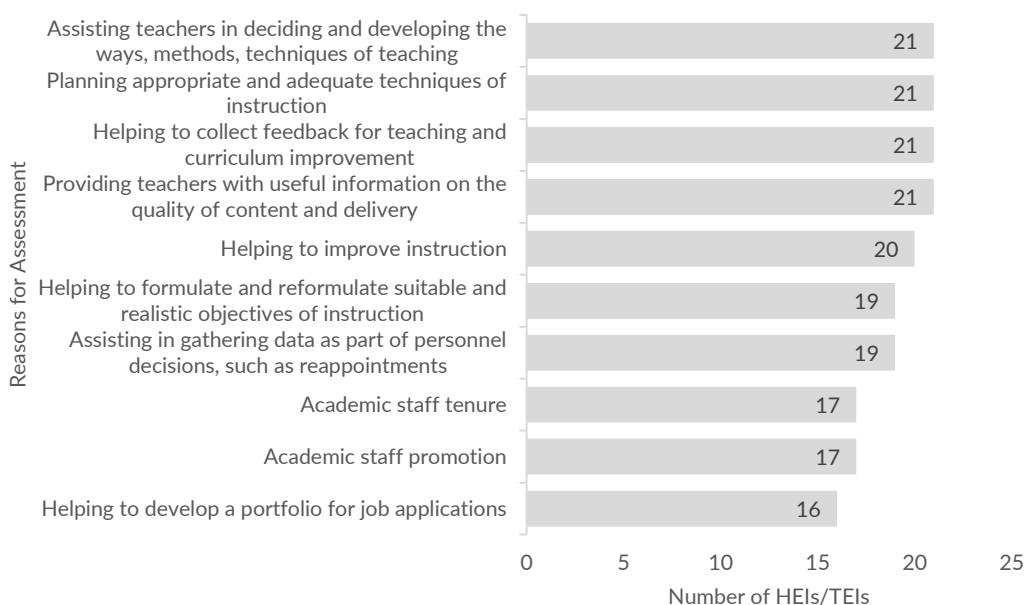
A critical look at the findings illustrated in Figure 3 alludes to one key point worth stressing. The findings suggest in the assessment of teaching practices, especially among the 28 HEIs/TEIs that participated in the study, attention appears to be paid more to issues relating teachers' professional development (i.e., to issues relating to teacher quality, the quality of teaching delivery, teaching methods and techniques and curriculum improvement matters) than concerns for the quality of students' learning. This point is interesting and thus corroborate in one sense with evidence from the literature (e.g., The Carnegie Mellon University, n.d.; CRLT, n.d.; Felder & Brent, 2004; Little et al., 2009; Stripling et al., 2019), which stresses the point that for quality service delivery purposes, teacher professional development issues need to take pre-eminence over such other matters such as staff tenure, teacher progression and remunerations. In another sense; however, this observation does suggest, albeit implicitly, that the purpose of undertaking teaching and teacher training assessments may be intended to bring about improvement in students learning; however, these assessments are perhaps not undertaken in tandem with learning concerns to help teachers improve and refine their teaching practices to enable students to improve upon their learning and performance.

On the part of the qualitative findings, insights from the semi-structured interviews conducted with the 17 officials/actors from case study institutions were quite revealing and corroborated the quantitative findings covertly. Most of the respondents interviewed made a strong case for the role of assessment of teaching and teacher training in assuring and ensuring the quality of teaching and learning. Respondents from two participating institutions, for example, had these to say about the reasons why they (i.e., their HEIs/TEIs) undertake teaching and teacher training assessments:

> The academic board does a lot and we also have the quality assurance office in place so that even at the time you're employed, you are made to do a practical tutorial for us to see whether you know the area that you are talking about. In addition to that, when the examination results are out, the examination board sits on it and they can assess whether a lecturer is performing or not... If so, many students are either failing or passing, it is a clear indication that something is wrong. They go through all these to make sure that our lecturers are putting forth their best and that quality education is being delivered (Senior Officer of Private HEI/TEI 6).

> We should be interested because everything about education is an improvement. We constantly have to be looking at how we do things to compare what is happening in the field. The new ideas redefine our path every time to make sure we are on course, and to get the best form of knowledge available to us as a country. This helps us know our lapses to organise training programmes for our staff so that they can deliver nothing but the quality (Senior Officer of Private HEI/TEI 1).

Quite clearly, the evidence adduced to answer this research question are but few of the very many reasons advanced in the literature for assessing teaching and teacher training using multiple sources of data. It is, for example, clear from the literature that the importance of assessing university teaching can be seen in the many purposes of evaluating teaching which includes, but not limited to, collecting feedback for teaching improvement, developing a portfolio for job applications, or gathering data as part of personnel decisions, such as reappointment or promotion and tenure (CRLT, n.d.; Felder & Brent, 2004; Hoyt & Pallett, 1999; Little et al., 2009; Stripling et al., 2019). However, as the findings from the study suggest, the HEIs/TEIs involved in TNE in the Ghanaian context appear to agree, although implicitly, that one of the foremost reasons for assessing teaching and teacher training is for the professional development of teachers/lecturers for quality assurance purposes. In this sense, the findings support one aspect of the Carnegie Mellon University's (n.d.) view implicitly but fail on the other aspect. The Carnegie Mellon University argues that assessment of teaching should aim to benefit both the professional development of the teacher as well as the quality of students' learning. The Carnegie Mellon University makes the point forcefully that assessing only teaching behaviours and course activities cannot be sufficient because the qualities of the teacher may be appreciated by students but not optimally helpful to their learning and growth. More so, the Carnegie Mellon University argues that assessing learning alone also cannot be sufficient because the ultimate success of students is also dependent upon their motivation and commitment to learning. For this reason, it is important, according to the Carnegie Mellon University, to emphasize that assessment of teaching and learning are two complementary and overlapping activities that should aim to benefit and/or underpin both the professional development of the teacher and the quality of student learning. This implies therefore that assessment of teaching and learning should be done in tandem to help teachers improve and refine their teaching practices to help improve students' learning and performance.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This article is an offshoot of a British Council, Ghana sponsored research project which explored TNE partnerships and the environment of distance learning in HEI/TEIs in Ghana. The article reports generally on the ways by which teaching and teacher training in Ghanaian HEI/TEIs are assessed to ensure that quality education delivery in Ghanaian institutions of higher learning is assured. Given the findings reported and discussed in the article, some conclusions can be drawn.

First, and regarding the findings which indicate that Ghanaian HEIs/TEIs involved TNE partnerships use two key mechanisms (namely: students' feedback in the form of student satisfaction and/or engagement surveys and peer observation of lessons) to assess teaching and teacher training. Thus, these institutions may have genuine intentions to improve quality education delivery to transform the learning experiences of their students. However, these good intentions appear to be constrained by their lack of knowledge and expertise about innovative and resourceful ways of undertaking teaching and teacher training assessments generally in HEIs/TEIs.

Second, we also conclude on the back of the research findings which suggests that Ghanaian HEIs/TEIs involved TNE partnerships assess the effectiveness of the teaching and teacher training of their newly recruited teaching staff by adhering to several different methods and approaches. Although this practice is commendable, some level of consistency is needed to ensure that all the HEI/TEIs are on the same page in terms of usage of assessment methods and approaches.

Third, and related to research question three, the findings reveal that the focus of teaching and teacher training assessments in Ghanaian HEIs/TEIs appear to centre on improving the quality of teaching delivery and curriculum improvement than concerns for the quality of students' learning. Thus, perhaps, teaching and teacher training assessments in these institutions are not undertaken in tandem with learning to help teachers improve and refine their teaching practices to help improve students' learning and performance.

Acknowledgments

REFERENCES

Abraham, S. K. (2017). *Is Ghana's higher education system delivering value to graduate students?: A comparison of foreign-trained to in-country trained university lecturers in the private university system* (Unpublished bachelor's dissertation). Ashesi University College.

Alexander, R. J. (2017). *Towards dialogic teaching: Rethinking classroom talk* (5th ed.). Dialogos.

Allen, C. H. (1940). In-service training of teachers. *Review of Educational Research, 10*, 210-215. doi: 10.3102/00346543010003210

Baryeh, J. O. B. (2009). *Higher education quality assurance in Ghana: How NAB is coping with the balance between improvement and accountability* (Unpublished master's thesis). University of Oslo.

Berk, R. A. (2005). Survey of 12 strategies to measure teaching effectiveness. *Journal of Teaching and Learning in Higher Education, 17*(1), 48-62.

Berman, E. A. (2017). An exploratory sequential mixed-methods approach to understanding researchers' data management practices at UVM: Integrated findings to develop research data services. *Journal of eScience Librarianship 6/1*: e1104

Bogdan, R. C., & Biklen, S. K. (1992). *Qualitative research for education: An introduction to theory and methods*. Allyn and Bacon.

Bovill, C., Jordan, L., & Watters, N. (2015). Transnational approaches to teaching and learning in higher education: Challenges and possible guiding principles. *Teaching in Higher Education, 20*(1), 12-23. doi: 10.1080/13562517.2014.945162

Carnegie Mellon University, Eberly Center. (n.d.). *Conduct assessments of learning and teaching*. https://www.cmu.edu/teaching.designteach/teach/assesslearning teaching.html

Center for Research on Learning and Teaching. (n.d.). *Guidelines for evaluating teaching*. The Regents of the University of Michigan. http://www.crlt.umich.edu/tstrategies/guidelines

Christensen, C. R., Garvin, D. A., & Sweet, A. (Eds.). (1991). *Education for judgment: The artistry of discussion leadership*. Harvard Business School.

Creswell, J. W., & Plano Clark, V. L. (2011). *Designing and conducting mixed methods research* (2nd ed.). Sage.

Darling-Hammond, L. (2006). Assessing teacher education: The usefulness of multiple measures for assessing program outcomes. *Journal of Teacher Education, 57*(2), 120-138. doi: 10.1177/0022487105283796

Felder, R. M., & Brent, R. (2004). How to evaluate teaching. *Chemical Engineering Education, 38*(3), 200-202.

Fry, H., Ketteridge, S., & Marshall, S. (Eds.). (2016*). A handbook for teaching and learning in higher education: Enhancing academic practice* (3rd ed.). Routledge.

George Lucas Educational Foundation. (n.d.). *Assessment. Why is assessment important?* https://www.edutopia.org/assessment-guide-importance

Goos, M., & Salomons, A. (2017). Measuring teaching quality in higher education: Assessing selection bias in course evaluations. *Research in Higher Education, 58*, 341-364. doi: 10.1007/s11162-016-9429-8

Hoyt, D. P., & Pallet, W. H. (2014*). Appraising teaching effectiveness: Beyond student ratings. Idea Paper 36*. The Idea Center. https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED462905.pdf

Little, O., Goe, L., & Bell, C. (2009). *A practical guide to evaluating teacher effectiveness*. National Comprehensive Center for Teacher Quality. https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED543776.pdf

National Education Association. (n.d.) *Teacher assessment and evaluation: The National Education Association's framework for transforming education systems to support effective teaching and improve student learning.* https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED583104.pdf

Nudzor, H. P., Oduro, G. K. T., Bosu, R. S., Amakyi, M., Ankomah, Y. A., Bakah, M. A. B., Koomson, J., Akomaning, E., Aidoo, D. B., Adosi, C. M. (2019). *Investigating transnational education (TNE) partnerships and the environment of distance learning in higher education institutions (HEIs) in Ghana.* British Council, Ghana. https://www.britishcouncil.org.gh

O'Neill, G. P. (1986). Teacher education or teacher training: Which is it? *McGill Journal of Education, 21*(3), 257-265.

Obanya, P., Shabani, J., & Okebukola, P. (2000). *Guide to teaching and learning in higher education.* UNESCO. https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000227677

Raza, M. A., Bilal, M., Rasheed, M. R., Chandio, B. A., Ahmad, N., & Sawand, F. A. (2015). Quality assessment in higher education. *International Letters of Social and Humanistic Sciences, 50*, 162-171. doi: 10.18052/www.scipress.com/ILSHS.50.162

Stellenbosch University. (2013). *Teaching, learning, assessment, curriculum, and pedagogy.* http://www.sun.ac.za/english/learning-teaching/ctl/t-l-resources/curriculum-t-l-assessment

Stripling, C. T., Estepp, C. M., & McClanahan, R. (2019). Measuring teaching effectiveness. *NACTA Journal, 64*(1), 338-352. doi: 10.2307/27157809

Subedi, D. (2016). Explanatory sequential mixed-method design as the third research community of knowledge claim. *American Journal of Educational Research, 4*(7), 570–577. doi: 10.12691/education-4-7-10

TDA - Teacher training (n.d.). TDA Teacher. Retrieved on April 5, 2019 from https://www.tda/uk

The Glossary of Education Reform. (2015, October 11). *Assessment.* https://www.edglossary.org/assessment/

University of Washington, Center for Teaching and Learning. (n.d.). *A guide to best practice for evaluating teaching.* https://www.washington.edu/teaching/teaching-resources/assessing-and-improving-teaching/evaluation/