Rethinking the place of micro-teaching in initial teacher education in Ghana: Insights from colleges of education

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ABSTRACT

Microteaching is a well-established pedagogical strategy for professional competencies in teacher education globally. It is explicitly omitted from the Initial Teacher Education (ITE) curriculum yet operationalised by some colleges under the Supported Teaching in Schools (STS) policy, which warrants critical interrogation. Relying on the theory of enactment, this qualitative study employed semi-structured interviews to elicit data from the ten (10) policy actors from two distinct case studies. Reflexive thematic analysis was employed to analyse the responses using NVivo 15 version. The study revealed that all policy actors agreed on the need to introduce an STS policy to address the perceived decline in student teachers' pedagogical competencies. Whilst microteaching was introduced in the Urban College of Education, actors in the peri-urban colleges of education felt powerless to introduce it, citing a lack of support from authorities. This study argues that the introduction of microteaching does not deviate from policy and curriculum intent but rather reflects a perceived philosophical disparity between policy actors and policy intentions of teacher preparation. The study exposed the influence of contextual dimensions and prior experiences of policy actors on the complexities of policy enactment rather than mere implementation. The study recommends integrating supervised simulation practice into STS activities and providing effective training for policy actors to reduce policy alienation.

Keywords: Initial Teacher Education, Micro-Teaching, Policy Actors, Policy Subjects, Supported Teaching in Schools

I. INTRODUCTION

The quest to achieve the quality education enshrined in Sustainable Development Goal 4 requires a systemic shift that leads to significant reforms in teacher education. The quality of initial teacher education remains a focal point of policy and research, as the success of every educational system in every nation depends on the quality of its teacher education (Eloff et al., 2025). This imperative is increasingly reflected globally, as many nations have redesigned their teacher education curricula to better align theoretical preparation with professional practice through clinically rich, practice-based models (Darling-Hammond, 2023; Ramaila, 2026). These practice-based models, such as microteaching, simulation, peer teaching, and on-campus teaching, serve as key pedagogical strategies that enable pre-service teachers to rehearse instructional practices, engage with formative feedback, and build confidence prior to leading in authentic classroom environments. These focus on the clinically oriented curricula underscore a collective effort to transcend traditional, abstract instructional approaches and practice-led teacher preparation (Darling-Hammond, 2023; Ramaila, 2026).

In 2018, Ghana's initial teacher education curriculum reform was introduced, marking a pivotal shift toward practice-based teacher preparation. This transition seeks to address long-standing concerns about the theory-practice dichotomy by introducing the Supported Teaching in School (STS) as a school-led teacher-preparation policy that provides pre-service teachers with opportunities to practice teaching in authentic classroom settings (Ministry of Education [MoE], 2024; T-TEL, 2018). This school-led initiative is fundamental to the reform, as it seeks to transform traditional, theory-heavy approaches into a more clinically rich experience that better prepares pre-service teachers for the multifaceted realities of the classroom (Darling-Hammond, 2023). By embedding professional development directly within school environments, the STS policy aims to foster a continuous and reflective learning trajectory, thereby aligning candidate competencies with the evolving expectations of the National Teachers' Standards (Ramaila, 2026). Nevertheless, even with this emphasis on immersive field experiences, microteaching remains a vital bridge between

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campus-based preparation and real-world practice, offering a controlled, safe environment for pre-service teachers to refine critical pedagogical skills (Ismail, 2011; Ledger & Fischetti, 2019).

Despite these reforms, the revised Initial Teacher Education curriculum does not explicitly mandate microteaching as a preparatory activity within the Supported Teaching in Schools policy activities. This omission is significant, as microteaching has long been recognised as a vital conduit between pedagogical theory and authentic classroom practice, and it remains prominent in teacher education curricula globally (Ismail, 2011; Ledger & Fischetti, 2019). Integrating such simulated sessions provides the necessary scaffolding for pre-service teachers to experiment with complex pedagogical strategies in a reduced-complexity environment before facing the unpredictability of field placements (Trent, 2023). Beyond simulation and rehearsal experiences, microteaching provides a structured environment in which pre-service teachers can integrate theoretical knowledge with pedagogical practice under the supervision of experienced college supervisors (Ismail, 2011; Ledger & Fischetti, 2019). Considering the contribution of microteaching to teacher preparation, the explicit omission in the STS policy raises critical concerns worth scholarly interrogation.

Anecdotal evidence reveals variation in the implementation of the STS policy, with some colleges of education augmenting teacher preparation with microteaching or campus-based rehearsals, whereas others adhere exclusively to the policy's prescriptions. This discrepancy creates inconsistencies in the practical readiness of teacher trainees, potentially undermining the uniform achievement of the National Teachers' Standards (Dankwah et al., 2021). This variation illustrates that curriculum implementation is not a linear process of compliance, but rather a dynamic process in which policy actors interpret, negotiate, and adapt policy within their unique institutional contexts (Ball et al., 2012; Braun et al., 2010, 2011). This study, therefore, critically investigates how teacher educators and partner school mentors negotiate the role of microteaching within Ghana's Initial Teacher Education curriculum, specifically examining how these situated interpretations shape the contextualised enactment of the STS policy.

1.1 Research Objectives

i. To examine how teacher educators and mentors enact the STS policy within the initial teacher education in Ghana
ii. To explore the teacher educators and mentors' perspective on the exclusion of Micro-teaching in the ITE curriculum in Ghana

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Theoretical Review

2.1.1 The Theory of Enactment

The theory of enactment, proposed to address the complexity of policy implementation, departing from the conventional linear, top-down approach to policy implementation and the Fidelity of Implementation (FOI), which treats any implementation deviation of a policy text as failure (Ball et al., 2012; Breitenstein et al., 2010; Tan, 2017). Unlike the fidelity of policy implementation approach, where policy actors are understood to passively accept and adopt the official policy narrative (Tan, 2017), the enactment of policy assumes that the actors constantly (re) interpret, adapt and or transform new policy ideas through their experiences, preexisting knowledge, expertise and practices (Tan, 2017). Maguire et al. (2015) and Tan (2017) argue that educators' role is not just to be policy subjects, the direct product of the policy, but also policy actors who are part of the policy implementation and enact the policy based on their contextual realities.

The theory of enactment is built on three main facets and four contextual dimensions. The facets include the material (physical aspects of the school or institution, depending on the context), the interpretive (the meaning made by policy actors and subjects), and the discursive (discourse and narrative surrounding education policies that shape how the policies are translated into practice) (Ball et al., 2012; Lopes, 2016). The contextual dimensions of policy enactment involves four main categories, and these are: situated (e.g. locale, school histories, intakes and settings), professional (e.g. values, teacher commitments and experiences, and 'policy management' in schools), material (staffing, budget, buildings, technology and infrastructure), and external context (e.g. degree and quality of local authority support, pressures and expectations from a broader policy context) (Ball et al., 2012; Braun et al., 2011; Weng, 2024). These contextual realities and policy facets work together to influence how educational policies are enacted within a complex, multidimensional institutional context.

In this study, the application of the facets and contextual dimension of the theory of enactment is focused on the policy actors (college supervisors and partner school mentors) who are at the centre stage of STS policy implementation. These policy actors are individuals with enormous professional expertise, institutional positioning, and contextual knowledge who actively construct the meaning of the STS policy in practice rather than passively transmitting a predetermined script (Ball et al., 2012; Tan, 2017; Weng, 2024). The teacher educators and partner school mentors are considered not merely passive conduits or implementers of predetermined policy texts, but interpretive agents who exercise professional judgement to close the void emanating from the policy reality gap. To address this gap and situate

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the study theoretically, the role of microteaching in STS policy implementation depends heavily on teacher educators' and partner school mentors' interpretations and meaning-making of the policy text, as well as on contextual dimensions that influence implementation.

2.2 Empirical Review

2.2.1 Microteaching as a Pedagogical Technique in Teacher Preparation

Microteaching is considered a pedagogical exercise in which prospective teachers deliver brief lessons to peers, receive structured feedback, and refine their instructional strategies before progressing to full-scale classroom practice (Ismail, 2011). Emerging from Stanford University in the late 1950s, microteaching was designed to reduce instructional complexity by enabling student teachers to isolate specific skills, receive targeted feedback, reflect on their performance, and iteratively refine their lessons (Ismail, 2011; Ledger & Fischetti, 2019). The microteaching has since become a foundational component of teacher education and professional preparation aimed at building pedagogical competencies of the preservice teachers (Trent, 2023). Its primary purpose is to enable student teachers to demonstrate their lesson-planning competence in a low-stakes setting, which provides a critical basis for assessing readiness before engaging in authentic classroom practice (ENAMA, 2021). Integrating structured pedagogical rehearsals into teacher professional preparation enables student teachers to cultivate expertise that mitigates the risks of relying solely on trial and error in live classrooms (Arsal, 2015; Ledger & Fischetti, 2019). Studies have shown that microteaching substantially improves pre-service teachers' proficiencies in key areas, including classroom management, instructional delivery, communication, questioning strategies, differentiated instruction, assessment, and reflective practice (Arsal, 2015). In this regard, microteaching is positioned not as a mere routine exercise but as a strategic pedagogical intervention that synthesises theoretical knowledge, subject content, and reflective practice.

Beyond the traditional implementation of microteaching, it has also increasingly been hybridised with complementary pedagogical strategies to augment its developmental utility. The incorporation of technology and digital video analysis enables the systematic re-evaluation of teaching sessions, facilitating a deeper cycle of re-planning and iterative improvement (Ledger & Fischetti, 2019). The rapid integration of digital transformation in microteaching from traditional, campus-based environments to online platforms was a pivotal catalyst driven by COVID-19 (Zalavra & Makri, 2022). This shift transcended mere crisis response, signalling a fundamental reconfiguration of teacher preparation that demonstrated the pedagogical viability of virtual environments in preserving the continuity and quality of clinical practice (Keefe, 2020; Zalavra & Makri, 2022). Beyond serving as a temporary emergency measure, this transition proved that digital platforms can effectively support professional development, establishing new paradigms for clinical teacher training (Keefe, 2020; Zalavra & Makri, 2022). Even though this transition was bedevilled by challenges such as technical difficulties, poor internet connectivity, and limited direct interaction, it encouraged the adoption of virtual coaching and collaborative digital tools, thereby broadening the scope of microteaching (Cleland et al., 2020; Ledger & Fischetti, 2019).

Notwithstanding the contribution of microteaching to the professional development of pre-service teachers, existing literature highlights that its effectiveness is inherently tied to the quality of feedback and the capacity for reflective practice. Some studies argued that microteaching occurs in a controlled, artificial environment and fails to mirror the unpredictable complexities of authentic classroom practice, thus limiting its effectiveness as a standalone preparation strategy (Ismail, 2011; Ledger & Fischetti, 2019). Despite such criticisms, the literature overwhelmingly positions microteaching not as a peripheral or auxiliary exercise but as a critical pedagogical intervention (Ismail, 2011; Ledger & Fischetti, 2019). Microteaching offers a de-risking opportunity to the transition to supervised school placements by equipping student teachers with the competence necessary to navigate the complexities of authentic classroom environments (Arsal, 2015; Ledger & Fischetti, 2019; Trent, 2023). Consequently, the formal omission of microteaching from Ghana's ITE curriculum and its informal reintroduction by some colleges of education point to a significant policy enactment gap that warrants further scholarly investigation.

2.2.2 The Supported Teaching in Schools (STS) policy

The Supported Teaching in Schools (STS) policy is among the four most critical pillars of the National Teacher Education Curriculum Framework (NTECF) and plays a crucial role in Ghana's 2018 initial teacher education curriculum reform. The STS policy was designed to provide student teachers with an extended supervised period for practising teaching (MoE, 2024). The policy reflects the intersection of the three main domains outlined in Ghana's National Teachers' Standards (NTS). These domains include professional values and attitudes, professional knowledge and professional practice, which intersect to represent the competencies of a professional teacher (MoE, 2024). Pre-service teachers are expected to attain high professional competence in a well-equipped partner school, well-prepared mentors, and an effective connection between the College of Education or teacher education university and the partner schools (MoE, 2024). The policy aims to expose student teachers to a range of supported and extended experiences, in which they can observe, plan, teach, assess, and apply their knowledge and skills, and to ensure the quality of teaching through portfolio assessment.

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The STS policy is premised on the philosophy that "teacher education should be viewed as an applied professional qualification that requires student teachers to apply the concepts and strategies they are simultaneously learning about in their coursework within practical settings" (T-TEL, 2018, p.3). The STS policy philosophy holds that teaching is best learned through immersive, situated practice alongside experienced practitioners, which aligns with the Craft-apprenticeship model of teacher education. The STS policy acknowledges the interwoven, integrated relationship between theory and practice, rejecting the traditional approach in which student teachers learn about teaching (theory) before learning to teach (field practice). This policy aligns with the trade-based apprenticeship tradition, thereby positioning the schools as sites of teacher professional knowledge production rather than universities. This implies that student teachers are engaged with acquiring both procedural knowledge (Knowing how) and declarative knowledge (Knowing what) concurrently throughout the four-year study period (Bertram, 2011; Gamble, 2009).

The STS policy is designed to expose student teachers to the general school architecture, integrating their school-based learning into the broader training through observation of teaching, practice teaching, understanding child growth and development, and appreciating multi-grade teaching and learning in diverse contexts over a four-year duration (T-TEL, 2018). The first year of STS activities is known as 'Beginning Teaching', which aims to introduce student teachers to the nature and core knowledge of subjects, critical issues in education and approaches to teaching and learning (T-Tel, 2018). The second-year 'Developing Teaching' also prepares student teachers to identify and evaluate learners' limitations and setbacks in learning and to conduct small-scale classroom enquiries under the guidance and supervision of partner-school mentors (T-TEL, 2018). The third and final year STS activities are known as 'Embedding Teaching' and 'Extending Teaching,' respectively. The embedded teaching (Third year of STS activities) involves six days (1 day per week) of observation in the first semester, and six (6) consecutive weeks of co-planning and co-teaching with groups of learners, with whole classes conducting small-scale classroom enquiries (T-TEL, 2018). In the final year 'Extended Teaching', student teachers spend 12 weeks (the entire first semester) in the partner schools, to plan, teach, and assess their learners independently with increasing consistency, and to demonstrate the ethical codes of conduct, values, and attitudes of the teaching profession at all levels (T-TEL, 2018). In the second semester, student teachers return to the college of education, reflect on their activities using their Professional Teaching Portfolios, and continue the action research inquiries initiated in the first semester. It is imperative to note that the STS activities are primarily school-led teacher-preparation models where student teachers are expected to record all activities in the Student's Reflective Journal (SRJ) and are assessed by the college lecturers.

III. METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research Design

This paper employed a qualitative research approach and a multiple-case study design to generate and analyse data. The qualitative research approach allows the researcher to investigate and explore the quality of interactions, activities, conditions, situations, and patterns in people's perceptions and understanding of the world. (Babbie, 2021; Yin, 2018). The adoption of multiple cases is considered appropriate in this qualitative study to produce more compelling evidence and a more robust study (Yin, 2018). Babbie (2021) also added that using a multiple-case study allows the researcher to explore multiple perspectives on a phenomenon and appreciate the influences of multilevel social systems on the respondent's experience and perceptions.

3.2 Study Context

The study was conducted in two colleges of education and their partner schools in the northern region of Ghana. The first case study is a college of education, pseudonym BG College of Education, the oldest in the region, situated in an urban setting, with most partner schools located in urban settings. The second Case study, with a pseudonym, SV College of Education, is situated in a peri-urban area, has partner schools in rural areas, and is considered the youngest college of education established in northern Ghana. These characteristics of the two case studies provided a sufficient basis for understanding the role of micro-teaching in the enactment of the STS policy across diverse contexts.

3.3 Study's Population, Sample and Sampling Technique

The population of this study comprises college supervisors, partner school mentors and STS coordinators in each case study. Using a purposive sampling approach, the study engaged with the STS coordinators, college supervisors and partner school mentors with at least 5 years' experience in STS policy activities. The table below summarises the sampled participants.

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Table 1
Participants of the Study

PARTICIPANTS	BG College of Education	SV College of Education	Total
College Supervisors	2	2	4
STS Coordinator	1	1	2
Mentors	2	2	4
Total	**5**	**5**	**10**

Table 1 shows that the study comprises 10 participants from diverse backgrounds to capture multiple perspectives of the enactment of the STS activities and the role of microteaching. Assuah (2026) explained that sample size in a qualitative study is not based on a fixed formula but rather guided by the complexity of the research phenomenon, and participants between 5 and 30 with diverse backgrounds are considered appropriate.

3.4 Data Generation and Analysis

The semi-structured interviews were used to collect data from respondents and lasted about 45 minutes. The responses were recorded using a digital recording device, and the audio information was transcribed with the assistance of TurboScribe AI. The transcribed data was further subjected to a thorough cleaning to eliminate errors caused by a noisy interview environment and the AI's inability to transcribe certain pronunciations correctly. The data was then thematically analysed using NVivo 15. The analysis was premised on the six-phase thematic analysis criteria proposed by Nowell et al. (2017): familiarising yourself with your data, generating initial codes, searching for themes, reviewing themes, defining and naming themes, and finally producing the report. These processes were followed to ensure trustworthy, credible, and critical commentary that draws on respondents. Ethical standards were highly adhered to, securing ethical clearance and written permission from the colleges of education.

IV. FINDINGS & DISCUSSION

4.1 Findings

The findings were categorised into three major themes: policy actors' understanding and interpretation of the STS policy, the role of microteaching in the enactment of the STS policy, and contextual realities that affect its enactment.

4.1.1 Theme 1: Policy Actors' Understanding and Interpretation of the STS Policy

The findings revealed a discrepancy between policy intentions and policy actors' understanding and interpretation across both case studies. A partner school mentor in BG College of Education indicated that.

> *"I believe the STS programme is a partnership between schools and colleges of education that aims to train teachers. Regarding its activities, I think it is similar to the old teaching practice, except that this one [STS Policy] is more theoretical and involves completing numerous forms [SRJs], rather than gaining practical teaching experience. ... the purpose of STS is to make students spend more time in a partner school, but not for practical teaching".* (Mentor 2, 01/12/2025).

It was evident that partner school mentors understand and interpret the STS policy activities as theory-oriented and liken them to old teaching practices. Another partner school mentor also explains STS activities as follows.

> "*…it [STS policy] is the same as the old teaching practice …the only difference is that it involves a lot of completion of forms. …sometimes we [mentors] rely on the student teachers to tell us how we can help them"* (01/12/2025). The college Supervisor also corroborated by stating that:
>
> *…"many of our mentors lack a basic understanding of the STS policy, … they [mentors] lack the knowledge of what the STS is all about. … this policy is new, and when I went to the schools for assessment, I realised that they [mentors] do not know exactly what the STS is about".* (Supervisor 2, 03/12/2025).

The STS coordinator added that:

> *"One of the major challenges I observed during monitoring was mentors' inability to support students during STS activities. … some of the mentors are not well-versed in our activities, and because of that, the student teachers are left to their own fate without any proper support".* (STS Coordinator, 04/12/2025).

Another college supervisor lamented that

> "*… I think the mentors in the partner schools need serious training because when we go into the field for assessment, they appear to be naïve and uninformed about the requirements of the STS activities…"* (Supervisor 1, 03/12/2025).

Similarly, at SV College of Education, partner school mentors interpreted the STS activities based on student teachers' activities rather than on policy text intentions. A partner school mentor stated that

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> *"This new policy [STS] allows student teachers to come to observe teaching and write their reports. The purpose of this policy is to observe and complete their forms and, sometimes, participate in co-curricular activities. Mentees are often focused on filling out forms [SRJs] and pay little attention to practical classroom activities". (Mentor 1,* 08/12/2025*).*

When a mentor was asked to explain the various STS activities in the school, he stated that,

> *"… I do not know there are differences in the STS activities. I think they [mentees] only come here to observe, and sometimes also teach…"* (Mentor 2, 08/12/2025).

On the contrary, policy actors in both Colleges of Education demonstrated an in-depth understanding of the STS policy activities as stated in the policy document. A college supervisor of BG College of Education indicated that

> *…." the STS component of the curriculum introduces students to the practical professional competencies in the partner school under the supervision of a mentor. The STS runs from years one to four, thus from Beginning teaching, Developing teaching, Embedded teaching, and Extended teaching. …the primary purpose of STS is to expose student teachers to the teaching profession from the first year of their training through to the final year." (Supervisor 2,* 03/12/2025*).*

Another supervisor also explains their role by stating that,

> "*… we serve as a link between the College of Education and the partner schools. We ensure mentees receive proper mentorship in the partner schools and assess and score the SRJs of the mentees…"* (Supervisor 1, 03/12/2025).

The STS coordinator of the SV College of Education, on the other hand, provides a deeper philosophical understanding of the STS policy. He indicated that

> *"The STS draws inspiration from the training of nurses and medical officers, in which practical training takes place in clinics and hospitals. This philosophy is intended to allow students sufficient time to practise. … practical professional practice starts from the first year to the final year. …partner school mentors are required to mentor and provide professional support to the student teachers to … effectively teach the basic school curriculum".* (STS Coordinator, 11/12/2025).

The college actors' demonstration of in-depth knowledge and understanding of the STS policy, as stated in the policy document, contrasts with that of the partner school mentors.

4.1.2 Theme 2: Policy Actors Perceived Erosion of Pedagogical Competence and Practical Preparedness of Student Teachers

This theme reported on the policy actors' perceptions of the declining standards of teacher professional preparation. A college supervisor in the BG college of education lamented that;

> *"This new curriculum [B.Ed. programme] is expected to produce high-quality teachers who are well-versed in pedagogy and practical teaching, compared to the old diploma, but the opposite is the case. …it appears our students are not well prepared for the teaching profession. The STS activities have moved all the practical training to the partner schools, making it difficult for us [College Supervisors] to ensure quality professional practice". (Supervisor 2,* 03/12/2025*).*

This suggests that the college supervisor perceived that the new four-year curriculum, which gave birth to the STS policy, was not producing the quality of teacher it envisaged. A supervisor added that*:*

> *"…our engagement with the student teachers reveals falling standards as student teachers are unable to prepare a comprehensive lesson plan".* (Supervisor 1, 03/12/2025).

Another supervisor also added that:

> "*The lesson plan is a basic requirement to teaching, so if a teacher cannot prepare a lesson plan well, delivery becomes a problem. …our students cannot prepare a lesson plan"* (Supervisor 2, 03/12/2025).

A partner school mentor also supported these claims by stating that:

> "*The student teachers come here with no knowledge of lesson preparation and no idea of lesson delivery. They [Student teachers] are always focused on completing their reflective journals, not the practical teaching in the classroom"* (Mentor 2, 01/12/2025).

This implies that the perception of student teachers' preparation deficiencies is not unique to supervisors but is also confirmed by partner school mentors. Some of the college supervisors attributed the perceived decline in professional practice standards to the omission of a teaching methods course from the curriculum.

> *"Can you imagine we don't teach teaching methods again because of STS? … they [curriculum developers] claim it is embedded in some courses, but it is not being taught as intended. I think we should bring back the 'methods of teaching' course to equip learners with the requisite knowledge and skills to teach effectively." (Supervisor 1,* 03/12/2025*).*

The STS coordinator for the SV College of Education also added that:

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> *"…the general methods of teaching, which was a course to prepare students for the practical classroom, is no longer part of this curriculum, so even common lesson planning, some of our students struggle to perform" (*11/12/2025).

An SV partner school mentor also added that

> *"Most of the mentees demonstrates lack of basic understanding of methods of teaching. For instance, they [student teachers] are unable to participate in play-based methods of teaching" (Mentor 2,* 08/12/2025*).*

This reaffirms and deepens the perceived erosion of the pedagogical and practical preparedness of the student teachers prior to the STS activities.

4.1.3 Theme 3: Introduction of Micro-Teaching and Policy Actors' Disengagement from STS Policy Activities

The findings under this theme revealed that the introduction of micro-teaching is to ameliorate perceived deficits in pedagogy and practical competencies within the STS policy. However, policy actors in the BG college of education have introduced micro-teaching to augment STS activities, whilst actors at SV college of education feel powerless to introduce it and therefore are disengaged from the policy. The BG College STS coordinator explained that:

> "*… in a management meeting we agreed that considering the falling standards of the professional practical training of the student teachers, the college management agreed to introduce the on-campus teaching practice to augment the STS activities…"(*04/12/2025). A college supervisor added that:
> *…this policy [STS] is good, but it has moved the practical professional training of the students to the partner school. ... we [College supervisors] do not have direct control of the professional practice of the students. …we have realised that the students lack practical skills, so we introduced on-campus teaching practice to solve this challenge". (*03/12/2025).

This is evidence that microteaching was introduced to address the perceived practical deficiency in the STS policy. A BG college supervisor opined that:

> *"During assessment, our students cannot teach with confidence because they haven't practised teaching on campus, where we can guide them before entering the real classroom. ... On-campus teaching practice is the surest way to prepare our students for real classroom teaching"* (03/12/2025).
> Another Supervisor added that: *'... since we introduced the on-campus teaching practice in 2023, our students can now teach better and score good grades during their off-campus teaching practice [STS Extended teaching] assessment."* (Supervisor 1, 03/12/2025). A partner school mentor also confirmed this claim by stating that: "*Previously, we complained that the mentees are unable to demonstrate basic teaching skills in the classroom, but now it is better... .... I think last year and this year group are exceptional; there is a significant improvement..."* (Mentor 1, 01/12/2025). Another mentor added that: *"...these mentees are very good and confident compared to some mentees we had a few years ago..."* (Mentor 2, 01/12/2025).

This indicates that all policy actors perceive the student teachers as deficient in practical teaching competencies. In the Case of SV College of Education, policy actors also believe that introducing microteaching will help address perceived inefficiencies in STS activities and provide the practical teaching competencies student teachers need in the classroom.

> *"I think we need to introduce micro-teaching to provide opportunities for us to supervise student teachers here on campus and ensure they are well prepared, practically, for the teaching profession before they go for the STS extended teaching".* (Supervisor 2, 09/12/2025).

Another supervisor from the SV College of Education indicated that

> *"I think the STS is failing; we are excluded from the students' professional practical training. ...without On-Campus teaching practice in the teacher training is problematic because they are practically ready to teach in the real classroom? The major problem is that we don't have the power to implement on-campus teaching practices. ...we [Supervisors] don't see ourselves as part of the whole policy, so we just do what they [policy makers] want us to do, even though we know it is not helping the system". (Supervisor 1,* 09/12/2025*).*

This statement means that the SV college supervisors feel powerless to implement the STS policy to the best of their abilities and expertise, and therefore become disconnected and disengaged from it. The STS coordinator also added that

> *"I think we have left the practical training of the students in the hands of partner school mentors, most of whom do not even understand the whole STS activities. ...reintroducing micro teaching will help a lot*" (11/12/2025).

This means that, even though micro-teaching is not introduced at the SV College of Education, policy actors believe it is an important component for ensuring that student teachers receive the necessary practical training.

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4.2 Discussion

The findings from this study were discussed through the lens of the theory of enactment (Ball et al., 2012) and the existing literature, organised around the three main themes that emerged from the data. These themes are policy actors' understanding and interpretation of the STS policy; the perceived erosion of pedagogical competence and practical preparedness among student teachers; the introduction of micro-teaching; and policy actors' disengagement from STS policy activities. The study revealed that college policy actors in both cases demonstrated understanding and interpretation of the STS policy as stated in the policy document, whilst partner school mentors in both case studies demonstrated the reverse, enacting the policy based on their prior knowledge and understanding of old teaching practice. The partner school actors perceived the STS activities as theory-driven, with a focus on completing their reflective journal at the expense of building practical competencies. The mentors, therefore, rely on their prior knowledge and expertise from the old diploma teaching practice, which consisted of a single terminal practicum for mentoring student teachers. This reinforces Ball et al.'s (2012) argument that policy actors' professional expertise, prior knowledge and culture influence their interpretation and enactment of the educational policy. Empirical studies reaffirm that partner school mentors have limited knowledge of STS policy and mentor student teachers as if they were having a single block teaching practicum (Dankwah et al., 2021; Dorsah et al., 2022). Otoo et al. (2021) also reported the inconsistencies in the STS policy intention and the orientation of student teachers provided by partner school mentors. These findings reveal a structural and system-level enactment gap rather than an isolated failing of the two case studies examined here.

The study also revealed a perceived erosion of pedagogical competencies and practical preparedness of the student teachers by policy actors in both case studies. A study by Otoo et al. (2021) revealed that mentees lack confidence and basic pedagogical knowledge and expertise in delivering lessons. The policy actors' perceptions of erosion of standards are premised on the shift of professional practice to partner schools and on the general method of teaching, which was a standalone course of study but is now embedded in other courses. Embedding the instructional pedagogy across all subjects, as designed by the ITE curriculum (T-TEL, 2018), may not be the main cause of the perceived decline in pedagogical knowledge, but rather how college lecturers make sense of the curriculum and enact it in the unique lecture hall. As espoused by Ball et al. (2012), policy actors account for how the policy relates to standards, which are themselves enactments rather than neutral diagnoses of shortfalls, and for reinforcing pedagogy within their own subject teaching. A critical analysis of the enactment of the STS policy and the embedded pedagogy curriculum, coupled with the convergence of both supervisors and partner school mentors on declining pedagogical standards, signals implementation bottlenecks in the ITE curriculum.

The perceived deterioration of pedagogical standards among all policy actors led to the introduction of micro-teaching at the BG College of Education, intended to provide additional practical preparation for student teachers to augment the STS policy. A critical analysis of this finding on the theory of enactment, in which policy actors translate, interpret, and enact educational policy based on their professional experiences, expertise, and contextual realities, rather than simply complying with or resisting the policy text (Ball et al., 2012; Tan, 2017). The findings further expose the variance in the philosophical understanding of policy actors and the STS policy intentions on teacher education and training. Drawing on Winch's (2017) philosophical assumptions about teacher knowledge, it was evident that the policy actors adopted an internship model and a professional-technician philosophy for teacher preparation, thereby introducing micro-teaching (On-Campus Teaching Practice). The professional technician philosophy, aligned with the internship model in teacher preparation, focuses on technical know-how, with student teachers supervised during their university-based clinical teaching (Winch, 2017). The STS policy, on the other hand, perceived teacher education as an apprenticeship model and teaching as a craft, positioning schools as sites for the preparation of teacher professional knowledge and practical skills, rather than universities (Winch, 2017).

The policy actors in the SV College of Education also share the same philosophy of the internship model and professional-technician teacher education, and admit the need to introduce micro-teaching, but feel powerless, disengaged and disconnected from the policy. The position of these policy actors is what Tummers (2012) referred to as policy alienation, in which teachers and policy practitioners become psychologically disconnected from the policy and feel powerless. They express a sense of hopelessness, powerlessness, and psychological disconnection from the policy because it contradicts their philosophical understanding of teacher training and professional knowledge (Tummers, 2012). The implementation variation across case studies is what Ball et al. (2012) describe as institutional contextual variation in policy enactment, whilst Chiang et al. (2023) also noted that situating the policy text in the immediate practical context of policy actors reduces their sense of alienation, therefore bridging the theory-practice gap.

V. CONCLUSION & RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Conclusion

This study examined the place of micro-teaching in the enactment of STS policy across colleges of education and their corresponding partner schools in Ghana. Through the lens of the theory of enactment, it became evident that STS is not uniformly implemented as intended by the policy text but is instead interpreted, translated, and reconstructed

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by policy actors based on their professional knowledge, culture, expertise, and institutional contexts. As partner school mentors demonstrated a limited understanding of the STS policy as stated in the policy text, they interpreted, translated, and enacted it based on their knowledge of the old diploma teaching practice. Whilst policy actors in the College of Education also interpreted the STS policy as stated in the teacher education curriculum, the implementation is at variance with the policy intention.

The varied implementations stemmed from philosophical and ideological differences in teacher preparation, with the STS aligning with the apprenticeship model and policy actors favouring the internship model. This ideological crush, coupled with a perceived decline in pedagogical competencies among student teachers, has led some colleges of education to introduce micro-teaching (On-Campus Teaching Practice) as a stopgap measure to enhance student teachers' practical professional competencies. At the SV College of Education, which is located in a rural setting, actors acknowledged the perceived deterioration in practical competencies in teacher preparation but expressed a lack of capacity and power to introduce microteaching in their college, resulting in psychological disengagement from the STS policy. This study argues that, despite the perceived decline in pedagogical competencies among student teachers and the introduction of micro-teaching as a remedy, it may not entirely address the situation, as other contextual factors may also be contributing. The disparities between policy intentions and policy actors' philosophies of teacher preparation warrant critical attention in the development of initial teacher education curricula. The misunderstandings and misinterpretations of educational policy texts among policy actors expose inadequate training and implementation engagement in most African countries. Policy actors' psychological disconnection from educational policy stemming from a lack of involvement in policy development widens the theory-practice gap.

5.2 Recommendations

The study, therefore, recommends that supervised simulation practice or microteaching (on-campus teaching practice) should be carefully evaluated and integrated into the STS policy framework as a complement to the school-led teacher preparation. Teacher preparation curricula should be redesigned to account for the contextual dimensions and the prior professional knowledge of policy actors to avoid policy alienation. Policy actors should receive intensive training and sensitisation on policy intentions to avoid misunderstandings and misinterpretations. There should be a clear written agreement between colleges of education and partner schools outlining responsibilities, assessment criteria, and communication protocols. The policy actors should be empowered to allow a degree of institutional autonomy within the national curriculum standard to reduce policy disengagement and powerlessness.

Declaration of Interest

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