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Reconceptualizing the Norms and Standards of Mentor Selection in the Malawi's 1+1 Initial Primary Teacher Education Model: Implication for Teacher Development

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KEYWORDS mentoring, quality, practicum, norms and standards, 1+1 Initial Primary Teacher Education Model, teacher development, professional behaviour, moral behaviour, teaching experience, mentoring experience and gender.

ABSTRACT Mentoring of student teachers during the practicum is a pivotal dimension of quality of teacher development. The key determinant of quality of mentoring is, however, the school mentor. This article reports on a study which examined the norms and standards that guided selection of school mentors in primary schools in the 1+1 Initial Primary Teacher Education Model in Malawi. The study employed a mixed methods sequential explanatory design comprising a survey followed by a case. Data was collected from 92 mentoring primary schools with a total of 183 informants comprising 91 school headteachers, 92 school mentors. Quantitative data was analysed by employing univariate analysis and qualitative data was analysed using content analysis. The findings revealed that school mentors were selected based on professional behaviour, moral behaviour, teaching experience, academic qualification, professional grade, age, school responsibility, mentoring experience and gender in order of decreasing frequency of use. A model of mentor selection anchored by the theoretical insights and the research findings is proposed.

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

The perennial quality debates in preservice teacher education centre on balancing theory and practice (Moyo 2014; Korthagen 2010; Day 2004; Husebo 2012; Trent 2013; Darling-Hammond 2006; Allen and Wright 2014; Heeralal and Bayaga 2011). As such, there are a range of models of preservice teacher education from fully college-based (theory first and teach later) to school-based (teacher first and theory later). In between this continuum lies a variety of mixed models with different structures of college based and school based components (Mattson 2006; Day 2004; Allen and Wright 2014). The Malawi's 1+1 Initial Primary Teacher Education model is an example of mixed models of preservice teacher education. It consists of one year of college-based component followed by one year of mentoring in primary school contexts (MIE 2006). All the models, however, rely heavily on mentoring of student teachers by practicing teachers. The school mentors play a critical role of supporting student teachers to link theory and practice. The quality of the school mentors is therefore a key determinant of the outcomes of the mentoring programme (Hegstad 1999; Hobson et al. 2009; Rose 2003; Alhija and Fresko 2014). As such, careful selection of school mentors is vital in a preservice teacher education mentoring programme.

National Contexts

Malawi, like many developing countries, is experiencing an unprecedented demand for more and better teachers (MoEST 2008(a); MoEST 2008(b)). The realisation of the Millennium Development Goals (UN 2000), Education for All goals (UNESCO 2000), the African Charter on Human and People's Rights (OAU 1981); the Southern Africa Development Cooperation Protocol on Education and Training (SADC 2007) and the Malawi's Vision 2020 and Malawi Growth and Development Strategy (GoM 2011) hinges on both the quantity and quality of teachers. This demand has given rise to a corresponding pressure to balance access and quality in teacher education and development.

Malawi introduced Free Primary Education (FPE) in 1994 to increase access to primary teacher education (Kunje 2002; Kunje, Lewin and Stuart 2003; Chimombo and Goodson 2005). The policy heightened the demand for more teachers, hence rendered the traditional programme of a two year college-based training programme inefficient (Kunje 2002). According to Kunje, Malawi has since then experimented on over two models of preservice primary teacher education programmes. They include the Malawi Special Teacher Education Programme (MASTEP) (1994

- 1996) whose structure had a one year of school-based followed by one year of college-based components (1-1); and the Malawi In-service Teacher Education Programme (MIITEP) (1997-2003) with a structure comprising three months of college based, 20 months of school based and 1 month of college based (3-20-1) (Kunje 2002; Kunje and Lewin 2000; Kunje et al. 2003). Their studies indicate that both programmes relied heavily on support from school mentors. They contend that the key challenge which necessitated Malawi to move from one model to another was the low quality of teachers graduating from the programmes. The preservice teacher education programmes compromised quality over quantity (Kunje 2002). It can also be argued implicitly that in this regard the mentoring programmes were, in part, ineffective; hence raising doubts on the quality of the school mentors. As such, the models seemed struggling to find the optimal balance between theory and practice. Hence, the introduction of the 1+1 Initial Primary Teacher Education model in 2005 as an improved model over its predecessor, the MIITEP (MIE 2006).

The 1+1 Initial Primary Teacher Education model refers to a one year of college based followed by one year of school based (MIE 2006). According to Mattson (2006) this is an example of an IN-OUT model of teacher training. During the college based component, student teachers acquire the knowledge, skills and attitudes from a variety of content knowledge, pedagogical content knowledge and practical teaching courses. The theories embodied in teacher education are therefore at the centre of the college based component. During the one year of school based component, student teachers are attached to a school mentor at each of the mentoring school. Many studies confirm that the main success story of the model is that it is a fast track-model of teacher education (DeStefano 2012; Heirstein 2013; MoEST 2014; Ndalama and Chidalengwa 2011). Their findings also indicate that the mentoring phase of the 1+1 model was plagued by many quality related challenges such as inadequate teaching and learning resources, inadequate financial resources and inadequate support from school mentors. These challenges are encountered amid the Government of Malawi' efforts of improving quality of the 1+1 preservice teacher education model through increasing funding, providing teaching and learning resources, providing in-service training to primary school teachers; and upgrading the qualifications of college lecturers. Hence, there was still need to reconceptualise the quality of mentoring the 1+1 IPTE Model.

The definition and practices of mentoring

The definition of mentoring varies across and within disciplines (Hansford, Tennent and Ehrich 2003). For instance, Eby, Rhodes and Allen (2007) identified over fifteen definitions; and Haggard et al. (2011) reported over twenty definitions. In preservice teacher education, Tomlinson (1995:7) defines mentoring as 'the process of assisting student teachers to learn how to teach in school based setting'. This definition is echoed by Sergiovanni and Starrat (2002:265) who defines preservice teacher mentoring as ' a process that is intended to help new teachers successfully learn their roles, establish the self-images as teachers, figure out the school and its culture, understand how teaching unfolds in real classroom and achieve other goals that are important to the teachers being mentored'. As pointed by Scandura (2009), in such definitions, mentoring assumes the characteristics of being a hierarchical relationship between the senior (practicing teachers) and junior person (student teacher). As such, mentoring is a socialization process of student teachers into the teaching profession by experienced teachers with a primary objective of enhancing the student teachers competences.

Studies consistently confirm that mentoring serves three main functions to the student teachers: career, psychosocial and role modelling functions (Kram 1985; Scandura and Ragins 1993; Castro, Scandura and Williams 2004). Literature, however, also consistently confirm that the benefits of mentoring in preservice teacher education extend to school teachers and quality of the education system as a whole (Kram 1985; Phillips and Fragoulis 2010; Scandura 2009; Eby et al. 2007; Ghosh and Reio, Jr. 2013; Hobson et al. 2009; Hansford, Tennent and Ehrich 2003). It is therefore important that the quality of mentoring is assured in order to accrue the direct and indirect benefits from it.

Preservice teacher mentoring is a formal mentoring programme. This means that it comprises sets of planned activities (Hansford, Ehrich and Tennent 2004; Weinberg and Lankau 2011; Parise and Forret 2008; Inzer and Crawford 2005). They also point out that formal mentoring programmes are characterised by norms and standards that define the space of operation, including selection of mentors. According to Bayaga and Moyo (2009: 57), standards help to rationalise the definition of quality, and make it more objective.

Hegstad's (1999) Formal mentoring Theory shows that mentor selection is one of the antecedents of any formal mentoring. It is clear from this Theory that the quality of mentoring is

influenced by mentor's demographics characteristics and profile. Findings from studies by Afolabi (2013), Finkelstein, Allen and Rhoton (2003), Ismail and Jui (2006) and Allen, Eby and Lentz (2006) have revealed that age, gender, teaching experience, mentoring experience, professional status and academic qualification are critical ingredients to the outcomes of a mentoring programme. This suggests that the demographics characteristics and profile of the school mentors are pivotal to the outcomes of a mentoring programme.

The term quality is multifaceted. Hence, there are a variety of definitions for it. Harvey and Green (1993) provide the most quoted framework of definitions of quality (Harvey 2007; Martin and Stella 2007; Bayaga and Moyo 2009). In the context of this study, quality refers to fitness for purpose and fitness of purpose (Harvey and Green 1993; Harvey 2007). According to Harvey (2007: 7), fitness for purpose and of purpose refer to meeting generally accepted standard as defined by the institution, nation, government, discipline, and professional or other (threshold) expectations. The main distinction between fitness for purpose and fitness of purpose is that the former focuses on compliance to internal standards (mission and goals of an institutions or programme) while the later is about compliance to external standards. Hobson et al (2009) contend that mentoring is most effective where it is fit for purpose and fit of purpose. But as pointed out by Bayaga and Moyo (2009), the main weakness with this definition lies in using standards which could be rigid to an ever changing environment. For purposes of this study, the definition was however more embracing.

Literature indicates that studies on mentoring have focussed on many aspect of mentoring including models of student teacher placement (Huizing, 2012); mentor-student teacher relationship (Leshem 2012); outcomes from mentoring (Phllips and Fragoulis 2010; Handsford et al 2003); supervision and assessment (Maphosa and Ndamba 2012); roles of stakeholders (Ambrossetti and Dekkers 2010; Hall et al 2008); mentor competences (Johnson 2003); and ethics in mentoring (McDonald and Hite 2005). The findings from these studies provided the conceptual framework of practices in mentoring for this study. Despite the plethora of studies on mentoring, little is known about assuring the quality of mentors from the context of the 1+1 Initial Primary Teacher Education model in Malawi.

Vygotsky (1978) Social Development Theory

There are many theoretical lenses through which to understand and interpret mentoring practices in preservice teacher education (Ehrich, Hansford and Tennent 2001). This study was, however, anchored in Vygotsky's (1978) Social Development Theory. The central theme in the Social Development Theory is that social interaction is the foundation of meaningful learning (knowledge, skills and attitudes) (Vygotsky 1978; Moalosi 2013). As such, Vygotsky (1978) emphasizes that meaningful learner development requires both the social and cultural contexts.

The Social Development Theory stipulates that social development of learners requires three main ingredients: (1) social interaction within a community of practice; (2) support from the More Knowledgeable Other (MKO); and (3) learning space known as the Zone of Proximal Development. Thus, cognitive development is a product of interaction or collaboration between the learner and More Knowledgeable Others within a Zone of Proximal Development. Without interacting with the MKOs, the quality and quantity of learning are compromised as less than marginal learning is achieved (Moalosi 2013).

This study was grounded in the principle of the More Knowledgeable Other (MKO). The More Knowledgeable Others (MKO) in this context refers to anyone with a superior understanding and competences (skills, knowledge and attitudes) to given assignment than the learner (Vygotsky, 1978). Thus, parents, teachers and peers are examples of the MKOs (Moalosi 2013). According to Vygotsky (1978), the quality of the MKOs and their activities are pivotal in the Zonal of Proximal Development (ZPD). In the context of this study, mentoring is a social development process (Kram 1985; Hansford at al 2003; Allen et al 2006; Scandura 2009); and the MKOs refer to school mentors. The fundamental question, however, is: what are the quality dimensions of the More Knowledgeable Other in preservice teacher mentoring programme?

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Literature indicates that mentoring of student teachers during the practicum is a key facet of the quality of preservice teacher education programmes (Hobson et al., 2009; Mattson, 2006; Hansford et al 2004; Maphosa and Ndamba 2012). Mentoring is a critical conduit for balancing theory and practice in teacher education in preservice teacher education programmes (Zeichner 2010; Korthagen 2010). Despite this acknowledgement and understanding, preservice teacher education programmes, have always grappled with how during the practicum mentoring is fit for

purpose and fit of purpose (Cohen (Sayag), Hoz and Kaplan 2013; Mashava and Chingombe 2013). The 1+1 Initial Primary Teacher Education model in Malawi is no exception to this challenge (MoEST 2013; Ndalama and Chidalengwa 2010; DeStefano 2012). In the context of this study, it can be argued that Government of Malawi's efforts of increasing funds, capacity building of stakeholders, and providing teaching and learning materials are necessary but not sufficient to assure the quality of mentoring in the 1+1 model (MoEST 2011; GoM 2011). Hence, there was still a knowledge gap on how to assure the quality of mentoring in the 1+1 Initial Primary Teacher Education model in Malawi.

Without quality mentoring there is a risk having student teachers learn teaching practices that do not reflect quality teaching in schools (Wang 2001). Scandura (1998), therefore, warns that bad mentoring may be destructive. Ragins, Cotton and Miller (2000) also add that bad mentoring is worse than no mentoring at all. This suggests that bad mentoring is not only ineffective but also inefficient. The study's focus on school mentor selection which is a vital component of the teaching practicum in the 1+1 model, seeks to address this problem.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

This study examined how the quality of mentoring in the 1+1 Initial Primary Teacher Education model in Malawi was assured through the selection of school mentors or the More Knowledgeable Others. The research questions which guided this study were as follows:

(i) What are the norms and standards that guide the selection of school mentors in the 1+1 Initial Primary Teacher Education model in Malawi;

(ii) What are the implications of the findings for a new model of mentor selection in the 1+1 Initial Primary Teacher Education model in Malawi?

RESEARCH METHODS

This study was anchored in post-positivism paradigm which employed a mixed methods sequential design comprising a survey followed by a case study (Creswell 2013 &2014; Johnson and Onwuegbuzie 2003). The target population was 92 school mentors and 92 headteachers in a total of 92 public primary schools. In the first phase, a drop-and-pick census survey (Dillman 2000) of all the informants yielded a 99% response rate. The second phase comprised a case

study of two schools in which two headteachers and two school mentors participated in a total of four one-on-one face to face interviews (Denzin and Lincoln 2011). The survey and case study data were triangulated and complemented with data from the review of documents. Quantitative data was analysed using SPSS version 20 and content analyses were employed on quantitative and qualitative data. Some of the qualitative and the quantitative data were qualitized and quantized respectively (Johnson and Onwuegbuzie 2003).

RESULTS

92 primary schools participated in this study giving a total of 183 informants comprising 92 school mentors and 91 headteachers. 62% of the school mentors and 82% of the headteachers were male. This indicated, in part, that mentoring responsibilities were skewed towards male. However, participation by both male and female informants was important in this study in order to get a balanced set of experiences. Of the 92 school mentors, 7% were between 20 and 29 years; 38% between 30 and 39 years; 43% between 30 and 49 years and 9% between 50 and 59 years. Similarly, of 91 headteachers 4% were between 30 and 39 years; 51% between 30 and 49 years; 41% between 50 and 59 years; and 3% between 60 and 59 years. This indicated that the informants were generally mature enough to participate in this study.

Finding 1: The norms and standards for the selection of school mentors (More Knowledgeable Others)

Data for this finding was deduced from the characteristics of the school mentors who participated in the study supplemented by headteachers' responses on the criteria they used to select school mentors.

(a) Characteristics of school mentors (the More Knowledgeable Other) in the 1+1 model

(i) Teaching and mentoring experiences of school mentors

Informants were asked to indicate their teaching experience in primary school and mentoring experience on a six point interval scale of less than one year, 1-3 years, 4-6 years, 7-18 years, 19-30 years and 30+ years. This adapted scale is referred to as Huberman's (1989) Stage Theory of teacher development. Table 1 gives the summary of the distribution of informants by teaching and mentoring experience.

Insert Table 1 here

It can be seen from Table 1 that 98% of the school mentors had four or more years of teaching experience. This finding was confirmed by data in the IPTE handbook (MIE 2006) and Partnership Agreement (MoEST 2013) which indicated a minimum of three years of teaching experience. Content analysis of qualitative data from interviews with Headteachers and document analysis also revealed that experience in teaching was a critical criterion for mentor selection. This suggests a norm and standard of appointing mentors with at least four years of teaching experience. Table 1 also shows that 2% of the school mentors were in their first three years of teaching at primary school. According to Huberman (1989), this indicated a category of teachers who themselves needed mentoring. As such, it raised doubts over the quality of mentoring provided by this category of teachers.

It can also be seen from Table 1 that an open ended approach was taken with regard to mentoring experience. However, 96% of school mentors had less than four years of mentoring experience. This indicated a relatively new cohort of school teachers who were assigned the responsibilities to mentor student teachers. It also suggests that mentoring experience was not a critical norm and standard for the selection of mentors. Considering that the IPTE programme was launched in 2005 (MIE 2006), the results raised doubts over the stability of mentors in the programme.

(ii) Professional grade of school mentors

School mentors were requested to indicate their highest professional grade or rank in the teaching profession. Table 2 gives the distribution of headteacher mentors and school mentors by their professional grade.

Insert Table 2 here

Table 2 shows that the majority of the school mentors (62%) were above the PT4 grade (the entry grade into the teaching profession). This indicates that student teachers were being mentored by largely senior and successful school mentors above their entry grade. There was therefore a professional grade span between the majrity of the student teachers and their school mentors. According to mentoring Hegstad (1999), Frels, Zientek and Onwuegbuzie (2013) and Lawal (2011), such a grade span is an essential ingredient to quality of mentoring. As such, the results suggest that seniority in professional grade was to a large extent a norm and standrd for mentor selection. It can also be seen in Table 2 that 38% of the school mentors were at the entry

grade of the teaching profession. This finding casts doubt on the quality of the role modeling responsbilities of such school mentors.

(iii) Academic qualification of school mentors

Each school mentor was asked to give his/her highest academic qualification. Table 3 gives a summary on the distribution of informants by highest academic qualification.

Insert Table 3 here

It can be seen from Table 3 that 87% of the school teacher mentors possessed an Malawi School Certificate of Education (MSCE) certificate. MSCE is the official highest academic qualification for primary school teachers in Malawi (MoEST 2011). This indicates that the majority of the school mentors possessed the official highest academic qualification, further suggesting that they had adequate subject knowledge. However, Table 3 also shows that 13% of the school mentors possessed a Junior Certificate of Education qualification as their highest academic qualification. Considering the Initial Primary Teacher education programme recruits student teachers with the Malawi School Certificate of Education (MSCE), the results means that the some of the school mentors had academic qualification lower than their student teachers. In this case, such a finding raises doubts on the quality of mentoring with regard to subject knowledge level of the school mentors and their role modelling functions in the mentoring programme. For the student teachers, the results indicated adherence to the programme's policy of recruiting only MSCE candidates into the IPTE programme (MIE, 2006).

Criteria for selection of mentors used by headteachers

Headteachers of mentoring schools, who were responsible for selecting and recommending school mentors, were asked to indicate the frequency with which they used a criterion for selecting their school mentors on a three point Likert scale of 3 = Always; 2 = Sometimes and 1 = Never. The scores for Always and Sometimes were then combined as they at least indicated the practice in selecting school mentors. In this study a percentage of 90 and above indicated the a norm and standard for selecting school mentors. Table 4 presents the rank ordered criteria for selection of mentors as given by headteachers.

Insert Table 4 here

It can be seen from Table 4 that the most frequently used criteria were professional behaviour (98%), moral behaviour (95%), teaching experience (94%) and academic qualification (91%). Of these, professional behaviour was the top most frequently criterion for selecting school mentors. This indicates that headteachers attached a lot of value to the professional behaviour of the school mentors. Perhaps, they were quite mindful of the mentors' roles of adviser, counsellor and role modellers which are often best defined within the professional behaviour. Table 4 also shows that gender was the least criterion for mentor selection. Perhaps this was because; the primary teaching force in Malawi was dominated by male teachers (MoEST, 2011). It can also be seen from Table 4 that there was some lack of uniformity in the criteria for mentor selection among headteachers. This indicated a weakness in implementing the norms and standards for mentor selection and monitoring of mentoring practices in schools.

Content analysis of the qualitative data from the semi structured mail questionnaire revealed that professional behaviour was the most widely used criteria. The headteachers explained that exemplary in professional matters, accepting responsibility, good listener and approachable which were elements of professional behaviour.

The handbook on Partnership Agreement between Teacher Training Colleges and Teaching Practice Schools (MoEST, 2013) and IPTE handbook (MIE, 2006) also outlined the criteria for selecting school mentors. They include qualified teacher; minimum of three years of teaching experience; possession of a Malawi School Certificate of Education; knowledgeable in subject matter, approaches to teaching and experience in teaching methodologies; committed and able to help student teachers grow professionally; and able to organise continuing professional development activities. The personal attributes of the school mentor included in the criteria were approachable, accommodating, supportive, emphatic, tolerant, impartial, good listener, exemplary and good morals, flexibility and a desire for continuous learning. Data from two handbooks triangulated, expanded and elaborated the findings in the survey questionnaire. For instance, there was convergence on teaching experience, moral behaviour and professional behaviour; expansion on organising continuing professional development activities; and elaboration on teaching experience. Perhaps, impartiality was an included as an attribute because the teacher mentor was responsible for at least student teachers, hence, the need to treat them equally.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

A critical component of mentor selection relates to the person or persons shouldering the responsibility to select mentors (Alhija and Fresko 2014). In the case of the 1+1 model, headteachers played a central role in selecting school mentors (MoEST 2013). The results revealed the four most common criteria used by headteachers to select teachers to serve as mentors were: professional behaviour; moral behaviour; teaching experience; and academic qualification. Data also revealed that gender was the least commonly used criterion for mentor selection. The results not only confirmed literature on mentor selection based on teaching experience and academic qualification (Hobson et al 2009; Rose 2003; Alhija and Fresko 2014).

Professional behaviour

Professional behaviour of teachers ranked first among the nine criteria for mentor selection as indicated by headteachers. This suggests that headteachers attached a lot of value to the professional competences of the teachers. As such they seem to indicate that mentoring is a tool of developing high standards of professional competences in student teachers. The findings confirm the importance attached to professional behaviour of school mentors in the teaching profession and mentoring programme (Hamilton and Brabbit 2007; McDonald and Hite 2004; Heeralal 2014). Their studies also showed that student teachers, teachers, headteachers and other key stakeholders regarded mentoring as a professional identity formation process. As such, mentors needed to support the acquisition of professional competences. In line with this view, McDonald (2004:89) contends that mentors are gatekeepers to the profession, and they have a central role in building and maintaining teaching as a high status profession. Thus, professional behaviour of practicing teachers was a critical criterion for selecting school mentors, who are regarded as upholders of the teaching profession. According to Hamilton and Brabbit (2007), professional identity formation in student teachers could therefore be regarded as a fourth function of mentoring in addition to career development, psychosocial development and role modelling.

Moral behaviour

Moral behaviour ranked as a second most common criteria used by headteachers to select mentors. This suggests that the headteachers strongly regarded mentoring of student teachers as

concerned with moral development. The finding is consistent with the principle that teaching in general and mentoring in particular has a moral dimension (Cummings, Harlow & Maddux 2007; Hunink et al 2007; Johnson 2003). In this context As pointed by Hunink et al.(2009) morality refers to a set of values, norms , rules and habits that binds the behaviours of practitioners in a profession. As pointed out by Cummings et al. (2007) and Hunink et al. (2007), mentoring of student teachers is equally concerned with moral development; hence it must be hinged on advancing moral reasoning among student teachers. As such, the headteachers used the teachers' moral uprightness as another critical criterion for selecting school mentors.

This study examined the norms and standards that guided the selection of the school mentors or the More Knowledgeable Others (Vygotsky 1978) in the 1+1 Initial Primary Teacher Education model. Analysis of data revealed that mentor selection was one of the key activities of the 1+1 Initial Teacher Education model. This confirms that mentor selection is one of the characteristics of a formal mentoring programme (Weinberg and Lankau 2011; Allen, Eby and Lentz 2006; Jones 2013). Perhaps mentor selection is carried out because not all practicing teachers have the attributes of being a school mentors or the More Knowledgeable Others (MKO) for student teachers as pointed (Hobson et al 2009; Rose 2003).

Empirical evidence also suggests that mentoring of student teachers during a practicum is a pivotal teacher professional development tool of student teachers (Sundli 2007; Luneta 2006; Hudson, 2013(a) &(b)). At the centre stage of this outcome of mentoring is the school mentor. Vygotsky (1978) concurs that the More Knowledgeable Other, which in this context is the school mentor, is instrumental in the social development of individuals. Kram (1985), Castro, Scandura and Williams (2004) and Hobson et al. (2009) have also echoed the critical role that the school mentors play in mentoring student teachers. Heeralal (2014:243) argues that mentor teachers assist students in bridging the gap between theory and practice and give students an insight into the real world of the teaching profession. As such, mentor selection is carried out to ensure the effectiveness of a formal mentoring programme (Hobson et al 2009; Rose 2003; Heeralal 2014).

Teaching Experience

The results have revealed that teaching experience was a criterion for mentor section as indicated by the majority (98%) of the school mentors having four or more years teaching experience. The results corroborate with previous empirical findings on criteria for mentor selection (Heeralal

2014; Hobson et al 2009; Rose, 2003). This also confirms one of the principles of Vygotsky's (1978) Social Development Theory, which argues for the presence of a More Knowledgeable Other (MKO) in a social development process. As pointed out by Heeralal (2014) and Korthagen (2010), mentoring during the practicum serves as bridge between theory and practice in preservice teacher education programmes. As such, it can be argued that experienced mentors are critical to this endeavour. Experienced mentors become sources of the theories of teaching which have been developed over and above the College-based theories (Baird 2010; Allen and Wright 2014; Moyo 2014).

Using Huberman (1989) Stage Theory of Teacher Development, school mentors' experience in teaching needed to be bounded. It is implied from the theory that school mentors needed to have a minimum of four years experience and maximum of seventeen years. According of Huberman, from three years and below, which is known as the Career Entry Stage, the teachers themselves are learning how to teach and work with pupils; navigating teaching and developing a sense of survival. As such, they themselves are in need of mentoring. As such, they need not be entrusted with the responsibility to mentor student teachers. Thus, the 2% of school mentors who were within the 1-3 years category of experience raises doubts over the quality of mentoring which they provided to student teachers as they were not the category of the More Knowledgeable Other. Huberman's Theory further shows that between 19 and 30 years of teaching experience, the teachers are characterised by being rigid, stubborn, and reluctant to innovations, disengaged from the professions. Similarly, above 30 years of experience, teachers are characterised as being disengaged from the teaching profession and use much of their time for personal gains. As such, it can be argued that the over 18 years of experience, teachers may minimally serve as effective mentors. Thus, the 30% of mentors who had over 18 years of teaching experience, further heightened the issues of the quality of their mentoring services.

Academic qualification

The results revealed that the majority of the school mentors (87%) possessed the formal highest academic qualification for the subsector of the education system. This means the most student teachers were paired with school mentors whose subject content was the same as theirs. Thus, there was no seniority in subject content between the mentors and student teachers. The finding contradicts the formal definition of a mentor as a more knowledgeable person which include

knowledgeable in subject content (Kram 1985; Hobson et al. 2009, Alhija and Fresko 2014). In this case, the school mentors could not be acclaimed as the More Knowledgeable Other (Vygotsky 1978) with respect to subject content. Further analysis of the data revealed that 13 % of the school mentors had lower academic qualification than their mentees. This means that over seventy student teachers were being mentored by school mentors who had lower academic qualification than them. In this regard, it can be concluded that the student teachers had more subject content than their mentors, thereby raising concerns over the quality of role modelling functions of such mentors. As argued by Vygotsky (1978) in the Social Development Theory, social development demands the presence of More Knowledgeable Other.

Professional grade

Seniority in the teaching profession in Malawi is reflected in the achieved professional grade of teachers. As an achieved status, the professional grade also indicates competences of the teachers. It can, therefore, be argued that the higher the professional grade the more competent the teacher. The results indicate that 62% of the school mentors were above the entry grade. This suggests that the majority of the school mentors were more senior and competent in the profession than the student teachers they were mentoring. The finding confirms the traditional definition of a mentor as a senior person (Kram 1985; Hobson et al 2009; Sergiovanni and Starrat 2002, Scandura 2009; Lawal 2011; Allen et al 2006). Seniority of mentors seems to be associated with authority and respect as well as the role modelling function of mentoring. As pointed out by Koc (2011), Alhija and Fresko (2014) and Ambrosetti and Dekkers (2010), mentors play a critical role of a modeller to the student teachers; which is embedded in the professional status. Alhija and Fresko (2014) concur that mentors must carry with them the respect and recognition within the profession. As such, the 38% of school mentors at entry grade in the 1+1 model raises concerns over the quality and quantity of the role mentoring services that they provided to student teachers.

Experience as a mentor

The results revealed variations in experiences in mentoring among mentors. This suggests that mentor selection was not guided by experience in mentoring. The possible reason for this could be because the 1+1 model was relatively new (MIE 2006). As such, there was not a pool of mentors from which to select. Another reason could be the emphasis on mentor training. The

results do therefore support the idea that recruitment of mentors must be influenced by the experience in mentoring (Eby et al 2007; Kram 1985; Simpson, Hastings and Hill 2007; Hobson et al 2009; Allen et al 2006). As argued by Hobson et al. (2006), effective mentoring is influenced by the initial and continuing professional training in mentoring that mentors receive rather than prior experience in mentoring.

Gender of school mentors

The results of this study indicate that gender was the least commonly used criterion for recruitment of school mentors by headteachers. This confirms the statistics for the respondents in this study which showed that 62% and 38% of school mentors (n=92) were male and female respectively. This showed male dominance in mentoring responsibilities. The results confirm the male dominance (60.1%) among primary school teachers in Malawi (MoEST 2011). Perhaps, this pool, which is skewed toward male, could have been a contributing factor. In addition, the inequality could be magnified by the practice of appointing on school mentor per school (MIE 2006). The results, however, show that female teachers had been marginalized in mentoring responsibilities. The results therefore also confirm the gender imbalance in many leadership positions in primary education (Chabaya, Rembe and Wadesango 2009). The results contradict Article 20 of the Constitution of Malawi which bars any form of discrimination on the basis of gender. There is therefore need to demystifying gender in mentoring responsibilities in the 1+1 model. Both male and female school mentors are needed for the development of student teachers (Fowler and O'Gorman 2007; Afolabi 2013; O'Connor and Garansson 2014).

A NEW CONXEPTUAL FRAMEWORK OF MENTOR SELECTION IN THE 1+1 INITIAL PRIMARY TEACHER EDUCATION MODE

The foregoing sections indicate that the model or norms and standards of mentor selection in the 1+1 Initial Primary Teacher education model is plagued by a few weak practices which have the potential to influence the quality of the mentoring programme. Thus the results from this study coupled with literature indicate a need for a new model of mentor selection. Table 5 gives a summary of the old model as well as a proposed model of mentor selection.

Insert Table 5 here

CONCLUSION

The findings in this study have shown that mentor selection is the 1+1 Initial Primary Teacher education was guided by such norms and standards as professional behaviour, moral behaviour, teaching experience, academic qualification, professional grade, age, school responsibilities, mentoring experience and gender. This list is in order of most commonly used to least commonly used criterion. The gender imbalance in the mentoring responsibilities is however a cause of concern in the 21st century.

IMPLICATIONS FOE TEACHER DEVELOPMENT

It is evident from this study, supported by Vygotsky (1978) Social Development Theory, that the school mentor (More Knowledgeable Other) plays a critical role in preservice teacher development during a practicum. The norms and standards for mentor selection can, therefore, have important implications on the performance of mentors; consequently on the quality of the student teachers. As argued by Maphosa, Shumba and Shumba (2007:305), it is one thing to attach student teachers to mentors and quite another to have meaningful mentorship taking place. As such, the findings imply that the selection criteria for the mentors such as professional behaviour, moral behaviour, teaching experiences, academic qualification and professional grade have the potential to influence the effectiveness of preservice teacher development during a practicum.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings and the discussion of the results, it is therefore recommended that the Ministry of Education and Stakeholders in the mentoring programme should review the criterion for selecting mentors. This will ensure that the inherent weakness in the current practices including gender stereotyping in selecting school mentors are removed. It is further recommended that a larger study and a comparative study be carried out to confirm the findings from this study.

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Table 1: Distribution of mentors (n=92) by teaching and mentoring experiences

Percentage of mentors by		
	Teaching experience	Mentoring experience
Less than 1	0%	37%
1-3 years	2%	59%
4-6 years	20%	3%
7-18 years	48%	1%
19-30 years	30%	0%
31+	0%	0%

Total	100%	100%

Table 2: Distribution of school mentors (n=92) by professional grade

Professional Grade	Teacher mentors
PT4	38%
PT3	44%
PT2	16%
PT1	2%
P8	0
Total	100%

Note: P8 is the highest professional grade in the primary teaching profession; PT4 is entry grade to the profession. All grades from PT3 to P8 are achieved through promotion (EMIS, 2011).

Table 3: Percentage of school mentors by highest academic qualification

Highest academic qualification	Teacher mentors
MSCE	87%
JCE	13%
Total	100%

Note: MSCE stands for Malawi School Certificate of Education (equivalent to O level).
JCE is Junior Certification of Education (lower than MSCE).

Table 4: Headteachers' Criteria for selection of school mentors

Rank	Criterion	% of Headteachers using the criterion
1	Professional behaviour (n = 90)	98%

2	Moral behaviour (n = 87)	95%
3	Teaching experience (n = 86)	94%
4	Academic Qualification (n= 87)	91%
5	Professional grade (n = 89)	83%
6	Age (n = 82)	77%
7	School responsibility (n = 81)	74%
8	Mentoring experience (n = 86)	65%
9	Gender (n = 88)	35%

Note: The total number of respondents (n) was not the same for the entire criteria due to missing responses.

Table 5: Old and Proposed model of mentor selection

Criterion	Current practice	Proposed practice
Teaching experience	mostly from four or above	between four and 17 years
Mentoring experience	open ended	experience in being mentored during preservice years
Professional grade	open ended	from PT3 to PT1
Academic qualification	JCE and MSCE	MSCE
Gender	Male dominance responsibilities (two mentors per school: one male and one female)	gender equality in mentoring

Key: JCE: Junior Certificate of Education; MSCE : Malawi School Certificate of Education