

IsiZulu Home Language Teachers' Experiences of Mentoring Pre-Service Teachers During Teaching Practice in Durban, South Africa

Zinhle Primrose Nkosi and Sicelo Ziphozonke Ntshangase

*The University of KwaZulu-Natal, School of Education, Languages & Arts Education,
P/Bag X03, Ashwood, 3605, KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa*

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ABSTRACT Mentoring pre-service teachers is crucial during teacher training. This happens when students are in schools doing teaching practice, where they are assigned to mentor teachers. This study sought to explore isiZulu home language teachers' experiences of mentoring pre-service teachers during teaching practice at selected secondary schools. A transformative learning theory was adopted in the study. Qualitative case study methods were used. Semi-structured interviews with twelve mentor teachers were used. Among findings, some mentor teachers have positive experiences with regard to their roles as mentors, yet some experience challenges, for example, overbearing university expectations, while others demonstrate inadequate understanding of what it means being a mentor teacher. It is concluded that some mentors are good at mentoring pre-service teachers while others require mentorship training to be able to perform their duties efficiently.

INTRODUCTION

While some research has focused on the mentorship experiences of students as they do teaching practice (Moosa and Rembach 2020; Mbhiza et al. 2024), there is very little research available with regard to mentor teachers' experiences on how they mentor pre-service teachers when they are on teaching practice, and such studies include Tsikati and Dlamini (2019). For example, Mbhiza et al. (2024) did a comparative study, exploring pre-service teachers' mentorship experiences during teaching practice. Their findings revealed that pre-service teachers felt that some of the mentors were willing to help them learn and develop knowledge about the teaching profession while others seem to be unsupportive, more particularly the mentor teachers from rural schools, when compared to the urban schools. The same was reported by Picard (2023), who explained that sometimes the mentor teachers assume that the university has already done the job, to prepare the pre-service teachers with the necessary skills essential when they are on teaching practice, and these were the mentors who were not supportive to the pre-service teachers. On the contrary, Mlyakado and Mwandambo (2024) studied the pre-service teachers' experiences on being mentored during

teaching practice in Tanzania. The study found that all sampled student teachers were satisfied with the kind of mentorship they received from their mentor teachers in the schools. This resulted in an improved pre-service teachers' tolerance, confidence, and flexibility in their actual teaching environment.

In South African universities, teaching practice is considered an essential component for student teachers, because it provides teaching opportunities to pre-service teachers (Furlong and Hirst 1988). When students are on teaching practice, they become exposed to classroom teaching and the school environment, as at this stage they are not yet qualified to teach (Ambrosetti et al. 2014). Student teachers are assigned to mentor teachers who should guide, supervise, and support them in their daily classroom practices as well as the school environment. In other words, the mentors are required to assist the preservice teachers with their development towards achieving teaching skills, and ways to cope with the school life. The preparation of knowledgeable teachers requires well-developed coursework and field experience in the subject the student teaches so that they are able to model good instruction, and to link theory and practice (Albanese and Mitchell 1993). Also, David and Kim (2023) conducted a study

on mentoring practices in Mozambique secondary schools. The study found that some mentor teachers were supportive, and they gave orientation and feedback to the pre-service teachers that they were mentoring. Consequently, some of those pre-service teachers showed an improved knowledge delivery in their classrooms. However, the study also exposed that not all mentor teachers were supportive to the pre-service teachers assigned to them, in such a way that those student teachers had to teach independently of the mentor teachers in the classrooms.

Objective of the Study

The objective of the study was to study the experiences of isiZulu home language teachers on mentoring pre-service teachers during teaching practice at selected Durban secondary schools.

Research Question

The study seeks to answer the research question: What are the experiences of isiZulu home language teachers on mentoring pre-service teachers during teaching practice at selected Durban secondary schools?

Literature Review

In South Africa, the mentorship of pre-service teachers means that pre-service teachers are assigned to mentors for guidance in relation to their work. Ambrosetti and Dekkers (2010, 2014), state that the mentor agrees to guide pre-service teachers so they develop as professional teachers, as well as assessing them according to the university-based criteria.

According to *the Guide to Teaching Practice Document of the University of KwaZulu-Natal*, the purpose of the teaching practice component for teacher trainees is to develop them so they are able to execute teaching, learning and assessment activities within the classroom. This guide further states that the purpose of the B.Ed. and the PGCE is to design meaningful learning experiences, reflected in detailed lesson planning, forecasting and preparation, and competent advocates of the subjects they teach. Also, according to the guide, students should be able to re-

flect critically on their actions in order to refine and develop their practice, and work with dedication and commitment as part of a community of professional teachers (University of KwaZulu-Natal 2019).

Not only do pre-service teachers get support from school mentors, but university supervisors also assess and provide them with the necessary support while stationed in the schools for their teaching practice. Their role is not only to observe, pass or fail the student, but they need to provide constructive feedback that will develop a student. There is available research on university supervisors and pre-service teachers undergoing teaching practice. For example, in their study, Meegan et al. (2013) the university supervisors were helpful to also guide the student teachers, like their mentor teachers.

Vumilia and Semali (2016), in their study to determine whether the processes of mentoring and socialisation that take place during teaching practice in Tanzania can improve the quality of teacher education, found that mentoring practices were of benefit to all individuals involved in teaching practice.

Another study by Izadinia (2016), from the Edith Cowan University in Australia, revealed the importance of the relationship between mentors and pre-service teachers, mentioning that a good relationship between a student teacher and a mentor, contributes in improving the confidence of a student teacher. This suggests that mentor-mentee relationship needs to be good at all times, for a successful mentorship programme.

Lewis (2017) focused on mentor teachers' experiences on mentoring pre-service teachers. The results showed an emphasis placed on reporting the external aspects of being a mentor teacher, such as the daily activities, and little was reported about the internal aspects of being a mentor teacher such as personal experience and rationale for working a pre-service teacher into a classroom.

In another study by Tsikati and Dlamini (2019), which sought to investigate the experiences of mentor teachers on teaching practice supervision in Eswatini, Swaziland, it was found that mentor teachers were supported by the university through the supervisors and a Teaching Practice Handbook. The study recommended the need for the training of mentor teachers, as well

as the rewards for those providing good quality mentorship to the pre-service teachers.

While the above literature discusses various topics on the field of study in general, literature regarding the experiences of mentor during teaching practice is still not adequate. This suggests there is still a gap in this area of study that needs to be addressed.

Theoretical and Conceptual Frameworks

The study uses the transformational learning theory, as well as the concept 'mentoring' as the conceptual framework. Below is a discussion of the Transformative Learning Theory.

Transformative Learning Theory

The word transformation means denotes a noticeable change in form, nature, or appearance. It evokes the change of something that changes from a certain state of lower level, to a more improved state. Therefore, transformative learning theory, developed by Mezirow (2003, 2000), is a theory of learning, which focuses on the premise that students can develop based on good quality support they receive from teachers (Mezirow 2000). It is sometimes referred to as transformation learning, and it hypothesizes that significant learning involves a shift in one's perspective or worldview. Mezirow posits that when learning occurs, the student interprets the new information based on previous experience. This requires that the student reflects on and reviews their learning. Therefore, since mentors contribute towards the growth of pre-service teachers on their journey towards becoming professional teachers, the researchers found this theory suitable for this study, because the prime aim of mentoring is to teach an individual so that they transform from being just students, but successful future teachers. Below is a discussion of the concept of 'mentoring', which acted as the conceptual framework for this study.

Mentoring

This study also used the concept 'mentoring' as a conceptual framework. Mentoring is a phenomenon where an expert, or someone experienced in the field, provides training to a less-skilled individual.

In the same vein, Stroude et al. (2015), mention that mentorship means that a mentor guides and coaches a mentee with the aim to expand his or her skills and knowledge. Good mentorship is important towards an improved personal and academic growth (Jeffers and Mariani 2017).

Hudson and Hudson (2010) argue that mentoring can lead towards improving both mentoring practices and classroom teaching practices. According to the University of Reading (2022), the mentoring relationship ought to be based on trust, confidentiality, mutual respect, and sensitivity. Dhunpath (2018), states that in education, mentoring is traditionally carried out through the apprentice model whereby a mentee is paired with a mentor, who is more with the aim of creating opportunities for professional development. This model is characterised by, learning through observation or imitating the mentor (Samkange 2015).

According to the *Guide to Teaching Practice document of the University of KwaZulu-Natal* (2019: 6), the mentor ought to introduce novice teachers to teaching and learning practices in the specific context of the classroom and the school. In addition, it is important that a mentor teacher must gauge when it is professionally apt to hand over the full responsibility of a class to the student teacher with respect to the teaching of a lesson. Below, the findings are presented.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study used a qualitative approach. According to Bertram and Christiansen (2023) and Cohen et al. (2017) a qualitative approach looks at reality as it is constructed by individuals in a certain social setting. The study uses 12 mentor teachers of isiZulu home language, whose lived experiences of mentoring preservice teachers were studied. As such, the study adopted an interpretivist paradigm. Bertram and Christiansen (2023) mention that the aim of education research is to understand the meaning, which informs human behaviour, and this is in line with the interpretivist paradigm. A case study design was employed to conduct this research. Yin (2017) notes that a case study studies a particular case intensively. Such a case can be an individual, group, institute, or community, thereby

making it possible to identify essential factors, processes, and relationships in the phenomenon being studied. It was for this reason that the researchers adopted a case study design in this research.

Data was generated through semi-structured interviews with 12 mentor teachers, whereby the researchers ensured adequate dialogue between ourselves and the participants. Semi-structured are open-ended interviews, and they contain questions that are planned beforehand, and all the participants are asked the same questions in the order that all of them would be asked. During the interviews, a voice recorder was used to capture the interview data. Questions for the interviews were both in isiZulu and English. The participants were allowed to choose the language in which they wanted to be interviewed, and choose between isiZulu and English languages. All of them preferred to be interviewed in English. Some stated they would switch into isiZulu if need be, but they were comfortable with both English and isiZulu. Therefore, most of the interview statements used in this paper would be in English.

The data was then transcribed and analysed through content thematic analysis. The researchers coded and categorized related data. These were then used analysed to generate major themes. Pseudonyms were used for the names of the participating mentor teachers, in order to protect their identities.

As noted above, the sample comprised 12 mentor teacher participants from three secondary schools, four from each school. They were selected purposively because the study targeted only isiZulu Home Language teachers in these schools. It was easy to approach them, some being ex-students of the researchers' institution. Before conducting the research, all ethical considerations were observed. This included explaining to the mentor teachers about their rights to participation, the use of pseudonyms of the mentor teachers in order to protect their identities, and giving the information regarding what methods were to be used for data generation. Ethical clearance was obtained from the institution's research office. Issues of trustworthiness were observed. This included rechecking if the themes that emerged were in line with the data produced.

RESULTS

This section discusses the findings of this study based on the research question: What are the experiences of isiZulu home language teachers on mentoring pre-service-teachers during teaching practice at selected Durban schools. Below is the discussion which includes classroom practices, pre-service teachers' conduct, students' diligence versus laziness, commitment in supporting students, lack of resources, university expectations, student teachers' readiness, and classroom management skills. Pseudonyms are used for the names of the participants below, to protect their identities.

Classroom Practices

Experiences that relate to classroom practices were reported as one of the aspects mentioned by the participating mentor teachers on mentoring the student teachers. Some of the mentor teachers revealed that while they made it their obligation to provide mentorship with regard to teaching practices, they had experienced little to no challenges pertaining to classroom practices. Most of the participating mentor teachers' statements showed that they had positive experiences with regard to their mentees' classroom practices. The majority of mentor teachers revealed that before students go to class to teach, they make sure that they model good classroom practices during the observation week of practising teachers. This helps when they go to class to present their own lessons. Mentor teachers stated that some of the students' classroom practices were good, as some were able to teach like experienced teachers and they could handle their classrooms professionally. However, a few of the mentor teachers stated that it was difficult to give guidance to some of the student teachers as they would show minimal signs of willingness to take mentors' advice. For example,

It is very interesting having a student who listens, and who teaches like a long-time serving teacher. I had two like that last year. Those two students could wash my heart. Their classroom practices were those that support and promote learning. (Mr. Duma)

It is not every student teacher you groom that will make you happy with their teaching,

but we try as much as possible to give them good support. More importantly, I like the collaboration and collegiality relationship with my mentees. (Miss Thango)

Most of them are good. Watch them when introducing a lesson, how they link previous knowledge to the new one, how they develop the lesson and how they conclude and assess the lesson. Actually, this is what I model to them. (Mr. Zulu)

I can't say it is only us who support and provide mentorship to the students, but the universities which send them to us as well. We all contribute towards achieving the final product. (Miss Xulu)

Pre-service Teachers' Conduct

Pre-service or student teachers' conduct was noted during the analysis of mentor teachers' statements. The following are some of the examples of their statements in this regard.

I have never been disrespected by the pre-service teachers who come to do teaching practice here. I think the universities familiarise them with professional and ethical behaviour in the workplace before they are sent to the schools for teaching practice. (Miss Xulu)

I make sure that I model good behaviour to them because I regard myself as their role model when they are here for teaching practice. (Miss Thango)

All the student teachers that have been assigned to me, behave very well, and this is what makes me support them as much as I can. Their good behaviour is overwhelming. (Mr. Manyoni)

Most of them are very respectful and they behave well, but I had a student whose conduct was disgusting. He had serious behavioural problems, and I ended up parting ways with him, and had to report him to the institution. (Mrs. Cele)

You hear in some schools that practising teachers are involved in sexual activities with learners, but not in our school. (Mr. Zulu)

One of the things I emphasise to them when they arrive at school for teaching practice is that under no circumstances should they get involved in intimate relationships with learners, and I hope the university does the same. (Miss Mavundla)

Diligent and Lazy Students

The majority of the mentor teachers report that some student teachers had demonstrated laziness, while others presented features of diligence. This was noted on matters, for example, of marking learners' classroom tasks, extramural activities, and when there was need to teach in the classroom in the case where a teacher in charge was unavailable for a certain reason. Below are examples.

There are student teachers who are very diligent and really, who are a blessing when they come for teaching practice. (Mrs Mabuza)

Some students are very good, diligent, and respectful. They would participate in many extramural activities without complaining. I am glad this is one of the things I emphasise to them. (Miss Shezi)

You become worried if you will get them. It is good to have them because having a student teacher in your class means your workload will be lighter for that period of time, rather than when you have your full workload. (Mr Duma)

Sometimes I have lazy students, it is difficult to always remind them about their work. They know what they must do and I tell them everything. If you can report them at their institution, you will be judged. (Mrs Cele)

Commitment to Supporting Students

Some participating mentors revealed a commitment to supporting student teachers. Mentor teachers have mentioned that although they enjoyed being mentors, it was time-consuming, as it added extra time on their already heavy workloads. This included giving support on how to organise a lesson plan, how to select teaching materials, present a lesson, assess learners, and manage the class, particularly where there are misbehaving students. Below are some of the mentor teachers' statements in this regard.

First, you need to commit yourself to mentoring them. Yes, I commit to guide and show them whatever that relates to teaching, including assessment, starting from planning a lesson. However, this is time consuming, as it requires much of your time. (Mrs. Cele).

I am confident that I am doing all that the university expects from me, as I committed to

doing it. I do not want to dirty my name...it requires a lot of commitment, but sometimes I feel pressured as I am already overloaded with school work. (Mr. Duma)

Lack of Resources

Mentor teachers revealed a lack of resources in the schools, noting that lack of or inadequate resources compromises the quality of their mentorship duties, although they try to utilise what is available in the school on supporting the pre-service teachers. Below are examples.

Our school does not have adequate resources and it becomes worse when a student asks for a particular resource, which we should have, but none of that is available in the school. I think we are not supporting them enough. (Mr. Zulu)

I feel while they [pre-service teachers] need to organise resources on their own when they prepare for their lessons, there are some that the school should have, but... (Mrs. Mabuza)

Ours is one of the disadvantaged schools in the area, we are a Quintile 3 school. It is not that we deliberately do not have all the useful resources they require. I hope they understand the situation. (Mr. Mavundla)

We do not have a school wi-fi, no computers, no laboratory, etc. We have a small library with fewer resources, and most of the books are old. We try to give them textbooks prescribed for learners, but one book per subject. (Miss Cele)

University Expectations

The participating mentor teachers reported that when universities send pre-service teachers to the schools for teaching practice, they [universities] have expectations from them as mentor teachers. Some mentioned that on occasion, the universities have higher expectations from them than they could afford, while others felt that they were able to meet the expectations of the universities. Below are examples.

I think the universities have unreasonable expectations from us. They expect that you fine tune the student whom they are unable to develop to be what they want, but think that we can make wonders. (Miss Zulu)

The universities always tell us what they expect from us, and I am sure they are satisfied with our efforts, as they have never complained, instead they keep sending their students to us. (Mr. Manyoni)

Although I have minimal teaching experience, I am confident that I do what the universities expect from me. (Mrs. Mavundla)

Every year I mentor students, and I am glad they always appreciate my efforts. Some even write me letters of appreciation based on their teaching practice experience under my mentorship. I am always humbled by their words. (Mrs. Mabuza)

Student Teachers' Readiness

The majority of the participating school mentors have revealed that some of the pre-service teachers they have mentored, have proven themselves to be ready towards the teaching profession, while some were still not ready. The following are a few examples of their statements.

I can say some are ready and I am proud of them because they teach as they are experienced teachers, while others seem to be far from being ready. (Mrs. Cele)

Even experienced teachers are not the same. You will find those who excel in their teaching, while there are those who contribute a little...the same applies to student teachers. It is true that they send us a combination of both the cream of the crop, and also the dull students. However, I try my best to model what is good. (Miss Xulu)

You will find them lacking content knowledge, sometimes pedagogical knowledge, but it becomes very difficult to write a negative report for the student, particularly if they demonstrate good conduct. I cannot imagine a student failing a course because of me. (Mr. Nene)

Some will make you smile as they are already teaching like experienced teachers. When they observe my teaching, I make sure I prepare my lesson thoroughly and ensure I present it successfully, so that they can learn from observing my teaching. (Mrs. Thango)

It is no lie that some student teachers demonstrate features of readiness, while others do not, even at their fourth-year level of study. You try as much as you can to contribute towards

their development, you teach with passion so that they have something to learn from you. (Mr Zulu)

There are some who would just show very little improvement in their teaching, and you feel like they can just not go to class for the reason that you have to re-teach and correct the errors they make. (Mr Duma)

Classroom Management Skills

Some of the mentor teachers' experiences related to student teachers' classroom management skills, mentioning that some would manage their classrooms very well, while others would not quickly show the mastery of classroom management skills. This was reported as a challenge by the mentor teachers, as they ought to keep visiting the classrooms these pre-service teachers taught, in order to assist them with disruptive children in the classrooms. Below are examples.

Each year I am so lucky to have students who can manage classrooms in a manner that a well experienced teacher can do. They know how a classroom should look like, for example, it must be clean, the walls shouldn't be bare, without pictures, there must be a reading corner, the sitting arrangement, the resources should be available, the class registers should be kept up to date, and so on. (Mr Cwele)

We receive the best of students who are able to control learners, even those classrooms known for accommodating unruly learners. (Mr Manyoni)

When the students come for observations, I make sure I teach where there are many misbehaving students, and try to model good classroom management skills to them. With this, I want to demonstrate how to deal with misbehaving learners. (Miss Thango)

You feel unsettled when a preservice teacher is in class with a number of mischievous learners, you need to keep an eye, just to be sure they are not being troublesome as this may lead to a havoc situation. (Mr. Zulu)

Some learners are disgusting, they can deliberately misbehave, aiming at discrediting the student teacher in the presence of a mentor teacher in class. You become relieved when you know the one with them in class has good classroom management skills. (Mr. Duma)

DISCUSSION

Based on the above findings, excerpts regarding classroom practices are testament that the mentor teachers have had good experiences in relation to their mentees' classroom practices, although their experiences may vary according to individual students' performance. It is also noted that the mentor teachers recognise the role played by the universities in developing pre-service teachers, as much as they do their part (Huong et al. 2020; Robinson and Feldman 2023). This emphasises the importance of connectedness between the schools and the universities.

The finding pertaining to pre-service teachers' conduct, reveals that the mentor teachers who participated in the study had in their past experiences, good student teachers under their mentorship, while misbehavior of some of them had also been reported. During teaching practice, the mentor teachers, as well as the whole school and its teachers, all expect that the student teachers who come for teaching practice will adhere to the professional code of conduct and the code of ethics, both in and out of the classroom (Kriel et al. 2023). This finding can be viewed in relation to the *South African Council of Educators' Act* which among other things, highlights that an educator should respect the dignity, beliefs and constitutional rights of learners, and needs to understand that each learner is unique, thus has individuality, and specific needs (The Department of Education 2000).

Furthermore, the finding regarding diligent and lazy student teachers presented above, indicates that some pre-service teachers are hard-working while others are not. It shows that sometimes some mentor teachers do not give a true reflection on the student performance in their reports when they assess them, for the fear of being perceived as unreasonable. This suggests that lazy pre-service teachers may finish their degrees, get appointed and continue in a spirit of laziness. This can be viewed as one way of adding to the pool of lazy teachers in the education system. Meador (2019) has noted that lazy students are difficult to teach. He states that teachers would rather have a group of struggling students who work hard, than having a group of strong students who are lazy. It stands to reason that if laziness is not rooted out while

pre-service teachers are on their training, it will have a negative effect. For example, the lazy pre-service teacher will finish their degree, get employed, perform their duties in a lazy manner, and then compromise the quality of their work, leading to poor quality students, who will not be diligent, and who will become future lazy employees. With regard to Mr. Duma's statement regarding mentor teachers' feeling of added workloads during students teaching practice, it is not clear why they view the arrival of pre-service teachers as an opportunity to have a reduced workload. Maundeni and Kahaka (2022) acknowledge that some mentor teachers seem to forget their roles and responsibilities, recommending the necessity to assign mentor teachers according to the areas of specialisation of each student-teacher.

Also, the finding regarding commitment to supporting students coincides with Maphalala (2013) who reports that mentor teachers, play an important role in the development of pre-service teachers. Du Plessis (2013) avers that the role of a mentor is to provide student teachers with all the support they will need for their teaching career, also give them emotional support. According to Openlearn (2021), a mentor teacher needs to act as a positive role model to the pre-service teacher, particularly enriching them with subject content knowledge and pedagogy. It is therefore unclear why some mentor teachers would complain about increasing workloads if their role as mentors was well-defined before committing to their mentorship responsibilities.

Furthermore, the finding that relates to lack of resources elucidates that some schools still encounter challenges, including a lack of necessary resources. This is similar to a report by Donachie (2017), who mentions that schools lack necessary resources, particularly those in the rural areas. This means that under-resourced schools are not only found in the rural areas, but also in some parts of the urban areas. Amato (2015) reports that many teachers, even in the urban areas, are confronted with a challenge of teaching at-risk students, while they do not have the necessary resources to support them. Matope (2021) sees the act of teaching the class without having adequate teaching resources as making wine while you do not have grapes. Modipane and Kibirige (2015) found that teaching practice is a challenge in poorly resourced and dysfunctional schools, which makes it diffi-

cult for student teachers who are on teaching practice to apply the theoretical knowledge gained from their universities. They further mention that universities offer theoretical concepts that are not necessarily always applicable to most of the schools' contexts.

The finding about university expectations concurs with the University of Akron (2021), which emphasizes that a mentor teacher is required to welcome the student teacher to their school, and introduce them to students and fellow colleagues. It is also expected that mentor teachers ought to give students a tour of the classroom and school, and encourage them to reflect on their lessons so they know their limitations and strengths in each lesson they presented. This is testament that universities indeed have expectations from the schools to which they send their students for teaching practice.

The finding regarding student teachers' readiness is made evident by Mr. Nene's statement who mentions the issue of students who perform poorly in class due to lack of pedagogical and content knowledge. It is not clear why this participant chooses to be not honest in terms of report writing based on the student performance. Universities take mentor teachers assessment reports seriously and as such, these form part of their assessment in the course. Congruent with this finding, a study conducted by Mkhasebe (2018) found that many student teachers lack the relevant subject content knowledge, and the pedagogical knowledge, particularly as they demonstrate inadequate competence on lesson presentation and development, as well as classroom management skills. However, it was noted that some of their mentors described them as excellent in subject content knowledge and pedagogy. This questions the credibility and trustworthiness of some mentor teachers' honesty, suggesting the need for the verification of the reports they write for students.

Lastly, the finding about classroom management skills concurs with Sueb (2013) who reports that the pre-service teachers' greatest challenges are students' disrespectful attitude towards them.

CONCLUSION

Findings have shown that some mentor teachers regard pre-service teachers as a relief, as they come to the schools in which they have

been placed to do their teaching practice, as some see an opportunity for a reduced workload during this time. This suggests that while many understand their role as mentors and are passionate about it, some are not clear about what being a mentor entails. For this reason, it is essential that mentorship roles are clearly defined for the mentor teachers before pre-service teachers arrive at the schools for teaching practice. Furthermore, the study revealed that there are mentor teachers who do not honestly assess pre-service teachers, feeling pity for those students whom they mentor, and thereby hiding a true reflection of their performance. However, not only do universities rely on the school mentor teachers' reports, they also send supervisors to support and assess the students on their teaching practice. For this reason, universities need to emphasise honesty to the mentor teachers when assessing students for teaching practice, and mentor teachers ought not to be ashamed or feel pity for those students who still require some development when writing reports about them. Doing this may hinder the process of identifying areas of development required of a student by the institution.

This study also revealed that resources continue to be a challenge in some schools, noting that this hinders the process of mentoring for the mentor teacher who is expected to support the student teacher with finding the relevant teaching resources. This means that there is a need for the Department of Education to ensure that both well- and under-resourced schools are treated the same in South Africa. All South African schools need to be upgraded, and well-equipped with resources so as to close this gap.

Also noted is the issue of university expectations on the mentor teachers. It is important that there is a mutual understanding between the schools and the universities, such that mentor teachers do not feel burdened in terms of their role. Instead, they should enjoy the role. Also, the universities need to appreciate mentor teachers' dedication in taking part in preparation for the next generation of teachers, such that motivation remains high, and mentoring is not taken as a burden.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the discussion above, it is noted that some mentor teachers demonstrate knowl-

edge of their mentorship roles, while others still lack mentorship abilities. This suggests that for a meaningful teacher mentorship, it is significant that there must be a good relationship between the universities and schools to which students are sent for teaching practice. While universities have their role to play in the life of a developing teacher, the role of a school mentor is crucial in this regard. This means that both universities and schools need to work together for a successful teacher development. When pre-service teachers go to the schools for teaching practice, they are expected to apply the knowledge and skills they have already acquired at the university. Additionally, when they arrive at the schools, mentor teachers take over their roles and continue to contribute towards the development of these pre-service teachers. In other words, on completion of their teacher qualification, both parties ought to have played their roles in developing a pre-service teacher. It is therefore necessary for mentor teachers to model diligence, and to motivate student teachers to do the same. Teacher laziness ought to be discouraged at all costs, and student teachers need to be encouraged to work diligently, while also being passionate about their work.

With regard to the issue of the state of some students' readiness, it may be important that mentor teachers themselves try to retrospect their mentorship abilities, checking if they are giving students their best when they mentor them in the schools. It must be emphasised that mentor teachers ought to provide professional support to pre-service teachers, and not act as if they were assessors. For this reason, it is important that universities should consider the necessity of adequate training for mentor teachers before they can practise their roles, towards the fruitful mentorship of practising teachers in the schools. This study therefore, has implications for further research on appropriate training programs of mentor teachers in education institutions.

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