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The Zimbabwe Bulletin of Teacher Education

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CONTENTS	PAGES
◆ Sources and levels of stress among teachers in Zimbabwe: Chireshe R. and Mapfumo P.	1-16
◆ Educational Administration at local level in Zimbabwe: Conflicts, Achievements and Challenges. Chivore B.R.S. Machinga G.M. and Chisaka B.C.	17-41
◆ Trainee teachers' views about the role of mentors in their professional development: Mudavanhu Y. Majoni C.	42-64
◆ The Impact of the Economic Structural Adjustment Programme on Education in Zimbabwe: Zvobgo R.J.	65-101
◆ Music – the Concept defined: Matiure S.	102 - 113

Trainee Teachers' Views about the role of Mentors in their Professional Development

Young Mudavanhu and Cuthbert Majoni

Abstract

The study investigated the views of trainee teachers about the role of mentors in their academic and professional development. The other purposes were to find out whether trainee teachers valued mentors' assessment of teaching practice; mentors' behaviours valued by trainee teachers; and why mentors are important in professional development. The study employed the descriptive survey method and questionnaire instrument. The population of the study was 439 third year trainee teachers who had just completed a yearlong school attachment programme. A sample of 198 trainee teachers was chosen using preferred sampling. Research assistants who were lecturers at Seke Teachers' College administered the questionnaire. This ensured a 100% return of completed questionnaires. The study used EP16 programme for data capturing and SPSS programme to produce frequency distribution runs.

It was found out that trainee teachers viewed lecturers as better placed to help in their academic development than the mentors, and that trainee teachers viewed mentors as better placed to help in their professional development than lecturers. The study recommended further research to compare the views of trainee teachers, mentors and lecturers about the role of mentors in the professional development of trainee teachers.

Introduction

The study investigated Seke Teachers' College trainee teachers' views about the role of mentors in their academic and professional development. Teachers' Training Colleges (TTCs) have, over many years, developed strong links with primary schools and work together in the school attachment programme. This is also known as teaching practice (TP). It is a form of teacher training partnership during which trainee teachers are based in schools for a full year. Teachers' Training Colleges introduced mentoring in 1995 and this involves both classroom teaching and school-based activities under the guidance of both school mentors and college lecturers.

Seke Teachers' College (STC) located in Chitungwiza is one of the 10 TTCs in Zimbabwe, which train primary school teachers. It is a government institute. The training of primary school teachers at STC, like other TTCs in Zimbabwe, normally covers a period of three years. Trainee teachers undertake two major activities. They study theory of education, subject matter and teaching methods in the first and third year of the programme through attending formal lectures, writing assignments and tests, designing and writing an action research report. Trainee teachers undertake teaching practice, in the second year of the programme, under the guidance of a mentor and it is during this time that they collect data for the action research project. They are given opportunity to experience teaching life during teaching practice, (Walters 1994). Mentor hosts the trainee teacher and is assumed to be an experienced teacher who is familiar with criteria for good and effective teaching (Stones 1992). Lecturers, Heads, Teachers-in-Charge and Mentors assess trainee teachers on teaching practice and are assumed to be competent in assessment. Little research has been carried to find out trainee teachers' views about the role of mentors in their academic and professional development.

The purpose of the study was to find out the trainee teachers' views about who was better placed to assist in their academic and professional development between mentor and lecturer. Another purpose was to find out the extent to which trainee teachers valued mentor's assessment of teaching practice. Thirdly, it was the purpose of

the study to find out the behaviours of mentors valued by trainee teachers and why trainee teachers viewed mentors as important in their professional development.

The research was guided by the following research questions

1. What were the trainee teachers' views about who was better placed to assist in their academic and professional development between mentors and lecturers?
2. What were the trainee teachers' views about the value of mentor's assessment of teaching practice?
3. What were the behaviours of mentors valued by trainee teachers in their professional development?
4. Why do trainee teachers view mentors as important in their professional development?

The concept of mentoring in teacher education

Teacher education has been a subject of criticism. New teachers have been found lacking the appropriate subject matter knowledge to implement or deliver adequately the curriculum, and lack practical knowledge about assessment and evaluation (Bennet 1993). National Foundation of the Improvement of Education (NFIE) (1999) postulates that experienced teachers have accumulated instructional knowledge and expertise over the years, which contribute to success of teaching. On this premise it makes sense to assume that through mentoring experienced teachers articulate and share classroom practices with novices. However there seems to be contradictions on who is better placed to offer academic and professional development to trainee teachers between lecturers and mentors. Teacher education is moving towards school-based teacher training and greater involvement of practicing teachers with the hope of improving effectiveness of trainee teachers' classroom practices. In this school of thought the school-based teacher educators and college-based lecturers share critical roles to determine the quality of training provision. Feimen-Nemser and Beasley (1994:108) defined mentoring as "face-to-face, close-to-the-classroom work on teaching undertaken by a more experienced teacher and less experienced in order to help the later develop his or her practice". This way experienced teachers guide and support the learning

of novices. Mentoring borrows from socio-cultural theories by emphasizing the social nature of learning through joint activity between mentor and mentee. According to Feilmen-Nemser and Beasley "by participating with (trainee teacher) in the work of teaching the mentor enables (trainee teacher) to do with help what (trainee teacher) is not yet ready to do alone". This is an application of Vygotsky's Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) theory (1978). Vygotsky (1978) as cited by Gluck and Draisma (1997) defined the zone of proximal development as "... the distance between the actual developmental level [of a learner] as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem solving ... in collaboration with more capable peers". Experienced teachers (mentors) are assigned to provide assistance to the trainee teacher. Mentors teach the trainee teacher the 'ropes' of the school organization. Mentors are there when trainee teachers need them to answer questions and to provide advice. They serve trainee teachers by listening and supporting them. Mentoring is a process through which trainee teachers are helped to move from assisted performance (by capable other) to unassisted performance and eventually self-regulated performance. Eventually the mentor-mentee relationship must come to an end.

The mentor is the main source of information about teaching, advice and feedback about one's practice, and counsellor when things do not work during attachment. The mentor acts as a model, as a coach (Schon 1991, 1987), as an initiator of practice-focused discussion, as a host for structuring the classroom context, as an emotional supporter (Elliot and Calderhead 1993) and as a designer of learning experiences. Therefore a mentor is a teacher who possesses skill of discussing teaching, skill of demonstrating a variety of practices, skill of counseling, skill of target setting, skill of identifying good teaching, skill of building relationship and skill of developing collegiality. A mentor is a senior experienced teacher from whom a trainee teacher learns good teaching practices by observation and imitation. For purposes of the study we defined a mentor as an experienced teacher helping a trainee teacher adjust successfully to the work of teaching. Whether trainee teachers are knowledgeable about the concept of mentoring is a subject for research.

Academic and professional development

Academic development is the acquisition of sound theoretical foundation on which to base rational classroom practices. It involves acquisition of subject matter knowledge, principles of teaching and learning. Subject matter knowledge in this study refers to the content of the primary school curriculum. A primary school teacher teaches the whole curriculum (or the full range of learning areas). The learning areas are Art, Environmental Science, Health Education, Home Economics, Languages (reading, writing, speaking and listening), Mathematics, Music, Physical Education, Religious and Moral Education, and Social Studies.

The concept of professional development encompasses academic development (acquisition of subject or content knowledge and teaching skills). Day (1999:4) defines professional development as

the process by which, alone and with others, teachers review, renew, and extend their commitment as change agents to the moral purposes of teaching; and by which they acquire and develop critically the knowledge, skills and emotional intelligence essential to good professional thinking, planning and practice with children, young people and colleagues through each phase of their teaching lives.

We interpret this to mean that professional development refers to activities to enhance teaching career growth. It is a process where trainee teachers acquire and improve instructional skills leading to increased student learning. We define professional development as the way trainee teachers acquire and develop knowledge, skills and values employed in the teaching/learning situation. Further a primary school teacher must possess the following personal requirements: enjoy working with children, creative and organizational skills, patient in dealing with learners of differing abilities and able to communicate simply and clearly.

Research methodology

The researchers used the descriptive survey method and questionnaire instrument to seek Seke Teachers' College trainee teachers' views about the role of mentors in their academic and professional development. Four hundred and thirty-nine (439) trainee teachers in their final year (third year), who had completed a year on school attachment, made up the population. Researchers used a sample of 198 (or 45%) trainee teachers made up of 99 trainee teachers who specialized in Infant Education and an equal number of trainee teachers who were doing the Junior Education programme. Researchers used preferred sampling where research assistants based at Seke Teachers' College selected students who were easily accessible to them. These were students whom they were teaching Professional Studies on the day they administered questionnaires. We preferred third year students because they had just completed teaching practice in the previous year.

The study used questionnaire instrument. Questionnaires were administered in lecture rooms at the beginning of lectures. This ensured a hundred percent return of completed questionnaires. We acknowledge that questionnaire fails to dig deeply enough to provide a true picture of opinions and feelings. This could have been overcome by use of interview. We could not afford the cost of conducting interviews.

Results

Data was collected, analysed and discussed under the themes: biodata of respondents; preferred age and gender of mentor; views about who was age and gender of mentor; role of mentor in academic development; role of mentor in professional development; mentor assessment of teaching practice; behaviours of mentor valued by trainee teachers; and importance of mentor in their professional development. Some respondents did not attempt all questions and this is reflected in the sample size that fluctuates between 192 and 198 as shown in tables. The study used EPI6 programme for data capturing and Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) programme to produce frequency distribution tables and percentages of the views of trainee teachers.

Biodata of respondents

The respondents were made up of 83 males (42%) and 115 females (58%). This was a fair representation of the distribution of trainee teachers by gender at Seke Teachers' Training College, which had an enrolment of 214 (49%) male students and 225 (51%) female students.

The majority of the trainee teachers (78.8%) who completed questionnaires were in the age group 21-30 years. There were no trainee teachers aged 20 years or below, there were 41 (20.7%) aged 31-40 years and 1 (0.5%) aged above 40 years.

Preferred gender and age of mentor

Table 1: Gender of trainee teachers' mentors. N =198

Gender of mentor	f	f %
Female	155	78
Male	43	22
Total	198	100

Table 1 above shows that one hundred and fifty-five (78%) respondents said their mentors had been female teachers while 43 (22%) had been males. Trainee teachers from Seke Teachers' College were attached to urban primary schools where there were more female than male teachers.

Table 2: Trainee teachers' preferred gender of mentor. N = 198

Preferred gender of mentor	f	f %
Female	107	55
Male	60	31
No preference	27	14
Total	194*	100

* There were 4 missing cases.

The majority of the trainee teachers (55%) preferred female mentors, while 30.9% preferred male mentors and 13.9% had no preference as shown in Table 2 above.

Table 3: Distribution of mentors by age as expressed by trainee teachers. N = 198

Age of mentor	f	f %
41 years and above	85	42.9
31-40 years	104	52.5
21-30 years	9	4.6
20 years and below	0	0
Total	198	100

In Table 3 above trainee teachers indicated that most of their mentors (52.5%) were in the age group 31-40 years followed by 41 years and above (42.9%), and 4.6% were aged 21-30 years. In general mentors were older than the trainee teachers.

In Table 4 below, the majority of the trainee teachers (55%) preferred mentors who were in the age group 31-40 years followed by 23% who preferred mentors aged 41 years and above. Sixteen percent of the trainee teachers preferred mentors aged 21-30 years, while 4% preferred mentors of any age and only 2% preferred mentors aged 20 years and below. The study concluded that trainee teachers preferred mentors who were female teachers and older than them in age.

Table 4: Trainee teachers' preferred age of mentors. N = 198

Age of mentor	f	f %
41 years and above	42	23
31-40 years	103	55
21-30 years	30	16
20 years and below	4	2
Any age	7	4
Total	198	100

Role of mentor in academic development

Table 5 below shows that the majority of trainee teachers (67%) said no to the statement "the mentor is better placed to help me in academic development than the lecturer", while a minority (33%) agreed. However the majority of trainee teachers (66%) said yes, "the mentor is better placed to help me understand the content of the primary school curriculum than the lecturer" while a minority (34%) said no.

Table 5: Views about who is better placed to assist in academic and professional development of trainee teacher between mentor/school and lecturer/college. N = 198

Q		Yes		No		Total	
		f	f %	f	f %	f	f %
6	The mentor is better placed to help me in academic development than lecturer.	64	33	131	67	195*	100
7	The mentor is better placed to help me understand the content of the primary school curriculum than the lecturer.	131	66	67	34	198	100
8	The mentor is better placed to help trainee teacher understand principles of teaching/learning than the lecturer.	93	47	105	53	198	100
9	Schools are better placed to help trainee teacher develop academically than the colleges.	60	30	138	70	198	100

*There were 3 missing cases on question 6.

Fifty-three percent of the trainee teachers disagreed that "the mentor is better placed to help trainee teacher understand principles of teaching/learning than the lecturer" and 47% agreed. In our study understanding principles of teaching/learning is academic development. When asked whether "schools are better placed to help trainee teacher

develop academically than colleges", the majority (70%) said no while a minority (30%) said yes.

The response to question 7 contradicted views of trainee teachers about who was better placed to help them in academic development between mentor and lecturer. Trainee teachers, it appears, did not view understanding content of the primary school curriculum to be academic development. The same could be said of understanding principles of teaching and learning, where the differences in number of those who said 'yes' and 'no' was small. The study concluded that trainee teachers neither viewed academic development to be the role of mentors nor schools, but that of lecturers and colleges.

Role of mentor in professional development

In Table 6 below forty-nine percent of trainee teachers said 'yes', "the mentor is better placed to help me in professional development than the lecturer" while those who said 'no' were 51%. Three did not respond. A similar distribution of responses was noted in

Table 6: Views about who is better placed to assist in professional development of trainee teacher between mentor/school and lecturer/college. N = 198

Q		Yes		No		Total	
		f	f%	f	f%	f	f%
10	The mentor is better placed to help me in professional development than the lecturer.	96	49	99	51	195*	100
13	Schools are better placed to help trainee teachers develop professionally than colleges.	100	51	95	49	195*	100

*There were 3 missing cases (no response).

question 13. One hundred (51%) trainee teachers said yes while 95 (49%) said no, to "schools are better placed to help trainee teachers develop professionally than colleges". There was no consensus on views about the role of mentor in professional development of trainee teachers when one considers that three respondents opted not to answer the question.

Table 7: Views about trainee teachers on "my mentor contributed significantly in development of the listed skills". N = 198

Q.	Skill of ...	Agree		Not sure		Disagree		Total	
		f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
14	Planning	106	54	6	3	85	43	197*	100
15	Teaching	172	87	6	3	19	10	197*	100
16	Evaluating	79	40	17	9	100	51	196**	100
17	Recording	111	56	9	5	77	39	197*	100
18	Disciplining	175	89	5	2	17	9	197*	100

*There was 1 missing case. **There were 2 missing cases.

Professional skills of a teacher include planning, teaching, evaluating, recording and disciplining. Trainee teachers were asked to agree or disagree with the statement that "mentor contributed significantly in development of the skills listed" in Table 7. The majority of trainee teachers agreed that mentors contributed significantly in the development of skill of disciplining (89%), skill of teaching (87%), skill of recording (56%) and skill of planning (54%) and did not contribute significantly in development of skill of evaluating (51%). Trainee teachers learnt a lot about disciplining and teaching from mentors. There was no consensus on views about contribution of mentors in development of skill of evaluating because of the 196 responses given 79 (40%) agreed, 17 (9%) were not sure and 100 (51%) disagreed. Respondents were equally divided, if the 'not sure' is taken as 'agree'. We concluded that trainee teachers, in general, agreed that mentors contributed significantly in development of their teaching skills. Role of mentor in teaching practice and assessment of trainee teachers.

Table 8: Views about who is better placed to assist in teaching practice between mentor/school and lecturer/college. N = 198

		Yes		No		Total	
Q		f%	f %	f%	f%	f	f %
1	The mentor is better placed to help in teaching practice than the lecturer.	169	86	28	14	197*	100
2	The mentor is better placed to assess my performance on teaching practice than the lecturer.	132	67	66	33	198	100

**There was 1 missing case.*

In Table 8 above the majority of the trainee teachers (86%) said yes, "the mentor is better placed to help me in teaching practice than the lecturer" while 14% said no. Further, the majority (67%) of trainee teachers said yes, "the mentor is better placed to assess my performance in teaching practice than the lecturer" while 33% said no. Trainee teachers were agreed that mentors were better placed to help trainee teachers in teaching practice and better placed to assess performance of trainee teachers on teaching practice than lecturers. The study was not conclusive on whether trainee teachers viewed teaching practice as professional development because responses to question 10 and 13, which directly sort views on professional development, differed with responses to questions 11 and 12, which directly sort views on teaching practice. Despite lack of no consensus among trainee teachers on role of mentor in professional development, the majority agreed that mentors were better placed to help trainee teachers in teaching practice and to carry out its assessment.

Table 9(a): Mentor's assessment of trainee teacher on teaching practice. N = 198

Number of assessments	f	%
5 times or less	164	84
More than 5 times	32	16
Total	196*	100

**There were 2 missing cases.*

The study found out that trainee teachers were assessed between 1 to 9 times by mentors. Mentors assessed trainee teachers five times or less in a majority (84%) of cases. In fewer cases (16%) more than five assessments were carried out. On average mentors assessed trainee teacher twice a term.

Table 9(b): Lecturer's assessment of trainee teacher on teaching practice. N = 198

Number of assessments	f	%
5 times or less	187	95
More than 5 times	9	5
Total	196*	100

**There were 2 missing cases.*

Lecturers assessed trainee teacher five times or less in 187 cases and more than five times in 9 cases. On average lecturers assessed trainee teacher once a term for three terms. Department of Teacher Education (DTE), University of Zimbabwe, recommends three assessments for each trainee teacher on teaching practice. Therefore mentors assessed trainee teachers more than the minimum requirement while lecturers just fulfilled the DTE minimum requirement of three assessments during the school attachment period.

Table 9(c): Trainee teachers' views about use of mentor's assessment mark by college. N = 198

College uses mentor's mark	f	%
Yes	61	31
No	133	69
Total	194*	100

**There were 4 missing cases.*

Sixty-nine percent of the trainee teachers indicated that their college did not use mentors' assessment marks for grading purposes, while 31% thought that college used the mentor's mark. Seke Teachers' College did not use the mentors' marks to compute the final grade of trainee teachers on teaching practice.

Table 9(d): Trainee teacher's value of mentor's assessment mark. N = 198

Number of assessments	f	%
I value lecturer's mark more than mentor's mark.	136	71
I value mentor's mark more than lecturer's mark.	49	25
I value both lecturer's mark and mentor's mark.	8	4
Total	193*	100

**There were 5 missing cases.*

Table 9(d) shows that the majority of trainee teachers valued lecturer's mark more than mentor's mark. Trainee teachers valued lecturer's assessment because college used the mark to pass or fail them. Seventy percent of the respondents put up this reason. Another popular reason was that lecturer knew teaching practice requirements of Seke Teachers' College and therefore was better placed to give a more valid and reliable assessment than mentor. Trainee teachers who valued the mentor's assessment said that mentor and trainee teacher spent more time together and understood each other better. The study concluded that trainee teachers did not value assessments of their teaching practice by mentors probably because Seke Teachers' College did not use the marks awarded to determine passing or failing teacher training course.

Behaviours of mentors valued by trainee teachers

Trainee teachers were asked to indicate the extent to which they valued professional behaviours of mentors and their responses are shown in Table 10 below.

Table 10: Views about the extent to which trainee teacher valued behaviours of mentor. N = 198

Q	Behaviour	To a large extent		Not sure		Not at all		Total	
		f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
23	Dress	180	93.8	3	1.6	9	4.6	192***	100
24	Punctuality	178	91	4	2	14	7	196*	100
25	Honesty	159	82	21	11	14	7	194**	100
26	Empathy	161	83	13	7	19	10	196*	100
27	Cooperation	162	92.8	5	2.6	9	1.6	196*	100
28	Resourcefulness	162	83	12	6	22	11	196*	100
29	Patience	172	83.8	13	6.6	11	5.6	196*	100

*There were 2 missing cases. **There were 4 missing cases.

***There were 6 missing cases.

Trainee teachers valued professional behaviours to a large extent in the order: dress (94%), cooperation (93%), punctuality (91%), patience (88%), empathy (83%), resourcefulness (83%) and lastly honesty (82%). The study concluded that trainee teachers valued all the professional behaviours listed in Table 5 to a large extent.

Importance of mentors in the professional development of trainee teachers

One hundred and sixty-three (84%) trainee teachers said 'yes', to "the mentor was important in the professional development of trainee teachers", while 32 (16%) said no. Trainee teachers viewed mentors as experienced especially in disciplining learners, effective in handling lessons, and close-by to help trainee teachers solve classroom management problems encountered in the classroom. Trainee teachers

who said no to question 30 felt that when the mentor was a head, deputy head or teacher-in-charge he or she was too busy to assist them. The study concluded that trainee teachers thought that, in their professional development, mentors were important because they were experienced and effective in classroom management and were readily accessible to mentos.

Discussion

Gender and age of mentor Trainee teacher neither has a choice in selecting mentor during teaching practice nor is he/she consulted. It is the responsibility of the school administration to assign mentor to trainee teacher. Given a choice, trainee teachers preferred mentors who were females and older than them in age. In terms of preferred age of mentor, trainee teachers' views were consistent with Vygotsky's Zone of Proximal Development theory, where an adult (or senior) enables the learner (or junior) to do with help what the learner cannot do alone. Being older, mentors are assumed to be more experienced than the trainee teachers (Stones 1975). Trainee teachers preferred female mentors to male mentors. Probably a comparison between females and males would show that it is easier to confide, to seek advice, feedback, counseling and guidance from females than males. This would seem to suggest that female teachers possess mentoring attributes more than male teachers do because they could be more patient and empathetic. Female teachers were likely to give more attention to trainee teacher, likely to be more patient and always available to offer assistance and give empathy. NFIE (1999) found out that ideal mentor was described as "a highly skilled teacher who has earned the esteem of colleagues and who possess confidence and 'presence' to offer counsel to other adults". This research, however, did not find out whether female mentors were better mentors than male mentors.

Role of mentor in academic and professional development of trainee teachers

Prior to the introduction of mentoring, schools were viewed as places where trainee teachers were sent to practice teaching skills (Manyati 1998). Teacher education introduced mentoring in 1995 in Zimbabwe,

with the deliberate effort to involve schools more directly and actively in initial teacher education (Mukorera 1997). Since then school teachers have been appointed as mentors with no training for their new roles as mentors, contrary to research which established that trained mentors were more effective than untrained mentors (Manyati 1988, Mukorera 1997).

Schools are best for experiencing the realities of teaching (McIntyre et al 1994). Trainee teachers experience teaching practice at school. They are afforded opportunity to appreciate the kind of teaching work and the importance of educational foundations in the work of a teacher. They get opportunity to appreciate the significance of teaching constraints such as examinations, time and resources. The mentors guide the trainee teachers through all these experiences. We found out that trainee teachers held the same views about mentors and schools.

Colleges, on the other hand, are well placed for research-based knowledge, reflection on teaching practice, setting and assessing students and for support services (McIntyre et al 1994). The partnership of schools and colleges requires acceptance of a principle of integration, attitudes of openness, detailed planning, decision-making and communication about who needs to know what. Lecturers, trainee teachers and mentors need a clear view of what mentoring entails. Mentors, when equipped with the appropriate knowledge and skills, should be in a position to help trainee teachers in both academic and professional development.

Mentors who have administrative responsibilities often use the trainee teachers as relief teachers (Fish 1995, Manyati 1998). Such mentors have very little to offer to the trainee teacher. Trainee teachers in our study expressed the same views about mentors who were administrators. Further, we are of the opinion that mentors who are less academically qualified than the trainee teachers do not offer adequate "cognitive stimulation". Trainee teachers today are joining Teachers' Training Colleges with higher grades at O-Level and A-Level than some of the qualified and experienced teachers who are already in the field. This could be a possible reason why in our study trainee teachers tended to say mentors do not help them in academic development.

Qualified teachers who are likely to be appointed mentors must therefore upgrade their academic and professional qualifications to keep abreast with ever increasing entry requirements in TTCs, changes in primary school curriculum and changes in teaching/learning methods.

Role of mentor in assessment of trainee teacher on teaching practice

By maintaining control of trainee teachers' teaching practice and assessment, colleges distance trainee teachers from the schools (Cochran-Smith 1991). Often mentors do not intervene in the work of trainee teachers unless when things are really going bad, as if there exists an unwritten rule (Feimen-Nemser and Beasley 1997). A possible explanation is that colleges when deciding to pass or fail trainee teacher do not use mentor's assessment. When mentors do not intervene in the work of trainee teachers this would seem to mean that learning to teach is construed as an independent process of trial and error. This thinking contradicts mentoring as assisted performance. Further trainee teachers assume that it is the responsibility of lecturers to teach planning, yet co-planning between mentors and trainee teachers should occur.

Trainee teachers who participated in the study were of the view that lecturers were better placed to assess them than mentors. Williams and Bowman (2000:175) postulate that, "a crucial role of mentoring is that the coaching or facilitative role of the mentor is never tied to evaluation and thus fosters a collegial relationship in a supportive non-threatening partnership". Joyce and Stowers (1983) hold the same view that mentoring should be separated from evaluation. Further Troutman (2000:134) reaffirm that, "when mentors are placed in the position of grading their protégés, this can interfere with the potential nurturing qualities of mentoring relationship". Authorities cited above argue that the mentors must not evaluate trainee teachers. However, they put forward a different explanation from that held by the trainee teachers who participated in the study. According to Shulman cited by Tell (2001) a *mentor* is "99 percent of the time ... *mentee's* buddy, *mentee's* friend, *mentee's* supporter" and therefore should not evaluate the mentee. He accepts that the mentor provides evaluative data where he/she "observed one doing or not doing something that so violated the fundamental expectations of the role that he/she would not have no recourse".

If trainee teachers are to know what they are doing well, how they need to improve and extend their professional skills mentors must possess skill of assessing. Mentors would then use this skill to give regular assessment and constructive feedback, both oral and written. Mentoring as a socialization process can be more effective when accompanied by reflections on interactions and teaching experiences. We argue that such assessments are of value and need not necessarily provide grades for the performance of trainee teacher.

Behaviours of mentor valued by trainee teachers

Experienced teachers support and guide the learning of trainee teachers through mentoring. Mentor behaviours are critical if the support and guidance is to benefit the trainee teachers. Trainee teachers who participated in the study valued to a large extent the following attributes of mentors: dress, punctuality, honesty, empathy, cooperation, resourcefulness and patience. These attributes describe the relational dimension of mentoring. Our research findings are in agreement with Williams and Bowman (2000:177) who defined relational support "as those activities or interactions that pertain to the emotional structures in a mentoring relationship that foster healthy attitudes and perceptions about one's self in relation to teaching". They found out that participants in their research emphasized affirmation (validation of one's professional status), commitment (of the mentor's emotional and intellectual resources) and collegiality (mentor and mentee enjoying equal status in the relationship) as the key attributes of the support received from mentoring relationship. We are of the opinion that the behaviours or attributes of exemplary mentors described here are not acquired through mere experience and initial teacher preparation, rather a deliberate and purposeful staff development programme is needed to foster these attributes.

Importance of mentor in professional development of trainee teacher

Trainee teachers need to develop teaching competencies such as organizing knowledge for pupils to learn, creating an environment for pupils to learn, teaching for pupils to learn, and demonstrating teacher professionalism. Professionalism means the manner of conduct within

an occupation. In our research we found out that trainee teachers saw mentors as important in helping them develop skill of disciplining learners, demonstrating how to conduct good lessons and providing immediate help to solve problems encountered. Trainee teachers who participated in the study narrowed importance of mentors to classroom management and did not think of the totality of teaching competencies. We hold the view that mentors are capable of providing assistance to the trainee teachers in all areas of teacher education.

Conclusion

From our research it has emerged that mentoring provides changes and challenges in teacher education. Mentoring has a great potential to improve effectiveness of teacher education programmes. It would appear that mentoring has gender implications in teacher education; however, in the absence of further and detailed research on this aspect the implications remain hazy. Secondly views originate from how people perceive and understand phenomena. It appears trainee teachers demonstrate a limited understanding of mentoring and the same could be said of mentors themselves and lecturers in Teachers' Training Colleges. This underlies the importance of further research and training in mentoring for all those involved in teacher education. Finally experienced teachers, schools, trainee teachers, lecturers and colleges stand to benefit from mentoring.

In our recommendations:

- I. Further research which, makes use of interviews and observation, is needed to compare the views of trainee teachers, mentors and lecturers about the role of mentors in professional development of trainee teachers;
- II. Universities and Ministries of Education should hold workshops on mentoring and on integrating college-based activities and school-based activities on teacher education for trainee teachers, mentors and lecturers;
- III. Universities and colleges should offer mentoring as a course for lecturers, mentors and trainee teachers to undertake as both pre-service and in-service training;

- IV. Only full-time classroom teachers must be appointed as mentors; and
- V. Schools should attach trainee teachers to mentors of higher academic and professional qualifications than trainee teachers.

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