MENTORSHIP OF STUDENT TEACHERS ON TEACHING PRACTICE: PERCEPTIONS OF TEACHER MENTORS IN ZIMBABWEAN SCHOOLS

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ABSTRACT

Mentorship as a concept in teacher training is vital in developing full professionals. It becomes even more effective if the mentors are adequately prepared for their mentorship roles. This study sought to determine: (a) the nature of training mentors had received in mentorship; (b) the extent to which they understood their role as mentors; (c) the mentors' views on the assistance they rendered to mentees; (d) the relationship between parent colleges and mentors; and (e) assess implications for teacher training in Zimbabwe. The study followed a descriptive survey design which utilized both quantitative and qualitative approaches. A comprehensive questionnaire was administered on a purposeful and information-rich sample of 120 mentors in two provinces in Zimbabwe. Interviews were also held with some of the mentors to triangulate findings from the questionnaire. The study revealed that many mentors had not been given any formal training in mentorship; they were not really sure of their roles and while they stated that they assisted mentees to the best of their abilities assistance given to mentees differed from mentor to mentor. College supervisors did not consult mentors for mentees' progress checks and mentors had no input in the final assessment of students under their tutelage. College supervisors and mentors' input should be incorporated in the final assessment of students.

Keywords: mentorship, student teachers, schools, college supervisors, Zimbabwe.

1. INTRODUCTION

Research shows that most teacher training colleges locally and internationally have now taken abode mentorship as a way of developing teachers on teaching practice (Bleach, 2001; Gordon & Maxey, 2000; Huling & Resta, 2001). Examples for the above can be seen in research studies on mentoring, for example, in Canada (Poldre, 1997), in New Zealand (Parker-Redmont, 1990), in Zimbabwe (Maphosa, Shumba and Shumba 2007), in U.S.A (Penner, 2001), in South Africa (Blunt and Conolly, 2006), in Ghana (Anane-Fenin, 2008), in Turkey (Koc, 2011), and in Malaysia, Norasiah, 2001). This strategy is being promoted worldwide because it facilitates the training of teacher trainees to learn from experienced professionals in schools (Bezanson, 2003; Carver, 2004). Adentwi (2002) argues that competency; quality and effectiveness of teachers have a direct bearing on pupils' performance and attainment hence the importance of ensuring that teachers are properly trained by offering them tuition on foundations of education,

pedagogical and subject area expertise. Students are then expected to go on teaching practice where they try the art of teaching (Anane-Fenin, 2008). Student teachers on teaching practice in schools are also assessed and awarded a teaching practice mark that contributes towards final assessment. During this teaching practice stint, student teachers are attached to qualified and experienced teachers who work as their mentors. The mentorship approach is modelled around the apprenticeshiptype of learning (Odell & Huling, 2000). The student teacher is expected to work under the tutelage of the mentor and learn from the mentor in order to develop into a fullfledged professional. This is not done in isolation but in a collegial working relationship with their mentor. This collegiality is expected to have a significant impact on the relationship between the mentor and the mentee (Campbell & Brummett, 2007; Kellaher & Maher, 2003).

There is need for mutually beneficial working relationships between mentors and mentees. To this end, Watson (2005) observes that a good mentor should be empathetic to the mentee, have respect of the mentee and be willing to also learn from the mentee. According to Saul (2011:1)

> *A mentor's job is to help the mentee reach his/ her goals. The relationship is mentee-centered. The mentor listens, sometimes challenges, offers insights and encourages. A mentoring relationship needs reasonably frequent and consistent contact. As a dialogue, it is interactive. Both partners contribute, change and grow.*

This shows that a lot is expected on how the mentor relates to the mentee if the montoring exercise is to be a success. Generally, relationships between mentors and mentees have been reported as being top-down, master and apprentice like with an imbalance of power between the supervisor and student teacher (Cameron & Wilson, 1993). However, Michael (2010) advocates for the term mutual mentoring in which information flows both ways and both partners learn from each other. The mentoring relationship should thus, enhance growth, empowerment and opportunity for both mentors and mentees (Vance, 2011 in Fitzpatrick & Wallace, 2011).

In the teaching profession, trainee teachers learn through effective guidance by and cooperation with a mentor (a qualified and experienced teacher) whose approach matches the learning needs of the prospective teacher (Williams, Butt, Gray, Leach, Marr & Soares, 1998). This places great demand on the professionalism of mentor teachers in encouraging student teachers to learn from their practical experiences in the school setting. In practice, mentor teachers' supervisory styles are manifested in large part in the intentions, the approach and the contents of their dialogues with student teachers. In these respects, mentor teachers' approaches have a considerable influence on how and what student teachers learn (Feiman-Nemser, 2001; Ovens, 2000; University of Maryland, 2007). Mentor teachers are usually inclined to take

the role of daily advisor and instructor to the student teacher (Timperley, 2001). Apart from this mentor - teacher role, which emphasizes situational adjustment, technical advice and emotional support, mentoring also includes the encouragement of the student teacher to grow professionally through reflection on his or her own practice (Feiman-Nemser, 2001). Combining the advisor and instructor role with the role of encourager of reflection, however, often requires special training in less familiar supervisory skills.

Other studies have noted that mentor teachers have multiple and complex roles which could be conflicting (Dart & Drake, 1995). One important aspect of the complexity of the mentor teacher's position is the need to match his or her approach to the learning needs and characteristics of the mentee. This implies that the mentor, therefore, needs to develop a highly adaptable mentoring and supervisory (Veenman & Denessen, 2001) with the understanding that student teachers have different learning styles, which partially depend on their orientations towards learning (Oosterheert & Vermunt, 2001). It is also known from research that student teachers' professional development takes place at differing paces, and thus their needs and concerns change over time. This is true for student teachers and also for teachers at the start of their professional careers (Furlong & Maynard, 1995). The need to have mentors with knowledge, skills and values necessary for succesful mentoring cannot be overemphasised.

The Concept of Mentoring in Schools

Classroom teaching can be very lonely and very stressful and the nature of teaching usually means that new teachers are isolated from their colleagues (Cookson, 2005*; Heider, 2005)* and have to try to cope alone. Beginning teachers need the opportunity to interact and share (Pitton, 2006). Mentoring has come to be applied to a more formal process in the teaching profession whereby a more experienced person is able to give support and advice to a less experienced colleague for the purpose of professional growth (Fletcher, 2000). For example, in schools, one of the main uses of mentoring is teacher induction.

There are a number of definitions of the concept mentoring. Bozeman and Feeney (2007:1) define mentoring as;

> a process for the informal transmission of knowledge, social capital, and the psychosocial support perceived by the recipient as relevant to work, career, or professional development; mentoring entails informal communication, usually face-to-face and during a sustained period oftime, between a person who is perceived to have greater relevant knowledge,wisdom, or experience (the mentor) and a person who is perceived to have less (the protègè)

In teacher training, the mentors are usually qualified, experienced and practising teachers who offere professional guidance to teachers under training. The whole essence of the exercise is to expose the teacher trainnees to the wrld of work under the gudance of 'experts'. The mentors, therefore, should have a lot to offer to the mentees to enhance their professional, socual and emotionall growth. The mentors' dispensation of duty and professional conduct should be worth emulating by the mentees. Being a mentor implies that one should have willingness and desire to help another colleague. Usually, there are mutual benefits arising from the mentoring process (Edwards & Mutton, 2007; Lamb & Ludy, 2008).

Hutto, Holden, Haynes (1991) include these aspects in their definition: "A mentor is an experienced, successful and knowledgeable professional who willingly accepts the responsibility of facilitating professional growth and support of a colleague through a mutually beneficial relationship" (p. 10). Mentoring has been used widely in many professions and has been found to be most helpful in the teaching profession. Coomble (1989) found that "young teachers who have a mentor relationship tend to cope better with the pressures of the professional world" (p.25). Mentor teachers should be willing to participate in teaching programmes; have demonstrated exemplary teaching practices with evidence of professional growth; effective communication skills; be accessible to colleagues; and have a solid knowledge of community resources (Hersh et al., 1993; Wildman, Maggliaro, Niles & Niles, 1992). In their study, Wildman et al. (1992: 207) have identified 12 characteristics that have been consistently reported by both mentors and mentees as important and these are: (a)Willing to be a mentor; (b) Sensitive: that is, knowing when to back off; (c) Helpful, but not authoritarian; (d) Emotionally committed to their beginners; (e) Astute, that is, they know the right thing to say at the right time; (f) Diplomatic: For example, they know how to counteract bad advice given to their beginner by others; (g) Able to anticipate problems; (h) Nurturant and encouraging; (i) Timely in keeping the beginners apprised of their successes; (j) Careful to keep beginners' problems confidential; (k) Enthusiastic about teaching; and (l) Good role models at all times. Other studies include the following qualities: (a) being one who listens, an active listener who can also role play classroom situations with an attempt to clarify problems and strategies; and being experienced in the field and respected by other colleagues (Mateja, 1992); (b) being accepting, nonjudgemental, willing to see other viewpoints, and having a sense of humour (Weeks, 1992); (c) being able to model and demonstrate effective teaching practices (Hutto et al., 1992); and being reflective and analytic about their own teaching thus encouraging this in the mentee. Vonk (1993) cited in Bleach (2001) summarises these in calling for openmindedness, reflectiveness, flexibility, listening skills, empathy, creativity and a helping attitude from practicing teachers because those actually working in classrooms make the best coaches as they are practising techniques on a regular basis. Similarly, Anderson and Shannon (1988) have identified

specific functions of a mentor in a collegial relationship as being to: encourage; affirm; inspire; challenge; teach or coach; counsel; sponsor; and befriend. This implies that being a mentor is a helpful form of professional development and the benefits are reciprocal. Studies have shown that mentoring is a process which cannot be hurried (Weeks, 1992) and involves continuous sharing of information and opportunities for coteaching (Mateja, 1992). This implies that teachers should be involved in setting their own goals so that they can become "responsible leaders in their own professional development" (Krasnow, 1993: 11).

The term mentor is defined in various ways in various contexts. For example, other studies view a mentor is an older, more experienced person who is committed to helping a younger, less experienced person become prepared for all aspects of life (Odell, 1990). This view assumes that a mentor has fully experienced some aspects of life in which he or she does the leading. In teaching, the mentor should not just be experienced but should be aware of modern trends in teacher education and the college policies so as to develop the mentee in line with college expectations (Taruvinga, 1996). A mentor has multifaceted roles which include supporting, modeling, instructing, coaching and supervising (Ambrosetti & Dekkers, 2010; Furlong & Maynard, 1995; Holloway, 2001; Kerry & Mayes, 1995). This implies that the role of a mentor should not be under estimated and before students are attached to a mentor, nothing should be left to chance since mentors should assist student teachers to improve their teaching and improve their professional competency (Gordon & Maxey, 2000). As such, mentorship places a lot of responsibility on the role of the mentor of leading, guiding, directing and supervising the trainee's learning process (Gordon & Maxey, 2000; Stanulis & Weaver, 1998). This implies that the need to have a knowledgeable, thoroughly trained and dedicated mentor cannot be overemphasized in schools.

It should also be observed that the issue of attaching trainees to mentors also revolves around the philosophical assumptions of modeling as Aristotle states that many skills, some of them complex, can be best learnt by emulating experienced practitioners and by supervised practice under their guidance (McIntyre, Hagger & Wilkin, 1995). As such, it is assumed that the model has the necessary qualities that the learner or trainee will emulate and imitate in the process of developing into a proper, ideal and desired professional. This translates very well into the school situation where a student teacher is attached to an already trained and experienced teacher whose duty would be to give direction and guidance in the nurturing of the aspiring teacher trainees. In modeling, mentorship provides mentees with the opportunity to observe new and appropriate teaching practices before they are expected to demonstrate them. Modelling is most meaningful when preceded or followed by mentor/mentee discussion of a specific teaching strategy (Kellaher & Maher, 2003). This implies that in mentorship, the mentors are expected to be fully aware of their roles (Hudson & Hudson, 2010) and should have in place a

deliberate plan to develop mentees on specific aspects of teaching and the profession in general.

Models of Mentoring in Schools

In coaching, mentors should assist and instruct mentees to demonstrate meaningful teaching practices in schools. Mentees may teach collaboratively with their mentors in a real teaching and learning environment and this helps them to become confident and competent at demonstrating teaching practices within the classroom. As such, coaching can be enhanced when mentors demonstrate a variety of teaching techniques and discussions with mentees (Bey & Holmes, 1992). A mentor has to be aware of his or her role as coach in order to effectively discharge the coaching duties and all the ingredients of coaching have to be implemented for the benefit of the mentee. It is unfortunate in a case where a mentor fails to exhibit the expected coaching skills. A coach should also be very knowledgeable in the areas in which he or she is coaching the mentees. As such, the mentors have to show direction and should know the direction to professional growth of the student teachers attached to them (Fletcher, 2000).

Research shows that there is no single mentoring model for everyone in schools (Bleach, 1999 & 2001; Souto-Manning & Dice, 2007). Other approaches to induction of new teachers have shown the potential of collaborative or reflective mentoring (Carver, 2004; Johnson & Birkeland, 2003). In this model, mentors and new teachers act as equal partners (Bleach, 1999 & 2001; Glickman, 1990) and the democratic pedagogy is employed. This model is also referred to as the "Supervisory behaviours model" (Vonk, 1993 in Bleach, 2001). Figure 1 below shows this model.

Non-directive	Assumes teacher can think and act unaided
Collaborative	Mentor and new teacher are equal partners
Directive-informational	Identifying problems and offering solutions
Directive-control	Prescribing action from "expert" viewpoint

Figure 1: Supervisory behaviours model
Adapted from Vonk (1993) in Bleach (2001)

In this model, both the mentor and the new teacher (mentee) are equal partners and they identify problems and offering solutions. In other words, both the mentor and the mentee reflect on their activities. In addition, students ground the principles of their practice in the context of a dialogue with a more experienced professional (Oliver & Aggleton, 2007). The other model is known as the "Novice-mentor relationship model" (Vonk, 1993) (see Figure 2 below).

In contrast to the Supervisory behaviours model, there is very limited interaction between the mentor and the new teacher in the Novice-mentor relationship model. This model emphasizes that the new teacher status and requires participation in competency programmes.

Laissez-faire ("sink or swim")	Very limited interaction
Collegial	Voluntary informal supervision
Formalized mentor-protégé	Contractual relationship
Mandatory competency-based	Emphasizes new teacher status and requires participation in competency programmes
Self-directing professional	Self-directing contract

Figure 2: The "Novice Mentor Relationship Model"
Adapted from Vonk (1993) in Bleach (2001)

The above model also emphasizes voluntary informal supervision or collegial relationship between the mentor and the novice. In addition, Hudson's five factor mentoring model emphasises the need for feedback (Caudle, 2010). Hudson outlines the following tenets as essential in mentoring: the mentor's personal attributes for facilitating the mentoring process; mentoring about the education system requirements; the mentor's pedagogical knowledge; the mentor's modelling of teaching practices and quality feedback provided by the mentor. The model seems to cater not only for the classroom practice but incorporates out-of-class knowledge such as mentoring on education policies and ethics (education system requirements).

There are some critical aspects of teaching practice in teacher education that should be emphasized in teacher training. These aspects are lesson preparation and lesson delivery (Chivore, 1999; Taruvinga, 1998; Tomlinson, 1995). As such, mentors should be very competent in these two areas in order to offer effective assistance to the student teachers. Lesson preparation, for example, involves making a lot of documents that assist in the teaching and learning of pupils in schools. These documents include schemes of work, lesson plans, teaching notes, records of marks, remedial and extension work records among others. Philip–Jones (1982) in Kerry and Mayes (1995) and Newcastle University (2011), talk about the need for joint planning of lessons of the trainee and the mentor with the mentor leading the way. In this regard, the mentor has to be aware of college requirements and standards in the making of such documents if they are to render significant assistance to the trainees in schools.

In lesson delivery, the mentors should lead by example and they have to be aware of the critical elements that constitute effective learning in line with

current trends in teaching and learning in schools (Gwarinda, 1993; Morrison, 1996). Ideally, the mentor has to deliver a number of lessons with the trainee observing and making notes. Follow up discussion of the mentor's lessons should be made soon after every lesson highlighting strengths and weaknesses of the lesson(s). As such, the teacher trainee is expected to develop the art of self–evaluation which is vital in professional development. Apart from issues directly linked to actual teaching in the classroom, there are also other areas in which the mentors can offer assistance within the school such as providing leadership skills, behaving in public and interacting with their pupils in schools. Such areas help the student teacher to uphold the code of ethics that governs the teaching profession.

There is no doubt from the above discussions that mentorship is a very useful approach in teacher training. This being an approach used by teacher training colleges in Zimbabwe for students on teaching practice, it is not only unique to Zimbabwe alone but is also used in other countries such as the United States of America whereby newly qualified teachers are placed under the mentorship of experienced teachers (Huling & Resta, 2001; McIntyre & O'Hair, 1996).

Theoretical Framework

The present study is underpinned on Bandura's Social Learning Theory. Omrod (1999) contends that the Social learning theory focuses on the learning that occurs within a social context. It considers that people learn from one another, including such concepts as observational learning, imitation, and modeling. It is from this theory that the mentoring of student teachers is drawn. Student teachers are supposed to develop professionally by observing their mentors and emulating them whilst the mentors deliberately model the mentees to the expected professional norms and requirements. Mentors may actualy model the student teachers' appropriate professional behaviours while at the same time ensuring that they do not model inappropriate behaviours.

The Zimbabwean Context

The training of teachers in Zimbabwe is conducted in teacher training colleges and in universities. University graduates with interest in joining the teaching profession as qualified teachers normally enrol for postgraduate teaching diploma or certificate courses offered in universities. There are teacher training colleges that specialise in the training of primary school teachers and those that train secondary school teachers. These teacher training colleges recruit students with Ordinary or Advanced Level passes and minimum entry requirements are set by the State. Most of the teacher training colleges are affiliates of the University of Zimbabawe hence the quality control of teacher training programmes in colleges is done by the Department of Teacher Education of the University of Zimbabwe. Whilst the specific teacher training

programmes may differ from college to college, the common issues are that trainee teachers are given tuition in subject content, professional studies, teaching methodologies, theory of education as well as teaching practice. It is during the teaching practice stint that colleges mostly attach student teachers to qualified teachers who act as mentors. Student teachers and mentors share teaching loads with the mentor assisting the student under his or her tutelage in all professional issues. In a study conducted by Maphosa, Shumba and Shumba (2007), student teachers were found to be generally unhappy with the nature of mentoring assistance they received from their mentors. This created the need to look at mentoring from the mentors' point of view.

Statement of the Problem

When college authorities attach their students to mentors in schools with an expectation that they will be assisted, the assumption is that the mentors are fully aware of what is expected of them. If the attachment of student teachers is based on wrong assumptions the whole mentorship programme may be a futile exercise, largely ineffective and the training of quality teachers severely compromised. The present sought to determine: (a) the nature of training mentors had received in mentorship; (b) the extent to which they understood their role as mentors; (c) the mentors' views on the assistance they rendered to mentees; (d) the relationship between parent colleges and mentors; and (e) assess implications for teacher training in Zimbabwe.

2.   METHOD

Research Design

The study followed a descriptive survey design which utilised a combination of quantitative and qualitative approaches. Descriptive research design is a scientific method which involves observing and describing the behaviour of a subject without influencing it in any way (Leary, 2004). In this study the researchers sought to establish mentors' views on various issues pertaining to their mentoring role. Quantitative data were collected through the use of a structured questionnaire whilst qualitative data was collected through interviews. Data triangulation was considered useful as some issues which could not be captured through a structured questionnaire could be captured through interviews.

Sample

Purposive sampling was used to identify participants for the study. Trochim (2006) states that in purposive sampling, we sample with a purpose in mind. In this study the purpose was to target teachers who had served as mentors. The sample of participants comprised of 120 qualified and experienced primary school teachers of both sexes. The sampling of schools from where mentors

were drawn was also purposive because the researchers could not access all schools due to high transport costs. As a follow–up to responses in the questionnaire, a sample of 20 experienced mentors who had worked with student teachers were also interviewed to triangulate findings in this study. All the participants used in this study were primary school teachers since the study focused on mentorship of primary school teacher trainees.

Instruments

A questionnaire and interviews were used to collect data in this study. Bell (2005) states that a questionnaire is a series of questions asked to individuals to obtain statistically useful information about a given topic. A questionnaire was utilised against its advantages of making it able for the researchers to collect data from a large number of respondents quickly, easily and efficiently as well as against the realisation that if closed questions are used, coding and interpreting of data becomes easy (Beiseke, 2002). Unstructured interviews were also used to collect qualitative data to augment the quantitative data (O' Leary, 2004) as they capture the participants' unadulterated perspectives without influence of the researcher's apriori categorization of the knowledge being sought (Zhang & Wildemuth, 2009).   Qualified and experienced teachers who worked as mentors in schools were asked to indicate the nature of training mentors had received in mentorship and if they had not received any they were to explain how they got to know of mentorship.   Participants were also asked to describe the extent to which they understood their role as mentors, the assistance they rendered to mentees, comment on how they worked with college based supervisors, and indicate the extent to which their input was considered in the final assessment of students.

Data Analysis

Descriptive statistics were used to analyse data. Data were analysed and presented by way of frequency tables and percentages.

Data collection

The researchers administered the questionnaire on the selected teachers by visiting schools. Follow-up visits were also made to recover questionnaires. Unstructured interviews were carried out with selected teachers as normal conversations.

Ethical issues

Permission to conduct this study was sought from and granted by the Provincial Education Directors of the two provinces in which the study was carried out. All the names of participants and provinces used in this study were kept confidential. The researchers personally administered the

questionnaire and collected it from the participants. The researchers explained the purpose of the study to all the participants before they completed the questionnaire. All participants were also assured that their responses will be kept confidential and that the data collected will only be used for purposes of this study. Appointments for interviews were made and these were carried out by the researchers and tape recorded with the respondents' permission.   The mentors were generally willing to give out their views on mentorship.

3.   RESULTS

Table 1: Mentors' teaching experience (N = 120)

Mentor's teaching experience	N	%
1 year or less	8	6.7
2 years	13	10.8
3 years	39	32.5
4 years	23	19.2
5 years	24	20.0
6 years or more	13	10.8
Total	**120**	**100.0**

Mentors' teaching experience. Table 1 above shows that the majority of the mentors, 32.5 % (N = 39) had served as teachers for at least three years.   A negligible number of participants, 6.7 % (N = 8) comprised of newly qualified teachers in this study.   It appears from Table 1 above that mentors have varying teaching experience.

Table 2: Mentors and the number of mentees they have served to date (N = 120)

Number of mentees served	N	%
1 mentee	18	15.0
2 mentees	37	30.9
3mentees	58	48.3
4 or more mentees	7	5.8
Total	**120**	**100.0**

Mentors and the number of mentees they have served to date. As shown in Table 2 above, the majority of the participants, 48.3 % (N = 58), have served at least 3 mentees while only 5.8 % (N = 7) have assisted more than 4 mentees. It appears from Table 2 that participants have experience in dealing with

mentees with some having worked as mentors four more than for different student teachers.

Table 3: Nature of assistance offered to student teachers by mentors.

Item of assistance	YES	%	NO	%
Do you assist in lesson preparation?	117	97.5	3	2.5
Do you demonstrate effective teaching?	108	90.0	12	10
Do you discuss your teaching with students?	58	48.3	62	51.7
Do you offer any skills in marking?	41	34.2	79	65.8
Do you offer skills in chalkboard use?	22	18.3	98	81.7
Do you talk of policies and regulations to students?	42	35.0	78	65.0
Do you help students in co curricular issues?	101	84.2	19	15.8

Nature of assistance offered to student teachers by mentors. The majority of the respondents, 97.5 % (N = 117) confirmed to have offered mentees assistance in lesson preparation, 90.0 % (N = 108) had demonstrated effective teaching and 84.2 % (N = 101) had assisted students in co curricular issues. On the contrary, 81.7 % (N = 98) indicated that they had not offered students any assistance in chalkboard use; 65.8 % (N = 79) did not offer any skills in marking students guidance in marking pupils' work; 65 % (N = 78) of the mentors indicated that they did not talk of polices and regulation with mentees; and 51.7 % (N = 62) did not discuss their teaching with students.

Table 4: Relationship between college supervisors and college authorities and supervisors

Item on relationship	YES	%	NO	%
Are you ever called for meetings with college staff?	2	1.7	118	98.3
Are you acquainted with college policies on teaching practice?	37	30.8	83	69.2
When college supervisors visit students do they ask for student progress reports from you?	23	19.2	97	80.8
Do you ever discuss students' performance with college supervisors?	49	40.8	71	59.2
Do colleges consider your supervision reports in student assessment?	0	0	120	100
Can you say you work hand in hand with colleges in student development on teaching practice?	53	44.2	67	55.8

Relationship between college supervisors and college authorities and supervisors. The majority of the participants 98.3 % (N = 118) indicated that they were never called for any joint meetings with college staff and those that indicated that they attended meetings with college staff confirmed that they had attended one meeting called by one college for mentors some long time

ago; 69.2 % (N = 83) of the participants showed that they were not acquainted with college policies in teaching practice and those that indicated that they were acquainted with the policies said that there were teaching practice guidelines sent to mentors by parent colleges. In some cases some mentors indicated that the guidelines were with school heads and were not made accessible to the mentors who worked with students; 80.8 % (N = 97) of the mentors indicated that college supervisors never asked for student progress from them. Some mentors actually indicated that college supervisors got information about students from school heads and not from the mentors; 59.2 % (N = 71) of the mentors further indicated that college supervisors did not discuss students' performance with them. In interviews carried out, some of the sentiments raised on the way college supervisors operated when they visited student teachers in the schools were as follows: (a) they always appeared to be running out of time; (b) only talked to their students; (c) at times they treated the mentor as if he or she was a nonentity; (d) never seemed to appreciate that their students was in someone's class; (e) are quite vindictive and all knowing; (f) they looked down upon mentors; and (g) showed that the mentor had no business in what they were doing (i.e. supervision). Although the relationship between college supervisors, authorities and mentors appears to be far apart, it appears that they work hand in hand as indicated by the participants' responses in the last item under Table 4.

As shown in Table 4 above, all the mentors 100 % (N = 120) indicated that their supervision reports were not considered in the student's assessment. Most of them actually indicated that they did not wrote any supervision reports for the student as this done by heads, their deputies and teachers in charge; 55.8 % (N = 67) of the mentors indicated that they could not consider that they worked hand in hand with colleges in student development on teaching practice. Some of the reasons they gave for this were captured as follows: (a) colleges did not induct them on mentorship; (b) no literature was provided to support their work; (c) relations with college-based supervisors were not properly defined; (d) college–based supervisors seemed contend to do their work without their input; and (e) they should be allowed to evaluate students' progress and feedback to parent colleges. It appears from the above sentiments expressed by participants that there is a need to bridge the working relationship between college supervisors and mentors in schools. Since both of them have the same goals of developing effective teachers, this will improve the quality of teachers produced by colleges.

4.   DISCUSSION

This study sought to understand mentorship from the point of view of the mentors and finding should enhance the operationalization of the mentorship programme for effective teacher training in Zimbabwe. The revelation in the study that most mentors had not received any formal training in mentorship is unfortunate and rather retrogressive in the country's quest for quality

education. Given the multi–faceted role of the mentor, a mentor has to be fully equipped for the mentorship role (Holloway, 2001; Kerry & Mayes, 1995). This implies that there is a need for both college supervisors and mentors to work together for the benefit of student teachers during teaching practice. The study also revealed that most mentors were less experienced teachers. As such, this serves to confirm the assertion that in mentorship there is need to have appropriate people to lead students (Odell & Huling, 2000; Stanulis & Weaver, 1998). This implies that less experienced teachers would have little to offer to students as they would not have encountered many problems in teaching and learning and with this kind of experience would not be in a position to solve them. This also confirms the assertion that mentorship is rooted in the belief that adults have the capacity for continued growth and learning (Omrod, 1999; Mateja, 1992). Experienced teachers also act as appropriate role models to mentees (Fletcher, 2000). However, experience alone without the necessary training and in–service programmes may not result in the best of mentors since trends in teaching and in teacher education keep changing (Adentwi, 2000). There is, therefore, need to have mentors who are abreast with the latest developmental trends in teaching and teacher education. A situation where the mentor would lag behind in knowledge of current developmental trends in teaching would defeat the whole purpose of mentorship. This also calls for mentors to keep abreast with current global trends by making full use of the internet.

In this study, most mentors indicated that they offered mentees guidance in some aspects of teaching such as lesson preparation ad lesson delivery. These are very critical areas of operation for a teacher (Morrison, 1996). Adequate guidance on such issues is best given when mentors have up to date knowledge on these areas. A mentor may claim to demonstrate effective teaching when what he or she terms effective teaching may fall short of real effective teaching. It is necessary for college supervisors, mentors and mentees to have the same conceptualization of effective teaching and learning in schools. It is not good practice for mentees to notice mentors' shortcomings in their expertise and skills because this may lead to mistrust and skepticism by mentees on the way they view their mentors.

The finding that some mentors did not demonstrate lesson and that some demonstrated but did not discuss taught lessons with mentees is indicative of problems in mentorship in the schools. As shown by the apprenticeship model from where mentorship draws, there is a need for joint lesson preparation by both mentors and mentees in schools (Philip–Jones, 1982 in Kerry & Mayes, 1995). In joint lesson preparation, the mentor should also be very conversant with college expectations to avoid tension and confusion between mentees and college supervisors. For example, after the mentor's demonstration lesson, an evaluation of the lesson should naturally follow (Kellaher & Maher, 2003). Both the mentor and mentee should discuss the lesson and highlight its strengths and weaknesses. This serves to professionally enrich the student

teacher during teaching practice. This implies the need for clear procedures to follow in the mentoring of various aspects of teaching and learning. As such, this also implies that nothing should be left to chance if mentorship is to be beneficial and uniformly applied to students. In other words, colleges should play a critical role by involving mentors in the mentorship programme.

This study also revealed that in the majority of cases there were no meetings that involved college staff members and mentors. This is a very unfortunate situation that seems to negate the expected trend in mentorship. Such a revelation could be the source of faulty mentorship. It must be pointed out that college officials and mentors have complementary roles in the development of a teacher during students' teaching practice stints and should speak with one voice on their expectations from students (Maphosa et al., 2007). As such, a clash of expectations by both college supervisors and mentors only serves to confuse the students. Therefore, it is necessary that at the school level, mentors should work together with colleges for the benefit of student teachers. A scenario where mentors are not even aware of college teaching practice policies makes it a mockery of the whole essence of mentorship in schools. Such a gap should be rectified for the benefit of both colleges and schools.

It must also be pointed out that sound and healthy relations between mentors and college based supervisors play a very pivotal role in teacher development (Holloway, 2001; Kerry & Mayes, 1995; McIntyre & O'Hair, 1996; McIntyre, Hagger & Wilkin, 1994). As such, a scenario whereby college–based supervisors appear to ignore the presence of the mentors when they visit their students for supervision is not very healthy in schools because this builds a culture of mistrust between the student teachers and their mentors. As such, this may result in a situation where students may value instructions from their college supervisors and not from mentors. Ultimately, students may treat mentors with contempt during teaching practice. Hence, there is a need to recognize and appreciate the role of mentors in schools. In an ideal mentorship situation, when the college–based supervisors visit a student, they should ask for the student's progress report from the mentor rather than from the student. The mentor should actually keep a record of the student's progress on various aspects of the profession.

The finding that mentors' reports were not used in the final assessment of student's teaching practice is worrisome. It is even more stunning in cases where mentors indicated that they never made any reports for mentees under their tutelage because mentors should monitor students' progress from the beginning to the end of teaching practice stint. As such, mentors are in a better position to properly evaluate students' teaching practice performance when compared to college–based supervisors' erratic and spaced teaching practice school visits because mentors work with student teachers for most of the time during teaching practice.

5.   RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSION

 Although this study that sought to determine mentors' views on mentorship found that most mentors were experienced teachers who were in a position to assist students, it also revealed that most mentors had not received any formal training in mentorship. This study also found that while most mentors were aware of their role in guiding students, the way guidance was offered differed from mentor to mentor in terms of the aspects in which assistance was rendered and the degree to which it was rendered. Mentors offered students' assistance in various aspects of the profession yet it remained questionable on the mentors expertise and skills in handling the ever–changing trends in teacher education and in teaching and learning. The study also revealed that relations between college based supervisors and mentors left a lot to be desired. When most college–based supervisors visited students for supervision they carried out their supervision with little regard of the mentor's role. Furthermore, mentors' reports were also not considered as part of the students' teaching practice assessment. This calls for urgent address of the above important issues raised by mentors about their working relationship with colleges.

As such, this study concludes that colleges should put in place training programmes for mentors. Such training programmes should also be followed up by regular in–service programmes for mentors from time to time. In addition, mentors also require a lot of support on the required information on mentorship of student teachers in schools. This implies that both mentors and supervisors should be staff developed on current global trends in mentorship. There should also be mentorship formats to ensure uniformity on the guidance given to mentees. Colleges should involve mentors in the assessment of students by ensuring that their input is considered in final teaching practice assessment. College–based supervisors also require staff development in order for them to understand and appreciate the complimentary roles of mentors. This would enhance relations between mentors and college–based supervisors for the benefit of the mentees in schools during the teaching practice stint.

There is no doubt from the above discussion that the findings that this article have made a contribution to this critical issue of teaching practice in teacher education by further exploring the concept mentorship from the point of view of mentors themselves. As such, will make mentors have a clearer understanding of what is expected of them in the mentoring and evaluation of student teachers during teaching practice. When colleges attach student teachers to mentors, there is need for them to ensure the workability of the mentorship programme. In conclusion, views from mentors have shaded useful insights on how the mentorship programme is implemented by college

supervisors and mentors in schools by ensuring the harnessing and buttressing of its strengths as well as amelioration of its deficiencies.

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