

**EXPLORING MENTOR LEARNING THROUGH THE PRACTICE OF  
MENTORING STUDENT TEACHERS DURING SCHOOL-BASED  
TEACHING PRACTICE**

**BY**

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A dissertation submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for Masters of  
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Date: January 2015

## DECLARATION

I, Mrs Grace Mary Ruth Pillay declare that:

(i) The research reported in this dissertation, except where otherwise indicated, is my original work.

(ii) This dissertation has not been submitted for any degree or examination at any other university.

(iii) This dissertation does not contain other persons' data, pictures, graphs or other information, unless specifically acknowledged as being sourced from other persons.

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(a) Their words have been re-written but the general information attributed to them has been referenced;

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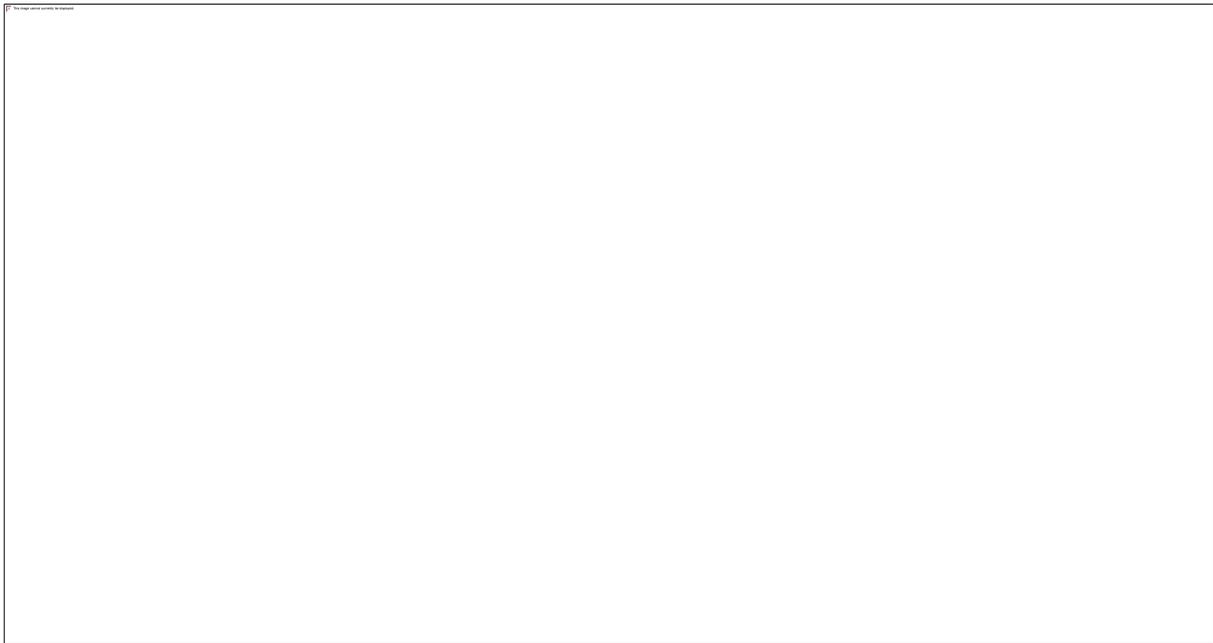
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Dr Marinda Swart  
(Supervisor)

## DEDICATION

The completion of my studies would not have materialised without the supremacy of the Holy Trinity on my life and work. I wish to honour our Lady, Mother Mary, and the powerful message found in her Holy Rosary.

### The Holy Rosary



(Figure 1: The Holy Rosary: received via email to the congregation of St Catherine's, Queensburgh)

I also wish to thank

- my husband, Basil Pillay, for his unstinting love and support. I appreciate the sacrifices you made and the encouragement you gave to ensure that I bring this study to its fruition. You are my greatest motivation. You introduced mentoring to my professional life and you are an informed sounding board for my ideas.
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To all mentors. What a serendipitous moment for a mentor, to be part of a legacy which took place thousands of years ago. How deeply comforting it is to know that we can trace our genealogy, sharing an ancestral link almost, with Mentor as we continue a journey which started in the deep mists of time.

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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

B.Ed.	Bachelor of Education
D.O.E	Department of Education
DoHET	Department of Higher Education and Training
ELRC	Education Labour Relations Council
EMEE	Effective Mentoring in English Education
ETDP	Education Training and Development Practices
IPET	Initial Professional Education of Teachers
IQMS	Integrated Quality Management Systems
ITE	Initial Teacher Education
LPP	Legitimate Peripheral Participation
MET	Master of Education in Teaching
NRF	National Research Foundation
NTNU	Norwegian University of Science and Technology
PGCE	Post Graduate Certificate in Education
SA	South Africa
SACE	South African Council of Educators
SETA	Sector Education and Training Authority
SIM	School-based Initiative for Mentoring
SLM	School Liaison Mentor
SMT	School Management Team
UK	United Kingdom
UKZN	University of KwaZulu-Natal

## ABSTRACT

School-based teaching practice with productive mentored support in actual classroom settings is a current focus in Initial Teacher Education and has been explored internationally and nationally as a mode of professional development for student teachers. In the South African context, as early as 2000, the Norms and Standards for Educators (South Africa, Department of Education, 2000) declared that teaching practice is central to Initial Professional Education of Teachers (IPET). Currently South African Minimum Requirements for Teacher Education Qualifications (South Africa, Department of Higher Education and Training, 2011) stipulate that learning in practice needs to take place in school settings with mentored support.

The historical notion of mentor depicted an experienced, older, wiser person, whose roles included educating, counselling, guiding, supporting, being a confidant and parenting with the goal of mentoring as finding one's role in adulthood. Traditional roles focused on one-to-one relationships whereas more contemporary views allow for collaborative learning with a view to support not only the mentee but mentor learning as well. The purpose of the study is to explore mentor learning through the practice of mentoring student teachers during school-based teaching practice.

The study was supported by a qualitative approach located in the interpretive paradigm. A case study methodology using multi-mode qualitative data collection methods drew on the learning experiences of four teachers who serve as mentors at one specific school in the Chatsworth area. The data which was collected through a biographical questionnaire, individual face to face semi-structured interviews and a focus group discussion allowed the participants to explore and interpret experiences of mentoring and learning during school-based teaching practice (Maree, 2007). Drawing on the data generated, this study found that mentor learning in the context of this school took place when the mentor teachers were able to take their formal studies, experiences of teaching and mentoring and work collaboratively during the Site based Initiative for Mentoring (SIM).

Evans's (2002) study which explores four elements of teacher development was adapted as the lens for the study. The four elements for teacher education and development were signposted as attitudinal, functional, role and cultural development and learning. Drawing on the data generated, the analysis of this study revolved around two themes. The themes spoke

to how mentors perceived and enacted their roles as mentor teachers by being mentor leaders, displaying passion as well as being problem solvers. The second role of being a supporter to student teachers entailed emotional support, support in acquiring practical skills as well as extending the work of the university. The mentor teachers learnt about mentoring in the context of their practising school when the mentor teacher participants were able to learn with and from others. Learning about mentoring was displayed as functional learning as the mentor teachers learnt new strategies or modified existing strategies such as time-saving techniques and mentor pedagogy. The participants learnt from student teachers, other mentor teachers as well as through their own reflection and embraced the discourse of collegiality and collaboration within the practice of mentoring.

The findings in relation to what and how learning happened indicated that mentor teachers had opportunities to learn about mentoring through the practice of mentoring. Mentors have also recognised that competence and skills gaps hinder mentoring and result in a fragmented practice in the school context. Great emphasis is placed on mentoring for Initial Teacher Education. The responsibility of the university in providing a structured mentoring programme for all mentors should give purpose and direction to the practice of mentoring during school-based teaching practice. Mentor teachers play a pivotal role in the life of the student teacher, but this is best accomplished when they are motivated to successfully implement what was previously articulated in policies.

# CHAPTER ONE

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.1. Introduction

South Africa's political transformation in 1994 heralded changes in all components of society, including education. This transition presented itself in a slew of policy mandates from the Department of Education requiring that teachers undergo deep-seated changes in ideology, curriculum, teaching practice and context, additional roles and responsibilities in Initial Teacher Education and to take charge of their own learning. Amidst the flurry of policies emerged those which directed the classroom teacher, as the custodian of the profession, with the responsibility to serve as mentors to the student teacher. Serving as a mentor requires engagement in effective practices of mentoring. In this sense, the practice of mentoring refers to the interaction between the mentors, student teacher and between groups of mentors. The mentor supports the development of the student teacher in their journey of becoming a teacher. School-based teaching practice became recognised as a context, different from that of teaching learners, where the teacher is tasked with the responsibility of developing the student teacher's knowledge and skills in becoming a competent professional.

Internationally, educational authorities have increasingly mandated schools to take on the responsibility for Initial Teacher Education. Schools play a powerful role within the practical component of Initial Teacher Education which takes place during school-based teaching practice (Hobson, 2002). The emerging specialist role of the teacher as mentor in Initial Teacher Education has also been recognised. This has resulted in international educational and academic arenas which include departments of education and universities appointing support for the mentor teacher in key professional development areas (Aways, McEwan, Heyler, Linsky, Lum, & Wakukawa, 2003). Schools taking on more responsibility for teacher education, with an informed mentor and an improved practice, are beneficial to the student teacher, the mentor (Sundli, 2007) and the institution itself (Waghid & Louw, 2008).

The Report of the Ministerial Committee on Teacher Education (South Africa, Department of Education, 2007) points out that school-based teaching practice with mentored support is a key component of Initial Teacher Education. The recent South African policy on Minimum Requirements for Teacher Education Qualifications (South Africa, Department of Higher

Education and Training, 2011) stipulates that practical learning within Initial Teacher Education qualifications should take place in authentic practical school settings where there is structured supervision, mentoring and assessment.

These policy documents highlight the need for schools to support and develop student teachers but they do not provide specific guidelines on what constitutes mentoring; nor do they address the need for support and on-going development for mentors. In addition, the mentor teachers know very little about the theoretical underpinnings of the university degree and the university practitioners are unaware of the work done during school-based teaching practice (Zeichner, 2010). Mentoring in South Africa is currently not sustained by a formalised mentoring programme and takes place on an *ad hoc* basis because mentoring and mentor training is not a mandatory requirement, contrary to international trends.

This has created a gap between the intention of the policy and its actual practice (Samuel, 2009). There is an assumption that teachers know how to mentor. Goba, Pillay, Ramrathan & Swart, (2006, p.18) add “we work on the assumption that teachers, based on their initial teacher training and teaching experiences, would know how to establish and maintain effective mentoring”. Zeichner (2010, p.90) adds that the traditional view of school-based teaching practice expects schools to provide a place for student teachers to practise teaching but mentors are not prepared in order to “implement a more active and educative concept of mentoring”. Harley and Wedekind (2004) add that the rampant curriculum changes, the changing role of the teacher, in addition to the teacher’s role as mentor, signals a need for support and development of the teaching cohort to be able to provide quality mentorship. It is against this background of the theory-practice divide and lack of structured mentor training, and support that a deeper understanding of what mentors learn through their practice of mentoring during school-based teaching practice is sought in this study.

## **1.2. Focus and purpose of the study**

Increasingly, importance is placed on the mentor during school-based teaching practice to develop the student teacher professionally. However, Long (2009) maintains that the opportunities to develop and support the mentor are rather limited. This study aims to explore

mentor learning through the practice of mentoring student teachers during school-based teaching practice.

Mutemeri & Chetty (2011) point to the dichotomy of theory and practice as embedded in the gap between the mentor teachers who have current contextual knowledge and skills of classroom practice as compared to the university lecturers who are less informed about the reality of the school faced by the student teacher and the mentor. It is expected, however, that mentoring takes place. Considering the lack of training and support for the mentor teacher this study aims to focus on mentor learning. The mentor teachers would be able to draw benefits from the study as it will assist them in their mentoring practices. Further, it is hoped that my study will be added to the existing, albeit limited, literature on mentor learning in the South African context.

### **1.3. Background and Rationale for the Study**

My passion for mentoring emerged in 2005 when I was requested to co-ordinate teaching practice for student teachers at a primary school in Chatsworth, Durban. These initial experiences translated to my becoming a mentor and serving as liaison mentor between the school and the University of KwaZulu Natal. The liaison role entailed overseeing the mentors and student teachers, ensuring that all contractual responsibilities were met and that the mentors are aware of their roles and responsibilities in the practice of mentoring. At the commencement of school-based teaching practice teachers were motivated to take on the responsibility of mentoring while others viewed it with much trepidation considering their already heavy workloads. Teachers were unsure about the mandate to mentor, as they were without any form of opportunities to learn or support, except for the initial briefing meeting at the university. Mentoring between the mentor-mentee often took place in isolation with very limited opportunities for networking amongst the teachers in the school. This motivated me to set up a mentor support initiative at the school level. This initiative included formal and informal discussions, and mini-workshops, collaborating, sharing our trials and tribulations of our practice.

It was an attempt to support and offer the mentor the opportunity to work with other mentors in close proximity, so that they know that help is available and that they do not feel isolated.

The scope offered by this school's initiative addresses a need for collegial mentoring practices to take place within a school (Shank, 2005). Such collaboration provides opportunities for mentors to work not only in a community of practice, but it allows for changes to mentoring practices and the social construction of knowledge on mentoring student teachers (Parker-Katz & Bay, 2008).

These experiences further motivated me to expand my understanding of mentoring by exploring the theoretical side of this practice. I was trained in 2009 in a Mentoring in Schools Programme which was a short course part funded by the Education Training and Development Practices (ETDP) Sector Education Training Authority (SETA). Participating in this short course became a serendipitous turning-point in my professional life as it accorded me the opportunity to engage in learning about mentoring and networking with other mentors. Learning about mentoring took place via activities such as discussion, role play, case study reflection, the completion of assignment tasks and the design of mentoring programmes specific to a school environment while maintaining a reflective journal. At this stage I was also introduced to the policy contexts of South Africa which delegated teachers to mentor but without providing the necessary tools to do so.

This formal mentor training experiences made me look at my practice of mentoring through a different lens as I gained in-depth understanding of the theory that formed the foundations of mentoring. The short course backed up my school-based teaching practice with theory which pointed out the difference between my role as a co-operating teacher and a mentor teacher. Awaya et al., (2003) note that teachers should be mentors and not merely co-operating teachers, fulfilling the contractual obligations between the school and the university. It also gave me the necessary tools to distinguish between effective mentoring practices and the extended time spent on fulfilling the requirements of the university. The mentors at my school are not formally trained yet they do take on the role of mentor. It alerted me to the need for development opportunities for the teachers at my school, so that they have the necessary knowledge and skills that underpin quality mentoring.

My renewed understanding, exposure to research, theories and case studies on mentoring relationships led to uneasiness. I was fortunate to be selected for the short course which could not answer all my questions but was an excellent grounding for mentoring. The teachers at

this school, most of whom have volunteered to mentor, did not have the opportunity to do the short course. I began to think about how the mentors at my school went about their practice of mentoring despite having no structured form of training. I began questioning what happened in their practices which could be beneficial to the student teacher as well as to their own development as mentors. I also wondered what mentor teachers learnt through the practice of mentoring. It gave me the impetus to expand on the school initiative and to understand how local knowledge can be produced in communities of practice through sharing and talking about mentoring (Maynard, 2000; Lieberman & Mace, 2008).

I hope that this study resonates with the mentors at this school by adding to the repertoire of mentoring skills. It became clear that their story was also my story; ergo the personal motivation to undertake the study is inherent.

My study represents a microcosm of the national and international research and current interest in mentoring which confirms that teachers, academics from higher learning and student teachers work in collaboration within communities of practice to implement and support mentoring practices. International studies are increasingly focused on these practices in schools for the professional development of the student teacher and the mentor.

The University of Haifa (Orland, 2001), the University of Hawaii (Awaya et al., 2003) and the University of Illinois at Chicago (Parker-Katz & Bay 2008) support the mentor's development. These studies show that schools take on more responsibility for mentor teacher education and recognise the need for trained mentor teachers with a focus on teaching practice. The literature is replete with many other such studies based on the importance of school-based mentoring, the relationship between the mentor and mentee, the roles and responsibilities of the mentor and the importance of mentoring programmes (Orland, 2001; Awaya et al., 2003; Parker-Katz & Bay, 2008). However, research which points to mentor learning during the practice of mentoring is limited (Cohen, 1995; Hobson, 2002; Awaya et al., 2003).

The mentor in the South African context is a classroom teacher who takes on the responsibility of mentoring student teachers during school-based teaching practice. The National Policy Framework for Teacher Education and Development (South Africa, Department of Education, 2007) talks about a model of teacher development which will

include a one-year internship as part of the fourth year of the B.Ed. degree. It further stipulates that schools take on more responsibility for the development of the student teacher, which signals a need for training and support for the mentor teacher. This course of action is in line with current international trends.

As early as 2000, Norms and Standards for Teacher Education (South Africa, Department of Education, 2000) mandated teachers with the responsibility of mentoring in the Initial Professional Education and Training (IPET), requiring that schools and mentors contribute to the teaching practice experience of the student teacher. Most recently the Integrated Strategic Planning Framework for Teacher Education and Development in South Africa: 2011-2025 (South Africa, Department of Education, 2011) and the South African Minimum Requirements for Teacher Education Qualifications (South Africa, Department of Higher Education and Training, 2011) point to the importance of the trained mentor in school-based teaching practice.

The policy mandate on mentoring is a step in the right direction but legislation merely states that mentoring should be taking place without providing the incumbent support for the mentor or monitoring its implementation at schools. Further, policy in the South African context is not guided by a frame of reference against which the effectiveness of school-based teaching practice and mentoring can be measured. The resulting gap between policy and implementation guided this study. The policy context will be discussed further in Chapter Two.

#### **1.4. The context of the school**

The primary school in Chatsworth, Durban has a staff complement of 24 teachers, of which 22 are state employed and two are employed by the School's Governing Body. The school draws its learners from the areas of Welbedacht and Naickers Farm. These areas include informal settlements as well as government housing schemes. Social ills like drug abuse, violence, poverty, unemployment and child-headed houses are commonplace. The school has been called upon, since 2005, to mentor student teachers from various higher education institutions. Recognising that mentoring in schools is mandated by policy and having a

responsibility as custodians of the profession, the teachers choose to mentor. However, only three members had any form of mentor training. These teachers contributed to a school-based initiative for mentor teachers to support each other. This initiative is further explored in Chapter Three section 3.6.2.2.

## **1.5. Methodology**

The study is located in the interpretive paradigm which entailed the selection of a qualitative approach using a case study methodology (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2007). A case study methodology showed participants' interaction and work in a natural setting (Maree, 2007), thereby exploring the mentoring practices of four teacher mentors in one primary school in Chatsworth. Henning, Gravett & Van Rensburg (2005) explore the case study methodology as understanding the phenomenon, mentor learning, investigated as a bounded system, the group of mentor teacher participants and the unit of analysis, the school which directs the boundaries of the system. This research is a case of the mentor teachers at the school which provides the context for school-based teaching practice.

The selection of multi-mode data collection included a biographical questionnaire, semi-structured interviews and focus group discussion used to obtain data from the participants (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2007). Purposive sampling, which enabled the selection of participants based on "preselected criteria relevant to a particular research question" (Maree, 2007, p.96), was used to select four participants who are the mentor teachers from the Foundation, Intermediate and Senior Phase.

## **1.6. Research Questions**

To support the purpose of this study, the following research questions were formed to explore mentor learning during the practice of mentoring student teachers during school-based teaching practice. The research questions are:

1. What are mentor teachers' perspectives of their roles as mentor to student teachers?
2. What and how did mentors learn about mentoring through the practice of mentoring during school-based teaching practice?

## **1.7 Structure of the dissertation**

The dissertation consists of five chapters. A brief outline of each chapter is presented below.

**Chapter One** introduced the study and provided the purpose, rationale, the research questions and methodology. The chapter concludes with an overview of the chapters in the dissertation.

**Chapter Two** reviews the literature on mentoring. The chapter provides clarification on the concepts: mentor, practice of mentoring and mentor learning. It reviews practices which were successful in preparing the mentor to provide the scholarship for the student teacher. The chapter reviews the roles and the responsibilities of the mentor in the school-based teaching practice. It maps out the policy context of South African education and its implication for mentoring in schools. The chapter concludes by defining the theoretical framework of Evans' (2002) study on teacher development. Evans (2002) focuses on the elements of teacher development, but the parameters of Evan's study, are applied to all teachers and whatever contexts they are situated in. In my study the elements of teacher development apply to mentor teacher's development with a specific focus on mentor learning.

**Chapter Three** focuses on the research design and methodology of the study. The chapter validates the use of the interpretative paradigm and qualitative approach. It presents the case study methodology and use of relevant data collection instruments: baseline questionnaires, semi structured interviews and focus group discussion. Purposive sampling and the reason for the selection of participants and the participants' profiles are explained. The context of the research site (the primary school) is expanded upon. Profiling the school context is supported by a discussion on the School-based Initiative for Mentoring, referred to as the SIM that was put in place to provide support to mentors. The method of data analysis as well as ensuring trustworthiness is explored. Finally, the chapter explains the ethical considerations of the study (Maree, 2007).

**Chapter Four** offers the participants' profile to give the reader a snapshot of their biographical details, experience and development as mentor. Thereafter data in the form of vignettes are presented, from four participants at a primary school in Chatsworth, focusing on mentor learning through the practice of mentoring during school-based teaching practice.

The themes explored the mentor's perspective of their role in school-based teaching practice, mentor learning during the practice of mentoring and strategies for mentor learning. The two themes explored the mentors' perspective of their roles, what and how the participants learnt about mentoring through their practice of mentoring during school based teaching practice.

**Chapter Five**, the final chapter, presents the findings and insights of the research. A significant finding was that the teachers placed great import on mentoring. Their limited developmental opportunities did not translate to an ineffective school-based teaching practice. In fact, the mentors drew on their experiences as teachers, knowledge and skills of mentoring from the School-based Initiative for Mentoring (SIM) to ensure that the practice of mentoring was meaningful.

## **1.8. Conclusion**

Chapter one introduced the study on mentor learning through the practice of mentoring during school-based teaching practice. The chapter outlined the focus, followed by the rationale for undertaking the study. An overview of the methodology presented details of the qualitative approach, the interpretive paradigm and the data collection methods. The key research questions were highlighted with an outline of the limitations of the research.

The chapter concluded with a summary of the subsequent chapters in the dissertation. Chapter Two reviews the literature on mentoring in schools with a specific focus on mentor learning. It concludes with an exploration of the theoretical framework facilitated by Evans' (2002) study on teacher development.

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

#### **2.1. Introduction**

Historically, mentoring had its roots in the Greek classics. Mentoring supported the education, counselling and guidance of the youth in their transition to adulthood (Awaya et al., 2003). Presently the mentor's roles and responsibilities are more complex and varied as schools take on more responsibility for practical teacher education (Orland, 2001). This study explores mentor learning through the practice of mentoring student teachers in the school setting. Mentoring as a mode of professional development in the school context should result in the development of the mentor and the student teacher (Awaya et al., 2003). Chapter one introduced this premise through the purpose and rationale, extended by the methodology. Chapter two is divided into two sections. The first section focuses on the concepts of the study; mentor, mentor learning and the practice of mentoring. The chapter is extended by understanding the school as a mentoring site and policies which point to school-based teaching practice in the Initial Teaching Education phase. Chapter one gave a glimpse of the policy landscape which regulates teacher education and mentoring as a requisite for Initial Teacher Education. The second part of the review provides an exploration of the theoretical framework. Evans' (2002) four elements for teacher development were tailored for this study as similar elements could be adapted mentor learning.

#### **2.2. Exploring concepts: Mentor and mentoring**

The concepts drawn from the topic are mentor, practice of mentoring and mentor learning. To ensure clarification the concepts, briefly introduced in Chapter one, will be explored and clarified.

##### **2.2.1. Mentor: a traditional view**

The etymological roots of Mentor stem from Ancient Greek mythology recorded in Homer's *Odyssey*. Odysseus, the leader of the people of Ithaca, left his home to go to war. He charged his friend and advisor, Mentor, with the education and guidance of his son, Telemachus (Awaya et al., 2003). This classic story provided a conventional understanding of mentor, who is an older, wiser, experienced adult tasked with the responsibility for the younger person (Cohen, 1995). The story is far removed from our present contextual realities but the

nature of the relationship between Telemachus and Mentor relates to qualities which are currently important to the mentor and mentee (Awaya et al., 2003). Derived from this story a traditional concept emerged which attributed the mentor's role as one of guidance, education and pastoral care.

### **2.2.2. Mentor: a contemporary view**

Mentors in contemporary society play an important role in various work sectors: in industries as part of work place training between a senior and junior member of staff (Chiles, 2005); in the medical field between a seasoned doctor and an intern (Pololi & Knight, 2005); and in the psychological fields between the professional and the patient (Rhodes & Lowe, 2008). In the present educational context the mentor is usually a more experienced teacher who provides support and guidance to the student teacher to augment and develop their professional practice (Wang, Odelle, & Schwille, 2008). In addition, Cohen (1995, p.3) adds, a mentor should "establish trust, offer advice, introduce alternatives, challenge, motivate and encourage initiative". Hawkey (1997) explains that mentors, displaying these behavioural functions, make a vital contribution to the professional development of the student teacher.

Orland-Barak & Yinon (2005) position mentors as the expert. As such the mentor is equipped with knowledge on content, pedagogy, pedagogical content, learners and educational contexts (Shulman, 1987). The mentor's expert position provides support to the student teacher in their transition in becoming a professional; this includes guidance in the practicalities of the classroom, and providing moral support and the freedom to make decisions and learn skills in classroom teaching and learning (Wang, Odelle, & Schwille, 2008). Allen and Poteet (1999) include having exemplary ethical standards, being a competent practitioner and possessing good communication skills as well as being responsive to learning as important traits for a mentor. The mentor carries the responsibility of supporting, counselling, advising, opening up their practice of teaching in order that the student teacher develops professionally to bridge the gap between the theoretical and practical knowledge (Wang, Odelle, & Schwille, 2008).

Orland-Barak and Yinon (2005) agree that the modern mentor carries out a diverse and complex function which comprehensively makes up the practice of mentoring. Cohen (1995) adds that the mentor develops the personal, educational and career potential, while having an

awareness of the pace of the student teacher's progress. This commitment requires skill, time, energy, expertise in content knowledge, and the ability to invest in the professional development of the student teacher and the teaching profession (Jonson, 2008). The mentor provides practical hands-on assistance for classroom teaching (Hobson, 2002) thereby playing a pivotal role in the Initial Teacher Education (Maynard, 2000). In order to communicate these ideas successfully the mentor and the student teacher must find a common ground of knowledge and skills in classroom management and subject content knowledge (Long, 2009). Literature has revealed the role of the mentor as one who develops the student teacher to attain practical and professional competence as classroom teachers.

Zeichner, Payne & Brayko (2012) contend that the role of the mentor during school-based teaching practice requires the translation of academic and theoretical knowledge into practice. The practice of mentoring therefore requires that the mentor teachers correlate what the student teachers learnt in the degree courses to teaching practice. Zeichner, Payne & Brayko (2012) add that this translation from theoretical academic space to the school-based teaching practice is a difficult one, where mentor and student teachers have had little success. One of the reasons mooted for this failure is that mentor teachers have no knowledge about the university degree courses and university lecturers know very little about school-based teaching practice and the work of mentor teachers (Zeichner, 2010). This further widens the gap between the theory and practice and makes the role of the modern mentor more complex. Against the background of the contemporary mentor, and the mentor in the South African context, who mentors with limited development or without the incumbent support from higher education, my study attempts to understand the perspectives mentor teachers have of their roles as mentor to student teachers and what learning is derived from their mentoring practice.

### **2.2.3. Mentoring: a developmental process**

Mentoring as a developmental journey taken by the mentor and the student teacher is dissimilar from the journey the parent may take with the child; this journey is one of professional development (Awaya et al., 2003). This conceptualisation of mentoring as a journey is possible because the mentor has made a similar journey in their transition to becoming a teacher (Daloz, 1999). In other words, a mentor is the insider whose experiences as a teacher become valuable to the student. Mentoring contributes to the professional

development of both the mentor and the student teacher as both learn from each other (Fairbanks, Freedman & Kahn, 2000). This context calls for mentors to take on various new roles and functions to provide practical hands-on guidance to enable the student teacher to become a competent professional (Wang, Odelle, & Schwille, 2008). Mentoring in school is a professional development strategy providing the student teacher with an opportunity to get involved in the practice and “action, which is at the heart of teaching” (Shulman and Shulman, 2004, p.263). Mentoring and mentor learning is linked to professional development as it requires teachers to work in a new context.

#### **2.2.4. Mentoring: in school-based teaching practice**

In South Africa Initial Teacher Education (ITE) is undertaken in Higher Education Institutions with school-based teaching practice as the practical component of ITE. ITE is a credited degree or diploma with supervised practical teaching in the mentored school practice with different kinds of support at different sites. ITE requires the school and the mentors to contribute to the teaching practice experience of the student teachers, by providing support in the attainment of their careers as teachers (McDonald & Hite, 2005; Jones & Straker, 2006; Ovens & Tinning 2009).

Research studies indicate that there is great value placed on mentoring during school-based teaching practice. Awaya et al., (2003) state that an important component of mentoring is the sharing of practical, hands-on knowledge to acclimatise the student to the culture of the school and the teaching profession. Carter and Rod (2001) assert that mentoring is contextualised with mentors who have a wide range of professional experience and knowledge. Wang, Odelle, & Schwille (2008 p. 139) add that mentoring assists the student to learn “a repertoire of skills”. Shank (2005) alludes to the mentoring as socialising the student into the classroom practices and induction into professional practices as a teacher.

Mentoring is valued because of the support given to the student teacher by the mentor. Wang, Odelle & Schwille (2008, p. 156) explain that the practice of mentoring is the support of the student teacher by a mentor who engages in: “coaching, stepping in, teaching together, demonstration, informal conversations on mentoring, debriefing, co-planning”. Dever, Johnson, Hobbs (2000) explored how the student and mentors learnt during their interaction with each other. “The mentors gained new educational insights and pedagogical ahas and an

appreciation of their dyadic relationship with their students” (Dever, Johnson, Hobbs, 2000) p.254). Learning in any context becomes meaningful when “professional development occurred in a learning-by-doing approach” (Evans, 2002, p. 125). Mentoring has also been associated with different intentions as Wang, Odelle & Schwille (2008) recall: occupational, pedagogical guidance and acclimatisation to the school, as mentoring is geared toward the student learning how to teach.

Literature reveals that great importance is placed on mentoring in the student teacher’s academic life. The selection of the teacher as mentor is therefore an important consideration. Mentors are appointed or assigned the task of mentoring by the principal, based on seniority; experience, training or teachers may also choose to mentor for several reasons (Long, 2009). Msila (2012) notes that experience and expertise does not necessarily mean that the person can be an effective mentor Dever, Johnson, Hobbs (2000) contend that there is a polarity between the academic degree courses of the university and the practice of teaching at schools. In other words there is no cohesiveness between what the student teachers do at university and what is expected by the schools. In addition to this, the mentor teachers do not have the support or the development to effectively fill these gaps.

Hawkey (1998) explains that the mentor makes an investment of time and experience to help in the professional development of the student while maintaining the role function as a fully fledged member of staff, with all its incumbent responsibilities. Further, the responsibility of transitioning the student teacher to become a professional requires that mentors are also supported with knowledge and skills (Jonson, 2008).

### **2.3. Mentoring as professional practice**

#### **2.3.1. Understanding mentoring as practice**

Reh (2013) adds that practice is the process of carrying out the professional’s body of work. The practice of mentoring during teaching practice is conceived to be the mentor’s interaction with and the provision of professional support to the student teacher to enable them to develop as teachers (Hobson, 2002). The Commonwealth Standards Framework for Teachers and School Leaders (Gallie & Keevy, 2014) describes professional practice as having the necessary skills to be professional and competent. This implies that mentor teachers should have the relevant skills to mentor student teachers.

Darling-Hammond & Bransford (2005) declare that the practice of mentoring denotes preparation and training to facilitate the student teachers' development as teachers. It does not end there because mentoring is a skill which is required to manage and motivate student teachers to help them grow as teachers (Reh, 2013). Darling-Hammond & Bransford (2005) maintain that the practice of mentoring is more enduring and useful than what the student teachers learn from preparing for practice. Awaya et al., (2003) however, stipulate that what literature contends to be the practice of mentoring is mere co-operating with the requirements of the university. If mentoring is to be an organic vehicle through which student teachers draw knowledge and skills to develop as professionals themselves then there has to be a form of nexus between theory and practice. Wang, Odelle & Schwille (2008) add the practice of mentoring must be grounded in the mentor's professional knowledge and skills which the mentor teacher acquires through formal training, in-service courses and mostly from teaching experience.

### **2.3.2. Understanding mentor teacher knowledge**

The conditions for teacher learning proposed by Shulman (1987) was adapted for this study to encompass mentor teacher learning. The argument for this is that mentor teachers are also teacher practitioners. In the same vein Shulman's (1987) model of teacher knowledge becomes the starting point to understand mentor knowledge. Shulman (1987) outlined seven types of teacher knowledge which included content knowledge, general pedagogical knowledge, curriculum knowledge, pedagogical content knowledge, knowledge of students as learners, knowledge of educational contexts and knowledge of educational ends, purposes and values. Awaya, et al., (2003) maintain that mentor teachers are selected for their professional competencies. As such Shulman's (1987) categories of teacher knowledge should provide the yardstick against which a competent mentor teacher could be selected. The context of the teacher practitioner and the mentor teacher differs. The teacher practitioner predominately works with the learner (pedagogy) and the mentor teacher works with the adult student teacher (andragogy).

Jones and Straker (2006) used the similar categories as Shulman (1987); context knowledge, pedagogical content knowledge, pedagogical knowledge and content knowledge and tailor made this to suit mentor teacher knowledge. Firstly, context knowledge links education and the microcosm of the school to the impact of the wider socio-economic, cultural and political context. The mentor teacher should bring to the attention of the student teachers ways of

working within certain contexts without impeding good practices. Secondly, pedagogical content knowledge refers to the mentor teachers skills set in understanding the mentoring process, requirements of tertiary institutions and the phases of mentoring with its incumbent requirements for the student teacher. This is followed by pedagogical knowledge which focussed on the knowledge required to teacher adult student teachers. The mentor teacher needs to understand how to create healthy mentoring relationships with the student teacher and avoid the pitfalls which arise from working with adults. Finally, content knowledge refers to the mentor teacher's experience, expertise, knowledge and skills which underpin the practice of mentoring during school based teaching practice. Further taking into account the initiatives the mentor teacher sets up to learn about mentoring through their own volition, attending courses, networking and collaborating with other mentors to broaden their repertoire.

### **2.3.3. Mentoring practices as a bridge to the theory-practice divide**

Mentoring bridges the theory-practice divides as shown by various research studies, where theory is the domain of the university and practice the domain of the school. Shulman (1987) maintains that there are more favourable conditions for learning in actual practice than at institutions of higher learning. This is supported by Wang, Odelle & Schwille (2008) who add that mentoring supports student teachers to achieve a variety of practical goals. Awaya, et al., (2003) add that the practice of mentoring is paramount because teaching is a complex and demanding profession. To attempt to bridge the theory-practice divide, there is no substitute for experience with a repertoire of tried and tested strategies and practical goals. Learning to teach situated in the practical settings allows student teachers to observe and question, to find out the details of classroom teaching and the social life of the school. If mentoring is to function it must be linked to good teaching and mentoring (Feiman-Nemser, 1996).

Mutemeri & Chetty (2011) contend that mentoring during school-based teaching practice is the most effective journey toward learning how to teach, therefore higher education has to ensure that degree course have some relevancy to the contextual realities of schools. They maintain that student teachers experience a polarity between the work done at the university and the classroom; and that theory does not have any relevance to the practice. They clarify that if mentoring during school-based teaching practice is to be mutually beneficial to both the student teacher and the mentor it should be a continuum to the degree course and not isolated

as it presently is. Zeichner's (2010) explanation correlates with the previous authors that school-based teaching practice is merely a place for the student teacher to practise and the mentor teachers are not provided with the support to implement an educative practice of mentoring. This dichotomy, however, does not impede the possibility of the practice of mentoring to develop an educative relationship between the mentor and the student teacher. In order that the mentor teacher works towards closing the gap, mentors need specific knowledge and skills in their mentoring practices. This study attempts to gain insight as to what mentoring practices contribute to narrowing the gap and what the mentors learn from these practices.

#### **2.3.4. Mentoring practices develop mentoring relationships**

Engagement in effective mentoring requires certain practices such as building and maintaining a relationship between the mentor teacher and the student teacher. Fairbanks, Freedman & Kahn (2000) provide a glimpse of a relationship that reflects the mentor and the student teacher sitting beside each other, and not on the opposite side of the desk. At the initial stage the image is one of comfort as the student teacher finds actual classroom teaching intimidating and having a supportive mentor is crucial as mentors "help ease the transition into school contexts" (Fairbanks, Freedman & Kahn, 2000, p. 104). Further, the article talks about a relationship which is collegial, with equal opportunities for the mentor and the student teacher to learn from each other, as each brings a different context and learning to the relationship (Fairbanks, Freedman & Kahn, 2000). The relationship between the mentor and the student teacher provides an important opportunity for each to learn from the other. These relationships are supportive and are sustained by professional discourse which provides the channel by which the mentor-mentee begins the transition into a community of practice (Henze & van Driel, 2009).

#### **2.4. Mentor learning through the mentoring practice**

##### **2.4.1. Understanding mentor learning**

There is limited literature on mentor learning therefore this study also explored research on teacher learning. Literature on mentoring mainly focuses on the student teacher, teaching practice, roles and responsibilities of the mentor teacher and the effect of mentoring on student teacher achievement (Awaya, et al., 2003). Mentor learning in the literature is often couched in the language of development. As such it is deemed necessary to understand

mentor learning within teacher professional development. Where literature refers to support for the mentor teacher it is mostly couched in terms of development (Zeichner, 2010).

Evans (2002) interprets teacher learning as learning which brings about a change in the individual. Fraser, Kennedy, Reid & McKinney (2007) maintain that teacher learning represents the processes which, whether intuitive or deliberate, individual or social, results in specific changes in the professional knowledge, skills, attitudes, beliefs or actions of teachers. Shulman and Shulman (2004) add that learning may be different for every teacher, clarifying, that teachers, in whatever context they may work, may be ready to learn but not have the knowledge or skill to do so. On the other hand, there may be teachers who have the necessary tools but remain “uninspired by a vision of education” or lack “membership in the kind of teacher community” which makes learning possible (Shulman & Shulman, 2004, p.260).

Shulman and Shulman (2004) agree with Evans (2002) that personal and professional development takes place when intent is changed into practice. A mentor’s development starts with the self, wanting to make a change to learn and grow in order to improve the practice. The mentor must not wait for training opportunities but take the responsibility for their development which leads to mentors becoming „agents of their own teaching and learning“ (Shulman (1987, p.514). Conceptualisation of mentor learning leads to questions which relate to what, where and how mentors learn and who supports their learning. Mutemeri & Chetty (2011) claim that the fact that there are more questions than answers regarding mentor learning suggests gaps in literature and silence regarding support and training of the mentor teacher. This research study will explore how development opportunities contributed to mentor learning and what was learnt.

#### **2.4.2. Mentor professional learning and professional development**

Taking agency for one’s learning is also included in the design of the recent Commonwealth Standards Framework for Teachers and Leaders (Gallie and Keevy, 2014. p.9). South Africa has been part of the discussion that resulted in this document. The main purpose of this document is “to guide countries in designing basic requirements related to knowledge, pedagogical skills and personal attributes that teachers and school leaders should demonstrate in order to achieve the outcomes of education”. The document states that the standards of professional learning and professional development are so closely related that it was decided

to combine these two standards in the final document under the title “professional learning”. Professional learning is viewed as an engagement or commitment to growth opportunities for self-actualisation whereas professional development is active participation in personal growth. Evans (2002) adds that learning transforms teachers when changes are effected in their personal and professional demeanour. According to Evans (2002) change can also refer to re-defining, modifying and re-framing. Thus, the focus of learning is specifically on self-actualisation through a process that results in change. Self-actualisation is the fulfilment of a person’s potential. Bertram (2011) adds that the most consistent aspect, based on what researchers say, is that teachers learn in different ways which results in a change in the professional’s knowledge, skills set actions and attitudes.

### **2.4.3. Mentor learning: An international perspective**

Literature pointed to change as a key element of learning; change not only in the mindset of the mentor, but also ways in which new learning was adapted to their practice. Different types of learning found in the context of teaching and mentoring offered a segue way for mentor learning. This section highlights key issues on international trends towards closer partnerships between schools and universities as well as establishing communities of practice for more effective teacher education.

International research sheds light on initiatives and programmes which support the development of the mentor teacher. For example, the United Kingdom (UK) (Hobson, 2002) recognised the importance of mentoring in teacher education, so much so that the time spent in school-based teaching practice in Initial Teacher Education (ITE) has increased over the years. In England and Wales the school-based mentor is an equal partner with the university in the preparation of students. Legislation gave more importance to mentors in the form of sustained support, workshops, and freed up the mentor to collaborate with other mentors and inform their individual practices.

In Fairbanks, Freedman & Kahn’s (2000) study, *Effective Mentoring in English Education (EMEE)*, mentors were given opportunities to engage with other mentors in conversations about teaching practice which assisted in their learning new skills and tried and tested strategies. The project offered the mentor opportunities to learn alongside the mentee. The

mentors and student teachers participated in workshops on effective mentoring, documenting and analysing experiences, and exchanging mentoring practices with other mentors and mentees. The mentors and the student teachers were not passive recipients, rather they listened, they spoke, they reflected, narrated their own stories in a collaborative post-evaluation seminar. The mentor, mentee and mentors from other institutions became co-researchers in exploring the significance of their relationship. This echoes what Jonson (2008) alluded to as learning being multi-directional, as learning was not the sole domain of the student teacher but the mentors as well. Mentors learnt that teaching and learning is a collaborative enterprise which also creates opportunities for reflection, which opened up the mentor's practice for self-evaluation and review (Stanulis & Flodin, 2009). The programme shed some light on how mentors learnt how to adapt what they learnt in the various contexts to their practice of mentoring.

In the Master of Education in Teaching (MET) Program at the University of Hawaii in Manos which was conducted by Awaya et al., (2003), the mentors and the students worked in communities of practice to generate local knowledge and engaged in reflective practice. In responding to these reflections the mentor got a fresher insight into the practice of mentoring and utilised the new learning to offer practical support to the student. The programme supplemented learning with workshops, planning and collaboration with other mentors and to learn within a community of practice. Examples of the new learning included how to adapt what the students learnt at university to the practice of teaching at schools, taking mentoring out of isolation and working within communities of practice. Awaya et al. (2003) add that trying to connect the theory and practice and working in communities of practice became new buzzwords in learning.

The study of Dever, Johnson and Hobbs (2000) on Mentor–Apprentice Collaboration pointed out that mentors are indeed very busy with the responsibilities of their individual classes, the school and their duties. This is a legitimate concern of most teachers. A sustained support base was made available for all mentors. Not only were they relieved of some of their duties but they were supported with workshops and one on one sessions with experts which gave them the necessary tools for mentoring.

International research studies revealed that interactive workshops, with an expert support base, equipped the mentors with the tools to develop their mentoring skills. Communities of practice, collaboration, reflecting became meaningful as mentors were able to locate what they learnt into practice within their respective mentoring contexts. Equally important was the support from universities and departments of education, which was offered to mentors to be able to carry out the professional practice of mentoring.

#### **2.4.4. Mentor learning: A Perspective from Southern Africa**

The state of mentoring in Southern Africa mirrors South Africa in its infancy; potentially drawing from western institutions to frame local contexts. South Africa, and the Southern African states selected for this study; Zimbabwe and Ghana, has moved teacher preparation from tertiary institutions to the field in the form of school based practice. School based practice is incorporated into the academic degree. Mtetwa and Thompson (2000) note that field based practice depends on mentor involvement. As such Zimbabwe recognises the important role played by the mentor teacher in the development and delivery of school based practice to the student teacher. Unlike in South Africa, the dawn of the new democracy brought with it a proliferation of policies without the necessary implementation in practice; the case for Zimbabwe was different. Development in the field of mentoring commenced with enquiry. One of the key research questions asked by Mtetwa and Thompson (2000, p.325), reflecting the vision for student teacher and mentor teacher development was: “What is the nature of both the process and content of mentor education (training); that is to say, how can potential mentors be identified and how can they be developed and accredited?” This level of inquiry will be used to improve teaching practice by improving the knowledge and skills of the mentor teacher.

Pre-service teacher education in Ghana (Amedeker, 2005) places front and centre the role of the teacher mentor. Extended teaching practice at school under the guidance of a mentor teacher is seen, as an important factor elevating the professional status of teachers. In Ghana mentor teachers have a profile with the tertiary institution with the purpose of effective pairing of mentor and mentee. A partnership is created between the school, mentor teacher, the university and the student teacher. Before the student teachers are deployed to the schools mentor teachers are provided with developmental opportunities for an effective school based teaching practice.

#### **2.4.5. Mentor learning: A South African Perspective**

Literature on mentor learning in the South African context is limited; therefore this study reviewed mostly international research to explore mentor learning. Msila (2012) concurs that mentoring in South Africa is a new concept in the educational landscape and that a well-prepared, trained and developed mentor is vital for meaningful school based teaching practice. The notion of mentor learning in the South African context is not supported in ways that would develop the mentors' practice. My study points to this important gap in the status of the mentor teacher in South Africa. The Departments of Education and Higher Education concur on the importance of the mentor teacher, without providing opportunities for their development.

Policies and frameworks stipulate that mentoring should be taking place during school-based teaching practice for the professional development of the student teacher. Teachers are mandated with the responsibility of mentoring as stated in the Norms and Standards for Educators (South Africa, Department of Education, 2000) stipulating that one of the roles of a competent teacher is a professional who plays a community, citizenship and pastoral role; which includes mentoring of student teachers, beginning teachers and colleagues. These collective roles required of all teachers in the school are also stipulated in the new policy on Minimum Requirements for Teacher Education Qualifications (South Africa, Department of Higher Education and Training, 2011) replaces the Norms and Standards for Educators. This indicates that all teachers in a school have a joint responsibility for mentoring in the school.

The Education Labour Relations Council (ELRC) (South Africa, Department of Education, 2003) mandates teachers as part of Integrated Quality Management System (IQMS) to provide pastoral care and mentoring as part of on-going professional development initiatives. Ncube, Mammen and Molepo (2012) affirm that mentor practices is an integral part of IQMS but mentor teachers have a limited knowledge of mentoring, pointing to the mismatch between policy and its intention. Further, adding that training and development in mentoring will equip the teacher mentor with a culture of reflection, collaboration, support of peers and student teachers.

The National Ministerial Framework on Teacher Education (South Africa, Department of Education, 2005) presents a draft model of teacher training which will include a one-year teaching practice session for all fourth year B.Ed. students. This is a step in the right direction. However; this model requires quality mentoring and trained mentors. The National Policy Framework on Teacher Education (South Africa, Department of Education, 2007) presents the framework for teacher education and development in South Africa and declares that teachers serve as mentors during initial education.

Most recently the Integrated Strategic Planning Framework for Teacher Education and Development in South Africa: 2011-2025 (South Africa, Department of Education, 2011) points to the importance of the trained mentor in school-based teaching practice. The South African Minimum Requirements for Teacher Education Qualifications (South Africa, Department of Higher Education and Training, 2011) require that Initial Teacher Education (ITE) programmes allow for the development of hands-on practical learning in the natural setting of the classroom.

This signals a need for training and support for mentors. Having these policies and frameworks in place is a step in the right direction. The documents, however, merely state that schools will have to take on more responsibility for the student's development without providing support for the mentors. Samuel (2009, p.9) contends that policies are directives to be followed adding that there is "the (obvious) gap between policies (intention) and practice (action)". The need to focus on mentor learning becomes mandatory because of the slew of policy changes that is taking place in the educational landscape in South Africa. Considering the limitations in mentor training and support in South Africa, my study intends to understand how mentors know how to mentor as well as how and what they learn through engagement in mentoring practices within a specific school context.

According to Feiman-Nemser (1996, p.2) when mentor teachers have limited opportunities to learn in most instances the mentoring practices lacks clarity of purpose and "empirical scrutiny". Mutemeri & Chetty (2011) maintain that most mentors in South Africa are ill-prepared for the practice of mentoring. This is echoed by the practices of universities to invite School Liaison Mentors to a briefing meeting before students are deployed to schools. The meeting covers the procedural mandates of the universities and responsibilities of the mentor

during teaching practice. At the school, that information is cascaded to the mentors. The cascade approach was found to be “unsustainable” (Samuel, 2009, p.8). The cascade approach does not provide the mentors with a “deep understanding” of mentoring in relation to professional development (Samuel, 2009, p.8). The university provides a short course such as Mentoring in Schools programme which supports and develops the mentor, this is however selective and once-off and not always available to all teachers that serve as mentors.

The Department of Education conducts the training of the teachers on classroom management and subject skills development, in the formal workshop approach, yet this model of training is seen as least favourable (Chisholm, 2000). Teachers attending workshops do not necessarily learn, thereby unable to put into practice or make any beneficial changes. Wilson and Berne (1999) agree that in departmental workshops the teachers receive the information, which has been packaged elsewhere, and delivered to the teacher, regardless of the context in which the teacher works. Training of mentors using the same paradigm will yield the same results. Fraser, Reid & McKinney (2007) explain that an approach which paints all mentors and all contexts with the same brush contributes to dissatisfaction and lack of ownership of the learning. Rather, learning within the school setting can provide opportunities for mentors to become actively involved in a context which is meaningful. This is corroborated by Ritchie and Wilson (2004) adding that knowledge, learning and the locus cannot be separated as each works symbiotically to bring about effective changes and development in personnel.

The gap in the literature on mentor learning is important for this study. There have been recent studies done in South Africa on mentoring during school-based teaching practice. These studies examined the importance of mentoring in the experiences of the master teacher (Pather, 2010), the multifaceted nature of teaching as it exists in various contexts (Samuel, 2009) and the dichotomy between the school and the university in respect of teaching practice (Mutemeri & Chetty, 2011). This study will contribute to existing literature by understanding what and how mentors learn about mentoring during the practice of mentoring.

## **2.5. Conditions for mentor teacher learning**

### **2.5.1. Personal learning**

Shulman and Shulman (2004) established that certain conditions need to be in place for the personal development of the teacher. These conditions can also apply to personal learning of mentor teachers. Taking the stance that mentor learning places emphasis on self-actualisation, personal learning can be realised by the mentor taking the initiative to talk to, work together with, share information with, and offer constructive criticism to other mentors within the practice of mentoring. The conditions for personal learning are stipulated as vision, willingness and motivation as well as reflection.

#### **2.5.1.1. The development of vision for learning**

As was previously stated a mentor is accorded with leadership skills and is an accomplished teacher. The mentor must be ready to develop a vision and have clear goals for teaching practice and learning as an engaged and meaningful process (Shulman & Shulman, 2004). In other words, there is a close relationship between vision and practice. Mentors can develop a new and changed vision which develops learning by engaging with role models and experts, working on case studies and having discussions with colleagues (Shulman & Shulman, 2004).

#### **2.5.1.2. Being a willing and motivated learner**

Together with vision the mentor must be willing and motivated to change (Shulman & Shulman, 2004). Evans (2002) conceptualises learning as a change in the mentor, in their thinking and the interaction in the classroom. Thus change is triadic as it reflects something different in the mentor's mindset, which is adapted for practice, in a context different from teaching. The attainment of a different skill set changes the behaviour and thought processes of the classroom teacher to be able to perform as the mentor teacher. The process of gaining knowledge and further experiences equips the mentor with the necessary tools to mentor during school-based teaching practice. Carter and Francis (2001, p.258) explain that "critical ingredients to effective mentoring were the availability of the mentors, and whether they were approachable, friendly, open and actively interested in the development of the beginning teacher". In sum, a willing and motivated mentor is available and actively interested and involved in the mentoring process.

### **2.5.1.3. Learning from experiences through reflecting**

Shulman and Shulman's (2004) study show that teachers in the capacity of learners become more cognisant of their understanding and their practices. This awareness rises from engaging in discussion about mentoring in order to augment their capacity to learn from their own and another's experiences. Shulman and Shulman's (2004) study, recommends that mentors should be encouraged to reflect on their collective experiences.

The experienced teachers who act as mentors reflect on their own teaching, skills, philosophies, practice and broaden their professional knowledge (Gulcan, 2013). Knight (2000) adds that such practical mentoring strategies allow for the provision of new ways of working which the mentor can build into their arsenal. The mentor also "accrues substantial benefits from mentoring" (Ghosh & Reio, 2013, p106). In my study personal learning tasked the mentor teacher to invest in their learning by committing to new contexts.

Morrow (2004) claims that reflecting on one's practice aims at developing a teacher into an agent of change. It does so by impressing upon the teacher mentor a reflective consciousness thereby becoming critical and curious about learning. Reflection provides the opportunity for the mentor to analyse and think about teaching and learning. It is during reflection that the mentor finds their voice, opinions, strengths and challenges, to show concern about education by constantly seeking innovative practice (Bell & Gilbert, 1994). Darling and Hammond (1997) suggest that it is the mentor's responsibility to keep up to date with innovations in education and to be open to new ideas to develop and improve their practice. To this end most teachers participate willingly in meetings, workshops, courses and formal study. Experimenting, enquiry, reflection, writing in journals, dialogue, collaborating and questioning will result in a sense of authority and autonomy to work in the school context (Darling & Hammond, 1997). Reflection is not only an isolated activity; mentors can reflect on their practices with other mentors and with student teachers as well (Shank, 2005).

Hagger and McIntyre (2000) explain that mentor learning is a gradual process of reflection, where the professional reinterprets and reorganises understanding of practice. A mentor draws significant skills through reflection, when the mentor thinks about the practice of mentoring, and finds connections between teaching and mentoring. Orland (2001) state that mentors learnt holistically when reflection raised an awareness of what it means to mentor.

Reflective practices require that the mentor becomes a different type of learner, someone who questions, inquires and is critical about teaching and learning. McIntyre & Hagger (1993, p.76), describe the “process of learning to mentor as involving a separation and recombination of the assumptions about teaching that mentors hold as teacher”. Mentor teachers use their knowledge and skills learnt and developed through teaching and adapt to mentoring. Orland-Barak & Yinon (2005) refer to the nature of the mentor’s professional status as one of expertise. However, the mentor with experience and the expertise as a classroom practitioner does not translate to skills in the practice of mentoring (Orland-Barak & Yinon, 2005). In these instances there is a gap in the mentor’s knowledge and skills; where in the passage from teaching to mentoring areas of the practice are unclear, where doubt and failure are experienced in an unfamiliar context.

Positioning the teacher as an expert and the notion of expertise stimulates the expert to reflect on changing uncertainties and doubts to learning new knowledge and skills. This type of learning is decisive and purposeful change in the mentor is drawn from reflection on experiential knowledge and experiences.

### **2.5.2. Communal learning**

Shulman and Shulman (2004) note that teacher learning occurs through continuing interaction within a community making the individual and community levels “independent and interactive” (p. 267). They highlight that being within a community of teachers as learners adds another layer to support individual learning. As such “...school settings and educators must create environments that support, sustain, and „tune“ the visions, understandings, performances, motivations, and reflections of all its members” (p. 267), thus the level of individual learning.

The Commonwealth Standards Framework for Teachers and School Leaders (Gallie and Keevy, 2014) indicates two of five categories of the professional standards of a distinguished teacher (i.e. qualified teachers with advanced levels of professional learning) that are applicable to understanding learning within a community: professional learning and professional skills and practices. To meet the expectations of the professional learning category, a teacher is expected to meet the standard of participating in professional development opportunities. One of the level descriptors of this standard states “Participates

as active, responsible member of professional community, engaging in a wide range of reflective practices; pursues opportunities to grow professionally and establishes collegial relationships to enhance own teaching and learning process and that of their colleagues, and encourages and supports professional development among teachers” (p. 33).

The second standard of professional skills and practices will be measured through the indicators of “Contributes to the professional development of colleagues through coaching and mentoring, demonstrating effective practice, and providing advice and feedback” (p. 25).

In sum, professional learning of mentors means engagement in growth opportunities to improve practice explored in The Commonwealth Standards Framework for Teachers and School Leaders (Gallie & Leevy, 2014). Such learning can occur through working with other teachers as learners within a community.

#### **2.5.2.1. Being a community of practice**

Shulman and Shulman (2004) identified the following three conditions of teacher learning within a professional community of practice: being a community of practice; having a professional knowledge base as a community; and community commitment. In recent years the notion of communities of practice or professional learning communities has been a buzzword in educational research. Shulman & Shulman (2004) point out the dialogical influence of a community of practice and its participants. “A community of practice with its established rituals or ceremonies can either serve to enhance the development of particular accomplishments, actively inhibit their development, or are neutral with respect to them” (p. 266-267) and “.... it is the individuals in a school that contribute to the formation of the community norms, incentives, and practices even as the community exercises its influences on the participating individuals” (p. 267).

Whitelaw, de Beer and Henning (2008) explain that a community of practice can curtail isolation and individualism in teaching and learning. Lave and Wenger, (1999) posit that the school within a specific community and culture influences teacher learning. These authors proposed a construct called Legitimate Peripheral Participation (LPP), which situates learning in a context for mentors to learn. This entails that over time, with practice and experience, the mentor is able to internalise the learning. Initially participation is legitimately peripheral but

over time the mentor gradually increases engagement with the student in the practice of mentoring and moves toward full participation.

Understanding the deeply adaptive nature of learning, participants in the learning situation accept that they too change in the process. The mentor in skilling the student is also transformed. The mentor's practice is seen as one of co-participation, and the mentor would not have attained the skills required for mentoring if it did not become available in the practice. This participation does not take place in isolation but in communities of practice.

Borko (2004, p. 7) comments on teacher learning as taking place in the context in which it occurs, "the contexts and activities in which people learn become a fundamental part of what they learn," and mentor learning is best actualised within the whole school development. "By tying learning into participation, the notion of LPP leads to understanding what it means for knowledge to be portable" (Lave and Wenger, 1999, p.14). This central concept entails that the mentor acquires the skills and the knowledge by participation. Learning can be found by engaging in day to day activities. The mentor and mentee and other mentoring personnel are co-learners, traversing the skills of classroom practice. The mentor with expert knowledge transforms the student teacher but is not untouched by the learning process instead becoming engaged because of the opportunity to participate (Lave and Wenger, 1999). Applying LPP (Lave and Wenger, 1999) to the practice of mentoring entails that the mentor becomes a collaborator with experience in performing a variety of mentoring tasks. These tasks become integrated into the practice as the mentor learns patterns of participation, problem solving and the multiplicity of roles.

Lieberman and Mace (2008) as well as Fraser et al. (2007) point out that social learning is best explored in communities of practice. It became clear that communities of practice influence mentor learning. Parker-Katz and Bay (2008, p.126) explain that mentoring is a „socially collaborative learning experience". Mentor learning therefore is not an abstraction; it is situated in a context which is meaningful for the participant as mentors working in a specific context are the best arbitrators of learning.

Knight (2002) adds that the community is one of the most important sites for learning as it tasks mentors to work in groups to make decisions about their development within the context in which they work. The participants place value on thinking and working together,

interacting and co-participating while learning and deriving meaning from the context (Lave and Wenger, 1999). Samuels (2009) explains that mentors have the capacity and the competency to work within these communities of practice.

“How a person learns a particular set of knowledge and skills, and the situation in which a person learns become a fundamental part of what is learned” (Putnam & Borko, 2000, p.4). The value of working in a community of practice has been pointed out but to function in one requires a safe space for collaboration, openness and support. Communities of practice as a space for mentor learning have definite and distinguishing features.

Cochran-Smith and Lytle (1999) add that a collegial and reciprocal space is dynamic for mentor learning which a one to one relationship does not always provide. The study carried out by Orland (2001, p.75) on community of practice indicates that the participants used the term “reading a mentoring situation” to describe how mentor teachers learn. The participants learnt by reflection, observation and interaction at externally organised workshops and in collaboration with the peers. As the mentor gained more experience in mentoring they displayed a greater understanding of the practice, engaged in multiple roles, with different responsibilities and interacted with all role players. The mentor worked with other mentors, became engaged, and took ownership of learning opportunities. The mentor therefore did not work in isolation but within communities of practice located in social situations.

A community of practice creates a professional openness to teaching and learning by providing a platform to share experiences, establish a sense of teamwork as well as provide support structures (Dever, Johnson, Hobbs, 2000). Day (1999) refers to this as work-place learning because as teachers and as mentors, learning takes place in everyday school activities. This will include discussions, informal get togethers, observation, and classroom and teaching experiences. For communities of learning to be effective the individuals must work together for the common good of the group (Adlesi & Bizjak, 2009).

#### **2.5.2.2. Professional knowledge base**

The professional knowledge of mentors can be individual or distributed collectively within the school as a community of practice (Shulman & Shulman, 2004). Mentors must have knowledge of mentoring and the ability to carry out the practice of mentoring which is referred to respectively as the “cognitive cluster” and the “performance cluster” (Shulman &

Shulman, 2004, p. 264.). The mentor has to acquire the requisite pedagogical content knowledge, classroom management and knowledge of learners (Shulman, 1987). Gallie & Leevy (2014) concur that the professional knowledge base of teachers includes knowledge of the curriculum, knowledge of learners and knowledge of teaching and learning in a changing world.

Cochran-Smith and Lyte (1999) posit two types of knowledge that support teacher learning: knowledge for practice and knowledge of practice, which will result in changes in the mentor's practice. Knowledge for practice is formal, structured learning generated at tertiary institutions which mentors may draw from to improve the practice of mentoring. Formal knowledge gained through studying, such as mentoring short courses and attending professional development programmes have an important place in mentor learning, as it steers learning towards a new context (Sachs & Day, 2004). Knowledge of practice engages mentors to create local knowledge by working in their individualised contexts. A mentor working together in a context with other mentors generates „knowledge-of-practice” (Awaya et al., 2003; Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1999, p.250). Mentors learn by “working within the context of inquiry communities to theorise and construct their work and to connect it to larger social, cultural and political issues” (Cochran-Smith & Lyte, 1999). In other words, mentor learning is framed in a collaborative relationship with other teacher mentors. Knowledge and skills gained during these interactions are adapted to suit the mentor's context. The mentor draws knowledge and skills through the practice of collaboration, dialogue, interaction (Awaya et al., 2003 and Cochran-Smith and Lytle, 1999, p.250). Further, mentoring requires that the mentor transforms the knowledge of teaching and practice to guide the student into the professional practice of classroom teaching (Parker-Katz and Bay, 2008). Awaya et al., (2003) and Parker-Katz & Bay (2008) suggest that the knowledge for the practice of mentoring is not conferred from the outside (expert perspective) but from the inside (emic perspective) acknowledging the situated contexts of teaching and learning. Collaboration with experienced mentors offers opportunities for the novice mentor to learn ranging from modelling, instructing, inquiry and working with peers in the same context. Mentoring requires the teacher to be reskilled into another context of teaching, adding a different kind of practical knowledge (Jones and Straker, 2006).

Day (1999) contends that all learning, including the planned, unplanned, the formal and informal, will bring beneficial changes to the mentor's practice. Hargreaves (1994) and

Fraser, Kennedy, Reid & McKinney (2007) explain that learning has taken place if it brings about a change in the mentor, specifically in the professional knowledge, skills and attitudes and induces learning which improves school practice.

### **2.5.2.3. Community commitment**

Community commitment requires a shared vision, commitment and to collaborate. Carter and Francis (2001) add that the mentor must have the ability to foster collaborative enquiry and reflective practice as this provides the fertile ground for learning (Orland, 2001). This activity gives them the opportunity to work through unclear issues, learn from each other in the peer group, investigate and evaluate the mentors' learning in the context of the mentoring site. Collaboration tasks the mentor to work in an alliance with other mentors, to provide support and co-operate with each other within the context of teaching and learning. Schools are social contexts where opportunities for collaboration within communities of practice exist (Lave and Wenger, 1991). Mentors share common problems, offer constructive criticism to each other and support each other's learning. Collaboration has been mooted as being effective for mentor learning (Lieberman and Mace, 2008) which is beneficial only when it is connected to the context.

Shulman (1987) suggests that a collaborative practice gives the teachers a connectiveness which creates a harmonious means of working together. Collaboration is an action of a group of mentors working together with the end result being qualitative learning of which mentoring is an integral part (Kennedy, 2005). Mentors experienced professional growth and development when they displayed openness to learning. Collaboration in the practice of mentoring was realised through daily opportunities and experiences and the mentor's development was evidenced in professional skills in mentoring (Orland-Barak and Yinon, 2005).

Mentors serve as teachers, whose primary responsibility it is to teach and have experience in teaching and may be experts in their fields of knowledge. Mentoring allows for sustained professional dialogue, sharing information and providing the means by which the mentor begins the transition into a community of practice (Lave and Wenger 1991). McDonald & Hite (2005) suggest that peer mentoring takes place and the mentors form teaching groups

that meet and share information and experiences. It also creates the opportunities for the mentor to learn from different styles.

Maynard's (2000) body of work shows that learning is a process of participation in communities of practice. Initially, participation is legitimately peripheral but over time the learner gradually increases engagement within the practices of the community. Initially when the mentor was exposed to mentoring it was done peripherally, like an outsider looking in. As the mentor gained experience, by performing a variety of tasks in the practice of mentoring, he/she moved towards full participation. Learning requires that the participants co-construct their learning not as absorbing what is set but finding what works in their environment. The participants therefore do not attain "a discrete body of knowledge" (Lave and Wenger, 1999, p 24), rather acquire the skills to make learning relevant. Learning in this context is not pre-packaged but could also be improvised as the situation demands. This kind of improvisation creates learning opportunities which emerge while the mentor engages in the practice.

Hawkey (1997) agrees that experts in the field tend to improvise actions depending on the circumstances of the situation however mentors gained clear educational awareness of the mentoring through collaboration not only with other mentors but with the student teacher as well. As the student teacher and mentor continued with the dialogue and the discourse of teaching, each gained a deeper understanding of their roles. When the mentors position themselves as learners, they become open to the possibilities and experiences.

## **2.6. Theoretical framework**

### **2.6.1. Four elements of teacher development (Linda Evans)**

The theoretical underpinning of this study is situated in the four elements of teacher development as extrapolated by Evans (2002). As indicated earlier in this chapter, teacher professional development and teacher learning is interlinked and therefore Evans's (2002) elements of teacher development provides a useful lens for understanding mentor learning and for the analysis of data (to follow in Chapter four).

The definition which Evans (2002, p.131) stipulates for teacher development is a "process whereby teachers' professionalism and/or professionalism may be considered to be enhanced".

Evans (2002, p.131) goes further and defines professionalism as “an ideologically-attitudinally– and epistemologically–based stance on the part of an individual, in relation to the practice of the profession to which she/he belongs, and which influences her/his professional practice”. Evans (2002) defines professionalism as the teacher’s displaying an extended demeanour as a professional. Professionalism is the knowledge, skills and procedures that teachers use during the course of teaching.

Evans (2002) ascribes learning and development as ongoing or that which has been completed. In other words, mentors have developed some part of their practice, but since learning is ongoing, they can continue to grow in different areas. Learning and development can be subjective where the mentor changes intrinsically. It can also be objective, where the mentor takes professional responsibility for development which is driven by “externally applied process” like workshops or collaborative engagements (Evans, 2002, p.131). Bell and Gilbert (1994) concur that development and learning are the responsibility the mentor takes for their learning in developing the practice of mentoring. Applied to my study the work of Evans (2002) would entail that mentor learning develops teachers to change, to grow and to develop.

Evans (2002, p. 130) makes the applicability of her conceptualisation of teacher development to other fields explicit (including this study). She states that teacher development “incorporates consideration of its having a range of applicability that extends from an individual to a professional-wide level”. In the case of teacher development at an individual level, teachers take the responsibility of being and becoming mentors. Mentor learning and development becomes desirable because it would be beneficial to the mentor, the student teacher and for school-based teaching practice.

Evans (2002) explores four elements of teacher development. The four elements include attitudinal development, functional development, role development and cultural development. The first two elements, attitudinal and functional development, focus on **change** while the last two elements of role and cultural development are offered as **forms** or dimensions of teacher development. Evans (2002) provides a discussion about the features of attitudinal and functional development. She clarifies that attitudinal learning comprises two features, that of intellectual and motivational development, whereas functional development has procedural

and productive features. As indicated earlier in this chapter The Commonwealth Standards Framework for Teachers and School Leaders maintains that professional learning and professional development are interlinked (Gallie & Leevy, 2014). Professional learning is viewed as engagement or commitment to growth opportunities for self-actualisation whereas professional development is active participation in personal growth. Drawing from this conceptualisation, mentor learning is viewed as commitment to engage in opportunities for growth and development with the purpose of self actualisation.

The four elements of teacher development as applied to this study will be referred to as attitudinal learning, functional learning, learning from role development and learning through cultural development. As indicated by Evans (2002, p.132), development “though does not exist exclusively of -change that would generally be categorised as learning”.

#### **2.6.1.1. Attitudinal Learning**

Attitudinal learning is a change in the individual’s attitude, as in the case of this research study, the mentor’s attitude to their practice incorporating intellectual and motivational as features of change. Intellectual change is revealed in a reflective practice; where the mentor teacher draws from experience to make changes to the existing practices of mentoring. Motivational change is revealed in the mentor/teacher becoming motivated as understanding of mentoring is enhanced and more experience and knowledge is gained.

#### **2.6.1.2. Functional learning**

Evans’ (2002) second element is functional learning where the teachers’ professional performance improves with the addition of procedural and productive changes. In this capacity teachers develop in their capacity to enhance their practice. Productive development is revealed in initiating resources and activities to support the teacher. An example of functional learning is envisioned in Orland-Barak and Yinon, (2005) who add that the mentor teacher changes from the practice of teaching to the practice of mentoring during school-based teaching practice. This displays new ways of working and applying new procedures while learning and developing (Evans, 2002).

### **2.6.1.3. Learning through role development**

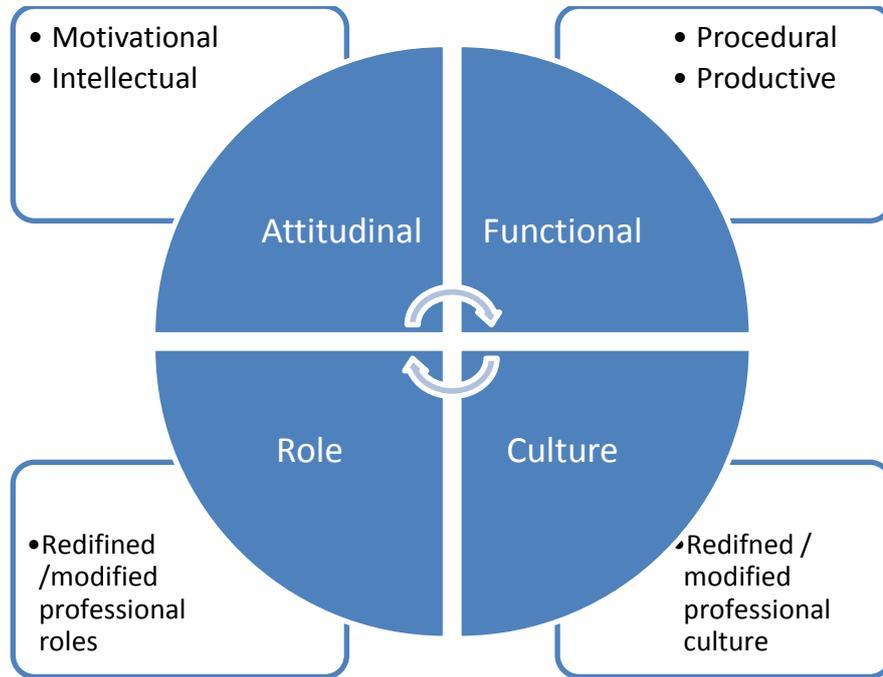
The third element, role development, maps out the changes in the roles and responsibilities of the professional teacher (Evans, 2002). Shank (2005.p 74) adds that the mentors also learn from the student teacher who brings “a level of expertise about new approaches and theories to their learning... and shaped the collaborative learning context”. It provided space for the mentors to talk about their practices, question, trouble shoot and develop deep bonds to extend the quality of the mentoring space for the mentors to talk about their practices, question, trouble shoot and develop deep bonds to extend the quality of the mentoring.

### **2.6.1.4. Learning through cultural development**

The final element, cultural development, similar to Shulman and Shulman’s (2004) communities of practice, maps out the changes to the teachers professional culture. Evans (2000, p.132) explains cultural development as the process whereby teachers’ professional culture is redefined and/or modified. Evans (2002) does not provide a clear explanation of what exactly teacher professional culture or climate entails and thus leaves this element open to interpretation. Drawing from other authors’ work on professional culture, it refers to the existing culture or climate within the school that influences the work and learning of teachers. For example, Kardos, Johnson, Peske, Kauffman & Liu (2001) indicate that professional culture “is the distinctive blend of norms, values, and accepted modes of professional practice, both formal and informal, that prevail among colleagues”. Professional learning cultures can also be viewed as communities of practices as highlighted by Shulman and Shulman (2004).

This study explores learning of the mentor teacher which is viewed as teacher development and thus the above four elements can provide a useful lens for this study. This is followed by deciding on how to remediate this and finally effecting the remediation (Evans, 2002). Evans’ (2002) attitudinal and functional development can be reflected as attitudinal and functional learning that can be extended in the mentors’ practice. Mentors may be prompted to make changes to their practice based on knowledge acquired elsewhere, drawing on experience and or by having discussions with colleagues. Evans (2002) also provides a lens for learning from role development and learning from cultural development.

**2.6.1.5. Figure 2-Figurative representation of elements and features of Teacher Development (Evans, 2002)**



**2.7. Conclusion**

Shulman (1987) compares what teachers do in the classroom to create opportunities for the learners to learn can also be applied to how mentors learn. This chapter unpacked the concepts of mentor, the practice of mentoring and highlighted ways in which mentors learnt. The practice of mentoring requires a different set of responsibilities than the practice of teaching. The teacher has been trained to work in the classroom; the practice of mentoring requires similar support for the mentor.

The mentor has to be supported and trained to work in the context of developing the student. Literature reveals that mentors learn vicariously through experiences, individual personal narratives and professional practices. Orland (2001, p. 85) adds that when the mentor engages in vicarious learning experiences on teacher education and learning, the mentor has the opportunity to have „different interpretive lenses“. The elements of teacher development are purported as best fit for the actualisation of mentor learning (Evans, 2002).

The purpose of Chapter Three is to explore the methodological underpinnings of the research. The study is positioned in the interpretive paradigm using the qualitative approach. Further the chapter explores the case study and the methods of data collection.

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND DESIGN**

#### **3.1. Introduction**

In the South African context, teaching practice is a component of Initial Teacher Education focusing on the school-based mentor developing and supporting student teachers toward professional development (South Africa, Department of Education: 2000). In relation to the importance placed on the role of the mentor during school-based teaching practice, this study explored the mentor's learning through the practice of mentoring during school-based teaching practice.

In the previous chapter the literature unpacked the role of the mentor, mentoring and the practice of mentoring in the professional life of the student. The literature also alerted one to the limited opportunities for mentor learning in the South African context. The key concepts of the study (the mentor, mentor learning and the practice of mentoring) were clarified. The theoretical framework, the elements of teacher development, penned by Evans (2002), was adapted for mentor learning to provide the lens for the study.

This chapter outlines three aspects which provide a description of the research methodology and design. The first part features the research design which includes the interpretive paradigm, the qualitative approach and the case study methodology (Mouton, 2006). Next, the sampling procedures with respect to the school and the participants, followed by the description of the data collection methods, procedures and analysis of data are presented. Finally, issues related to trustworthiness including ethics are discussed.

The data collection methods were designed to answer the following research questions:

1. What are mentor teachers' perspectives of their roles as mentor to student teachers?
2. What and how did mentors learn about mentoring through their practice of mentoring?

### **3.2. Research design**

Cohen, Manion & Morrison, (2007) advised that fitness for purpose must be the guiding principle in research, with a different research paradigm for different research purpose. The study employed the interpretive paradigm and the qualitative approach to explore mentor learning. The research design provided a plan for the data collection and analysis (Mouton, 2006). The study is embedded in the social sciences underpinned by three assumptions: ontological, epistemological and the methodological (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2007).

Ontology focuses on the nature of reality of the participants. Maree (2007) explains that the ontological assumption of the qualitative approach accounted for the shaping of reality in relation to the context in which the participants interact. The participants have their own thoughts, ideas, beliefs and attitudes about the practice of mentoring. Although subjective, these experiences hold true (Maree, 2007). The second assumption explored the epistemological underpinnings (knowledge) in research (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2007). In qualitative study knowledge is personal, therefore subjective and unique to the individual. The participants interpreted how they understood the practice of mentoring in relation to their experiences (Maree, 2007). The next assumption is the methodological nature of research. Cohen, Manion & Morrison (2007) explain that the ontological and epistemological assumptions have implications for the methodology which demand a specific set of research methods. The resultant choice, the case study methodology, was selected to study the participants in their natural setting at the sample school (Maree, 2007).

### **3.3. The Interpretive Paradigm**

The human factor is a complex dimension which cannot only be explained in terms of objective, scientific reasoning. This resulted in the social scientists opting for the interpretive paradigm to explore the broad labyrinth of being a human being (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2007). The interpretive stance is an effective portal to understand meaningful social interactions. „„Interpretivism foregrounds the meaning that individuals or communities assign to their experiences““ (Maree, 2007, p. 21). In terms of the study the mentoring experiences were interpreted within the context of school-based teaching practice. The interpretive paradigm necessitated the selection of qualitative data collection methods (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2007). The data collection methods included a baseline questionnaire, face to face semi structured individual interviews and a focus group discussion

to generate data on mentor learning through the practice of mentoring during school-based teaching practice.

The interpretive paradigm accepts that the world in which we live is constantly changing and the people working within this locus must adapt to a particular context. Further, it accounts for meaning and interpretation, values, opinion, moral judgments and that which makes a human a human (Cohen, Marion & Morrison, 2007; De Vos, 2008; Maree, 2007). Interpretivism outlined the following key claims. Individual behaviour can only be understood by the researcher if they share the same frame of reference as the participants (Cohen, Marion & Morrison, 2007). The participant's point of view, actions and interactions are context-driven. The second claim records that the individual's interpretation of the world has to come from them and not from the outside. The focus is on how people construct their social world by relating and sharing with each other (Maree, 2007). In the study the mentors had the opportunity to share their experiences and interpretations of the practice of mentoring. The third claim is that there are multiple interpretations; there cannot be just one answer or solution as the situation deals with different personalities, each with their own ideas, stories and beliefs. The interpretations can change with reference to the context in which it occurs (Maree, 2007). Finally, it is the contexts of participants, experiences and knowledge which influence the way humans interact (Cohen, Marion & Morrison, 2007; De Vos, 2008; Maree, 2007).

The uniqueness and idiosyncratic nature of the interpretive paradigm gave the study a broad spectrum of characteristics of mentoring without making generalisations (Cresswell, 2009). „The aim of the interpretive study is, however not to generalize but to provide descriptions of the participants' perceptions of their life-worlds“ (Maree, 2007 p. 78). The interpretive paradigm is a subjective rather than an objective undertaking (Cresswell, 2009). It is open to myriad interpretations which required the participants to interpret their practices based on individual and collective experiences (Cohen, Marion & Morrison, 2007). The interpretive paradigm accepts the complexity of the participants.

### **3.4. The qualitative approach**

Research methodologies are found on two ends of one spectrum which ranges from qualitative to quantitative. There are methodologies which are based on rigorous scientific underpinnings and objective experiments determining quantitative data (Cresswell, 2009). At the other end of the spectrum is the qualitative approach which is based on subjective, interpretative data (Maree, 2007). My study is qualitative because it explored and interpreted the experiences of teachers who serve as mentors. The natural progression from the interpretive paradigm was the qualitative approach framed in the experiences of the natural environment (Mouton, 2006). This approach allowed for the collection of experiential data and asked in-depth questions from the participants.

The focus of the qualitative approach aimed at understanding phenomena in the context in which they occurred. In this study the mentor's contexts, understandings and beliefs about the world in which they live filtered their experiences, knowledge and how meaning was constructed of their practice (Lave & Wenger, 1999; Borko, 2004). Knowledge is drawn from the daily experiences of mentoring and teaching. "The emphasis is thus placed on the participants' frame of reference and how they see things from within" (Maree, 2007, p.78). The qualitative approach is a means of exploring and understanding the meaning individuals and groups ascribe to a social setting. Picciano (2004) adds that quality refers to the essence (why, what, when and how) of things. The research requires seeing, hearing, touching and experiencing activities in their natural setting.

### **3.5. Case study methodology**

Thomas (2013) explains that social sciences embed case study research in an interpretive frame. Thomas (2013, p.590) adds that case study methodology eases our understanding of theoretical issues because it allows one to "build exemplary knowledge, making connections between another's experience and our own, seeing links, having insights from the noticed connections". Cresswell (2009) explained that a broad understanding of the qualitative approach is framed in using words, open-ended questions, employs the case study and the collection of qualitative data through observation in a natural setting. Cresswell (2009) clarifies that the case study methodology is an in depth empirical inquiry of a current phenomenon within a boundary like a case study of a specific organisation. As such Thomas (2013) ascribes value to case study methodology within educational research and inquiry.

A case study is focussed on a singular event or phenomenon, studied in its complexity and requires an understanding as to its selection (Thomas, 2013). Further, case study research helps the researcher develop a reflective and critical understanding of the environments in which they are working (Thomas, 2013). “The richness of the living worlds being studied in education is acknowledged and employed by the case study” (Thomas, 2013, p.593) as it attempts to understand how participants interact with each other in that situation (Maree, 2007). The interpretive paradigm and qualitative research places a great deal of importance on the context and the case. According to Henning, Gravett & Van Rensburg, (2005) the case is an important context for understanding what is studied.

Henning, Gravett & Van Rensburg (2005) explore the case study methodology as understanding the phenomenon, mentor learning, investigated as a bounded system, the group of mentor teacher participants and the unit of analysis, the school which directs the boundaries of the system. This research is a case of the mentor teachers at the school which provides the context for school-based teaching practice. Maree (2007, p.75) points out that the case has specific characteristics; in this case, the mentor teacher participants make meaning of the phenomenon.

In this case study, situated in a primary school in Chatsworth, an attempt to show how the mentor teachers learn through the practice of mentoring during school-based teaching practice is made. Case studies explore the phenomenon within the context (thus the school) in which it occurs and it gives the researcher clarity on the participants’ thoughts and experiences. In respect of this study, the case study was selected as a viable way to conduct qualitative research because it allowed me to understand how my participants, the mentor teachers, interacted with each other and with the student teacher through mentoring practices during school-based teaching practice (Cresswell, 2009).

In contemporary case study research the study of groups of people has developed wide-ranging understandings of human interaction within a context (Cresswell, 2009). Further, case study allows the use of several sources, techniques and different methods for data collection based on human interaction. This type of research gives the researcher the opportunity to plan ahead the type of data that has to be collected and the “analysis techniques” to be utilised to answer the research question (Maree, 2007, p. 76). The case in

terms of this research is the mentor teacher in a particular school and a case study takes into account the complex nature of real situations, which is the mentor teacher during the practice of mentoring during school based teaching practice. Thomas (2013) adds that case study methodology capacitated a limited number of cases (four participants in this study) to be generalised to a wider sample. “It is the recognition of complexity that has led to case study’s status as one of the most popular ways of looking at a subject in detail for the purposes of teaching and research” (Thomas, 2013, p.561).

### **3.6. Sampling**

Sampling refers to the process which the researcher uses to select a component of the larger population for the study (Maree, 2007). Sampling involves making decisions about which people or settings to select for research analysis (Cresswell, 2009). Sampling in qualitative study includes a particular way that the researcher selects the participants. Qualitative research is based on non-probability and purposive sampling (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2007) rather than probability and random sampling favoured by quantitative research (Maree, 2007). Sampling in qualitative study is made in order that the researcher obtains rich and comprehensive data to answer the research questions.

#### **3.6.1. Purposive sampling of participants**

In qualitative research purposive sampling is used to select the participants based on their particular characteristics and their interaction with the data which is to be collected (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2007). “Purposive sampling means selecting participants according to preselected criteria relevant to a particular research question” (Maree, 2007, p.83). Further, this type of sampling is used in a specific situation with a defined purpose in mind. Purposive sampling allows the researcher to handpick the participant who would contribute the richest and most detailed data for the study. The study was based on mentor learning so I had to purposively handpick my participants who have experience as mentors during school-based teaching practice. Qualitative research usually works with small samples and I have a sample size of four (Maree, 2007).

The participants teach and mentor in the three phases offered at this school: the Foundation, Intermediate and Senior phase. The participants were made up of three females and one male.

Although gender was not a criterion, this particular participant was the only male to have a few years of experience in mentoring. I chose these participants because they were able to articulate their concerns, challenges and tribulations during school-based teaching practice. This cohort represents a group of teachers who started mentoring at its inception at this school in 2005 and have mentored ever since. The participants are full-time, state-paid teachers who teach the stipulated hours as per departmental regulations and include the mentoring of student teachers into their existing workload.

### **3.6.2. Profiling the school context**

#### **3.6.2.1. About the school**

The study was conducted at a primary school in Chatsworth. The primary school was selected purposively as the school takes on student teachers for the annual blocked teaching practice. On one end the school borders informal settlements, some of which have been partially developed with low-cost housing and tarred roads. On the opposite side is the built up area which consists of semi-detached houses, in a developed housing settlement with basic amenities. A road built up in the last eight years has linked both ends to the school. There are 24 full time staff members, two governing body post holders and five Indian language teachers who serve the school on a part-time basis. The learners are disadvantaged in term of cultural and material capital. A large percentage of the learners live in single family homes with minimum to no income, depending solely on the social grant. The learners are also faced with social ills: unemployed parents, poverty, substance abuse, child-headed homes, teenage pregnancy and dreaded diseases. The relationship between the parents and the school remains a tenuous one. In a school population of over 700 only on average 21% of the parents pay school fees, which have never gone beyond R1000 per annum. The school depends on the allocation from the Department of Education, fundraising drives, initiated by the teaching staff and sponsors. The school has a self-sustaining feeding programme and a daily delivery of sandwiches from local religious organisations to feed the poor. Included in the social welfare programmes is the distribution of uniforms, stationery and food hampers. Teaching within this context demands a unique ethos from the teacher, requiring them to make an investment in the social welfare of the learners, be creative about the lessons especially when resources are required and understand the reality of the child. This environment provides the student teacher with a unique learning experience.

### 3.6.2.2 The School-based Initiative for Mentoring (SIM)

Most teachers on staff serve as mentors to student teachers during teaching practice. Three members of staff were selected to participate in the Mentoring in Schools short course which was offered by a university. Since 2005-2009 the School Liaison Mentor and mentor teachers attended the annual meetings the university held before student teachers were deployed for teaching practice. The teachers who attended this course recognised a need for the development of mentors and mentoring at the school and decided to introduce a School-based Initiative for Mentoring (SIM). The SIM was introduced to establish a culture of mentoring within a specific school context. The purpose of the SIM is two-fold: to develop and support the teacher as mentor as well as the student teacher. The SIM provides support to the student teacher in the form of an induction. Induction includes a guided tour of the school as well as introducing the student teacher to the daily running of the school, how to avail themselves of the resources, timetabling, and school policy. The school time-table is adapted during teaching practice to include an early morning meeting with the school liaison mentor, observing, planning, teaching and engaging with mentor teachers during post evaluation meetings.

The second purpose of the SIM includes support for the mentor teacher. Two readings formed the backdrop of the design of the SIM for the mentor teachers to understand the nature of mentoring and some key markers for the practice of mentoring. The first article, *Mentoring adult learners: a guide for educators* (Cohen, 1995), provided the mentor teachers with an understanding of the different phases of the mentoring process. These phases were used to develop a semi-structured programme which divided the school-based teaching practice session into fluid phases and gave the mentor a yardstick as to the mentee's progress. The second article, *Mentoring as a journey* (Awaya et al., 2003) introduced the ideas of the developmental moments in the journey of mentoring. Although the mentor teachers were introduced to other readings, the above two pieces of work have remained the basis of the SIM during school-based teaching practice. The SIM takes mentoring out of the isolation of the classroom to common places like the staffroom and corridors. It provides the opportunity to enquire, find out, and test ideas and thoughts on mentoring, with colleagues.

### **3.7. Data collection: Methods and Procedures**

#### **3.7.1. The biographical questionnaire**

Data collected in qualitative study includes questionnaire (Maree, 2007). I selected this method of producing biographical information for two important reasons. The biographical questionnaire collects personal information from the participants. It also allowed the researcher to get teacher mentors orientated into being participants in a study where they begin thinking about mentoring and learning. I found that the teachers at this school had not participated in a research setting where they were asked questions about their practice.

I thought that this would serve to break the ice and get the teacher thinking about their learning about mentoring during school-based teaching practice. The questionnaire could be done at the mentor teacher's convenience. The teachers were given a week to complete the questionnaire. The design of the biographical questionnaire was based on an example of Ramrathan's (2010) Questionnaire for the Mentoring in Schools short course programme, which asked the participants to rate their current knowledge about mentoring against the categories that constitute mentor learning which included formal knowledge which is obtained from formal studies, experiential knowledge which is gained from experiences in mentoring, and finally intuitive knowledge. The questionnaire included both open- and closed-ended types of question.

According to Cohen, Manion & Morrison (2007) research is empirical which means that it is based on the collection of evidence. The data which the researcher collects sheds light on the research question. The data was produced through the biographical questionnaire, semi structured interviews and the focus group discussion. Decisions are made about what is to be collected, from whom, when and how (Vithal & Jansen, 2006) in respect of the research questions. The research question determines what methods of data collection will be used in a study (Cresswell, 2009).

#### **3.7.2. Semi-structured interviews**

An interview is a „two-way conversation“ (Maree, 2007, p.87) where the interviewer asks the interviewee questions to find out information about their ideas and views about a topic. Cresswell (2009) proposes that the interview is a social interaction between the researcher and the participants. In terms of the study an interview entails the researcher asking the

participants questions in an attempt to collect data about experiences, thoughts and ideas in relation to the research question.

According to Maree (2007) a qualitative interview is an attempt to view the world through the eyes of the participants. Cresswell (2009) adds that such interviews gather rich, thick, comprehensive and descriptive data which would be utilised to understand the participant's interpretation of the world and their construction of knowledge (Parker- Katz & Bay, 2008). In order for the interview to be a success and for rich data to be gathered there has to be an element of trust between the researcher and the participant. The participant must have an understanding and a respect for the topic in order for the interview to be effective, interesting and successful. I held the interview at a place and time in which participants were most comfortable. I explained the parameters of the study and that their privacy would not be compromised and would be used for its intended purpose.

There are different types of interviews used in qualitative research. These include unstructured, semi-structured and structured interviews (Maree, 2007). An unstructured interview takes the form of a conversation, over a period of time and is made up of a succession of interviews. It explores the participant's views about an event. Structured interviews are pre-determined and used in larger samples. Semi-structured interviews are generally used in research which covers a shorter time span. Although the participants answer a predetermined set of questions, it does give the researcher the advantage to probe and clarify the answers (Maree, 2007).

The semi-structured interviews had pre-determined questions which allow for probing and clarification of data (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2007). Further, the researcher has the freedom to amend the order of the question; change the word order and even clarify the details for the participants to provide relevant research information. The semi-structured interviews acquire data which is original and personal based on how the participants view the world and allow for greater adaptability with the responsibility for its subject matter in the hands of the researcher (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

The researcher must be focused on the interview and the data which is emerging. In this way the researcher will be able to detect different thought patterns which can be probed further. The researcher must not let the participants get side tracked by issues that are not pertinent to

the study (Maree, 2007). The interviews were designed to engage and encourage the participants to talk about their experiences of mentoring and their incidences of learning. The qualitative interview is a lens through which the researcher views the subjective world of the participants (Cresswell, 2009).

The principal and the participants were informed of the scope of the study. The principal gave permission for the study to take place. An important condition was that all fieldwork was to take place after school, and that contact time with the learners was not compromised. The participants taught in the same school as I did, creating ease of access.

The data collection took place after school hours so that there was no disruption to the school time table. The interviews took place exactly a week after the biographical questionnaire. This was for no particular reason other than departmental workshops and school-based mentoring was taking place. The initial interview extended the participants' answers from the baseline questionnaire. It also enquired as to how the participants knew how to mentor, through their experiences and practice of mentoring. As a researcher I had to find a common time where the participants and I were available and the interview could take place uninterrupted. A few days before the interview I gave the participants the interview schedule to familiarise them with its content.

The period when teachers return to school in term three to the first week in August, is marked for school-based teaching practice. The initial plan was to have the first set of interviews completed before the commencement of school-based teaching practice and the second set at its completion. This did not materialise because the ethical clearance to conduct the study was not gained in time. Academic regulations stipulated that fieldwork commences when the researcher received ethical clearance. I received ethical clearance in the first week of August. I had to re-organise the timeframe for the interviews and conducted the first set of the interviews during the last week of school-based teaching practice. The second set of interviews took place in the third week of August, a week after school-based teaching practice ended. The second interview also took place after the focus group discussion and was built into the data collection to get final thoughts and clarity and further information from the participants. Further, the mentor teachers had just completed the school-based teaching practice and their mentoring practices were still fresh in their minds. The interviews took place in a classroom which is situated away from the main buildings of the school as it

guaranteed the least disruption from after-school activities. The school is surrounded by residences which did not disrupt the interview but the background noises could not entirely be eliminated. The teachers could not spare any other time except the time immediately after school. Each interview lasted between one to one and a half hours. The interviews were audio-taped and later transcribed. The transcripts were handed back to the participants to verify the details to ensure trustworthiness (Maree, 2007). It was difficult finding the time to conduct the interviews. I had to be mindful of the responsibilities the participants carried on a daily basis. I could not prescribe a set date or time. This had to be negotiated with the participants. Refer to annexure for the semi-structured individual interview sheet.

### **3.7.3. Focus group discussion**

According to Cohen, Manion & Morrison (2007) the focus group discussion is based on the interaction between the participants while discussing a topic provided by the researcher. This interaction allows for the data to come through. Merriam (2009) alerts readers to the fact that the focus group discussion yields a collective rather than an individual view. Mouton (2009) adds that the setting for the focus group discussion is an artificial one which brings together a selected sample of participants to discuss a particular topic. The advantage of a focus group discussion is that it yields data which would not have been revealed in an individual interview relying mainly on the strength of a group.

Focus group widens the range of responses as the participants build on each other's ideas (Maree, 2007). The focus group is a forum for the mentors to provide insights into their experiences and recount the knowledge gained working as mentors. The answers will be richer as the participants get involved in discussions, critical debates and build on each other's responses (Maree, 2007). The group is small in size but it provides the opportunity for the participants to talk in depth about their experiences. One of the shortcomings of the focus group is that the dominant voice may overshadow the quieter one. The researcher in this instance must be able to give all members a voice and steer the discussion in a way that all participants have an equal chance to share their thoughts (Cresswell, 2009).

Cohen, Marion & Morrison (2007) state that a focus group discussion produces a greater amount of data than a single interview and this is done in a shorter space of time. The focus group discussion took place in the second week of August. It took a great deal of negotiations

to get all the participants together for the focus group discussion. The rules of propriety and respect were maintained during the focus group discussion as well. Refer to annexure for focus group discussion sheet.

### **3.8 Data analysis**

Guided by Cohen, Manion & Morrison (2007), all aspects of research data were analysed in a purposeful and sequential manner after data had been produced. Maree (2007) added that qualitative data analysis is based on interpreting the data to find meaningful content. This is done by thorough inductive analyses which require the researcher to locate emergent themes from the data. The data analysis must be suitable to a particular research design and approach (Henning, et al., 2005). Content analysis is the most appropriate method for data analysis in this study. It is usually used in transcripts and is used to analyse data generated by open-ended questions on surveys, interviews and focus group discussions (Henning, et al., 2005). The data showed the gradual emergence of recurrent themes and patterns of thinking (Henning, et al., 2005). Data was drawn from the biographical questionnaire, semi structured interviews and through the use of focus group discussions. In terms of the study the data was coded and categorised in into recurring themes which identified what, how and where mentor learning took place through the practice of mentoring. The data does not speak for itself; the meaning drawn from it has to be interpreted by the researcher (Henning, et al., 2005).

The researcher must become familiar with the data (Maree, 2007). In terms of my study it meant reading and re-reading the data until I grasped the ideas of the participants. I collected the biographical questionnaire from each of the participants. I collated the information using a grid. This format gave me an instant overview of the biographical information of the participants in relation to their knowledge and experience of mentoring which are the key points of the data. The reading of the transcripts refreshed my memory of the participants' thoughts and experiences on mentoring. During the course of the reading, important words and phrases relating to the study were highlighted. The next step was to code the data. Coding data allowed me to look for patterns and craft categories. In this way I was able to find that certain words, phrases and ideas were common to all participants. I also looked for data that was different in each transcript.

At this stage the themes in the data analysis began to emerge. Re-reading the data, especially the highlighted areas, I was able to condense into two themes which were finally implemented for the study. The two themes were identified as perspectives of mentors' roles and elements of mentor teacher learning. The data generated through the biographical questionnaire, semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions in Chapter Four is analysed and presented as vignettes which are short character sketches or stories used to analyse data (Henning, 2004). The vignettes are couched in the participants' own words and allowed for the further refinement of data.

Henning (2004) adds that the story is not a fictional one but is used by the researcher as an organising technique. The use of the vignettes does not mean that the researcher makes up the story; rather the researcher puts together the data in a story. Spalding and Phillips (2004) support Henning (2004), adding that vignettes are "snapshots" built in such a way as "to provide one account of the truth that was representative of events". Spalding and Phillips (2004) note that the vignette's is a way of documenting the data generated from one's research. In keeping with these ideas I selected the data directly from the participants own words, thoughts and experiences focussing on mentor learning during the practice of mentoring. It was vital that the vignettes were the direct quotations of the participants as it reflected on the research question and the trustworthiness of the research.

### **3.9. Ethical Considerations**

As a researcher I had to abide by ethical considerations. Before the study commenced I informed the principal of the scope of the study. I provided the principal with information on the data collection methods, the timeframe for its completion and the confidentiality of the participants. The principal gave authorisation to conduct the study at school. The next step was to meet with the participants on an individual basis and explain the scope of the study, the reason for handpicking them as participants, the data collection and timeframes. The participants had to sign consent forms which detailed the scope of the study and the confidentiality clause. The consent form also stipulated that the participants could ask to leave the study at any time with no repercussions. Further, at each stage of data collection the participants were assured of the privacy and the confidentiality of the results.

The school is an institution managed by the Department of Education. The next step was to attain a go-ahead from the Department of Education. A letter requesting permission to conduct research from the Department of Education was forwarded. This detailed the scope of the study, the types of data to be collected and timeframes. Together with the instruments, consent forms from the participants and the principal were forwarded. The department gave permission for the research to proceed with the provisos that teachers' contact time with the learners was not comprised, teachers' confidentiality maintained, and that teachers are given the option to leave the study at any time. Finally the ethical clearance had to be sought from the university.

The participants had to have a clear understanding of the protection of their anonymity and privacy and the confidentiality of the results and the findings. The participants were given pseudonyms and the name of the school was omitted, save to say that the study was based on the mentoring experiences of four mentors who teach at a primary school in Chatsworth. As a researcher I had to abide by ethical considerations. At the outset I had to establish trust, honesty and respect so that my participants felt at ease sharing their ideas with me.

### **3.10. Trustworthiness**

According to Maree (2007, p. 80) reliability and validity are crucial aspects of quantitative research. However, in qualitative research it applies to the research being "credible and trustworthy". In qualitative research it is not an intention to replicate the study as it deals with the human dynamic (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Since my study is positioned in the interpretive paradigm and used qualitative data collection methods, it does not lay claim to absolutes or data which one can quantify (Cresswell, 2009). This study explores the participant's subjective experiences and the researcher's interpretations. Maree (2007) argues that the use of multiple data production methods will lead to trustworthiness. So that I can verify that the information is credible and to enhance reliability (Lincoln & Guba, 1985), I used the biographical questionnaire, the face-to face, semi-structured interviews as well as the focus group discussions to gather data. Each of the instruments built on the previous one and common questions were inserted. Secondly, after I completed the transcripts I gave them back to the participants to verify the content, to ensure that the transcript mirrored the information relayed during data collection. The data was never going to be quantified or generalisable because it dealt with the participants' experiences within the context of a

particular school and this characteristic of the interpretive paradigm and the qualitative approach is also its advantage (Cresswell, 2009).

### **3.11. Researcher positionality**

In addition to serving as the researcher in this study I also serve as a mentor and as the liaison mentor at the school which means that it is my duty to ensure that school-based teaching practice and the practice of mentoring takes place efficiently. In qualitative research the researcher's subjectivity cannot be eliminated (Cresswell, 2009). According to Mouton (2009) the researcher's affiliations to the study is an important trait of qualitative research. The researcher has the responsibility of putting the participants at ease and developing an atmosphere of trust that their privacy will be protected.

As the researcher together with the participants we share an interest in the study. Researchers themselves are an important part of the research process, either in terms of their own personal presence as researchers, or in terms of their experiences in the field. I needed to ensure that data can be trusted, and I made a conscious attempt to remain truthful and objective during the data generation and analysis process and attempted to present the data and findings as close to the truth as possible. I have a vested interest in the study as I wish to make a contribution to the mentoring practices at this school to enhance not only the mentor but the mentoring practice. This was an area of interest at school especially since most of the mentors were not trained.

### **3.12. Limitations**

The study is restricted to four teachers from the same school who serve as mentor teachers. It cannot be generalised as a practice at other schools. In my perusal of the readings I have come across instances that spoke of the limitations of studies in the interpretive paradigm utilising qualitative methods of data collection. Merriam (2009) declared that it is not possible to generalise nor replicate qualitative studies, as repeating the research will not give one the same result because human nature is never static. This approach deals with human beings in the context in which they interact. It is subjective, experiential and emotive as people share their meanings and life stories. This paradox is its greatest strength as it treats humans as human beings in their natural setting and not in a laboratory (Cohen, Manion &

Morrison, 2007). This study is not generalisable nor can it be replicated nor was that ever the intention. The study is based on a unique situation of four mentor teachers within the context of a primary school. Studies in the interpretive paradigm deal with human beings in the context in which they interact (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2007). The study is reflective of the four teachers from the same school who serve as mentor teachers. It does not represent the experiences of all mentors or other school settings.

I am the school liaison mentor, who co-ordinates school-based teaching practices for the mentor and student teacher. I am also responsible for mentoring of the student teachers and providing support for mentor teachers. My responsibilities in the above role function had the potential to influence the participants and the data. The participants were informed of the insider position in order to counteract unwarranted influences on them or the data. This could be a limitation for the study as it could potentially influence the data production and analysis. As a result of this potential limitation, I employed different methods for the production of data.

### **3.13. Conclusion**

The purpose of the chapter was to introduce and outline the methodology of the study (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2007). The chapter explored the interpretive paradigm and the qualitative approach. Explanations were provided with regard to the selection of the case study methodology and the qualitative data collection methods. It went on to describe the research context, participant sampling, the validity and trustworthiness and finally the limitations of the study. The next chapter presents and analyses the data from the biographical questionnaire, interviews and focus group discussions.

## **CHAPTER FOUR**

### **DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS**

#### **4.1. Overview and Introduction**

The previous chapter presented the research design and methodology of the study. It mapped out the interpretive paradigm, qualitative approach, methods of data collection and case study methodology. The study called for an in-depth exploration of the evolving nature of mentoring and learning in the natural setting of practice (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2007; Cresswell, 2009; Guba & Lincoln, 1994). The data collection methods included biographical questionnaire, individual semi-structured interviews and focus group discussion.

Chapter four commences with the participants' profile together with a tabular form to give the reader a snapshot of their biographical details, experience and development as mentor. Chapter four presents thereafter data in the form of vignettes, from four participants at a primary school in Chatsworth, focusing on mentor learning through the practice of mentoring during school-based teaching practice. The vignettes are used for data analysis, brought into dialogue with the research questions and theoretical framework. Drawing on the theoretical framework of Evans (2002) research on the four elements of teacher development provides insight as to how mentors perceived and enacted their roles as well as what and how the participants learnt about mentoring through their practice of mentoring.

Evans' (2002) study focuses on teacher development; however latitude to adopt the elements of teacher development to mentor learning was presented in the range of applicability. This range of applicability stated that teacher development can be applied to teachers in the various contexts in which they teach and learn (Evans, 2002). Mentor learning through the practice of mentoring during school-based teaching practice is one of those contexts in which the elements of teacher development can be applied. This theory was selected because Evans (2002) introduces the specific foci of change in the four elements of teacher development. Change is a key factor of the study. Firstly, the teacher changes role function to become a mentor. Secondly, the mentor teacher displays attitudinal and functional development. Finally, the mentor has to add to knowledge and skills in order to teach student teachers, thus contributing to the change in the culture of teaching and learning within the professional culture of the school.

The data analysis is presented in two sections in this chapter. The first section focuses on answering research question one: **What are teachers' perspectives of their roles as mentor during school-based teaching practice?** The role of the mentor during school-based teaching practice will be addressed through the first question. Section two shifts to answering research question two: **What and how did mentors learn about mentoring through their practice of mentoring?** This question would be unpacked by focusing on learning as it exists in the context of the practice of mentoring.

#### **4.2. Profiling the participants**

The literature reviewed stressed the importance of the mentor during school-based teaching practice (Hobson, 2002). In presenting the data, the participants are referred to by their given pseudonym: Jo, Edison, Jae and Shastri to protect their identity. I tried to match my understanding of the participant's background with the pseudonym I selected.

##### **Participant 1: Jo**

Jo is a 60 year old with more than 40 years of teaching experience in the Foundation Phase of which she is also the Head of Department. She holds a Bachelor's Degree. It has been more than five years since her last formal studies. In the biographical questionnaire, Jo indicated that she has no formal knowledge of mentoring. She chose to mentor as she sees it as her responsibility to give back to the profession. She draws her knowledge of mentoring from her experiences and her intuition which developed from teaching and managing her department. She has mentored teachers placed in the Foundation Phase since 2008. She attended the meetings held at the university which briefed mentors on school-based teaching practice. Her experiences during mentoring were filtered through her own value system. She accepts that the student will have similar needs as a qualified teacher; however, they must first be grounded in the basics of literacy and numeracy. She added that the student is a younger, inexperienced and less qualified teacher than those in her department.

##### **Participant 2: Edison**

Edison is a 48-year-old, Level 1 teacher with more than 20 years' experience in the Senior Phase. He has a three year teaching diploma and last studied over five years ago although he

has attended in-service courses in Mathematics. His biographical questionnaire shows, like Jo, he too does not have formal training in mentoring. His understanding of mentoring was drawn from his intuition and experiences as a teacher. He started mentoring at this school in 2005. He chose to mentor as he saw it as an opportunity to enlighten students in Mathematics.

### **Participant 3: Shastri**

Shastri is a 48 years old with more than 20 years of experience. She has no formal training in mentoring. She is a Level 1 educator teaching in the Intermediate Phase. She started mentoring in 2005. Shastri used her experience as a teacher to mentor. She collaborated with the liaison mentor at this school as well as with teachers who have training in mentoring. She is currently pursuing her Master's in Education which has exposed her to literature and case studies on mentoring which she uses for her practice. She believes that the mentor must have experiences in the field in which they wish to mentor students.

### **Participant 4: Jae**

Jae is the only participant with formal training in mentoring. She was formally trained in the Mentoring in Schools Programme at a university in 2009 and she is currently studying toward her Master's in Education. Jae is a 46 year old female teacher with 24 years of teaching experience. She is a Head of Department and teaches in the Intermediate Phase. She represents the one of three in her staff who has had formal training in mentoring. She started mentoring in 2005. She chose to mentor because she believes that she has the passion to teach and to mentor and is willing to share this with the student teachers. Jae uses her expertise and experience in teaching to inform her mentoring of students. She has more experience in teaching than in mentoring. It is her experience as a teacher which gives her the knowledge to assist the student teacher. Her training in mentoring has not fully equipped her with all the necessary skills to mentor. She believes that her training must be upgraded and supported to meet the demands and changes that are currently taking place in education.

In summary, the participants are experienced teachers who have made a choice to mentor. Edison and Jo have no formal training in mentoring. Shastri also has no training but is, currently pursuing her Masters which has provided the opportunities to interrogate literature on mentoring. Jae has formal training in mentoring and is a Masters student but believes that ongoing support for the mentor will add meaning to their practice. The participants drew their

mentoring skills from their experiences of teaching, their expertise in specialised learning areas and their intuition as teachers.

Table 1 below provides an outline of biographical information of each of the participants.

Name	Qualification	Teaching experience	Mentoring experience and training.
Jo	Bachelor's Degree	42 years	Commenced mentoring in 2005. No formal training in mentoring.
Shastri	Honours Degree. Studying towards Masters in Education	22 years	Commenced mentoring in 2005. No formal training in mentoring
Edison	Diploma in Education	22 years	Commenced mentoring in 2005. No Formal training in mentoring.
Jae	Honours Degree. Studying towards Masters in Education	24 years	Commenced mentoring in 2005. Formal training in mentoring-short course

### 4.3 SECTION ONE: Perspectives of mentors' roles

#### 4.3.1 Overview of section

This theme unpacks the participant's interpretation and enactment of their roles as mentor and what they learnt in response to these roles in the practice of mentoring. The various roles alluded to in literature are the historical relationship which includes counselling, parenting, guiding, supporting and being a confidant (Awaya et al., 2003). Over time the specialist role of the mentor emerged to include leadership, support, and guidance (Schwille, 2008) and sourcing practical skills (Hobson, 2002) in developing professionally (Hargreaves & Fullan, 2000). The participants' perspectives on roles that mentors should engage in, as well as roles

that were performed during school-based teaching practice, emerged from the data as leadership and support.

#### **4.3.1.1. The mentors' role as leader**

The mentor leader entails leading student teachers into action, attainment of teaching practice goals, being influential in matters relating to the profession, a source of inspiration and a role model (Gulcan, 2013). Shulman & Shulman (2004) and Reh (2013) stipulate that teachers, equipped with knowledge and skills of the profession and who have passion, can lead others to become competent. The participants viewed the mentor leader as having passion for the profession, capable of solving problems and leading by example.

##### **4.3.1.1.1. A mentor leader displays a passion for the profession**

Edison and Jae stated that being a mentor leader requires displaying a visible passion for the profession irrespective of the increased challenges that teachers experience in the profession and school. Edison believes that a positive attitude and having passion in the face of adversity in one's profession defines one as a mentor leader.

*A leader displays positive attitude to teaching and learning. Despite the challenges I am inspired to find passion where none may exist. Passion comes from deep within, to wanting to make a difference, to show student teachers who have so much of the negativity of the profession thrown at them, that they too with a positive attitude can and will make a difference. I cannot ignore the reality of our contextual factors and the increasing demands made on the teacher but if this is all I give, and then I cannot count myself as a leader. I have to show them that being positive and passionate about teaching does not mean I cannot be a realist but that I can take some of the negativity and make it a positive experience.*

Edison clearly articulated that being passionate about the profession entails remaining interested and enthused to teach and learn irrespective of negativity about the profession and the increased demands on teachers. A key feature of the mentor leader that Edison raised was the need to be realistic about the challenges, working conditions and demands that teachers face, but to ensure that student teachers are shown that such negatives could be turned into positives.

Jae is a Head of Department in the Intermediate Phase. She commenced with mentoring in 2005. She completed the Mentoring in Schools programme short course in 2009, thereafter commenced with Masters in Education. She understands her role as a mentor leader as being passionate and motivated about teaching and learning. Jae is a Mathematics teacher and she found that student teachers, who select Mathematics as a subject, have to be motivated about teaching the subject. As a mentor leader Jae cannot expect the student teacher to be motivated or display passion if she does not display the same attitude.

*The mentor introduces the student teacher to the practicalities within the school. As a maths teacher I found that many student teachers feel insecure teaching this subject. I recognise that my passion and motivation to make a difference to mathematics teaching and learning helps the student teacher. During mentoring I reveal to the student teacher ways one can teach maths which makes it enjoyable.*

Jae acknowledges that student teachers have insecurities about teaching Mathematics as the subject itself is daunting, with a challenging curriculum and learners who present difficulties in learning mathematics. She uses a „never say die“ approach in teaching which brings fulfillment despite the difficulties. An attribute of a mentor leader is motivation and drawing from being passionate even when one faces challenges in terms of the curriculum and with learners presenting barriers to learning. It is the responsibility of the mentor leader to ensure that the student teacher understands the challenges associated with teaching. She also reiterated Edison by indicating that there are learning moments in negative or challenging experiences. Typically one may complain about negative experiences but, as a leader, one learns from these experiences, which Friedlander (2013) calls the anti-model. The anti-model tasks one to identify the negative cause and effect and self correct to cross that line (Friedlander, 2013).

These two vignettes demonstrate that a mentor leader should display passion for the profession at two levels. At a personal level the teacher-self needs to draw on his/her innate passion to make a difference and at a professional level to extend this passion by making it visible to the student teacher. Such passion entails being committed, inspired, motivated, and positive about the profession irrespective of the obstacles which impede teaching and learning. This positive attitude separating leaders from followers is what Jonson (2008) refers

to as energy expended by those who have the capacity to lead. Jae, who faces similar challenges, raises above this to lead the student teacher in a positive manner which Gulcan (2013) signposts as leaders in action.

#### **4.3.1.1.2. A mentor leader leads by example**

The participants are in agreement that leading by example entails that the mentor leads with the knowledge that their practices create the yardstick for the future practice of their student teachers. Leading by example is most beneficial when teaching and learning developed positively and productively in the teacher's practice, and is held up as an example for the student teacher to follow (Chiles, 2007). Hooks (1994) adds that a leader cannot expect others to follow that which he/she cannot do themselves.

Edison and Jo had these ideas to put forward on leading by example. Edison mentioned that the student teachers who observed his lessons absorbed everything. He found much of his original lessons ideas appeared in their lesson plans. Edison revealed that he came to realise that he needed to be more conscious of his teaching approaches as student teachers tend to imitate the teachers' practices.

*When the student teacher observed my lesson I did not pay attention to the fact they were absorbing everything I was doing. The realisation was greater when I in turn observed the student teacher and found that some aspects of my teaching which I did not really think through were also reflected in her lessons. Therefore equipping them with the skills to draw from my lesson to develop their point of view became an important agenda in my practice.*

For Edison leading by example entailed student teachers observing his classroom teaching but being mindful about regurgitating what they observed. Instead, equipping them with the skills to create their own ideas in teaching became an important strategy in his practice. An important facet of leading by example that Edison raised was the need to give the student teacher the opportunity to observe teaching in action, followed by developing their personal styles and ideas.

As an experienced teacher, Jo revealed being a mentor leader starts with the teacher-self before leading others such as the student teacher. Leading by example emanates from being exemplary in one's own classroom teaching so that others may be able to follow.

*A teacher must be a leader of their own teaching in their own classroom before they lead others. We cannot overlook the fact that not all teachers can be mentors, and not all mentors can be leaders. For example, a mentor should not tell the student teacher how to plan lessons and how to add variety to the content, and expect the student to carry out these tasks, when the mentor does not take his own advice for his own classroom teaching.*

Jo clearly articulated that leading by example entails that you must be a good example as a teacher, before leading others. As gatekeepers to the teaching profession, mentors are bequeathed with the responsibility to lead by example. An integral facet of the mentor leader that Jo brought up was to ensure that what mentors expected of the student teachers was what they already practised as teachers.

From the data, it is evident that the participants viewed the student teachers as similar to sponges that absorb the practices of the mentors. While this is encouraging, in that they must learn as much as possible in a short space of time, they must also be able to filter what they observed and develop their own teaching styles. This means that the mentors should be aware of and take responsibility for their actions as teachers in their classrooms and as mentors. The participants' responses are in line with Gulcan (2013) who maintained that leaders, who expect others to follow, must lead from a position of strength. Waghid & Louw (2008) add that mentors leading with an inspired, context-rich and skills-based practice have the potential to markedly motivate the student teacher to emulate these qualities and practices.

The first two sub-themes unpacked under mentor leader which depict having passion for the profession and leading from example relate to issues between mentor and student teacher. The next theme focuses on mentor leaders as problem-solvers within the broader School-based Initiative for Mentoring (SIM) where the participants are practising teachers.

#### **4.3.1.1.3. Mentor leaders are capable of problem solving**

Mentor leader as problem solver covers a broader landscape as it is at a different level than the personal interaction between teacher mentor and student teacher. This sub-theme reveals the mentor leader becoming a part of a community of mentors within a specific school context. School-based teaching practice is a complex space for the mentor teacher. Evans (2002) states that teachers in the context of mentoring are agents for change; as it becomes

necessary for mentors to develop problem solving capabilities when faced with complex situations (Gulcan 2013). The participants agree that being able to solve problems is an important quality for a leader but also that it is impossible to solve all problems.

Jae has training in mentoring but showed concern that other mentor teachers did not have the same opportunities. Together with the liaison mentor who has similar training, a school-based initiative grew to assist mentors at this school. (Refer to Chapter Three - paragraph 3.6.2. on Profiling the school).

*A leader does not sit back and wait for something to happen, you make things happen. Mentors who had development in mentoring and those who are studying brought in academic readings, case studies and research to establish a programme at school to help other mentors. Taking the lead and rising to the challenge ensured that we were able to act in a way which assisted the mentor.*

Jae indicates that a mentor leader has the ability to solve problems, take charge of situations and uses the resources available to them. An important feature of the mentor leader that Jae raised was the need to rise above the challenges and take the initiative to create a collaborative environment for mentors to practise and learn.

Shastri's vignette reveals that a leader must have the ability to solve problems and find solutions inside the school by drawing on human resources such as the expertise of the trained mentors.

*The initiative at school helped mentors understand that having no development in mentoring did not mean that they could not mentor. In fact we took the challenge of having just a few trained mentors to create a resource pool for other mentors who also wished to create a meaningful teaching practice experience for the student. I cannot control the problem of lack of developmental opportunities, but being part of the school-based initiative, with an informed liaison mentor, shows that we can be part of the solution within our ambit.*

In the South African context mentoring at schools takes place on an *ad hoc* basis. Mentors do not get the necessary support from the Department of Education or the university, student

teachers are deployed to schools without the guarantee that they will be developed and schools are not evaluated for suitability as professional development spaces. Therefore Shastri's decision to take part in the SIM reveals her position as problem solver. Being part of a collaborative community of mentor-learners means finding solutions to meet challenges related to mentoring.

The vignettes reveal mentors taking the lead, creating solutions, albeit in small ways, to make a difference to mentoring at this school. Their action is in keeping with leaders who view a situation, expand upon it and find alternatives so that mentoring becomes a positive experience (Wang, Odelle & Schulle, 2008). Shulman & Shulman (2004, p.506) add that mentors must be developed to expect the unexpected and to be "creative and inventive, both problem solvers and innovators".

The participants understood certain perspectives of the mentor's role as leader. Mentors as leaders characterise their roles through passion for the profession, leading by example and being capable of problem solving. The vignettes focus on the mentor working with the student teacher as well as in communities of practice which has been accepted as being effective for learning (Lieberman & Mace, 2008; Shulman & Shulman, 2004). The participants were able to actualise these roles but accepted that these roles came with challenges.

Mentor leaders displaying an intrinsic passion for the profession develop a positive attitude toward teaching and learning. The external display is relayed through the mentor leader leading through action and example. According to Gulcan (2013) a positive work environment leads people to become actively and productively involved in building of the profession. A negative environment tasks the teacher to work harder and find solutions within the context. Mentor teachers who display attitudinal development, which reveals the motivational feature, are highly motivated in specific instances to make mentoring work (Evans (2002)).

#### **4.3.2. The mentor's role as supporter**

Odysseus selected Mentor who was a wise and upstanding citizen, to provide educational and parental support to Telemachus (Awaysa et al., 2003). Similarly, mentors support the student

teachers in the acquisition of practical skills for use in their own classrooms. Although the mentor does not provide parental support, motivating, encouraging, and uplifting the student teacher is equally important (Jonson, 2008). Data from this study showed that mentors take on the role as supporter in developing practical competence and skills, providing emotional support and extending the work of the university.

#### **4.3.2.1. Supporting the student teacher acquire practical competence and skills**

School-based teaching practice is the period when the students are deployed to schools for the practical component of teaching which includes sharing of practical, hands-on knowledge and skills to acclimatise the student to the culture of the school and the teaching profession (Goba, Pillay, Ramrathan & Swart, 2006). Shulman and Shulman (2004) highlight that it is the responsibility of teacher educators (thus including the mentor teacher) to ensure that student teachers are skilled in the varieties of practice, for example design and implementation of curriculum and assessment as well as understanding organisational processes within the school culture.

The following vignettes reveal how mentors perceive their supportive role in assisting the student teacher acquire practical skills during teaching practice. Some of the obstacles which impede this type of support are highlighted.

Jo is of the opinion that support commences with the student teacher understanding the fundamentals of teaching in the classroom; this will include writing and executing a lesson plan, teaching, assessing and pastoral care. Although Jo reveals that teaching is much more than this, it is important to have a starting point to provide the foundation to build on. An organisational procedure which includes the daily running of the school and classroom also forms part of developing the student teacher's understanding of the school culture. Jo acknowledges that the student teacher moves between two different places – the university and school. Therefore the role as supporter is to try and narrow the gap between what the student learns at university and what actually happens in the classroom. She is of the opinion that providing the student with practical guidelines on how to implement the teaching curriculum in the classroom is one of the aspects that contributes to closing the gap between theory and practice.

*I take the student teacher through the daily running of school, the class and show them practical ways of teaching. I always held the opinion that the mentor should show the student teacher how to implement the teaching programmes in the classroom. This is the kind of support the student teacher does not get at university, but is expected to carry out at school.*

Similar to Jo, Shastri believes that the mentor teacher's role is to provide the student teacher with the tools of the trade. This includes supporting the student teacher in understanding the practical implementation of the teaching plan. However, what she plans to accomplish during the blocked teaching practice session (an *interactive workshop* on curriculum implementation) and what she actually does (a *watered-down version*) is restricted by the short time frame for teaching practice.

*The mentor supports the student to become a teacher by equipping them with the practical tools of the trade, but what inhibits this is the limited time for school-based teaching practice. The intention is to give the student teacher a well planned, interactive workshop on implementing curriculum and practical tasks in the class, but in practice we give them an insipid version required just for the teaching practice.*

Jae takes into account the impoverished circumstances of the school and the need to show student teachers practical ways of getting around such conditions. She discovered that although some student teachers have had teaching practice experiences in poor and/or under-resourced schools, they do not necessarily have the tools to work effectively in these circumstances. She shared specifically her view of how student teachers need to be supported in understanding how to change waste material into valuable resources.

*A mentor supports and guides students to work in school contexts so that they become familiar with the realities of our classrooms and the many tasks carried out on a daily basis. Effective teaching in a poorly resourced school requires that the mentor support the student teacher in understanding how to work by re purposing resources. Most student teachers expect that resources are available and we have to get them in that mode, where an old calendar is not thrown in the bin, but re-purposed as a chart, or where Coo-ee caps are used as counters in the Maths class, or cardboard can be used to make boxes or placed against broken windows to keep out the cold.*

Edison, on the other hand, emphasised the value of the SIM as support mechanism for inducting the student teachers into the organisational procedures of the school. It is evident that the induction on the what and how of the school culture in the format of a check list document and tour of the school also supports the work of the mentor teacher as student teachers become familiar with the practice of the school early in the teaching practice session. Edison points to two levels of support at the school level. Firstly, the induction session carried out at the beginning of the teaching practice session. This is followed by the processes and procedures for mentor teachers embedded in the organisational culture of the school. At the classroom level the mentor has the responsibility to support the student teacher. The SIM gives the mentor teacher the confidence, ease, and more time to focus on mentoring with the ultimate outcome of developing confident students for the workplace.

The above vignettes reveal that mentors support the student teacher by making the curriculum accessible and unpacking it for practical implementation in the classroom. Both Jo and Shastri talk about supporting the student teacher's understanding of the subject policy statements and its implication for teaching. The findings from their data indicate two possible factors that constrain the mentor's role as supporter: firstly the gap between the university and the school related to curriculum implementation in the classroom and secondly, the limited time spent at school for teaching practice. The mentor's aim is to bridge the gap as the mentor and the student teacher are in different places. Edison and Jae followed the trend set by Jo and Shastri and also provided support in tangible ways by giving them practical skills to use in a disadvantaged school setting (Jae) and by adding to their experience by being inducted early on in their teaching practice session through the SIM (Edison). If I add my gaze to school-based teaching practice I concur that the period spent at school, where the practical component of teaching exists, where the student teachers would spend most of their professional life, then I would find that it is very limited in terms of time, especially when one has to consider the amount of administration and supervision it requires. It takes mentors who are dedicated and motivated to school-based teaching practice to support the student teacher with practical skills. Developing professional skills takes time. The participants' views are in keeping with that of Wang, Odelle & Schwille (2008, p. 139) who indicated that the mentor provides supports for the student to "get inside the practical tasks of teaching" despite the transitions and rampant changes in the curriculum. It is equally important to support the student teacher to understand and transition into the school culture (Henze & van Driel, 2009). Finally, Awaya (et al., 2003) maintain that because teaching is a complex

activity the student teacher will also require support in the organisational procedures of the school.

#### **4.3.2.2. Providing emotional support**

Shulman (1987) adds that teaching is complex, where the novice and experienced teachers have similar responsibilities, further compounded by 30 pairs of eyes staring at you, wanting your attention at the same time. Although this reference dates back to 1987, these statements are still valid for present-day novice and student teachers. For a student teacher this can be even more stressful with the limited time they have accrued in front of the class. Awaya et al., (2003) take the view that teaching in a classroom for the first time can be traumatic and a supportive, understanding mentor can make the process less stressful. Jae, Jo and Edison's vignettes reveal the importance of emotional support during mentoring.

Jae explains: *The mentor should establish trust early on so that the student teacher understands that there is someone they can turn to. There are times when the student teacher has to be taken under the wings of the experienced teacher in order to feel protected. It is important to be the shoulder, the crutch, when the classroom becomes a scary place. At times all this needs is a kind word of encouragement.*

In this instance Jae foregrounds that trust needs to be built early in the relationship. Trust can be developed by offering protection to the student teacher when needed through being physically available, approachable and through words of encouragement.

Jo explains: *After a bad crit my student left the classroom in tears. I understand that it is important for the student to be strong but in these vulnerable moments the mentor has to step up and be there with words of encouragement and survival tools which can help ease some of the discomfort. I want the student to have a positive experience of teaching practice. The reality however, is that some students have a difficult time. It is in these times that emotional support and encouragement is required from the mentor teacher.*

Jo is of the view that although student teachers need to toughen up there is always room for the mentor teacher to provide support and encouragement.

Edison offers a different opinion: *As a male teacher I felt that I had to be very circumspect when I had to offer support. If a girl in my class experiences a problem I send them to a female teacher. But as a mentor teacher I felt that I had to step up. I wait until the student teacher is calm before I offer a few encouraging words. But it is also important for them to learn to handle these situations. In a real classroom situation one cannot walk out in tears, you would have to work through whatever is causing you that stress. Supporting the student emotionally is important, it is equally important for the student to toughen up. Throw the student teacher in the deep end to develop independently, but it is equally important to be available during this period.*

Edison adopts a sort of „balancing approach“ in understanding the role of the mentor as supporter. Edison states that emotional support for the student teacher is important, but it is important that they are given the space to find their feet during these challenging periods. In addition to the mentor contributing to the teaching practice of the student teacher (Hawkey, 1997) it is equally important to support them emotionally.

This support and guidance goes back in time to Mentor and Telemachus (Awaya et al., 2003). The participants concur that equally important to offering practical guidance, is being supportive, encouraging, offering kind advice and techniques for survival for classroom practice as well as to develop professionally. The participants“ views on emotional support vary from being close to the student when giving protection (Jae) to toughening them to develop independently (Edison). Jae and Jo provide the student teacher the proverbial shoulder to cry on because they understand that the student teacher is developing and teaching comes with unique complexities. Edison, however, adds that despite the difficulties in the classroom, it is best that the student learns coping mechanisms for when they are on their own. The mentor“s conception of support fluctuates between a nurturing environment to one which advocates tough love which Awaya et al. (2003) refer to as one offering support and giving them the space to grow. In addition to the essential support during emotional circumstances it is equally important to support the student teacher to develop the resilience to deal with the challenges in the classroom.

#### 4.3.3.3. Supporting and extending the work of the university

Literature has already established that mentors play a key role in Initial Teacher Education by providing support in the attainment of their careers as teachers (Wang, Odelle &Schwille, 2008). The mentors concur that the university provides the theoretical, academic knowledge and school-based teaching practice provides the hands-on practical experiences of teaching and learning (Mutemeri & Chetty, 2011). Considering this ongoing theory practice nexus, the participants revealed that the mentor teacher plays a role in supporting and extending the work of the university through their practice of mentoring. There is however a gap between what is done at university and the school. Zeichner, Payne & Brayko (2012) concur that little success has been achieved in bringing together the campus-based coursework and school-based field work components. There is also an inability to draw sufficiently on the local community-based knowledge in schools to inform prospective teachers because of the gap between the two institutions.

Jo, who has vast experience in teaching in the Foundation Phase, understands the importance of equipping the learners with basic skills, the foremost of which is reading. She was gravely concerned when the student teachers who elected to teach in the Foundation Phase weren't equipped with the necessary basic knowledge of phonics as well as the skills to teach the learners how to read. Jo learnt not to rely on the university to provide all the necessary tools for the student teacher. As a mentor she understands her role and responsibility to equip the student teacher with content knowledge, training in phonics, and this is done through an on-site workshop and observations in the class. Despite the time constraints the phonics workshop took place after contact time so that all interested student teachers could attend.

*I found that I cannot take anything for granted believing that because they are coming from a tertiary background that they have content knowledge. In my interaction with my student I found that she did not have training in phonics. The university provided the theoretical knowledge on reading abilities of a child in this phase without providing the skills to apply that in the classroom. From that point on I included phonics training as part of my practice. In fact all student teachers who are placed in the FP (Foundation Phase) are workshopped, time permitting, and invited to the classrooms to observe actual phonics lessons. Each student is also given a phonics document which they would be able to use in future, no matter*

*how many times the curriculum changes.*

Jo intimates student teachers lacked training in basic reading competence, which is developed through phonics. Furthermore, student teachers are unable to apply theoretical knowledge to the classroom situation.

*The student has more academic than practical knowledge which we try to bridge during the practice of mentoring. My mentoring practice gives me the responsibility to represent the profession to the best of my ability and give the student a window into the world of teaching. Realistically, the gap may not be completely bridged, but it is a start.*

As Jae indicates below, similarly to Jo, she believes the role of the teacher mentor is to extend the work of the university by filling the gaps as far as possible. She highlighted the lack of background knowledge in Mathematics at university so she had to find a way to mentor student teachers on effective methods for teaching. She created worksheets for the student teacher to follow and to teach with. This is what Evans (2002) refers to as functional development where changes are effected in the mentor's professional performance.

*The student teacher must have prior knowledge. But the university does not provide it, so it is our responsibility to fill in that gap and build bridges. When I first started mentoring I believed that as a mentor I would be able to do just that. When the student teacher arrived I found that they struggled in teaching Mathematics. So I made a decision that I will add to what they learnt at university even if it were just a few sections at a time and even if it just for the time that they are with us. I developed worksheets which taught the skill, gave an example of how it is done, application exercises. This simple technique helped the student teacher to have all the information on hand.*

Shastri adds that the university is theory rich in its approach, yet the reality of classroom teaching is different. In her interaction with her student teacher she found that they had the academic know how of child development and discipline but in practice this did not pan out according to these theories. The mentor teacher revealed to the student teacher how to apply theory practically. Some of the practices included receiving the learners and engaging them in the lesson from the beginning to minimise the disciplinary problems.

*The final year student teacher usually spends the last week of TP completely in charge of the class. I found that they constantly battled with discipline. Even though they were familiar with the class they did not know to deal with the discipline problems which arose. I recall that the student teacher had a document on discipline, provided by the university. This for me was an example of how I filled a small gap. We worked through the steps provided in the document and included in the practice on how to receive the learners and how to engage them at the beginning so that they become interested in the lesson; you know the few tricks we use to get the discipline under control.*

As mentor teacher, Jo saw her role as mediator or possibly a referee between the university and school, yet she has never interacted with the university, creating a missing link. Jo also questions her ability to mentor or the ability to bridge the gap, not for the lack of trying, but the lack of interaction. She concluded succinctly by adding her thoughts:

*As a mediator or a referee, a go-between, the mentor takes over from the university, to equip the student with daily classroom skills. Yet I have never gone into the university to see how they work, nor has the university come to me to check my work, so my belief that I am a mediator is brought into question.*

Edison supports Jo's view that student teachers lack practical skills and knowledge. Edison maintains that his intention is not to diminish the work of the university but to add. The role of the mentor teacher is to try and bridge the work of the university and the work of the school so as to better prepare the student teacher for the workplace. The mentor teacher has to also represent the face of the profession.

*As mentor teachers we cannot fix all the issues that come about during mentoring, but we can bridge what is done at university and the school.*

The participants extending the academic and theoretical work done at the university is couched in terms like *bridge* (Edison) and filling gaps and linking with what is done at university (Jae and Shastri) although Jo also performed these two role functions by providing a practical phonics class, but she felt trying to bridge the gap is questionable because there is a void between the university and school. As a mentor she does not know the work of the

university so at best her efforts are one-sided, from the side of the school only. The university does have meetings with mentors but this is insufficient. Being a mediator requires more commitment between the school and the university.

The data suggests that the mentors at this school are thinking about their role in the life of the student teacher and making attempts at a positive, informed practice. This however is not always the case as in the South African context the teaching practice was experienced in a negative way which inhibited growth and development (Robinson, Vergani & Sayed, 2003; Mutemeri & Chetty, 2011).

Awaya et al., (2003) add that the mentor shares practical, hands on knowledge to acclimatise the student to the culture of the school and the teaching profession. Although the mentors were able to relate to the perspectives of their roles as leader, supporter and mediator there were inhibiting factors which prevented them from successfully carrying out these roles completely. Shulman (1987) maintains that there are more favourable conditions for learning in actual practice than in academy. This partial success is evident at this school, because despite the inhibiting factors which include the lack of support for the mentor, the difficulty in finding correlation between the university and the school, the changing curriculum landscape, and the limited time spent on school-based teaching practice, mentors created a positive space for mentoring. This can be attributed to the mentor's position of leadership, providing practical and emotional support and mediating between the school and the university.

This section unpacked the perspectives of mentors' roles. The role as leader and support added value to the specialised role of mentor teacher. The role of supporter tasked the mentor teacher to unpack the practicalities of classroom teaching, curriculum coverage and the procedures required for teaching.

#### **4.4. SECTION TWO: MENTOR LEARNING THROUGH MENTORING PRACTICE**

Section two shifts to answering research question two: **What and how did mentors learn about mentoring through their practice of mentoring?** One would find that what the mentors learnt is inextricably linked to how they learnt. The themes which emerged from the data in answering this research question aim to tell the participants' stories of their journey

and growth during the practice of mentoring. The theoretical framework presented in Evans' (2002) four elements on teacher development is the lens used to unpack data on the mentor and mentor learning. What and how mentors learn about mentoring through the practice of mentoring is composed in the following four themes: Attitudinal mentor learning, functional mentor learning, mentor learning through role development and mentor learning through cultural development (Evans, 2002).

#### **4.4.1. Attitudinal Mentor Learning**

Evans (2002) maintains that attitudinal learning is a change in one's attitude to one's practice revealed through features of intellectual and motivational change. Intellectual change brings about reflection in one's professional body of work. Motivational change encourages one to become motivated. In relation to the mentor, attitudinal learning is a change in the mentor's attitude to the practice of mentoring. Intellectual change is revealed in reflective practice; where the mentor draws from experience and engages cognitive processes to make changes to the existing practice of mentoring. Motivational change enhances mentoring as more experience and knowledge is gained.

The practice of mentoring is conceived to be the interaction between the mentor and the student teacher during school-based teaching practice (Wang, Odelle & Schwille, 2008, p.156). It involves complex interactions which create a fertile ground to draw considerable benefits for the mentor and the student teacher (Ghosh & Reio, 2013). Evans (2002) writes that mentors who display attitudinal development show changes in how they practise. The participants referred to this as a shift in the way they thought and acted, in finding ownership in their experiences of learning. The shift occurred in two ways; firstly, through adopting a specific disposition and secondly, by accepting the position as a learner and as a mentor. Mentors who are open to learning do not only see themselves as experts, they also recognise their ability to learn (Orland-Barak & Yinon, 2005).

Jo's vignette below reveals the mental tug-of-war she experienced when she had to think of herself as a learner in the mentoring process rather than the expert. She separated her role as teacher (mentor)-expert from that of teacher-learner. She had to change from the traditional apprenticeship way of thinking about mentoring to adapt to being more open to learning from others.

*At the outset I would like to say that it is very difficult because as a teacher I did not think of my learning. I see my responsibility as one of teaching. I think that this attitude stemmed from the old school. It was very confusing to see myself in this role and I am not saying this out of arrogance but that is how it is. As a mentor I am the expert, the provider of practical knowledge, I know the context of the school and I am responsible for their education.*

Edison's vignette clarifies his belief in distinct roles: teachers teach, mentors mentor and student teachers learn. However, when the teacher mentors position themselves as learners it required a change in their attitude and the way they think about learning as a teacher. He emphasised that learning from a student requires an attitude of openness, a feeling of being equal to the student and accepting that the student teacher has something of value to offer. A teacher has to have confidence as a person and a teacher to learn from those whom you mentor as well. Such confidence also means being confident in yourself as a teacher. Edison indicated that having an idea and experience of your role as a teacher makes it difficult to follow in a role as learner.

*It was difficult to understand how to correlate between our belief that teachers teach and learners learn. More experienced teachers will learn from a student, if the former is open to learning and knows that he can gain knowledge from the experiences of the student. Learning depends on the teacher, not feeling inadequate in showing that he lacks in some field. But in practice it is not such a simple process.*

Similarly, Jae adds that learning from others, for example, a student teacher reflected a conscious shift in one's attitude that requires being open to possibilities of learning. She indicated that having knowledge of your role as a professional teacher makes it difficult to follow in the role as a learner. This shift is not an easy or comfortable one as the teacher now positions herself as a learner, learning from the student teacher.

*As mentors we came to the practice of mentoring as mentors, older and more experienced. But our experience and status as a professional teacher must not blind us to the possibilities of learning from the students. This transition comes naturally at times, but most often it is slow, uncomfortable almost.*

Shastri agrees that a change of mindset opens up the possibilities to learn. The teacher should adopt an attitude of willingness and motivation to learn. Being willing and motivated are features of individual learning (Shulman & Shulman, 2004).

*An experienced teacher who shows willingness to learn from a student is a testament that he is open to new learning without the pride and the arrogance that he knows it all, or to be uncomfortable to admit that someone who is younger with lesser experience is able to teach him.*

This theme presents the mentor's changing attitude toward learning from a position of expert as teacher (Orland-Barak & Yinon, 2005) to being a learner in the mentoring process. The notion of an expert in the position of a learner can cause feelings of discomfort for the teacher mentor (Orland-Barak & Yinon, 2005). The fluctuation from teacher to mentor reflects the "vulnerable nature" of the teacher when they redefine themselves as learners (Orland-Barak & Yinon, 2005 p. 574). The participants' angst in shifting from experienced, expert to learner is revealed in the words *difficult* (Jo), *inadequate* (Edison), *uncomfortable* (Shastri) and *blind* (Jae). The participants experienced this sense of anguish because mentoring took them out of their comfort zone and placed them in a unique situation different from teaching. The participants mention *uncomfortable*, and this made each aware that feelings of discomfort may come with changing attitude in taking the role as teacher-learner. Evans (2002) notes that learning and development is about change and in this instance a change in attitude toward learning as it redefines the role of the mentor linked to being a learner.

Intellectual change, as part of attitudinal learning, reflects on the shift from expert to learner and requires deep engagement in thinking and introspection to shift. Intellectual change which is focused within attitudinal development may incorporate the enhancement of understanding (Evans, 2002, p.132).

#### **4.4.2. Functional mentor learning**

Evans (2002) states that learning or adapting procedures as well as changing mentoring practices by doing more and better, thus being more productive, forms part of functional learning. Although Evans (2002) refers to functional learning as including procedural and productive development as two separate features of functional learning, it is often difficult to separate the two features, as in the case of this study. Procedures that were new, or existing

procedures that were modified, ultimately shifted the mentor teacher to change how they worked resulting in more productive and effective ways in their practice of mentoring.

#### **4.4.2.1 Procedural changes for more productive mentoring practices**

In the South African context mentors carry out the task of mentoring over and above continuing with their responsibilities of teaching. Apart from the responsibilities the mentor has as a teacher, they have to find a way to mentor the student teacher to be able to teach in the school and carry out the contractual requirements of the university. This can be time consuming and stressful and impact on the effectiveness of mentoring or learning. As the data revealed in this study, mentor teachers moved to look for new ways of mentoring or modified existing practices that worked for them and for their specific school context. The procedures that were identified in the data referred to, firstly, finding and utilising strategies for more effective use of time for more effective mentoring practices; secondly participants experienced a turning point which made them shift their mentoring practices; and a third aspect that emerged from the data was the value that mentor teachers placed on learning new ways of teaching from the student teachers which the teacher mentors implemented in their own teaching practices.

##### **4.4.2.1.1. More effective use of time**

Jo reveals that it was necessary and important that the student teacher not only absorb what she does as a teacher but also to engage in a discussion around these events, She found value in the post-evaluation period built into the SIM, as discussed in Chapter Three. This opportunity allowed a comfortable and safe space for her to interact with the student teacher and provided opportunities for discussion on the happenings of the day. Jo's learning is reflected in her shift in realising the value of having set structured time with the student for mentoring rather than sacrificing her teaching to the learner's time for the purpose of mentoring.

*As it is important for the student teacher to learn from me, I have discovered that observation is not enough. I needed to ground what I taught in a particular context. I found that I could not keep track of whether my mentoring had value or not. It took me some time before I*

*realised that using the post evaluation period which took place each afternoon gave us a comfortable space to discuss the day. Initially I tried to explain all of this during teaching time, but in this way the teaching suffered because I took the attention away from the learner.*

Edison found that the lack of time during teaching and mentoring was a great cause for stress but through trial and error he managed to find a way around this difficulty, allowing for effective mentoring. He had to change his practice to find time-saving techniques to ensure effective mentoring. He believed that he had to find a balance between teaching time and mentoring time. He managed to create a time slot during the day to complete administrative tasks related to mentoring.

*There is never enough time for mentoring to run its course as it includes evaluating and writing reports and to keep the syllabus moving for the learners. When we first started we were all at an equal disadvantage. I had to change my practice to include time-saving techniques to free up time to mentor without detracting from teaching. I learnt to manage the administration, evaluation and completion of forms during a set period of the day. Learning strategies to free up quality time for mentoring took place on a trial and error basis, but once I was able to make it work in my practice, mentoring became less stressed. And I was able to find that balance where teaching is not compromised.*

Shastri also found that she had to make creative use of the time with the student teacher to draw value from the mentoring experience. Utilising the assessment documents for teaching practice provided a useful tool for engagement in post-lesson observation discussion.

*I had to immerse myself totally into the practice. I also used the evaluation and the completion of the forms as a means for post evaluation discussions with the student.*

The above vignettes reveal that the mentor teacher learnt how to find a balance between the time needed for teaching and mentoring. As Jo stated that “*It took me some time before I realised that using the post evaluation period which took place each afternoon...*” and Edison added “*Learning strategies to free up quality time for mentoring took place on a trial and error basis..*”, and Shastri “*I also used the evaluation and the completion of the forms as a means for post evaluation discussions with the student.*”

These quotes reveal that the mentors made procedural changes to some aspect of their practice to enable more productive mentoring (Evans, 2002). Utilising the set post evaluation time slot for mentoring (Jo); finding time-saving techniques for mentoring (Edison) and utilising the student assessment form as a tool for engagement in post-lesson observation discussion (Shastri) were core to functional learning as procedures were put in place for more productive mentoring (Evans, 2002).

#### **4.4.2.1.2. Turning points leading to action**

Data from Edison and Shastri allude to certain turning points or triggers in their mentoring that resulted in them consciously taking certain actions to change their practice of mentoring. Edison learnt to overcome some of the burning limitations in handling the student teachers' teaching. This is what Edison stated:

*Sometimes I find myself in an uncomfortable situation and initially I did not know how to handle it. I found that students did not understand the content and during the teaching of the lesson gave the learners the incorrect information. I did not know whether to correct the student and give the learners the right information. This would have made the student uncomfortable. After discussing this with other mentors, I found that they had similar situations. I made a change as to how I mentored. I used modelling. I had a pre-evaluation discussion, and then taught the lesson which the student observed. This was followed by the student teaching. Together we built codes when I knew that I had to step in or when the student required assistance.*

Edison's vignette revealed that a turning point in his mentoring practices came when he learnt in conversation with his peers that they were struggling with similar challenges in dealing with certain students' teaching. Sharing and bouncing ideas off his peers allowed him to think of a more practical way to change his mentoring practices to support students in a more professional manner. He implemented a strategy to work in a closer and more structured way with the student by providing an opportunity to discuss the lesson with the student, modelling the teaching for the student to observe, followed by the student modelling for him to observe. Introducing a code system to support the student if needed signals Edison's awareness of having to develop acceptable behaviour to support the student in challenging circumstances rather than embarrassing the student or engaging in conflict. This strategy allowed for improved interaction between the mentor-mentee by establishing a comfortable trustworthy

space between himself and the student teacher which is vital for the mentoring practice. Through these interactions Edison changed the procedures of how he mentored resulting in productive changes which improve the way one works (Evans, 2002).

Shastri makes reference to the value of the SIM where she learnt about mentoring phases from selected readings given to the mentor teachers. She adapted her practice of mentoring to include these phases in the mentoring process with her student teachers which ultimately resulted in a more structured mentoring process. Shastri explains:

*In one of the meetings at school we were introduced to a reading on the different phases of mentoring. This became a turning point for my practice as it changed the way I worked and brought more organisation to mentoring in my class.*

Shastri's vignette revealed productive changes as she changed her own practice to fit in with the knowledge acquired on the phases of mentoring.

#### **4.4.2.1.3. Learning new ways of teaching within the mentoring process**

Learning during the mentoring process should be a two-way process. The student teacher has a fount of fresh ideas backed up by theory and as such the mentor teacher can learn innovative classroom ideas from them. Orland-Barak & Yinon (2005) maintain that the mentor is able to learn depending on the interaction and the situation in which they find themselves during mentoring. Awaya (et al., 2003) explore an understanding of mentor learning as developing naturally during mentoring between the mentor and the student.

The mentor participants indicated that the mentoring process opened up spaces for them to learn from the student teachers. Mentors learnt more creative teaching methods and specifically integrating technology such as computers into their teaching. Jo's vignette reflects that she was unsure as to how to share her knowledge of Mathematics teaching with her student as she lacked training in mentoring. Being in a position as mentor, she was pushed to re-examine her understanding and practice of mentoring by drawing on her experience as a teacher. Her observations of the student teachers' creative use of examples eased her uncertainty as she came to realise that she could combine her own teaching

experiences with the new ways presented by the student teacher. This resulted in learning more creative teaching methods that she could use with her Maths classes.

*As a teacher I used my experience and studies to teach the learner but as a mentor I did not have formal training or experience to draw from. I had to find creative ways to pass the knowledge to the student teacher. But something unique began to occur when I observed the student teacher teach the learners different concepts in Mathematics using simple yet exciting methods. This made me realise that I could draw from my experience as well as imitate the student teacher's creative use of examples.*

Three of the participants, Shastri, Jae and Edison, said that mentoring allowed them to learn how to integrate computers into their teaching work. Shastri added that she was able to learn how to use computers for teaching purposes such as her preparation and actual teaching. Shastri started implementing computers in her teaching and this changed many aspects of teaching, as it brought an innovation to her class.

*The mentor needs to realise that they do not have experiences in everything. I found that the current students have skills in technology in the class that it is impossible not to make a difference to my learning. I learnt to use the array of technological tools in preparation and presenting the lesson. As an experienced teacher I have a great deal to learn about computers and I appreciated its usefulness as a method of teaching as presented by my student.*

Jae was assigned Arts and Culture (AC) to meet timetable requirements. She is not a qualified AC teacher and lacks training in this area. She used the textbook as a crutch to guide her lessons. Yet having a student teacher with a background in Arts changed her perceptions of this learning area. Jae also learned about the usefulness of computers in teaching.

*I had a student for a few sessions a day for AC. I found that I was able to learn interesting ways of presenting the lessons and not only rely on the textbook. This brought a fresh look to AC in teaching when she brought in computers as part of the lesson. If you look at the use of computers in teaching and learning, the experienced teachers have a great deal to learn and during mentoring we appreciated its usefulness as a method of teaching. The student used these devices so naturally, effectively and with so much ease.*

Edison is a senior maths teacher. His student teachers used mathematical games on the computer to teach Maths. This generated excitement and interest among the learners and encouraged him to use more innovative ways to teach.

*The student teacher use mathematical games to teach the learners. I found that this is a creative and innovative resource. The students injected an element of fun and interest in lessons which in turn helped with discipline. This has made me rethink the way I teach Maths.*

Within mentoring opportunities, Jo learnt creative methods of teaching Maths whilst Jae, Edison and Shastri learnt how to use computers in teaching. Using computers as part of the lessons and teaching has changed the landscape of the teacher's practice. The mentor developed a changed mindset and is open to make a shift in how they approach their teaching. The data indicate that mentor learning about mentoring includes being open to learning from student teachers as they were able to gain effective methods for teaching.

#### **4.4.3. Mentor learning from professional role performance**

Evans (2002) declares that teacher mentors can draw learning opportunities from their specialised professional roles as the roles are re-defined and/or modified. In relation to this study the role and responsibility of the teacher is redefined and modified to that of mentor teacher. The movement between the roles, from teacher to mentor, opens up opportunities for the mentor to learn. In other words learning to mentor draws from the role as teacher. Role development in the mentor maps the changes in the roles and responsibilities of the professional (Evans, 2002). Furthermore, in this study the role and responsibility of the teacher as in a specialised role as mentor is redefined and modified as they learn new skills, knowledge and attitudes in the process of mentoring.

The data indicated that the teacher drew on expertise in the role of teacher to enact the role as mentor. Orland-Barak & Yinon (2005) contend that the teacher's natural space is the classroom, where they demonstrate their expert knowledge in the teaching of learners. Orland-Barak & Yinon (2005) add that there is a close link between teaching and mentoring but mentors see themselves as teachers first.

Teachers see themselves as expert teachers and not expert mentors; as such mentoring has taught them to draw from teaching to learn to mentor (Orland-Barak & Yinon, 2005).

Jo has over 40 years of teaching experience but limited experience and training as a mentor. She accepted her position as expert in the classroom and that mentoring was new to her professional context. As a mentor she feeds on her experience as a teacher, which helped her mentoring practices, as the student teacher was able to learn from her expertise as a classroom teacher. Jo's vignette revealed two ways of drawing on her experiences in her professional role as teacher. She also sees the need to allow her student teachers access to her experiences as teacher with the hope that the student teacher is able to learn from her expertise as a classroom teacher.

*As a teacher I have built up decade's worth of experience which has to be opened up for the student in my class. As a mentor I have few years of experience, insufficient to have built such a set of skills. So I mentor the student teachers to become teachers based on what I do as a teacher. Being a teacher and teaching was natural and comforting and this helped me to adapt teaching to mentoring.*

Edison indicated that his lack of mentor training and experiences shifted him to draw on his teaching practice to inform his mentoring practices. This signals then that the same skills used for teaching are put to use as a mentor.

*I have no training in mentoring. I have a few years of mentoring experiences. Therefore I mentor as I would teach, by bringing clarity of the curriculum to the student teacher.*

Jae adds that teaching gives a strong foundation to mentoring practices. She believes that an effective teacher has developed the skills to pass on knowledge and skills to the learner irrespective of the type of learner (child or adult). She also highlighted that teaching gave her the skills to determine the needs of the learner and focus on supporting such needs. In the case of the student teacher such needs entail developing their content knowledge.

*A teacher who teaches effectively will draw from this source for the student. The teacher has to understand that not all teaching experiences can be used to mentor the student. Mentors*

*are required to draw the relevant aspects of teaching to suit the varying contexts of the student teacher. The student teacher most often needs support in content knowledge yet in the delivery and presentation they excel. In this instance I have learnt to spend time on content knowledge for the student teacher.*

Shastri on the other hand declares that the number of years one teaches or mentors does not make one an expert. This signals a view that a mentor needs specific skills in mentoring such as being able to transfer information to the student about decisions that underpin teaching.

*In most cases I found that experience does not equate to expertise. One can teach for many years but fail when it comes to putting across that information to the student teacher.*

In the role as teacher, the teacher is the expert by virtue of their qualifications, experience and expertise. The above vignettes reveal two views. Firstly, the participants see a link between experience and expertise in teaching as a source to draw from for the practice of mentoring. This is in keeping with Orland-Barak & Yinon (2005, p. 574) who maintain that “in the passage from teaching to mentoring, mentors draw on their expertise as teachers”. The opposing view is presented by Berliner (2001, p.467) who contends that “the acquisition of experience does not automatically denote expertise”. Shastri, who maintain that experiences and expertise do not necessarily equate to each other is in line with this view. However, the limitations in mentor training and mentor experiences shift the teacher to draw on their role as teacher to inform their role as mentor.

The void which exists between mentoring and teaching is revealed to me in the teacher’s experiences of anguish. In my opinion this void can be filled when mentors start a dialogue about what constitutes learning and quality mentoring. Fraser, Kennedy, Reid & McKinney (2007) conclude that teaching, and in terms of this study, mentor learning, is regarded as personal and professional change and an understanding of self and the role of the educator. Mentoring places teachers in a different context to teaching. This theme explores the fluctuating nature of the participants’ expert position as a classroom teacher to mentor teacher, which is relatively new to their repertoire of skills. Jo had to reinvent herself as mentor whom she initially understood as originating from the practice but when she started mentoring she realised that it required an investment from her as well.

The participants who came across unfamiliar situations during mentoring, not having encountered them during teaching, positioned themselves as learners (Berliner, 2001; Orland-Barak & Yinon, 2005). Learning took place when the mentor encountered new situations and automatically drew on their role as teacher to support their role as mentor.

#### **4.4.4. Mentor learning within a situated professional culture**

The previous theme revealed an enhancement of mentor's professional role performance as they drew on teaching experiences to engage in mentoring. Cultural development maps out the changes to the teachers' professional culture (Evans, 2002).

This theme refers to the participants' experiences of learning in a specific professional culture with accepted modes of practice, working toward a common goal (Kardos, et al., 2001). The National Policy Framework for Teacher Education (South Africa, Department of Education, 2007) stipulates that teachers are fundamental in driving good quality teaching and learning within an enabling school environment. Whitelaw et al., (2008) indicates that an enabling environment is based on principles such as collaboration and collegiality which curtail isolation in teaching and learning. Data from this study indicated that the professional culture of mentoring in the school contributed to; mentor teachers collaborating, learning and developing within a safe space.

##### **4.4.4.1. Learning through collaboration within a safe space**

The school emerged as a powerful site for mentor learning as it represented a collaborative, collegial support structure which encouraged working together towards a common goal (Putman & Borko, 2000). The participants outlined that collaboration between mentors contributed to gaining considerable skills and knowledge within the safe context of the school.

Jo found that collaboration to be a new experience as she only attended departmental workshops with a top down cascade approach. She shifted from mentoring in isolation to becoming part of a community of mentors which contributed to a better understanding of mentoring within the schooling context.

*When we started mentoring I sat alone with my student teachers to work through issues raised from the practice. I only understood collaboration when I incorporated my experiences of mentoring with other mentors, and my understanding grew from here.*

Shastri mentions that an ideal would have been for more time to be allocated to getting together as mentors. These get-togethers however, allowed for sharing quick bites of information. Shastri found value in those moments as it allowed for sharing of experiences; solving problems experienced in mentoring and knowing that she has some support structure in the school. Her professional performance was enhanced through growing confidence and developing skills for future mentoring practices.

*As mentors we get together, not always in a room, not always having the time, not always organised but knowing that there is someone available made me feel at ease. I was able to share my concerns, and find a willing ear and helpful hand to help me understand and work through problems. Each time I shared my experiences with others it made me more confident, so when that particular issue takes place again I will have the tools to work through with it.*

Shastri compares working in these communities to departmental workshops.

*Firstly, collaboration and communities of practice came into our vocabulary during our tertiary studies. Working together at school moved away from the banking system, where someone merely deposited the information, and each mentor had to work on their own. Departmental workshops instilled in teachers the notion that they cannot think for themselves. But when the mentors began sharing and finding moments to work together, and ask so many questions, to pooling our resources learning became available to all and not confined to the learners/ students but to the teachers/mentors as well.*

Edison, a Maths teacher, with a jam-packed syllabus, did not feel that he would have the time or the capacity to have someone else in the class with him. Mentoring became a responsibility, a task, a chore, but it had to be done and he obliged. But what he learnt from these mentoring sessions was that he was not alone with his feelings. Knowing that he was not alone and that he had opportunities to share provided some comfort.

*I shared these feelings with other mentors and they too understood how I felt. When I started attending the sessions at school I found that other mentors also felt that unease at having to mentor. But listening to others I began to see there is no cut and dried method for mentoring, it comes with practice. Knowing that I can share this platform, my challenges, concerns and problems with other colleagues gave me hope. You get to hear various opinions on how teachers manage their practices.*

Edison continued that collaboration between mentors commenced out of a need to address these challenges associated with mentoring of student teachers. He references those formal and informal moments when the mentors sat together to share what they do and to strengthen others who needed help within a limited time frame. These moments helped Edison to gain a deeper understanding of what was expected of him as a mentor.

*Mentors at this school started working together. Instead of working with pupils, we were now working with student teachers. As such we needed advice. Working together either in informal settings or at formal meetings set up by the student liaison mentor gave me a greater understanding of what I had to do when I was with the student. We used these forums to clarify problems, allowing one to gain deeper understanding of what was expected of the mentor teacher. But as a mentor teacher I think that more time to get together for these discussions was required.*

Jae added that her formal training in the Mentoring in Schools short course and the fact that she is studying toward her Master's degree gave her the tools to understand teacher education and learning (including mentoring). She was able to draw on this formal training to give advice to other mentor teachers in the SIM. She further elaborated that having opportunities to pool resources strengthened collaboration amongst the mentors.

*These initiatives set up by the school were in response to the challenges faced by the mentors. It wasn't intended to be a comprehensive package which would answer all our questions; rather the teachers felt a need for further assistance. For example, I have participated in the Mentoring Programme at the university and I am also studying, so I would be able to assist and give advice to others. The enormity of the mentor's responsibility in the practice of mentoring could not remain the domain of the mentor alone. This took us out of the class into communal places, to pool our resources share information and learn from each other.*

According to Putman & Borko (2004, p.125) teacher learning occurs in different parts of the practice and contexts which includes the classroom, school communities and professional development courses and workshops. “It can occur in a brief hallway conversation with a colleague...To understand teacher learning we must study it within these multiple contexts, taking into account both the individual teacher-learners and the social systems in which they are participants.”

The mentors intimated that getting together was impeded by time; for Jo *not always in a room, not always having the time, not always organised but knowing that there is someone available made me feel at ease*. Edison was able to share meaningfully with mentors *to clarify problems, allowing one to gain deeper understanding of what was expected of them*. Further, Jae who had access to tertiary education showed her “extended professionalism” by sharing what she learnt in tertiary with other mentors in collaborative spaces (Evans, 2002). Jo, on the other hand, experienced the difference between working in isolation to collaboration *when I incorporated my experiences of mentoring with other mentors, and my understanding grew from here*.

Collaboration in the practice of mentoring was realised through daily opportunities and experiences as the mentor developed in professional mentoring skills (Orland-Barak and Yinon, 2005). The SIM did not emerge naturally but grew out of a need to respond to mentor teachers who lacked development and required support. Mentors now had a space to seek out opportunities to work together. Mentoring allows for sustained professional dialogue, sharing information and providing the means by which the mentor begins the transition into a community of practice (Lave & Wenger 1991).

Knight (2002) adds that the community is one of the most important sites for learning as it tasks mentors to work in groups to make decisions about their development within the context in which they work; this learning is meaningful as it is situated at the site. Evans (2002) concurs and claims that the creation of a professional culture or climate is an essential element of learning and change. The data indicated that the SIM provided a platform for the community of mentors to function in conditions of safety and trust that provided the participants with a voice.

#### 4.4.4.2. The use of interactive discussion in an inclusive culture

Professional cultures work best if they are inclusive of all mentors. Inclusivity in this sense refers to all mentors in a school being at the centre of the action and learning. This can be achieved through, for example, engagement in interactive discussions. In the interactive discussions between the mentors, there is a passing forth of information and the capacity for each to learn. Fraser, et al., (2007) suggest that interactions and discussions with one's colleagues is an important quadrant for learning. Opportunities for interactive discussion open up when the mentor takes an active interest in and ownership of learning. In Fairbanks, Freedman and Khan's (2000) study, *Effective Mentoring in English Education (EMEE)*, mentors were given opportunities to interact and engage in conversations. The importance of talk was at the forefront of their learning.

An important principle of situated learning theory (Lave and Wenger, 1999, p.109) is a kind of participation that involves "talking about and talking within a practice". The mentors were not passive recipients, rather they listened, they spoke, and they discussed, and interacted with students and other stakeholders in order to add to their practices. Carter and Francis (2001) note that teaching is largely an isolated activity but mentoring promotes interaction and opens the classroom doors to a dialogic and interactive learning between the mentor and mentee. The following vignettes reveal the participants' experiences of talking as a mode of learning.

*Jo: I have learnt that mentoring is not an isolated aspect and that by simply talking to other mentors on matters of the practice I am able to pick up valuable information.*

*Shastri: Formal training opportunities are important but the practice of mentoring provides hands-on avenues for learning. Talking was relegated to the staffroom, to complain about the amount of work, to catch up with friends. Mentoring taught me that talking can be a starting point especially when talking makes sense, and we speak about that which we share together.*

*Jae: Success did not come all at once, it was trial and error, going back to the other mentors and discussing your practice. When it was discussed in this manner, I learnt more. The learning became specific to my needs as a mentor. At this school we have opened avenues for*

*teachers to interact and talk to each other and this gave me opportunities to make my practice of mentoring.*

Establishing an inclusive culture for mentoring occurred as the participants engaged in interactive discussions, shared common problems and offered constructive advice which supported each other's learning. Interactive learning has been mooted as being effective for mentor learning (Lieberman and Mace, 2008) which is beneficial only when it is connected to the context and inclusive of the context. Long (2009) states that the culture of mentoring adds value to a professional culture of a school.

#### **4.5. Conclusion**

Carter and Francis (2001, p 249) state that mentoring has become the „foundation stone“ of collaborative endeavours. The practice of mentoring requires a different set of responsibilities than the practice of teaching. The teacher has been trained to work in the classroom; the practice of mentoring requires similar support for the mentor. The mentor has to be supported and trained to work in the context of developing the student. This brings about a change in attitude, functional learning, role and cultural development in the mentor, which effects changes and development in their work and professional performance (Evans, 2002).

This chapter presented the findings of the study by outlining mentor learning through the practice of mentoring. The data gathered from the participants revealed that an understanding of the mentor's role and the practice of mentoring was significant as it set the foundation for the mentor to learn. Mentor learning took place in various contexts: self, site, tertiary institutions, and collaborative practices. Chapter Five provides insights, findings and recommendations and concludes the study.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### KEY FINDINGS AND CONCLUSION

#### 5.1. Introduction

In the previous chapter the data gathered from the participants during the data generation process of the study was discussed. The data presented in the form of vignettes were supported by the themes and extended by literature on the practice of mentoring and mentor learning during school based teaching practice. This chapter presents a synthesis of the key findings and recommendations in response to the two research questions.

#### 5.2. Summary of key findings and theoretical insights

This section presents the findings and insights of the mentor's role and mentor learning during the practice of mentoring within the context of school-based teaching practice. The interpretation and enactment of the roles of the mentor during school-based teaching practice were addressed through the first question. An attempt is made to highlight their learning about mentoring through engagement in each of these roles.

##### **What are teachers' perspectives of their roles as mentor during school-based teaching practice?**

Research question two unpacked learning about mentoring in the context of the practice of mentoring through the four elements of teacher learning as espoused by Evans (2002). The four elements explored were attitudinal learning, functional learning, learning through role development and learning through professional cultural development.

##### **What and how did mentors learn about mentoring through their practice of mentoring?**

#### 5.2.1. Perspectives of mentors' roles

The first role as perceived by the participants was that of the mentor as leader. This role was realised through passion for teaching and making this passion visible to the student teacher; in tangible ways such as leading by example and having the capability of solving problems. The second role was one of mentor support, supporting the student to acquire practical

competence, the provision of emotional support and extending the work of the university for the student teacher.

Shulman & Shulman (2004) stipulate that teachers, who have passion, can lead and motivate others to become competent. The original mentor and mentee relationship, between Mentor and Telemachus, was based on passion and duty of care (Awaya et al., 2003). The participants' display of passion, irrespective of challenges, was tempered with realism in showing the student teachers how to change negative experiences into positive ones. Friedlander (2013) presented the anti-model where professionals, in a position of leadership, learn from negative contexts.

Passion for teaching is closely followed by leading by example; which was grounded in the knowledge and skills of the teacher's practice. The participants set out the practice of mentoring student teachers with a space for the student teacher to follow their lead in order to develop their own styles of teaching. For this to take place the teacher's practice had to be exemplary and of the highest standards as the participants viewed their role as gatekeepers of the profession. Waghid & Louw (2008) add that mentors leading with an inspired, context-rich and skills-based practice have the potential to motivate the student teacher to emulate these qualities and practices. Leading by example requires that one is a good example oneself.

The final aspect of the first role of the mentor teacher as a leader entails that mentor leaders are problem solvers. The practice of mentoring and school-based teaching practice is a complex process and it has become necessary that mentors develop skills to work within these spaces. Most mentors at the participating school are not trained or developed to mentor, yet they do. The participants and other mentor teachers at this school who had training in mentoring put together a site-based programme to assist each other as mentors. This revealed that mentor leaders had the ability to solve problems related to mentoring within the immediate school context. The SIM contributed to understanding the nature of mentoring and in extending these understandings to the practice of mentoring within the school context, thus taking on an inside or emic perspective to mentoring as alluded to by Parker-Katz & Bay (2008).

The second role was mentor as supporter. This study revealed that mentors viewed their role as supporter through developing practical competence and skills for teaching, providing emotional support and extending the work of the university. The participants supported the student teachers in teaching and learning activities in an effort to narrow the gap between what the student learns at university and what actually happens in the classroom. The levels of support at school were two tiered, at a school level and at a classroom level. At a school level student teachers were inducted into the organisational culture and workings of the school. At the classroom level the mentor is responsible for support of the student teacher. The support given by the mentor teacher is of a practical nature, so that the student teacher can fully understand its implementation in the classroom. Shulman and Shulman (2004) highlight that it is the responsibility of teacher (including the mentor teacher) to ensure that student teachers are skilled in the practice, for example, design and implementation of curriculum and assessment as well as understanding organisational processes within the school culture. The gap between the university and the school-related curriculum does however impede the mentor's support to the student teacher.

The next role under the banner of support, as indicated by the participants, is the provision of emotional support. Awaya et al., (2003) take the view that teaching in a classroom for the first time can be traumatic and a supportive, understanding mentor can make the process less stressful. The participants agreed that trust has to be established. However, there was some difference of opinion in how much support to give the student teacher, *to be taken under the wings of the mentor teacher vs throws the student teacher in the deep end to develop independently but be available*. In this way the mentor teacher learnt appropriate actions for interacting with the student teacher. The study revealed that the mentor should adopt a balancing approach in their role as supporter, providing support when necessary and needed but also giving the student teachers the space to find their feet.

The final aspect to this theme is extending the work of the university. Literature has already established that the university provides the theoretical, academic knowledge and school-based teaching practice provides the hands-on practical experiences of teaching and learning (Mutemeri & Chetty, 2011). Considering this theory practice nexus, the participants revealed that the mentor teacher play a role in supporting and extending the work of the university through their practice of mentoring. There is however a gap between what is done at university and the school. The participants understood that the student teachers lacked

content knowledge, and this impeded the teaching and learning process in the classroom. The participants tried to bridge the work of the university and the work of the school so as to better prepare the student teacher for the workplace. School-based teaching is the practical component of a degree, yet there is a lack of interaction between the university lecturers and the mentor teacher. Shulman & Shulman (2004) state that one may never find a solution to the theory-practice nexus, but view it as a challenge from which positive learning experiences may be drawn. Typically such learning would include how to fit mentoring within the timetable, finding innovative ways to close the gap and using the SIM to enhance the practice of mentoring.

### **5.2.2. Mentor learning through the practice of mentoring: what and how?**

Findings from this study in relation to research question two on what and how mentors learn about mentoring through their practice of mentoring is composed in the themes: attitudinal mentor learning, functional mentor learning, mentor learning from professional role performance and mentor learning within a situated professional culture.

Evans (2002) maintained that attitudinal learning is a change in one's attitude to one's practice revealed through intellectual and motivational change. In terms of the study mentors who displayed attitudinal learning and development showed changes in how they practised. Participants became open to the learning opportunities and changed from the traditional apprenticeship way of thinking about mentoring to becoming more open to learning from others, including the student teachers. Findings from the data indicate that mentors did not get caught up in their thinking that the mentor is the expert and thus become blind to possibilities of learning.

Functional mentor learning is indicative of an improvement in professional performance aided by procedural and productive changes (Evans, 2002). This study shows that changes or modifications to procedures resulted in more productive outputs, thus more effective and functional mentoring practices specific to a school context. Findings from this study indicate that one of the main challenges that the mentor participants experienced was how to manage their time between teaching and mentoring. Mentor teachers learnt how to use their time more effectively by finding time-saving techniques to balance their work of teaching with their work as mentors. The time saving strategies used by the mentor teachers varied from

using the structured time slots (post-evaluation period) that were available for mentoring on the time-table to planning for additional time during the day. Mentors took the initiative to use prescribed mentoring assessment documents more wisely as a tool for improved discussions between mentor and mentee. This procedure became a time-saving technique as the mentor was able to meet the contractual requirements of the university as well as mentoring the student teacher.

Another key finding that supports mentor functional learning is the changes in mentoring strategies employed by the mentor teacher for improved practice. Two key strategies that were highlighted were, firstly, the use of a support strategy with student teachers that need more support in their teaching. The mentor teacher used a modelling strategy for improved student teaching in the classroom. The teacher also built in the use of non-verbal coding between the mentor-mentee to avoid embarrassing the mentee when a potential conflict could arise. A second strategy found in the study was the implementation of structured phases in the mentoring process which led to more organised mentoring practices.

In relation to this study the role and responsibility of the teacher is redefined and modified to that of mentor teacher. The movement between the roles, from teacher to mentor, opens up opportunities for the mentor to learn. Role development in the mentor maps the changes in the roles and responsibilities of the professional (Evans, 2002). The mentor teacher found opportunities to learn from the professional role performance of mentoring. Participants drew from their teaching experience to support their learning to mentor. They were experts in terms of classroom practice with mentoring being new to their professional context. Having experience as a teacher does not necessarily mean being a good mentor. The findings reveal that mentor teachers identified two specific skills that they drew from their expertise as a teacher in order to mentor: the ability to identify the needs of the learner and the skills to impart knowledge, even though the type of learner and needs differed.

In both the roles, as teacher and as mentor, the teacher/mentor is the expert by virtue of their qualifications, experience and expertise but they came across unfamiliar situations during mentoring, not having encountered them during teaching and repositioned themselves as learners (Orland –Barak & Yinon, 2005). The opposing view is presented by Berliner (2001,

p.467) who adds that “the acquisition of experience does not automatically denote expertise”. Orland-Barak & Yinon (2005) contend that the teacher’s natural space is the classroom, where they demonstrate their expert knowledge in the teaching of learners. Orland-Barak & Yinon (2005) add that there is a close link between teaching and mentoring but mentors see themselves as teachers first. Teachers see themselves as expert teachers and not expert mentors; as such mentoring has taught them to draw from teaching to learn to mentor (Orland-Barak & Yinon, 2005).

Orland-Barak & Yinon (2005) maintain that teachers gain considerable skills and knowledge from the context in which they find themselves. The school emerged as a powerful site for mentor learning as it represented a collaborative, collegial support structure which encouraged working together (Borko, 2000). The participants outlined their collaborative learning as mentors working with each other allowing for sharing of stories of their mentoring experiences that allowed better meaning making of mentoring practices. Working within the situated context of the school gave the participants the opportunity to practise and learn in an environment where they teach. This allowed for moving away from the isolation of their classroom into collegial spaces that provided them with a voice and thereby changing their professional culture of mentoring (Evans, 2002).

The findings from the data further reveal that the participants found a situated space to develop local knowledge about their mentoring practices. Current research trends in Orland-Barak & Yinon (2005) suggest that the preparation to become a mentor requires one to understand that mentoring consists of complex social interactions. Learning through social interactions in communities of practice, as situated spaces, according to Carter and Francis (2001) allows for the workplace to be educative by creating opportunities for teachers to talk, engage, reflect on their own practices and become critical friends to each other and to provide collegial support to teachers. Before mentoring became an established practice at the school, the participants could not accept the notion that they were learners. The idea that they teach and the learner, or the student, learns was firmly entrenched in their thought processes. The practice of mentoring made them rethink this position. The participants displayed academic maturity by deciding to move between expert and learner. Berliner (2001) explains that the mentor may be an expert in one situation but is a learner in another. Little (2007) suggests that for professional development and learning to be meaningful, the teacher must engage in

collaborative discussions within a community of practice in order to contribute to the broader professional community.

Learning to mentor requires the teacher to interrogate the practice of teaching to reskill for the practice of mentoring. Both these roles offer different kinds of responsibilities. Parker-Katz & Bay (2008) concur that a mentor is expected to transform the knowledge of the practice of teaching for the practice of mentoring. This will require the mentor to reflect on the practice of teaching to create an experience for the student to develop into a professional. Parker and Adler (2005) state that Higher Education Institutions can significantly influence the teacher's official knowledge and provide the opportunities for higher education to meet the demands of educational change and transformation. Each of the participants acknowledged that they served their practice of mentoring both as an experienced teacher and as a learner. Being open to the ethos of learning afforded the participants opportunities for learning about their own practices.

### **5.3. Recommendations**

The school is a social space. Teachers, parents, learners and students engage socially in teaching and learning activities. The teacher who serves as mentor is the gatekeeper to the teaching profession. Great importance is attached to this role function, therefore it is important to develop and skill the mentor to practise in a context different from that of teaching. According to Shank (2005) teachers develop a more holistic approach to teaching and learning as a way to raise the levels of achievement of the student, engage in reflective teaching, and move away from working in isolation to engage in collaborative practices.

Parker-Katz and Bay (2008) declare that a serious attempt is required in reskilling the mentors as mentoring has the potential to significantly influence the teaching profession. Mentoring allows for the students to learn and develop as teachers. It also provides a space for the mentor to develop. Mentoring provides a space for multi-directional learning between the mentor and the mentee. It tasks both the partners with the responsibility for their own learning.

The sweeping changes taking place in education at the moment necessitate qualified mentors to support the professional development of the student. If the mentor is expected to be a

gatekeeper of the profession during school-based teaching practice, then it becomes important that the development and support of the mentor is not done on an ad hoc basis. The study makes the following recommendations:

1. All stakeholders with an interest in and a responsibility for teacher education should map out the way forward for a commitment to the mentoring practices in this country so that policy implementation should be consistent and beneficial to all.
2. Mentors have shown the initiative to become knowledgeable about their practice of mentoring. A more formalised and structured mentoring programme will benefit all mentors.
3. After school-based teaching practice, the university should conduct a feedback with all students. This information should be relayed to all mentors as it may contain the strengths and recommendations for future practices.
4. Mentors should collaborate with other mentors and take ownership of their own learning.

Mentor teachers have little experience with the core activities of mentoring: observing, discussing teaching with colleagues, and/or developing collaborative contexts where mentors and students can explore new approaches. Borko (2004) maintains that the professional development programme which is meaningful to the teachers is contextually viable and takes into account the teachers' requirements for professional development and will be able to assist the teachers in their learning and in gaining new insights and knowledge.

Mentoring would seem to be a natural progression in the teaching profession where the traditional teachers have passed on their expertise. Despite this seemingly natural form of assistance, mentors have had no formal systems through which to receive guidance. The collaboration, teacher talk, workshops, planning sessions and writing about one's mentoring experiences make this relationship more productive. Further study in a related field will enhance the mentor's knowledge and create more opportunities for learning. Training programmes, however, remain redundant if we do not provide the teachers with adequate opportunities to learn.

Many experienced mentors are highly skilled practitioners also do not want to volunteer to act as mentors as they perceive that it is time consuming, takes them from their prime responsibilities of teaching and offers few benefits or incentives to participate. Some teachers may be unsuitable for the role of mentors for a variety of professional or personal qualities. The student liaison mentor should also be skilled with the professional aptitudes for selection and pairing of mentors and students.

The schools should establish a pool of mentors that promotes choice and flexibility for all participants. By having a pool of mentors, recognition is given to staff that can utilise established professional and personal networks to assist beginning teachers, as it is unreasonable to expect that one mentor can be everything for a mentee. „Hence collaborative mentoring strives to satisfy opportunities for deeper multiple demands required of relationships for professional development“ (Mullen, 2000, p 5.). Networking supports the mentors in their roles so it is vital they have an established system to share with each other, to discuss ideas, seek advice or draw on each other“s expertise. Pools of mentors and expertise also meet the need for mentors not to be overloaded, as involvement in mentoring programmes is a professional and personal commitment that does carry extra time commitments and responsibilities.

This study explored mentor learning about mentoring during school-based teaching practice. It is however necessary for further research on mentoring within the South African context. Mentoring during school-based teaching practice is key for the development of the student teacher, yet the possibilities to find opportunities for the mentor to learn and develop remain limited. Further research about the case of mentor teachers learning will provide more in-depth understanding in this area and will be of great significance for teacher education.

#### **5.4. Conclusion**

This study explored mentor learning through the practice of mentoring during school-based teaching practice. School-based teaching practice is a current trend in Initial Teacher Education, with mentored support for the student. The student with the theoretical, academic background from tertiary institutions is mentored through practical and contextualised mentoring. The mentor however has limited developmental opportunities. The realisation of the import placed on teaching practice gave the impetus for this study. Mentors should have

opportunities to learn in meaningful and connected. If the mentor works collaboratively on issues that are very important to them, then effective change can occur for improvement.

The participants at this school feel that mentoring has reached a tipping point. Policy makers have to implement a comprehensive developmental plan and create a blueprint for sustained, contextualised support for the mentor. This opens up mentor learning, mentoring; the practice and school-based teaching practice to further research and scrutiny.

When I first started my journey as a Masters student, a lecturer asked the class to name the philosopher who inspired us. I was clueless because I did not engage with philosophers in a way that I could be inspired. At the very near end of this journey, and in preparation for the next, I have many philosophers from whom I draw inspiration. At the very top of that list is Lee Shulman. Perusing his articles I got a sense of his unwavering respect for the teacher. One reference was couched as a comparison between teaching and the medical field; where he stated that the only time doctors could get a semblance of a teacher's work, was in an emergency room during a natural disaster (Shulman,1987). The next time he spoke directly to my study was where he indicated that sustainable learning is most effective in practice, as in school-based teaching practice, rather than in academic institutions. It is most befitting then that I end with my favourite quote.

Shulman (1987) compares what teachers do in the classroom to create opportunities for the learners to learn can also be applied to how mentors learn: "We as teachers are just older members of the same species as our students. We do not suddenly change the necessary conditions for learning when we pass our 21<sup>st</sup> birthday and earn teaching credentials".

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## **APPENDICES**

### **Appendix A**

38 Pyrenees Str.

Shallcross

4093

2011-06-06

Tyburn Primary School

P.O.BOX 56074

Chatsworth

4093

Sir

Request for permission to conduct research at Tyburn Primary School

I am a student at the University of KwaZulu –Natal (UKZN). The research forms a part of my study and the findings will be used in my M.Ed. dissertation.

The aim of the study is to explore how mentor teachers learn through the practice of mentoring, during school based teaching practice. The mentoring practice at Tyburn Primary School will be the focus of the study.

As part of the study I will require to meet with four teachers who act as mentors. In this study I will use the following methods of data collection: a baseline questionnaire, individual interviews and a focus group discussion. The collection of data will take place after contact time with the learners and it will not clash with any after school activity.

The baseline questionnaire will be a pen and paper exercise. The interviews and the focus group discussion will be recorded using an audio recording device. The data will be anonymous i.e. it will not be possible for it to be linked to the school or the teachers. Pseudonyms will be used to protect the identity of the school and the teachers as research participants. The school and the teachers will not be disadvantaged if a choice is made not to participate or to withdraw from the study at any stage. The data will be used in my research

and will be published as part of my Masters dissertation. The data will be stored in a secure store room housed in the Faculty of Education for a period of five years.

Thank you for your co-operation

\_\_\_\_\_

Mrs. GMR Pillay (M.Ed. student)

-----

Declaration of consent: Principal

I \_\_\_\_\_ (Full name of the Principal) of \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ (Name of school) hereby confirm that I understand the contents of this document and the nature of the research. I consent that the selected teachers at this school participate in the study.

I understand that the teachers are free to leave/withdraw from the study at any time if they choose to.

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Principal

Date

Telephone No.

## Appendix B

38 Pyrenees Str.

Shallcross

4093

2011-06-06

Tyburn Primary School

P.O.Box 56074

Chatsworth

4030

Sir/Ma'am

Informed consent to participate in the research

I am a student at the University of KwaZulu-Natal (UKZN). The research forms a part of my study and the findings will be used in my M.Ed. dissertation.

The aim of the study is to explore how mentor teachers learn through the practice of mentoring, during school based teaching practice. The mentoring practices at Tyburn Primary School will be the focus of the study.

I hope that this study will benefit the mentor teachers at Tyburn Primary School; therefore your participation is valued.

The data production will depend largely on your participation.

If you agree to participate you will be required to complete a baseline survey, participate in two interviews and a focus group discussion. You will be notified in advance of the date and the duration for the data collection which will take place after contact time with the learner. The interview and the focus group discussion will be recorded using an audio recording device.

The methods of data collection will include the following:

Activity	Estimated duration	Proposed time frame	Format of collection
Baseline Questionnaire	1 hour	June 2011	Questionnaire
Interview Part 1	1 hour	June 2011	Audio Recording
Interview Part 2	1 hour	July 2011	Audio Recording
Focus group discussion	2 hours	August 2011	Audio recording

The data will be used for the writing of my M.Ed. dissertation. The data will be anonymous i.e. it will not be possible for it to be linked to the school or the teachers. Pseudonyms will be used to protect the identity of the school and the teachers as research participants. The school and the teachers will not be disadvantaged if a choice is made not to participate or to withdraw from the study at any stage. The data will be used in my research and will be published as part of my Masters dissertation. The data will be stored in a secure room housed in the Faculty of Education for a period of five years.

Thank you for our co-operation

---

Mrs. GMR Pillay (M.Ed. student)

Declaration of consent: Research participant

I hereby confirm that I understand the contents of this letter and the nature of the research and I consent to participate in the study.

I understand that I am at liberty to withdraw from the study at any time, should I so desire.

Name and surname: \_\_\_\_\_

Name of school: \_\_\_\_\_

Contact details: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Signature

\_\_\_\_\_

Date

## Appendix C

### Baseline Questionnaire

M.Ed. Dissertation: Exploring mentor learning through the practice of mentoring during school based teaching practice.

#### Baseline Questionnaire of Mentor teachers

Dear participant

This baseline questionnaire is intended to get biographical and baseline information on your current knowledge of mentoring. The information obtained through this survey will be used as a basis for the first interview.

#### Section A: Biographical information

1. Name and surname \_\_\_\_\_

2. Highest qualification level

Matric	2- year diploma /certificate	3-year diploma	Bachelor's Degree	Post Graduate Study

3. Number of years of teaching experience.

Below 5 years of teaching	5-10 years	11-15 years	15-20 years	More than 20 years

4. Post level

Level 1 educator	Level 2 HOD	Level 3 DP	Level 4 Principal.

5. Number of years since your last formal studies.

Less than 5 years	More than 5 years

Section B: Mentoring knowledge and experiences

2.1. What do you understand by the following terms?

2.1.1. mentor- \_\_\_\_\_

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2.1.2. mentoring practice- \_\_\_\_\_

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2.2. What do you think is the job of a mentor?

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2.3. When did you start mentoring student teachers at this school?

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2.4. Do you have any formal training to mentor?

Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_

2.4.1. If you answered Yes, please give details as to where, when and what kind of training you received.

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2.4.2. If you answered No, please give details as to how you know how to mentor.

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2.5. Where there any other initiatives at your school which capacitated you to mentor?

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2.6. Briefly describe your practice of mentoring.

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2.7. Is there any other information you would want the researcher to know about mentoring at your school?

Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_

2.7.1. If you have answered Yes, please explain further.

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Rate your current knowledge about mentoring according to the following categories.

(1 = no knowledge and 5 = extensive knowledge)

Categories of knowledge	1	2	3	4	5
Formal knowledge (obtained from formal studies)					
Experiential studies( obtained from experiences in mentoring teachers)					
Intuitive knowledge(knowledge through your own thinking and understanding)					

Thank You for your participation.

Mrs. Grace Mary Ruth

M.Ed. student

## Appendix D

### Interview Schedule

M.Ed. Studies: Exploring Mentor learning through the practice of mentoring during school based teaching practice.

Interview Schedule for first individual semi-structured, face-to-face interview

Dear Research Participant

The purpose of this interview is to gather information on your understanding and experiences of mentoring. This first interview will take place at the beginning of the Teaching Practice Session (July 2011).

The information you give here is strictly confidential and will be used for the purpose of collecting data for my Masters Dissertation.

All names of the participants and the name of the school will be substituted with pseudonyms to protect the confidentiality and anonymity of all.

Thank You

---

Grace Mary Ruth Pillay (M.Ed. student)

#### Proposed Questions

Thank you for completing the baseline questionnaire as it has informed this interview.

1. What do you understand by the following concepts?
  - 1.1.Mentor
  - 1.2.Practice of mentoring
2. What do you think is the job of a mentor?
3. Do you think that any teacher could be a mentor? Give reasons for your choice.
4. When did you start mentoring student teachers? Explain.

5. How many years' experience do you have in mentoring student teachers at this school?  
Explain.
6. Do you have any formal training in mentoring?
7. 7.1. If you answered Yes, please give details as to where, when and what kind of training you received?  
7.2. How did this training assist you in the mentoring of student teachers?  
7.3. If you answered No, explain how you know how to mentor. Prompt and extend responses.
8. How did you become a mentor at this school?
9. If you had a choice would you choose to mentor? Why? Why not?
10. Were there any other initiatives at this or a previous school which capacitated/assisted you to become a mentor? How did such initiatives assist you in developing your knowledge of how to mentor?
10. Explain how you would mentor a student teacher? (Focus on preparation, initial meeting with student, developmental phase, ending the mentoring. Focus in each case on how you will mentor, how do you know how to engage in such practices, where will you engage in such mentoring)
11. What have you learnt thus far (at this point in time) regarding mentoring from your experiences and/or from formal training?
12. Identify gaps in your knowledge of how to mentor student teachers?
13. Is there any other information you would want the researcher to know about mentoring at this school?

M.Ed. Studies: Exploring Mentor learning through the practice of mentoring

Interview Schedule for second individual semi structured face-to-face interview.

Dear Research Participant

The purpose of this interview is to gather information on your learning of mentoring through your experiences of mentoring. The information you give here is strictly confidential and will be used for the purpose of writing my master's thesis. All names of the participants and the name of the school will be substituted with pseudonyms to protect the confidentiality and anonymity of all.

Thank You

---

Grace Mary Ruth Pillay (M.Ed. student)

Proposed Questions:

- 1 Have your ideas on how to mentor changed during this school based teaching practice session? Explain
- 2 Explain how you mentored you student teacher during this session? (Focus on preparation, initial meeting with student, developmental phase, ending the mentoring. Focus in each case on how you will mentor, how do you know how to engage in such practices, where will you engage in such mentoring)
- 3 Was your practice of mentoring different from previous times? Explain why or why not?
- 4 Where there any initiatives/activities at this school which assisted you to develop your knowledge and/or practice of mentoring? Explain (Probe: briefing sessions by SLM, discussions with colleagues, other etc.)

- 5 Describe a critical moment (positive or negative) in your mentoring experiences with your student teacher that has made an impact on you? What happened, where did it happen and what did you learn from the experience?
- 6 Do you think this school context/environment supports mentoring? Explain.
- 7 What do you think should be put in place to improve mentoring at this school? How do you think your suggestion(s) could impact on your learning of mentoring?
8. As a mentor, identify two activities, moments, opportunities within the school context/environment that you experienced, that supported you in your practice of mentoring with your student teacher. Describe the activity/opportunity/moment. What did you learn and how did you put this learning into practice? If you did not implement the learning give reasons.
9. Is there any other information you would want the researcher to know about mentoring?

## Appendix E

### Focus Group Discussion

M.Ed. Studies: Exploring Mentor learning through the practice of mentoring

Schedule for focus group discussion

Dear Research Participant

The purpose of this interview is to gather information on your learning of mentoring through your experience of mentoring. This will take place mid-way during the Teaching Practice Session in August 2011

The information you give here is strictly confidential and will be used for the purpose of writing my master's thesis. All names of the participants and the name of the school will be substituted with pseudonyms to protect the confidentiality and anonymity of all.

Thank You

---

Grace Mary Ruth Pillay (M.Ed. student)

Schedule of key questions

1. What was the most valuable experience in mentoring your students? Why?
2. What do you think should be put in place at this school to support mentoring practices?
3. Did you share your experiences of mentoring during this session with each other/

4. Do you think that collaboration is a valid means of support for the mentor teachers at your school? Explain.
5. The Department of Education together with other stakeholders has come with a revised plan for teacher education? The plan calls for support and training for the mentor teacher. It will also include a one year teaching practice session for the B.Ed. in the final year of study and the establishment of professional practice schools. What are your thoughts on this in relation to your role as mentor?

## Appendix F

Turnitin Originality Report

EXPLORING MENTOR LEARNING THROUGH THE PRACTICE OF MENTORING STUDENT TEACHERS DURING SCHOOL BASED TEACHING PRACTICE by Grace Pillay  
From Masters first full draft - Part 1 (Moodle 29599160) (TEPD Research Support (Moodle 9002623))

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< 1% match (publications)

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## APPENDIX G

58 Pyrenees Str  
Shallcross  
4093  
2011-06-06

Tyburn Primary School  
P.O.BOX 56074  
Chatsworth  
4093

Sir

Request for permission to conduct research at Tyburn Primary School

I am a student at the University of KwaZulu –Natal (UKZN). The research forms a part of my study and the findings will be used in my M.Ed dissertation.

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Thank you for your co-operation

Mrs. GMR Pillay (M.Ed student)

Name of Researcher	Portfolio	Position	Contact details
Contact details Mrs GMR Pillay	M.Ed student	HOD- Tyburn Primary School	031-4045410(w) 031-4094080(h) 0789041991 <a href="mailto:gmrpillay@gmail.com">gmrpillay@gmail.com</a>
Ms Marinda Swart	PHD student	Lecturer School of Education	031-2603489 <a href="mailto:Swartm1@ukzn.ac.za">Swartm1@ukzn.ac.za</a>

-----

Declaration of consent: Principal

I PRASHAAN HEMRATH (Full name of the Principal) of  
TYBURN PRIMARY (Name of school) hereby confirm that I  
understand the contents of this document and the nature of the research. I consent that the  
selected teachers at this school participate in the study.  
I understand that the teachers are free to leave/withdraw from the study at any time if  
they choose to.

[Signature]  
Principal

2011/06/08  
Date

031 - 4045410  
Telephone No.



