

**STUDENT TEACHER EXPERIENCES OF MENTORING
DURING TEACHING PRACTICE IN A PRIMARY AND A
SECONDARY SCHOOL**

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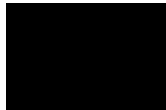
2023

DECLARATION

I, Wonderboy Mandlenkosi Mpisi, declare that the entirety of the content submitted herein is my own original work (with the exception of where acknowledgements indicate otherwise). I also declare that the entire work has neither been submitted nor is it being submitted at this university or any other institution for other academic purposes, by myself or by any other party with my consent.

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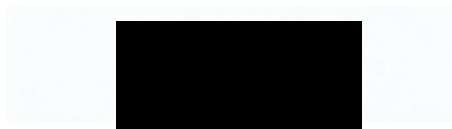
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LIST OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

BEd	Bachelor of Education
CAPS	Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement
CPTD	Continuing Professional Teacher Development
DBE	Department of Basic Education
DH	Departmental Head
DHET	Department of Higher Education and Training
DoE	Department of Education
DUT	Durban University of Technology
ELRC	Education Labour Relations Council
ISPFTED	Integrated Strategic Planning Framework for Teacher Education and Development
MRTEQ	Minimum Requirements for Teacher Education and Qualifications
NPFTED	National Policy Framework on Teacher Education and Development
PGCE	Post Graduate Certificate in Education
PIRLS	Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS)
POA	Program of Assessment
QMS	Quality Management Systems
QMS	Quality Management Systems
SACE	South African Council for Educators
TIMMS	Trends in International Mathematics and Science
WIL	Work Integrated Learning

ABSTRACT

The South African schooling context is complex and diverse, with many challenges. In many school contexts, the challenges include large class sizes, limited resources, and high staff turnover. It is for this reason that the mentoring of novice teachers takes on particular importance. The current South African teacher education policy, as well as the Department of Education's policy on teacher professional development, reveals an increasing focus on the role of mentoring in underpinning teachers' professional development. It was thus important to gain an understanding of how student teachers experienced mentoring in their teaching practice placements.

This study focused on student teachers' expectations and experiences of mentoring during their teaching practice placements in two selected township schools in the Howick Circuit in KwaZulu-Natal. It also considered strategies for the improvement of mentoring experiences, as suggested by the student teachers.

This was a qualitative study within an interpretive paradigm. A narrative inquiry design was adopted, with semi-structured interviews and reflective journals used as the data collection methods. A purposive sampling strategy was employed to identify four student teachers (two in a primary school and two in a secondary school) to participate in the study. Qualitative content analysis was then used to analyse the data. Hudson's Five-Factor Model for Effective Mentoring was used as the conceptual framework in order to understand the student teachers' expectations and experiences of mentoring.

The findings of the study revealed that the student teachers' expectations of the mentoring practices in the schools were not met fully. The student teachers all viewed the role of mentors as central to their professional development, yet their experiences differed from participant-to-participant in particular areas, although there were areas of similarity.

Collaboration between the mentees and their mentors did not happen as expected for the student teachers, although the mentors were generally friendly, welcoming, and supportive in terms of sharing school policies, routines, and other system requirements. However, there was minimal transfer of the pedagogical skills sorely needed by student teachers to develop into fully-fledged professionals. This was due to the mentors only availing themselves sporadically, if at all, to observe and be observed by their mentees during lessons. Had this

been done properly; it would have given both mentors and mentees opportunities to learn from each other through skills being modelled and the provision of oral and written feedback.

Strategies suggested by student teachers to improve mentoring included the development of formal mentoring programs and closer collaboration between schools and universities so that a common understanding of mentoring is developed.

An effective strategy that would improve the student teacher experience would be the proper implementation of school policies such as the Continuing Professional Teacher Development System (CPTD) and the Quality Management System (QMS) that place mentoring as central to these policies. Though these policies already exist, their implementation remains a challenge in most schools. Instead of focusing on policy compliance, this study recommends strengthening the implementation of these policies that encourage mentors to understand their roles in professional development.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

1.1 Introduction and Background

This study sought to explore student teacher experiences of mentoring during teaching practice in schools. In South Africa and other countries, such as the United Kingdom, Norway, and the United States of America, teaching practice in schools is regarded as an integral part of initial teacher training (Hudson et al., 2009; Ngidi & Sibaya, 2003). Teaching practice refers to a period when student teachers are placed in schools to receive specific in-context training to apply what they have learned in their university coursework to actual practice in schools. Ideally, student teachers should be mentored by experienced classroom-based teachers (mentors) during their teaching practice in schools.

This chapter gives an overview of the study. First, the focus and purpose of the study, as well as the background and rationale, are outlined. Second, the research questions used to explore the topic are given. Third, a brief review of related literature is presented, as is the methodological approach used in this study. Finally, the organisational structure of this dissertation is introduced.

Mentoring of student teachers is a required element of teacher training in South Africa. Mentoring entails a sustained relationship between an inexperienced person (mentee) and a mature and experienced adult (mentor) in which the mentor guides the mentee's development of professional knowledge, skills, and values (Goldhaber et al., 2020). In the context of teaching practice, this relationship is between the student teacher and a qualified and well-experienced educator in a school who is an expert in the field of the student teacher's specialisation. Mentoring is acknowledged by many researchers as an effective strategy for enhancing the professional development of teachers (Hudson, 2013). Alsaleh et al. (2017); Grima-Farrell (2015); and Yuan (2016) assert that mentoring plays a critical role in the professional development of pre-service and newly appointed teachers by facilitating their transition to fully-fledged professional teachers. Effective mentoring practices play a huge role in ensuring teacher professionalism, teacher retention, and the general motivation of teachers (Van den Borre et al., 2021). In South Africa, the literature reveals that the mentoring experienced by both student teachers and mentor-teachers during teaching practice in schools is fraught with many challenges. For instance, in their study, Du Plessis and Mestry (2019)

reflect on the lack of a culture of professional development in South African schools. This deficiency can be seen in the absence of mentoring policies, the lack of adequate preparation for student teachers in school programs, and the absence of opportunities for mentors, instructors, student teachers, and/or university supervisors to engage in active and continuing dialogues (Du Plessis & Mestry, 2019). Teacher workloads, curriculum demands, financial constraints, and a lack of stability in schools due to constant systemic changes are cited among the barriers to effective mentoring. Orsdemir and Yildirim (2020) further note that student teachers are often not given the opportunities to observe their mentors articulating pedagogical knowledge in classrooms during teaching practice, which is necessary for them to develop the link between theory and practice.

The issues foregrounded above suggest that student teacher experiences of teaching practice emanate mainly from the mentoring relationships with and practices of their mentors. This study, therefore, explored the nature of these experiences from the perspective of student teachers in order to gain insight into the development of their knowledge, skills, and professional identities. In addition, it sought to understand what could be learned from these experiences to improve mentoring practices during teaching practice.

1.2 Focus and Purpose of the Study

The focus of this study was the student teacher experiences of mentoring during teaching practice in two schools —a primary school and a secondary school. Participants were student teachers who were in their third or final year of the Bachelor of Education Degree (B.Ed.) and those completing their Postgraduate Certificate in Education (PGCE) and placed in schools to complete their routine teaching practice experience required as part of their initial teacher education. The purpose of the study was to provide insight into the strengths and weaknesses of the mentoring process that is carried out in real-life contexts in South African schools. This was achieved through an in-depth exploration of student teachers' experiences of mentoring during teaching practice in one primary school and one secondary school in the Howick Circuit in KwaZulu-Natal, one of the provinces in South Africa.

During teaching practice, student teachers are expected to acquire practical knowledge of teaching and be nurtured by capable mentors in schools (Mukeredzi et al., 2015). The Policy on Minimum Requirements for Teacher Qualifications (MRTEQ) (Department of Higher Education and Training [DHET], 2015) makes it compulsory for teacher-training institutions

to integrate “work-integrated learning (WIL)” and “learning in practice” components in all initial teacher qualifications (p. 10). The policy further asserts that teacher-training institutions must “develop mutually beneficial partnerships with schools” (p. 13). Islam et al. (2011) argue strongly in favour of the school and university’s joint role in filling gaps in teacher education. They state that these partnerships can play a significant role in “making teacher education reflective and context-based and improving practices in schools and universities” (p. 52). Teaching practice in schools, therefore, provides student teachers with opportunities to apply their theoretical knowledge acquired from the university’s coursework to actual classroom teaching in the school context (Orsdemir & Yildirim, 2020). They do this by observing lessons taught by their mentors, but also by themselves teaching lessons under the mentorship of in-service teachers. Thus, mentoring is a key element in the transference of skills, knowledge, and values from the work of teaching to the student teacher in the course of their professional development. I therefore explored the nature of the mentoring experienced by selected student teachers in my study.

1.3 Rationale of the Study

Despite a comparatively large financial injection into South Africa’s education system over the past two decades, the poor performance of schools continues to be of grave concern for the government (Du Plessis & Mestry, 2019). Reports on the performance in both national and international benchmark studies paint a grim picture about the schooling progress in the country. For instance, out of 25 and 39 countries that participated in the Trends in International Mathematics and Science (TIMSS) benchmark tests in 2003 and 2015, respectively, South Africa was placed among the 5 lowest-performing countries (Reddy et al., 2015). The Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS) 2016 also reveals that South African grade four learners were ranked last in the reading scores of the fifty countries that participated (Howie et al., 2017). This means that upon finishing the grade, the majority of learners in grade four do not have basic reading skills. This is a huge concern as a lack of reading skills tends to spill over into performance in other subjects and, unless corrected, persists in its effect on the balance of the learners’ school careers. This is substantiated by the fact that, while performance in the National Senior Certificate has grown gradually over the years, more than half of the learners who pass matric do not qualify for admission to university, while a number of those who do cannot cope with the academic demands at the university level (dos Reis et al., 2019). Chief among the contributing factors to poor performance in the schooling system is the failure of the system to produce and develop quality teachers. Many student teachers are

often not adequately prepared for the real world of schooling during teaching practice (Korucu-Kiş, 2021). Sharplin et al. (2010) refer to this phenomenon as “culture shock” and argue that this has the potential to cause uncertainties in student teachers and often leads to dropout (p. 3). Teacher-training institutions have been blamed for this theory-practice gap—a disparity that exists between what is learned by student teachers as part of their university coursework and the contextual realities in schools. This is corroborated in the studies cited above.

My passion for mentoring developed in 2012, when I started to mentor the first of many student teachers I got the opportunity to mentor in my career. I worked for 16 years as a secondary school teacher in a rural school and then joined an urban school in Pietermaritzburg in 2012. Typical of many urban schools, this school receives a number of student teachers from local universities for teaching practice every school term. I got the opportunity to mentor more than 12 student teachers during my 5-year stay at the school, but I had neither training nor reasonable experience in mentoring. My only recourse was to tap into my experiences with my mentors during my training as a teacher.

I found the role of mentoring student teachers exciting and particularly fulfilling, especially when receiving positive feedback from student teachers who felt that I had contributed to their development. I increasingly felt that the use of mentoring as a strategy for the effective development of student teachers could go a long way in developing teachers who are reflective practitioners and are prepared and able to collaborate with colleagues as communities of practice to improve learning outcomes. In pursuing this study, I was interested in knowing what specific learnings mentors contribute to the development of their mentees as professionals and also to answer the question of what I could learn and share with others from these experiences.

As a principal of a township school now, one of my roles in staff development is “to assist educators, particularly new and inexperienced educators, in developing and achieving educational objectives” (Department of Basic Education [DBE], 2016, p. 44). My current school receives several student teachers every school term for teaching practice under the guidance of our teachers as mentors. As a school principal working with current policies, including the Quality Management System (QMS), which has a focus on mentoring, I am particularly interested in developing an effective mentoring program in my school.

Lortie (1975, p. 61) argues that student teachers come for teaching practice in schools with preconceptions about the work of teaching. These preconceptions, he further states, emanate from their experiences as learners at schools, and during their years as schoolchildren, they analyse how their teachers teach and manage classrooms, etc., and from these, they develop perceptions that are either useful or unproductive for their development as teachers. He refers to these experiences of schooling as socialisation into the practices of teaching as an “apprenticeship of observation”. Amin (2009, p. 73) asserts that there is a need for teacher trainers to “reframe the memory” of student teachers in order to challenge or deepen their already held conceptions about teaching. Rusznyak (2009, p. 263) similarly refers to these conceptions as “pedagogical immunity”. She elaborates that these need to be confronted by teacher educators because they may hinder the development of students.

Pursuing this study deepened my understanding of mentoring as a practice and of how students’ preconceptions about teaching are either strengthened or discouraged during their interactions with mentors in schools. This enabled me, in my endeavours as a school principal, to create an environment in the school where both student teachers and in-service teachers (mentors) could enhance their professional learning from and with each other through open analysis and critical evaluation of their practice. This should contribute to the quality of the professional development in my school. Pursuing this study contributed further insights into mentoring as a practice in terms of how students’ preconceptions about teaching are either strengthened or discouraged during their interactions with mentors in schools. These insights could help schools’ leadership groups in their efforts to create environments in their schools where both student teachers and practicing teachers could enhance their professional learning from and with each other through reflective and collaborative practice.

The study also contributed to the work of the South African Council for Educators (SACE), which plays a key role in promoting the continuous development of teachers, and to the professionalization of teaching, including the preparation of teachers at the pre-service stage. SACE works through ambassadors, who are volunteer teachers identified by the Council from all nine provinces in South Africa, to promote the new SACE Continuing Professional Teacher Development System (CPTD) for teachers in their local districts. The CPTD was introduced in terms of the National Policy Framework on Teacher Education and Development in South Africa (NPFTED) to regulate and institutionalise continuing teacher development in schools, among other things. While mentoring is recognised in the CPTD and other professional

development policies in South Africa as key to professional development, practice in schools shows concerning implementation deficiencies, e.g., a lack of training of school management teams on mentoring, as is required by the policy on the Quality Management System (QMS). An understanding of the experiences of student teachers, their expectations, and what they learned during teaching practice in schools helped provide feedback to school and national policies on teacher development, including the CPTD and QMS.

This study specifically sought to contribute to the following:

- Improvement of the mentoring practices and enhancement of the professional development of teachers for the benefit of schools, student teachers, and the profession.
- Improvement of the mentoring guidelines for student and novice-teacher mentoring by educator training institutions and education policymakers.

1.4 Research Questions

The following research questions were used to explore the topic of this study:

- i. What are student teachers' expectations of mentoring during teaching practice in schools?
- ii. How do student teachers experience mentoring during teaching practice in schools?
- iii. What strategies are suggested by student teachers to improve their teaching practice mentoring experiences?

1.5 Literature and Conceptual Framework

In this section of my study, I provide an overview of the literature that is presented in Chapter Two. Mentoring is a professional teacher development practice that presents many benefits to schools, student teachers, and novice and experienced teachers. While this is true, literature reports widely on several factors that contribute to ineffective mentoring practices, which tend to stunt mentoring efforts in the context of student teacher training. To answer my research questions, the literature consulted focused on the concepts of teaching practice, mentoring, the role of mentors, the benefits of mentoring, as well as the barriers to effective mentoring. Further to this, the role of mentoring in facilitating both teacher reflective and collaborative practice is explored, and lastly, various strategies suggested by student teachers to improve mentoring are reviewed. These concepts will be further explained in Chapter Two. The

literature also covers international trends in the mentoring of student teachers, the South African policy environment on mentoring, as well as the conceptual framework for this study.

1.5.1 International trends in student teacher mentoring

In countries such as the United Kingdom, Norway, and the United States of America, teaching practice in schools is regarded as an integral part of initial teacher training (Hudson et al., 2009; Ngidi & Sibaya, 2003). According to Hobson et al. (2009), mentoring in these countries is mandatory in response to the need to supply and retain teachers and to mitigate the challenges experienced by student and novice teachers in real-life contexts in schools.

1.5.2 South African policy environment on mentoring

An increased emphasis on the significance of mentoring as an important strategy for teacher education and development is finding space in the teacher development policy in South Africa. The Minimum Requirements for Teacher Education Qualifications policy (MRTEQ) (DHET, 2015) makes it compulsory for initial teacher-training programs to include the component of work-integrated-learning (WIL) to be carried out in schools or simulated workplaces, to bridge the gap between the theoretical knowledge gained from teacher training institutions and the practical work of teaching in schools. The Integrated Strategic Planning Framework for Teacher Education and Development in South Africa (ISPFTED) (Education Labour Relations Council [ELRC], 2011), the Integrated Quality Management System (IQMS) (ELRC, 2003) and the Continuing Professional Teacher Development Management System (CPTD) (SACE, 2013) represent key policies in South Africa that acknowledge and seek to promote mentoring as a strategy for transforming the development of teachers to improve learning outcomes across the schooling sector. The literature reviewed considers these policy initiatives as well.

1.5.3 Conceptual framework of the study

Hudson's (2004) Five-Factor Model of Mentoring was used as the epistemological guide in this study, thus was used to understand and analyse the experiences of student teachers during their teaching practice in schools. Hudson (2004) identifies five factors that may be adopted to understand and facilitate effective mentoring in schools, namely: personal attributes, system requirements, pedagogical knowledge, modelling, and feedback. These factors are discussed

in detail in Chapter Two. I used these factors as a guide to structure the interview questions and participants' journal prompts and to analyse and present the participants' responses.

1.6 Research Design and Methodology

This was a qualitative study. The study intended to gain insights into student teachers' experiences of mentoring during their teaching practice in two schools—a primary school and a secondary school. An interpretive paradigm was thus adopted to conduct this study. The interpretive paradigm is followed when a researcher seeks to understand “the world of human experience” in the context of practice (Cohen et al., 2003, p. 36). This allowed the participants to reflect freely on their experiences of mentoring during their teaching practice. Reflective journals and semi-structured interviews with open-ended questions were used to generate rich data on the participants' experiences.

A narrative inquiry was found to be useful as an approach to this study. Clandinin (2006) explains that teachers' knowledge “is developed out of teachers' stories about their work and their dialogues with one another, with pupils, with teaching materials, and with themselves” (p. 3). Following Silev (2019), this assisted me to elicit and, together with the participants, re-tell the authentic stories of the experiences of mentoring told by the student teachers who participated in the study.

1.7 Sampling

A purposive sampling method was used in this study. Four student teachers were purposively sampled from two schools—a primary school and a secondary school. The two schools are located in a township of KwaMevana, Howick, Umgungundlovu District in KwaZulu Natal. Both schools are categorized as “no-fee” schools according to the funding norms of the Department of Education and serve majority of learners from poor households. Every year student teachers are placed in these schools by different universities for teaching practice sessions. I chose the two schools because they were easily accessible. I, the researcher, was the principal of the primary school selected, and the secondary school was in close proximity to the primary school. A good working relationship exists between these two schools. The student teachers selected were enrolled in either the Postgraduate Certificate in Education (PGCE) or the Bachelor of Education degree (B Ed) at local universities. They go to schools each year to spend a period of four to five weeks doing teaching practice under the mentorship of school-based educators who teach subjects that are relevant to the student teachers' fields

of specialisation. When the study was conceptualised, I planned to collect data between April and May 2020, the period in which most student teachers are placed in schools for teaching practice. However, in April 2020, schools and universities in the Republic of South Africa were forced to close due to the national lockdown that was announced by the President of the Republic. The announcement was due to the outbreak of the coronavirus (Covid-19) disease, which was declared an international pandemic. There was thus no placement of student teachers for teaching practice, as the schools were also closed. I then rescheduled my data collection for later when schools and universities re-opened. The schools and universities started to re-open at the beginning of June 2020, and I prudently commenced with data collection in the third school term between September and October 2020, as there was uncertainty regarding the opening and closing of schools.

A detailed discussion of the design and methodology for the study is provided in the next chapter.

1.8 Research methods

Two data collection methods were utilised in my study. These were semi-structured interviews and participants' reflective journals. In the interpretivist paradigm, interviews can be useful because they "give the researcher an opportunity to ask probing and clarifying questions and to discuss research participants' understandings with them" (Bertram and Christiansen, 2014, p. 82). On the other hand, keeping a reflective journal "helps increase the self-awareness of the student teachers about their experiences and observations through the process of reflecting and clarifying perceptions, feelings, and thoughts" (Mariko, 2011). Both of these methods were selected in order to seek rich information from the participants regarding their experiences of mentoring. My study explored student teachers' experiences of mentoring during teaching practice in schools. These methods, therefore, allowed me to probe participants for clarification of their responses, and I was able to elicit their views and have deep and meaningful discussions about their experiences.

1.9 Organisation of the study

This study is organized into five chapters and the overview of each of the five chapters is presented below:

Chapter One

This chapter gives an overview of the study. The focus, purpose, background, and rationale of the study are discussed, and the research questions are outlined. A brief review of the related literature and the conceptual framework followed in this study are also presented. In addition, the research design and methodology used are introduced. The chapter concludes with an overview of the chapters that make up this dissertation.

Chapter Two

This chapter engages more broadly with the literature that was reviewed. In this chapter, both international and local literature related to mentoring is reviewed. The chapter provides a detailed picture of the significance of mentoring in teacher preparation programs, with a particular focus on the South African context. The benefits and possible barriers to effective mentoring are also discussed, and the various strategies for improving mentoring are explored. Teaching practice is also examined as a key component of student teacher development. Lastly, mentoring is reviewed as a reflective and collaborative practice, and the extent to which it is integrated into the teacher development policy in South Africa is discussed. The theoretical/conceptual framework underpinning this study is presented at the end of this chapter.

Chapter Three

This chapter describes the qualitative research approach adopted in this study. The qualitative research approach is located in the interpretive paradigm. The methods of data generation that are used in this study to address the research questions underpinning the study are also discussed. In addition, the sampling procedures and sample size are discussed and explained. Finally, the issue of the positionality of the researcher in this study is discussed, as are the methods of data analysis, the ethical considerations in this study, and the validity and trustworthiness of the data collected.

Chapter Four

In this chapter, an analysis of the findings of the research is presented based on the research questions. Hudson's (2004) Five-Factor Model is used as the conceptual framework for the data analysis and discussion of the findings.

Chapter Five

This is the concluding chapter. It begins with a brief overview of the study, and then the arguments that have been developed are synthesised. Thereafter, the implications of the findings are discussed, and recommendations and concluding comments are made.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW AND CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

2.1 Introduction

This chapter reviews the literature on mentoring, with a particular focus on the mentoring of student teachers during teaching practice. An in-depth exploration of the concept of mentoring is done, with a discussion of various approaches to mentoring and accompanying discourses on the role of mentors. The significance of reflection and collaboration in teaching and the role of mentoring in inculcating these in student teachers during teaching practice are also discussed. Lastly, the barriers to and benefits of effective mentoring, as well as the strategies suggested in the literature for improving teaching practice, are presented with specific reference to the South African context. The theoretical/conceptual framework underpinning this study is presented at the end of this chapter.

2.2 The Context

The past decade has seen a renewed and strengthened focus on the training and development of both pre-service and practising teachers in South Africa. The Teacher Development Summit held in 2009 and the subsequent introduction of the Integrated Strategic Planning Framework on Teacher Education and Development in South Africa (ISPFTED) (DBE & DHET, 2011) led to several programs and policy initiatives meant to transform the trajectory of the preparation and continuous development of teachers in the country. These initiatives are reflective of international practice in the area of teacher development to a large extent. The significance of quality teacher preparation programs receives particular attention in the teacher development space internationally. As such, this chapter reviews the literature on teacher

preparation for this study, focusing specifically on the component of mentoring student teachers during teaching practice in schools. Key concepts, issues, and debates on mentoring are explored. The review of the literature provides the framework for the exploration and understanding of the student teachers' experiences of mentoring during their teaching practice in schools.

2.3 Teaching Practice in Schools

Teaching practice has traditionally been described as a period when student teachers are working in relevant contexts to receive specific in-service training to apply theory into practice (Addy et al., 2023; Ferber & Nillas, 2010; Korkmaz & Toraman, 2020). During teaching practice, student teachers get an opportunity to apply the content and knowledge learned from university courses, reflect on their daily practices, and develop their professional identities as educators (Bertone et al., 2006; Liebowitz & Porter, 2019). This makes teaching experience in schools a critical practice in the preparation of student teachers. It provides student teachers with an “opportunity to stand face-to-face with the challenges and demands of the teaching profession” (Caires & Almeida, 2007, p. 10). They maintain that student teaching practice represents the final test of knowledge and ability for student teachers; it is the point where theory meets practice. Caires and Almeida (2007) further state that student teachers must be able to apply what they have learned, demonstrate that they can handle planning and organization, and demonstrate the other necessary skills that teachers are called on to use daily. The workplace provides an authentic context where professional practical knowledge is acquired and nurtured (Mukeredzi et al., 2015) and this facilitates and consolidates student teachers' learning.

The constructivist view of teacher learning (Bada, 2015; Ramnarain & Ramaila, 2012) holds that student teachers construct their knowledge as they engage actively with actual teaching rather than from their lecturers or course content. Thus, the context in which learning happens and the perceptions of the students affect their learning (Fosnot & Perry, 2005). Correspondingly, Bullock (2017, as cited in Aydin & Ok, 2019) notes that mentors' timely and regular feedback, together with the provision of enough space for mentees' autonomy in teaching, are considered to lie at the heart of teaching practice. This puts teaching practice at the centre of initial teacher education, with schools providing the ideal contexts for practical learning that student teachers need.

There is a renewed emphasis on teaching practice in schools, as it is the ideal space for student teachers' learning (Crasborn et al., 2010). In terms of the Minimum Requirements for Teacher Education Qualifications (MRTEQ) policy in South Africa (DHET, 2015), "Work-Integrated Learning (WIL) takes place in the workplace and can include aspects of learning from practice (e.g., observing and reflecting on lessons taught by others), as well as learning in practice (e.g., preparing, teaching, and reflecting on lessons presented by oneself)" (p.10). Moreover, to enhance the students' practice experiences and therefore the overall quality of the student teachers' training, the ISPFTED (DBE & DHET, 2011) mandates the development of teaching schools, i.e., "teaching laboratories where student teachers can engage in learning-from-practice" (p. 18). It further proposes the development of professional practice schools (PPSs), well-functioning schools where student teachers will spend extended periods of time engaging in comprehensive teaching practice work. The role of schools and mentors, therefore, becomes integral to the student teachers' training as they provide the required context and expertise for the application of and reflection on theory and practical work acquired in teacher education institutions and schools, respectively.

As noted earlier, "the development of expertise through experience is recognized as an essential part of teacher-learning" (Butler & Cuenca, 2012, p. 296). However, the structure and frequency of teaching practice vary across different teacher education institutions and countries. The report titled "*Preparing Teachers Around the World*" (Wang et al., 2003) reveals that the duration of teaching practice in most countries around the world ranges from three weeks per semester to an eighteen-month period in a three-year degree. The report further states that in the United States of America, student teachers are generally required to embark on a period of lesson observation before teaching lessons. This happens under the supervision of a university tutor, the school-based mentor teacher, or the principal.

In other countries such as Australia, Singapore, Japan, and the United Kingdom, teaching practice in schools is also a requirement in teacher education programs (Wang et al., 2003). However, there is variation in terms of the duration of the teaching practice, the sharing of supervision and assessment among the university tutors, the mentors in the schools, and the school principals, and the timing of the teaching practice (for example, towards the end of the qualification or as a pre-requisite for graduation). For example, Wang et al.'s (2003) report states that in Hong Kong, student teachers' performance during teaching practice "is assessed via supervisor ratings and a portfolio that includes observations, reflections on classroom

teaching, and reflective teaching journals. In one of the teacher programs, lecture staff conduct nine supervisory visits of student teachers during the two years” (p. 22).

Teaching practice in schools presents various challenges that may make or break the overall experience of student teachers and, as a result, contribute to the development of negative professional identities for mentees. Orland-Barak and Wang (2021) assert that these challenges are mainly connected to the mentors’ expertise (e.g., communication skills, classroom management strategies, and subject pedagogy) and the student teachers’ level of development, for example, the student teachers’ ability to glean and use effective feedback from the mentor during their mentor-mentee post-lesson discussions. On a positive note, the study conducted by Alalwan et al. (2020) found that there was wide acknowledgement by students of the positive and supportive contribution their mentors made to their personal and professional development. This contributed to the students’ ability to teach with confidence.

It can thus be seen, in light of the above, that teaching practice is an essential component in the development of student teachers into teaching professionals, and this is recognized in different countries. It provides student teachers with the chance to test theory and shape their teaching practice. There are a myriad of stimuli that the student teachers are exposed to that need to be managed, hence the relevance of mentorship.

2.4 Mentoring

The concept of mentoring emanated from the classic story of the ancient leader Odysseus, who, when going off to war, left his friend, Mentor, with the responsibility of taking care of his son. As an experienced, wise, and caring adult, Mentor was given the task of guiding this young and inexperienced man towards adulthood until his father returned (Awaya et al., 2005). The objective of mentoring was to initiate young men into adulthood so that they would be able to cope with the realities of this phase of human development. While this was the basis for the conceptualisation of mentoring, societies influenced by differing contexts, particularly in education, have changed, leading to a myriad other conceptualisation of mentoring.

Many researchers accept the traditional definition of mentoring in the context of education as a one-on-one relationship between a highly competent and experienced teacher (mentor) and a novice or trainee teacher (mentee) (Hobson, 2012; Mukeredzi et al., 2015). Defining it this way narrows mentoring down to a directional flow of knowledge where the source (mentor)

releases information to a passive receiver (mentee). The traditional mentoring approach thus tends to be characterised by a top-down interaction. Also implied in this understanding is that only the mentee benefits from the interactions. This was the case in Odysseus's story, where the success of the mentoring could be measured by the son's ability to meet the expectations of adulthood. The son's feelings and thoughts seemed not to be considered, since he was in the hands of an expert. This mentor-centred approach was subsequently seen as a weakness, and an improved version, namely, collaborative mentoring, was born (Orland-Barak & Wang, 2021). Collaborative mentoring tends to be more democratic as it allows the mentor and mentee the latitude to discuss, negotiate, and agree on a set of expectations. In some instances, everything is done together, sequentially from preparation to evaluation to the actual teaching. In their study, Orland-Barak and Wang (2021) found that the mentee was able to learn work rules at each stage of cooperating and apply them immediately, with success. The usual traditional boundaries are cut with collaborative mentoring, giving the mentee the freedom to express themselves without reservations because of the atmosphere of trust created.

There is thus more to mentoring than just an interaction that connects the less knowledgeable to the more knowledgeable teacher. As indicated by Tourigny and Pulich (2005), the relationship between the mentor and mentee is bridged by activities as well as by "shared learning and commitment to each other's professional growth" (p. 69). This understanding is further captured and elaborated on by Hudson et al. (2009), who see mentoring as a process whereby "personal attributes, system requirements, pedagogical knowledge, modelling, and feedback" (p. 6) are articulated to equip the mentee with sound teaching practices. These aspects, known as the five factors of the mentoring model, are articulated in detail later in this chapter and form the lens through which this study is conducted.

Mentoring, whether conceptualised in a narrow sense (traditional approach) or broadly (collaborative approach), serves as an integral component of developing teachers into professionals. For example, the Department of Education (DoE) (2008) defines mentoring comprehensively as follows:

A sustained developmental relationship between an adult and youth or an experienced person such as an educator with long service and inexperienced (newly qualified) educator, or both qualified and experienced professionals, but where one has acquired the new required knowledge and skills while the other has not. The mentor provides

guidance and support to a mentee concerning a wide range of knowledge, skills, attitudes and values (p. 22).

This definition implicitly acknowledges the significance of mentoring as a professional practice in the whole teacher development continuum. Mentoring can play a crucial role in teacher professional development for both in-service teachers and those who are still in their preparation stage. It provides a cost-effective method for developing teachers, both pre-service and experienced, on a range of pedagogical practices (e.g., lesson planning, teaching and observation, classroom management, etc.) (Hudson, 2013). Due to this, several countries in the world, e.g., Australia, the United States of America, and South Africa, have made mentoring a mandatory requirement in terms of which student teachers, as part of their training, need induction and to be assigned a mentor (New South Wales Institute of Teachers, 2004). This has proven to be a working strategy for dealing with the mass attrition of new teachers being overwhelmed by the shock of the reality of the actual work of teaching (Orland-Barak & Wang, 2021).

The terms “mentor”, “support teacher”, “supervisor”, “expert teacher”, or “co-operating teacher” (Sonja, Despina, Biljana, & Jadranka, 2018; Ambrosetti, & Dekkers, 2010; Sağ, 2008) are commonly used by researchers to refer to school-based teachers supporting novice or student teachers through mentoring. The terms “mentee”, “novice teacher”, “student teacher” or “protégé” are used to refer to student or beginning teachers within a mentoring relationship. Even though these terms tend to be used interchangeably, they convey some variations in meaning. Looking at the mentor category, the term “support teacher” implies someone who is there to give help to the mentee when it is needed. A “supervisor” denotes a superior, someone who is there to make sure that work is done in accordance with expected performance standards. “Expert teacher” gives the impression of knowing everything—saturated and overflowing with knowledge. “Co-operating teacher” signifies someone willing to accommodate the mentee by doing everything together. This range of terms used emphasize multiple roles played by mentors in the development of mentees. These terms all suggest the supportive role mentors play in the professional journey of their mentees

In the mentee group, a “novice teacher” speaks of someone who is very new to an environment and thus needs someone to hold his/her hand. The term “student teacher” suggests someone who is there to learn from models of excellence. The term “protégé” depicts someone for the future who, at the moment, has a lot of potential that needs nurturing.

In either group, the term used seems to define the kind of interaction expected between the mentor and mentee. These defined interactions suggest coupling specific terms from each, such as the following pairings: mentor and mentee; supervisor and student teacher; expert and novice teacher; and support teacher/co-operating teacher and protégé.

In an ideal mentoring process, a mentor and a mentee embark on a journey together in a sustained relationship characterised by virtues of trust, collaboration, “moral support, and knowing when to help and when to sit back” (Awaya et al., 2005, p. 45). A mentor avails himself to share his knowledge and professional expertise to help guide the development of a mentee’s expertise and to familiarise the mentee with the work of teaching in a specific school context (Hobson, 2012).

Mentoring as a one-to-one relationship between a mentor and a mentee manifests in many forms, e.g., as a peer-to-peer approach (Cornu, 2005), where two or more student teachers or in-service teachers at the same career development stage enter into a collaborative relationship to mentor each other—learning, teaching, and reflecting together to improve their practice; or group mentoring, whereby groups of colleagues in a school who are at different stages of their development choose to journey together in learning from one another. They take advantage of various skills and expertise among themselves to collaborate in overcoming the challenges of teaching in their school context (Shanks et al., 2022). In addition, mentoring arrangements can be made in situations where there is a shortage of mentors, where a mentor has many mentees to take care of (high mentor-mentee ratio) and has to travel between schools. In this case, peer-to-peer mentoring could be added, where student teachers co-mentor one another with the added advantage of being able to share and compare mentorship experiences.

Mentoring can also be undertaken through formal or informal arrangements. On the one hand, formal mentoring is a practice whereby a structured program is put in place by an institution, government, etc., with a mentor assigned to support the development of a new teacher (Desimone et al., 2014). Similarly, Carvalho and Santos (2022) talk of the involvement of the parent organisation, not only in the authorisation of the process but also in the provision of support in every aspect thereof. Thus, according to them, the organisation determines the rationale of the exercise, matches mentor to mentee, assists with the development of expectations, and spells out the roles of each, including the frequency and duration of meetings. The level of involvement by the organisations shows a great deal of control over the whole process through a scripted procedure that captures the norms of the organisation. Formal

mentoring conventionally tends to depict a hierarchical process with mentors playing a supervisory role. Because they are assigned the role, they might suffer from a poor-quality relationship which might, in turn, lead to poor relationship outcomes (Holt et al., 2016).

Informal mentoring, on the other hand, is unstructured and formed based on the commonality of interests or shared attraction (Holt et al., 2016). Additionally, the relationship is stronger and tends to last longer (mentor-mentee ties) than in formal mentoring (Carvalho & Santos, 2022). The relationship can be junior-to-senior, peer-to-peer, or even group mentoring, depending on what needs to be addressed and how it is defined by the mentoring partners. Junior-to-senior informal mentoring usually entails inexperienced teachers initiating the relationship with experienced teachers to whom they go for professional support (Shank et al., 2022). It is clear from such informal mentoring arrangements that all teachers, not only novice and student teachers, are continually in need of support by someone more experienced or with more expertise in their area of operation to become better at what they do. Desimone et al. (2014) argue that informal mentoring is as important as formal mentoring and, therefore, should be looked at in a complementary context. Whereas informal mentoring focuses on personal needs (Carvalho & Santos, 2022), formal mentoring addresses the professional needs of the mentee. There is more learning that happens over time because of the increased frequency of meetings in informal mentoring (Holt et al., 2016) as they get to know each other better. The mentoring can even extend to settings outside of the workplace for an extension of conversations. Fairbanks et al. (2000) reported on a mentee who described her mentor as a friend who sometimes invited her to dinner at her house.

In South Africa, the notion of mentoring found much policy expression with the introduction of the Integrated Quality Management System (IQMS) (ELRC, 2003). Among other things, the IQMS aims to enhance the performance of all teachers. To this end, individual teachers take full responsibility for their development by reflecting on their practice to identify their development needs. In addition to selecting an immediate supervisor, a teacher also chooses a colleague with expertise in his/her area of teaching as their mentor (ELRC, 2003). The policy's intention is that these relationships in schools then result in a rigorous mentoring process to assist every individual teacher's development. The development is developed through continuous guidance, modelling of good practice, feedback from mentor/s, and personal reflections on practice.

The studies conducted by Mosoge and Pilane (2014); and Ncube et al. (2012), however, reveal a very limited understanding among educators of the concept of mentoring as being integral to the development of professional practice. While these teachers see mentoring as “a good idea to support them in their professional growth” (Mosoge & Pilane, 2014, p. 615), their limited grasp of the IQMS system almost 20 years after its introduction may be an indicator that the IQMS has not yet succeeded in entrenching mentoring as a teacher development strategy in South Africa and that there was little post-implementation reflection to refine and strengthen the system. This specifically points to a misalignment between the policy and its implementation and further implies that there is a need for training mentors and teachers alike so that they can have a greater shared understanding of what mentoring is, how it is done, and what successful mentoring looks like.

The ISPFTED (DBE & DHET, 2011) confirms this view. The framework introduces and endorses the establishment of professional learning communities at the “local level to create collaborative spaces where teachers can be mentored in a specific subject, curriculum, and management and leadership practices to improve their performance” (p. 14). Mentoring of student teachers during teaching practice in schools takes place within this uncertain policy environment experienced by the schools and teachers. This is bound to compromise the quality of the mentoring, since no one has enough knowledge of what mentoring should look like and how it should be done and managed.

The role of a mentor as a key player in the process of student teacher learning is discussed in the following section.

2.5 The Role of Mentors

As indicated in the previous sections, in the context of education, the term “mentor” refers to an educator (subject or generic) who works with a student teacher for the duration of his/her teaching placement (Lofthouse & Thomas, 2014). Wexler (2020) explains that mentors are expected to undertake various roles and responsibilities during teaching practice while guiding student teachers in learning how to teach, transitioning the student from pre-service teacher to professional educator.

One of the roles is the provision of pedagogical advice (a component of Hudson’s 2004 Five-Factor Model of Mentoring) and guidance (Rasmitadila et al., 2022) to develop the mentees’

practices and to support students' learning (O' Dowd et al., 2020). In this role, the mentor shapes the mentee's teaching so that it can be more effective (Wexler, 2020).

Another role is modelling, which is also a component of Hudson's (2004) five-factor model. It entails student teachers learning by observing their mentors teaching lessons and doing other classroom and out-of-classroom practices. Mentors thus become role models for their mentees (Hudson & Usak, 2009). In this role, the mentor's behaviour is intended to instil in the mentee the drive to be competent and the desire to identify themselves with the practice of teaching. How the mentor conducts him/herself will help resolve perceptions and preconceptions that the novice teacher comes with—some being challenged, others being confirmed (Wexler, 2020).

Provision of feedback is another of the five factors in Hudson's (2004) mentoring model and is another role played by mentors. According to Wexler (2020), the mentor's practices, which include regular feedback to his/her protégé and lesson observations, have a far-reaching effect on the development of the mentee's self-confidence and are key to the mentee meeting the challenges of teaching. Tourigny and Pulich (2005) add that, through feedback, the protégé improves professionally and in judging social contexts and gets to understand the norms of their organisation. The study by Mukeredzi et al. (2015) discovered that some mentors only give feedback to their mentees for the purpose of compliance with university requirements. (p. 6). They refer to this as "compliance mentoring", as mentors only embark on mentoring for the sake of compliance with university assessments. This can contribute to ineffective mentoring practices and is reflective of a lack of supervision and proper coordination of teaching practice.

Another key role is relationship-building. Positive and supportive relationships are essential for effective mentoring and require that mentors be approachable and trustworthy, among other characteristics. These are the personal attributes of mentors suggested by Hudson (2010) in his Five-Factor Model of Mentoring. For this reason, factors such as the mentor-mentee's personal and professional qualities and the mentor's attributes and practices, among others, become crucial in student teachers' learning to teach (Hudson 2010). Wexler (2020) notes that student teachers benefit immensely from the strong relationships they develop with their mentors. An important aspect of this role is that mentors must have excellent communication and conflict resolution skills and be flexible enough to accept the varied teaching (and learning) styles of their mentees. Carvalho and Santos (2022) explain that a mentor's attributes

include: being a good listener; being flexible; the ability to focus on issues to enable discussion and reflection on practice; the ability to access opportunities for their mentees and broaden their experiences; and awareness or foresight to recognize pressure points, which may require further collaboration between the mentor and mentee. Many researchers agree that these attributes are much needed by mentees to help student teachers face and overcome challenges during the practical process of learning to teach, which requires mentors' sustained guidance and support of a collaborative nature (Carvalho & Santos, 2022).

2.6 Dimensions of Mentoring

There is general conflation in the literature of the concept of mentoring in education with other concepts such as coaching, counselling, supervision, and induction (Gallant et al., 2015). The meaning of each is usually context-based. For example, loosely viewed, counselling carries a therapeutic connotation, coaching focusses on performance where there is a set agenda, and mentoring denotes the orientation and development of both the career and personal elements of a mentee. What distinguishes mentoring from the other two is the mentor-mentee relationship. It can be argued that mentoring is an overarching term that may constitute, though not exclusively, elements of coaching, counselling, supervision, and induction (Gallant et al., 2015). For example, as part of mentoring pre-service and in-service educators, mentors are called on to utilize certain elements of induction as they familiarise their mentees with the internal workings of an institution (Orland-Barak & Wang, 2021), and this is related to coaching. Shanks et al. (2022) concur that mentoring may encompass counselling and coaching. They say that a senior mentor may see fit to apply counselling or coaching as directed by the situation. It is important to note that mentoring is conceptualised in many different ways, emanating from how it has been practiced, and what aspects have been emphasised in different contexts over time. At any given point in time, according to Shanks et al. (2022), mentoring is influenced by what is being done, the context in which it happens, and the quality of the relationship between the mentor and mentee.

The next sections explore the key dimensions of mentoring derived from the literature review by Lai (2010), which identified three dimensions of mentoring: the relational dimension, the developmental dimension, and the contextual dimension.

2.6.1 Relational dimension

According to Lai (2010), the relational dimension refers to the relationship between the mentor and the mentee. In this dimension, the role of a mentor is to provide emotional support and to be an adviser and friend to the mentee during his period of learning to teach (Bradbury, 2010).

The relationship is meant to be close and based on trust and mutual respect. Ramnarain and Ramalia (2012) posit that the relationship should be voluntary, caring, and nurturing, where the mentor and mentee collaborate as partners to solve problems of practice. Butler and Cuenca (2012) view mentors as “individuals who serve as an emotional support system for novice educators” (p. 300). The relational dimension is essential because mentees are new in the profession and must deal with elementary fears regarding the work of teaching before actually teaching themselves (Maynard & Furlong, 1993, as cited in Lai, 2010).

2.6.2 Developmental dimension

The developmental dimension of mentoring focuses on the personal and professional development of both the mentee and the mentor through the actions and behaviours of the mentor (Lai, 2010). Butler and Cuenca (2012) hold that mentors who focus on using their expertise in assisting mentees with classroom practices, teaching and assessment strategies, and organizational skills, view themselves as instructional coaches. These mentors constantly interact with their mentees by giving advice, conducting observation sessions, and providing helpful feedback for the development of pre-service teachers. A similar notion is held by Mukeredzi et al. (2015). They argue that the role of mentors is to focus on the actual training of mentees on the teaching of subject content, assessment, and student discipline strategies. The expertise and judgement of mentors becomes paramount as they have to understand and continually monitor their trainees' development. Research by Maynard and Furlong (1993, as cited in Lai, 2010) identified two other models of mentee development: First, the competency model in which mentors assume the role of coaches in an increasingly deliberate program that includes scheduled observation sessions and intentional feedback on practice; and second, the reflective model in which collaboration and reflection are promoted and facilitated by mentors (Feiman-Nemser, 1998, as cited in Butler & Cuenca, 2012). There has to be a functional relationship between the mentor and mentee for the mentee to develop, highlighting the

importance of the relational dimension in creating a conducive environment for the development of the mentee.

2.6.3 Contextual dimension

The influence that the school's organizational culture has on teaching and learning is recognized as critical in this dimension of mentoring (Grocutt et al., 2022). This section focuses on the cultural and situational features of the mentoring setting and their impact on both mentors and mentees. Researchers have conceived of mentors as socializing agents for student teachers due to the central role that the mentor holds in the life of a mentee. In this role, mentors introduce and acclimatize student teachers to the school context, which entails the daily routines of the school, including monitoring of learners' daily attendance, participating in staff and parent meetings, and undertaking other administrative staff responsibilities (Butler & Cuenca, 2012). Hudson's system requirements encapsulate the contextual dimension. Familiarity with how the elements of the system operate for the functionality of the system as a whole is necessary for the progress of the mentee.

The developments brought about by reforms in education over the years have placed more emphasis on student outcomes and, consequently, on the quality of teachers. For example, knowledge and skills have become so diverse that it is impossible to expect one "expert" to be the sole source of information and assistance for the inexperienced teacher to learn about teaching, as is conceived by traditional approaches to mentoring. Heeneman and de Grave (2019) note that school structures have changed to promote more collaborative mentoring where the mentor and mentee work together right from the planning of the teaching to the actual teaching to achieve the set mentoring goals.

It can therefore be argued that various factors, including the developmental and emotional needs of mentees as well as the professional dispositions of the mentors, make mentoring a complex endeavour that requires careful selection and empowerment of mentor teachers. This discussion substantiates Gary's (2004, p. 4) assertion that "mentoring is a complex human interaction". This complexity arises from the multi-dimensional nature of mentoring as well as the complexity of learning how to teach. As such, given the number of human stimuli that influence the thoughts and resultant behaviour of the mentee, effective mentoring requires acknowledging the need for more than one mentor, and each mentor has a different specified role (Conley, 2001).

2.7 Mentoring as a reflective and a collaborative practice

Reflection is a core quality of effective teachers. In terms of the Norms and Standards for Educators in South Africa (Ehren et al., 2019), all teachers are expected to be reflective practitioners in order to enhance their classroom practice and improve learner performance in schools. This notion also finds articulation in the current pre-service teacher education policies and programs. The policy on the Minimum Requirements for Teacher Education Qualifications (DHET, 2011) requires student teachers to become reflective practitioners and to use instruments such as portfolios, and the learning portfolio, in particular, to document and reflect on their learning process and their development as teachers. Several researchers agree that reflection is a process of ongoing scrutiny of teaching practice where students, novices, and even experienced teachers can learn about themselves in different contexts (Frick et al., 2010). If continuously promoted and supported, reflection-on-practice can help teacher training and mentoring efforts to develop professionalism in pre-service teachers (Ehren et al., 2019). Ehren et al. (2019) also emphasise that the process of bringing oneself to account is a powerful instrument for pursuing excellence; it is enhanced when it is done regularly and reflexively.

Reflection-on-practice refers to the reflection done after an activity (e.g., a lesson) (Schon, 1983). Calderheard and Gates (1993) note that “reflection is productive when it leads to changes in practice that may or may not be retained, but that result in a better personal understanding of one’s practice” (p. 146). Reflection can assist in bridging the gap between the theory acquired through university coursework and practice teaching in the school context (Frick et al., 2010; Gravett & Ramsaroop, 2017). Reflection can be fostered through mentoring practices where mentors and mentees view one another as sources of diverse knowledge and therefore take the opportunities that mentoring presents as a collaborative relationship to glean from and share available knowledge and practices (Harris, 2000, as cited in Rhodes & Beneicke, 2002). In these collaborations, new teachers are often seen as possessing recent subject content knowledge, while mentors are viewed as having a repertoire of knowledge and skills about teaching (Grocutt et al., 2022). It is important to note that while traditional approaches to mentoring are criticised for not acknowledging reflective practice as an important element to address in mentoring practices, modern

approaches are seen to embrace such elements as key ingredients for effective mentoring (Heeneman & de Grave, 2019).

Du Plessis et al. (2020) note that, for various reasons, pre-service teachers seldom find opportunities to reflect on their thinking and practice. Mentoring of student teachers, therefore, can play a critical role in facilitating reflective practice by mentees. Mentors can do this by using their pedagogical expertise as well as strategies such as observation of a series of lessons taught by mentees and the mentors themselves, followed by a post-lesson discussion with their mentees. Mentors thus require competence in reflective skills and the ability to act as “critical friends” to allow student teachers to become reflective practitioners (Frick et al., 2010). Unfortunately, several studies report a serious lack of such capacity among mentors due to inadequate training by teacher education programs, and the non-existence of or casual attitude towards the value of reflection in schools, among other reasons (Du Plessis et al., 2010; Mukeredzi et al., 2015). Training mentors properly before they supervise student teachers is, therefore, key to mentoring effectiveness. In the study conducted by Hennissen et al. (2010), it was concluded that mentors developed effective mentoring skills and became more deliberate in their conversations with mentees after receiving training on mentoring, and this competency was observed to be deficient before training.

In addition, as indicated earlier, equally significant in the process of mentoring is the practice of collaboration among colleagues. Darling-Hammond and Bransford (2005) point out that:

Preparing teachers as classroom researchers and expert collaborators who can learn from one another is essential when the range of knowledge for teaching has grown so expansive that it cannot be mastered by any individual and when students' infinitely diverse ways of learning are recognized as requiring continual adaptations in teaching (p.11).

It is important for teachers at all stages of development to sharpen their skills continually and develop dispositions for sharing and learning new teaching strategies with and from others in a collegial environment. Together with co-teaching and joint reflection, collaborating with student teachers as mentees is regarded by scholars as a useful strategy for mentoring (Thant Sin, 2022). This is particularly beneficial to student teachers for the development of their fledgling professional identities (Meijer et al., 2011). The careers of the student teachers are

still burgeoning; therefore, the more they reflect on their practice with others, the more input they get, which will help them improve. Both mentor and mentee educators can gain from one another to build up their professional practice (Heeneman & de Grave, 2019). This working together of the mentor and mentee is consistent with Hobson's (2012) acknowledgement of collaboration as an effective mentoring strategy where both mentor-teachers and their mentees plan lessons jointly, observe each other's lessons, team-teach, and reflect together. Teaching practice introduces student teachers into a community of practice where they can learn from their colleagues (mentors) in a collegial and supportive relationship. It is crucial to share teaching skills and mentor new teachers (Nkambule, 2017). The importance of reflection and collaboration in mentoring cannot be overestimated.

2.8 Benefits of Mentoring

Teaching practice in schools presents student teachers with an excellent opportunity to have actual teaching experience in real-life contexts, and mentor teachers are key role-players in this teaching experience (Hudson, 2013). They act as a contact point between their mentees and their experience of teaching. Ferber and Nillas (2010) argue that since mentors become role models for student teachers, they play a critical role in student teachers' learning about teaching, providing emotional support to quell the fears of the student teachers, facilitating the accumulation of pedagogical skills, and helping them adapt to the norms, standards, and expectations associated with teaching in general and with specific schools (Ehren et al., 2019). This can help student teachers increase their confidence and self-esteem and also enhance their self-reflection and problem-solving skills (Hobson, 2012).

According to Du Plessis et al. (2010), student teachers are most fulfilled during their experiences when mentors are willing to provide guidance, observe lessons, allow themselves to be observed while teaching, and give effective feedback.

While mentees are the main targets of the benefits of mentoring, studies show that mentors often derive many professional benefits from their roles as mentors as well. These include a deepened understanding of school policies and systems through the articulation of curricula and education system requirements such as school policies and routines (Hudson, 2010). Mentoring can also involve co-learning, where both the mentor and mentee are considered to be sources of knowledge valuable for teaching. Mentors often view beginning teachers as sources of up-to-date content, whereas mentors wield a base of practical knowledge about the

work of teaching and thus provide valuable insights for mentees through role modelling (Cross et al., 2019). This signifies the importance of collaboration between mentor and mentee for effective learning to occur (McConnell et al., 2019). McConnell et al. (2019) further observe professional and personal benefits for mentors, stating that student teachers bring new insights into teaching, which open mentors up to self-reflection on their daily teaching practices. In another study, Hudson (2013) found that mentors acknowledged that mentoring allowed them to engage with new practices (e.g., the latest teaching strategies, ICT usage, etc.) that helped enhance their teaching practices and other personal and professional educator roles such as communication.

Mentors' roles as role models have the effect of improving their self-confidence and fulfilment as they observe the development of their mentees over time (Krishna et al., 2020). This may lead to an overall improvement in their mentorship relationship with stakeholders in the school community. Mentoring during teaching practice thus not only benefits student teachers, as mentors are also nudged into self-development that affects their professional practice.

2.9 Barriers to Effective Mentoring During Teaching Practice in Schools

Research reveals some factors that contribute to the ineffective mentoring of student teachers during teaching practice. These factors emanate mainly from the relationships between the mentors and mentees (Krishna et al., 2020), student teachers' attitudes, the school context, as well as the level of support given to mentors and mentees by teacher-training institutions (Maphosa & Ndamba, 2012). The problem of attitude is not only limited to students, as Holt et al. (2016) noted that in the absence of similarity (i.e., effective pairing) between the mentor and mentee, the mentors may not give their all. This may, in turn, decrease the mentee's motivation to consult the mentor for assistance.

The initial phase of teacher education is a complex process in which many student teachers have to unlearn preconceptions they hold about the nature of teaching that would otherwise constrain their development in learning to teach. This is particularly true in the South African context, where the education system has recently undergone a radical and multi-faceted transformation (Du Plessis et al., 2020). For various reasons, student teachers do not always get the opportunity to observe mentor teachers modelling conceptually deep, inquiry-based

teaching during teaching practice sessions. As a result, the process of learning as envisaged by their university programs is compromised (Du Plessis et al., 2020). Frick et al. (2010) note that, due to the power imbalance between mentees and their mentors, student teachers' creative abilities and opportunities to explore new teaching strategies may be inhibited.

A lack of proper feedback by mentors due to the absence of mentor training is among the reasons resulting in the majority of mentors using "common sense" to mentor student teachers. Also, teacher-training institutions have been blamed for ineffective communication with schools to induct schools and mentors on the mentoring requirements for teaching practice (Maphosa & Ndamba, 2012). Cross et al. (2019) confirm this point by stating that:

Many student teacher mentors receive very little guidance on effective mentoring practices or ways to mentor student teachers toward the aims of particular teacher educator programs. Consequently, mentors often base their conceptualisation of mentoring around their own experiences as students, student teachers, and in-service teachers, as well as unique school contexts and individual dispositions for teaching (p. 297).

Dirks (2021) reported that limited interaction between mentors and training institutions is evident due to factors such as teacher workload, weak partnerships with educator trainers, limited space, and overcrowding in schools, among other factors. This makes for a disjointed and uncoordinated process of mentoring that does not assist in the deep development of student teachers into effective practitioners (Frick et al. 2010; Rhodes & Beneicke, 2002; Zeichner, 2010).

Furthermore, a disparity between the mentoring style and the learning needs of individual student teachers may lead to the withdrawal of a student teacher from the teaching practice. Such a disparity may limit the chances for student teachers to reach their best possible level of competence (Ersin & Atay, 2021). Despite the call for flexibility in the mentoring approach, most mentor teachers hardly vary their supervisory behaviour in response to the changing needs of student teachers and, either consciously or subconsciously, stick to a certain supervisory approach (Wang et al., 2006; Williams et al., 1998). A study conducted by Moosa and Rembach (2018) found that while student teachers expected a warm reception and support in schools, many experienced a lack of supportive mentorship from their mentors.

Literature is also replete with other examples of what creates barriers to effective mentoring, including the mentor teacher workload; power relations between the mentor and mentee inhibiting the student's ability to instigate change and explore new pedagogies; lack of time; lack of clear mentoring policies in schools; lack of willingness by both the mentor and mentee; and the lack of qualified mentors (Frick et al., 2010; Mutemeri & Chetty, 2011; Rhodes & Beneicke, 2002; Robinson, 2015). The prevalence of these barriers presents a huge challenge for student teacher learning and may perpetuate ineffective teaching practices and impact negatively on learner performance in schools.

2.10 Strategies to Improve Mentoring Practices in Schools

The significance of the effective mentoring of pre-service educators during teaching practice in schools is covered widely by studies on the subject, e.g., those by Frick et al. (2010); Korthagen (2009); Maphosa and Ndamba (2002); and Mukeredzi et al. (2015). While the literature identifies many barriers to effective mentoring, a litany of strategies to ameliorate them is also suggested.

According to Mukeredzi et al. (2015), training of mentors and deliberate collaborations between teacher-training institutions, the schools, and the departments of education are good practices towards effective mentoring. This can result in student teachers being able to “demonstrate more complete and effective planning, complete classroom instruction, and greater reflexivity on practice” (Glebelhaus & Bowman, 2002, as cited in Ferber and Nillas, 2010, p. 65). Many researchers agree that teacher training institutions should be responsible for facilitating the induction and training of all stakeholders involved in teaching practice (Tuomikoski et al., 2020). The role of schools in this regard must be to monitor and support the mentors and mentees in the mentoring process, while the departments of education should provide the necessary resources (Ncube et al., 2012). This assertion resonates with Du Plessis et al. (2010), who elaborate as follows:

In preparing students for teaching practice, all role-players need greater clarity on what is expected of students about learning outcomes, assessment criteria, and lesson plans. Students need to be placed at schools that will provide constructive learning environments, mentoring teachers should receive training, and there should be greater clarity on the who, what, and how of the assessment of students during teaching practice (p.112).

According to Zeichner (2010), there is a democratization of education through partnerships between universities and schools and the shared ownership of learning and educational spaces. Casale and Nduabgo (2021) mention “high impact practices” (HIP), in which universities and schools in close proximity form collaborations. HIPs are collaborative efforts between a university and community where pre-service teachers participate in projects that allow them to conduct problem-solving in the presence of experienced educators of differing backgrounds. Students alternate between periods of attending lessons at the university and being in the field. Such partnerships are mutually beneficial, as universities are given the chance for their students to get exposure to the rich experiences provided by mentors, and the school has access to quality teachers and sometimes additional resources for classroom use. Such exercises also provide mentors with the chance to reflect deeply on their practices, making them better practitioners in due course.

Mentors require competence in reflective skills and the ability to act as critical friends to support student teachers to become reflective practitioners (Frick et al., 2010). Hobson (2012) argues that mentors who are educated about mentoring can advance the quality of pre-service teacher education and, simultaneously, advance their skills. Mentor training should help mentors understand the importance and potential benefits of discussing pedagogical issues with their mentees (Tuomikoski et al., 2020) and should seek to help the mentors develop their interpersonal skills as well as their ability to stimulate mentees to reflect on their actions. Additionally, Ersin and Atay (2021) suggest that mentor training should be preceded by meetings between the mentors and mentees, long before the mentoring program starts. This will allow them to discuss their beliefs about teaching, their expectations, the preferred mentoring approach, and how observation lessons are going to unfold. This could serve to promote professional development for both mentees and mentors, resulting in improved learner performance in schools.

Wexler (2020) recommends that the teaching practice sessions be scheduled during schools’ non-examination periods. This important consideration enhances the student teachers’ mentoring, as it helps to overcome schools’ antipathy towards hosting student teachers. Orland-Barak and Wang (2021) maintain that schools should also schedule sufficient time for mentors to do the work of mentoring (e.g., by reducing the workload of mentor teachers to free up time for mentoring) and pair mentees with mentors who are not positionally superior, etc. (Hobson et al., 2007). This is supported by Wexler (2020), who argues that setting aside

dedicated time for mentors to embark on mentoring can be useful in making mentoring in schools more effective. This points to the need to strengthen the mutually beneficial partnerships between the schools, departments of education, and teacher training institutions. This will help familiarise such institutions with the contextual realities in schools while helping student teacher mentors and schools understand the institutions' expectations of mentoring (Mukeredzi et al., 2015).

Varying mentoring approaches by mentors to match the needs of student teachers is an important strategy to keep mentees gainfully engaged in mentoring relationships (Killion et al., 2020). Research also suggests that one of the most valuable specific mentoring strategies is lesson observation—both of and by the mentee—with a subsequent discussion between the observer and the observed (Orland-Barak & Wang, 2021). Mentors' observation of mentees' teaching tends to be most valued when it is preceded by a meeting to agree on the objectives of the observation and then followed by another, conducted in a sensitive manner, which provides an opportunity for constructive dialogue, including exploration of the perceived strengths and limitations of the mentee's teaching and the development of ideas for potentially overcoming any perceived limitations (Wexler, 2020).

Wexler (2020) also views, as a critical element, the level of functionality of schools as sites for teaching practice. She argues that it is where pre-service teachers learn about teaching by emulating experienced practitioners who act as their models of practice that effective student teacher learning emerges. It is, therefore, necessary that schools where teaching practice is undertaken are identified and developed into sites of excellence where quality learning and teaching, collegial support, and continuous professional development are embraced by all. The Integrated Strategic Planning Framework for Teacher Education (ISPFTED) (DHET, 2011) embraces this notion. In this regard, the ISPFTED adopted the development of teaching schools (TS) and professional practice schools (PPS) as “laboratories” and centres for “appropriate support and guidance of student teachers” during teaching practice (p. 18).

Hudson (2013) suggests that mentoring must be recognised and rewarded as professional development, with acknowledged professional development hours not only through approved professional development programs but also through the actual mentoring experience and other recognitions to promote effective practices in mentoring.

2.11 Conceptual Framework

The purpose of this section is to describe the conceptual framework that underpinned my study. This study sought to explore student teachers' experiences of mentoring during teaching practice in schools. The study assumed that student teachers are supposed to be given opportunities to grow as competent professionals during their teaching practice. This is achieved through continuous reflection on their own and their mentors' teaching practices, under the guidance of and in collaboration with their school-based mentors. While student teachers themselves bring a repertoire of knowledge and insight about teaching, the effectiveness of such insight and its impact on their development depends to a large extent on their professional and personal dispositions as well as the idiosyncrasies that their mentors bring into the mentoring relationship.

In this study, Hudson's Five-Factor Model (Hudson, 2004) was used to analyse the elements of mentoring that emerged from the mentoring relationships and also to frame the discussions on student teacher experiences during their teaching practice in schools. Hudson's Five-Factor Model is consistent with the constructivist approach to learning, which holds that students construct their knowledge through personal experiences within a social context (Fosnot, 2013). According to Hudson (2004), the relationship between the mentor and mentee is at the core of effective mentoring. This means that the mentee's learning experiences are enhanced when there is a good relationship and undermined when the relationship is dysfunctional. The constructivist theory is useful in mentoring as it underscores the use of experiences to help develop and shape the knowledge and skills of the mentee (Hein, 1991). The theory posits that what was learned and experienced in the past is instrumental in moulding what is currently being experienced. Thus, students themselves engage with existing knowledge and experiences to build new insights. In the process, meaning is progressively constructed on the continuum of generic to specific. The mentor's role can be improved through constructivism, and this will, in turn, help the mentee's development of their teaching practices.

2.11.1 Hudson's Five-Factor Model of Mentoring

Hudson (2004) proposes five factors that contribute to effective practices by mentors of pre-service teachers: personal attributes, system requirements, pedagogical knowledge, modelling, and feedback. The mentor's role here is to help the mentee get to the refined, desired level of pedagogical articulation so they can become confident and independent in their teaching

practice. This mentor-mentee relationship is strongly dependent upon mutual respect, good communication, and trust. This makes personal attributes the overarching factor in ensuring effective mentoring. The significance of this is depicted in Figure 2.1, where the band of personal attributes surrounds the other four factors. The interrelationship of the other four factors is also depicted by connecting arrows. These factors are presented in Figure 2.1 and discussed below.

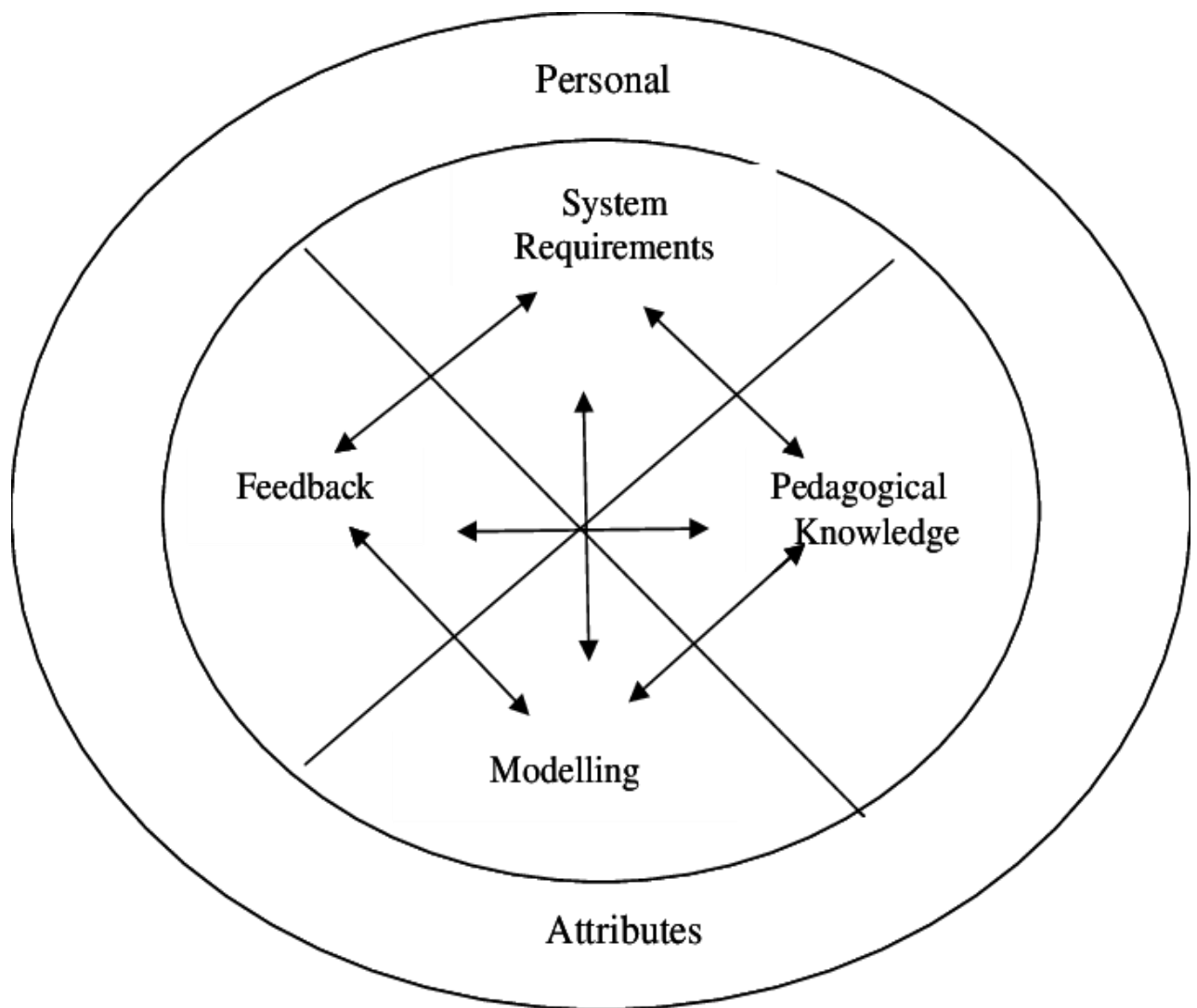


Figure 2.1: The Hudson Five-Factor Model (Hudson, 2004, p. 3)

2.11.2 Personal attributes

Effective mentoring requires mentors who take a keen interest in their mentees' learning to teach them what to do in the classroom environment. These are mentors who provide encouragement and emotional support, are easy to talk to (good-natured), and attend willingly to the student teacher's challenges in practice (Kennedy & Dorman, 2002). This kind of support is regarded as being at the core of the mentoring relationship, as it generates trust and confidence. It is therefore expected that mentors build constructive relationships with their mentees, where they can detect their underlying fears and needs and provide necessary support at all times (Ballinger & Bishop, 2011). This factor is the most critical of the five factors in Hudson's model, as Smolik (2010) explains:

Personal attributes underscored all subsequent factors because it required the mentor to develop a relationship with a mentee that was positive and supportive. Mentors needed to demonstrate good listening skills, reflective discourse, and a willingness to pursue a mentee's educational interests within the context of the classroom (p. 5).

This suggests that the personal attributes of both the mentor and the mentee begin the mentoring relationship and can make or break the kind of development that both can gain from this relationship. Having said this and given the power differential in the mentor/mentee relationship, the mentor needs to embody the qualities of trust, support, and approachability from the outset of their interaction. This should encourage the mentee to feel welcomed into a reciprocal relationship of warmth and openness. The context in which learning happens is social; therefore, the creation of an amicable social environment has the potential to shift the professional beliefs, values, and attitudes of the mentee (Hudson, 2008). It is the personal attributes of the mentor that contribute to the successes of all other factors (Hudson, 2004), and it is for that reason that Hudson places personal attributes as a band encompassing the other factors in his model. This emphasizes the importance of relationships in effective mentoring.

2.11.3 System requirements

Mentors who are familiar with the education and schooling system requirements regarding dynamics such as curriculum reforms and content practices are key to helping student teachers bridge the gap between what they learn at university and the realities of the school context

(Hudson, 2004). As future teachers, student teachers need a thorough understanding of the government's policies and mandatory requirements for curriculum delivery (Hudson, 2005). This can best be facilitated by mentors who are themselves capable professionals who have sufficient insight into the directives for teaching and learning in their subjects (Shea & Greenwood, 2007). Thus, mentors themselves must be proficient with the content of a particular subject and curriculum and how it is used within the school. Additionally, aspects of mentoring linked to system requirements include the specifics that given subjects aim to achieve and the school policies for a particular subject. System requirements refer to the general school and education policies as well as to the school culture. Acquaintance with the system requirements bridges the general education system to the school system in a way that shows how the two relate to each other. Effective mentoring requires that student teachers are introduced and supported in their understanding of the context of their teaching, which includes knowledge of the school culture and an understanding of a range of policies.

2.11.4 Pedagogical knowledge

Pedagogical knowledge has to do with “knowledge of how to teach in the classroom” (Shulman, 1986, as cited in Hudson, 2004, p. 42). For effective mentoring, this is not just the possession of general pedagogical knowledge but also up-to-date subject-specific pedagogy (Guerriero, 2017). Various subjects have different pedagogical knowledge that the mentor must be able to articulate clearly for the benefit of their mentees. This includes lesson planning, preparation, assessment, and classroom management strategies (Hudson, 2004). Pedagogical knowledge is perhaps the key factor justifying the need for teaching practice, as student teachers have to know how to teach. Above all else, mentees essentially need to develop teaching strategies, and mentors are the main source of this knowledge and skill (Smolick, 2010). The mentor's articulation of pedagogical knowledge and practice is key since the mentee's development is largely dependent on it. Teachers are also increasingly using electronic technologies to deliver instructions in these modern times, so technological pedagogical knowledge is also important as mentors have to develop their mentees on this aspect as well (Trombeta de Oliveira, 2021).

2.11.5 Modelling

Modelling entails the mentee learning by observing the mentor deliver instructions, manage the classroom, and demonstrate their professionalism. Good modelling gives birth to

competent student teachers who aim to be like their mentors, and “mentors are defined as experts who can model effective teaching practice” (Barat & Hay, 2001, as cited in Hudson, 2004, p. 143). Mentor teachers must therefore always be prepared to be observed and critiqued by their mentees for meaningful mentee development to take place. The mentor has to exhibit a passion for the work of teaching and create opportunities for the mentee to get involved so that they can develop their knowledge and skills. Research shows, however, that there is a general lack of guidance and clarity on the roles and responsibilities of mentors (Feiman-Nemser, 1998, as cited in Butler & Cuenca, 2012). This lack of guidance may harm student teacher development because if the mentors are left to use their own limited experience of mentoring without adequate guidance, any erroneous preconceptions that student teachers have about teaching may be reinforced rather than dislodged.

2.11.6 Provision of feedback

The importance of feedback in the mentoring process cannot be overstated. It is that time when the performance of the mentee is reviewed, and feedback given in order to improve their practice. Feedback can be given formally or informally. Formal feedback often takes the form of a planned, structured meeting, whereas informal feedback is usually given in real-time, for example, holding a conversation immediately after the lesson. Feedback should not sound negative but rather be constructive (Hudson, 2004), because the way in which feedback is given has the power to encourage or discourage the mentee.

Hudson (2004) explains that mentees can acquire their confidence from the feedback they receive from their mentors. This can help mentees develop the ability to make professional judgements about the appropriateness of how they teach and organize their educational efforts. These judgements are crucial and must always be made “in new, unique, and concrete situations” (Heilbronn, 2008, as cited in Biesta, 2015, p. 79). The relevance of feedback in pre-service teaching is also underscored by the DHET (2011) that mandates student teachers to be competent, reflective practitioners. It is further cemented by the way in which various authorities have spelled out the plethora of benefits of feedback in the mentoring process. These include, among others: the production of proficient professionals (Calderhead & Gates, 1993; Schon, 1983); the establishment of collaborative relationships (Harris, 2000); learning about the self in a context (Korthagen, 2004); and the acquisition of reflective skills (Frick et al., 2010).

The five factors, though presented separately in Figure 2.1, are not discrete as they overlap. For example, personal attributes are important when giving feedback, modelling, articulating system requirements as well as developing pedagogical knowledge. This model is useful in framing the student teacher experiences of mentoring in my study as these five broad themes are at the core of effective student teacher mentoring. In my study, Hudson's model represents a multifaceted lens through which the mentoring experiences of the student teachers can be understood and articulated.

The model depicts the multifaceted nature of mentoring and highlights the need to understand the complex nature of mentoring in analysing the student teachers' experiences. The model is useful in highlighting the key dimensions or aspects of effective mentoring through which the student teachers' experiences can be understood.

2.12 Conclusion of the Literature Review

This chapter explicated the various aspects of mentoring drawn from the literature. The concept of teaching practice and its role in teacher development was explored, with the role of mentoring highlighted as central to the development of pre-service teachers into fully-fledged professionals (Alsaleh et al., 2017; Du Plessis & Mestry, 2019; Goldhaber et al., 2020). Research reveals that mentoring student teachers can be key in inculcating practices of reflection in these mentees, as well as in teaching them to work collaboratively with colleagues in a community of practice (Frick et al., 2010). While mentoring student teachers is fraught with many challenges, literature shows some useful strategies to mitigate these, with the resulting benefits of effective practices also prominent across studies on the subject. The literature review has concluded with the conceptual framework based on Hudson's (2004) five-factor mentoring model, which gives the multifaceted lens through which the data was collected, analysed, and presented in this study. The next chapter discusses the research design and methodology employed in this study to explore the student teachers' experiences of mentoring during teaching practice in selected schools.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND DESIGN

3.1 Introduction

The previous chapter presented an in-depth review of literature related to the mentoring of pre-service teachers. Some of the concepts that were discussed in the preceding chapters include Hudson's Five-Factor Model, which serves as the theoretical framework for the study. This chapter provides a detailed discussion of the research design and methodology that were used to collect the primary data for the study, with a focus on the student teachers' experiences of mentoring during their teaching practice in selected schools. The chapter begins by discussing the research paradigm and research design used in this study, then the sampling procedures, data collection methods are outlined, and lastly, the data analysis, ethical considerations, and possible limitations of the study are also presented.

3.2 The Research Paradigm

This was a qualitative study within the interpretive paradigm. As I was interested in gaining insights into student teachers' experiences of mentoring during teaching practice in two schools—a primary school and a secondary school—an interpretive paradigm was appropriate. Cohen and Manion (1994) explain that a paradigm is what determines the sampling method to be employed, the data collection method to be used, as well as how that data will be analysed. McKenzie and Knipe (2006) maintain that the choice of a paradigm in research gives a basis for subsequent decisions in the research, including the choice of methodology, literature, and study design. The interpretive paradigm is followed when a researcher seeks to understand “the world of human experience” in the context of practice (Cohen et al., 2003, p. 36). In this study, the interpretive paradigm allows participants to reflect on their experiences of mentoring. The paradigm allows the researcher to ask some follow-up questions to get more clarity on a given subject. Citing Creswell (2003), McKenzie and Knipe (2006) state that for the interpretive researcher, participants' views on the phenomenon under investigation become the main source of insights into the subject being studied. They further note that interpretivism acknowledges the “background and experiences” and the influence these might have on research (p. 4). As a result, interpretive researchers tend to “generate or inductively develop a theory or pattern of meanings” from the qualitative data that emerges during the research process (Creswell, 2003, p. 9). My study sought to understand the

mentoring experiences of the selected student teachers through their voices, so the interpretive paradigm and qualitative data methods were appropriate, given the subjective nature of their responses.

3.3 The Research Design

A narrative inquiry was found to be useful as an approach to this study. A narrative inquiry refers to research procedures used by researchers to collect and report on stories of various phenomena told by people (Nigar, 2020). These stories are also called narratives (Crawford & Schultz, 2014). According to Connelly and Clandinin (1990), motivation for the use of narrative inquiry in education is the fact that “humans are storytelling organisms who, individually and socially, lead storied lives” (p. 2).

In support of this view, Clandinin (2006) explains that teachers’ knowledge “is developed out of teachers’ stories about their work and their dialogues with one another, with pupils, with teaching materials, and with themselves” (p. 359). Connelly and Clandinin (1990) further state that these stories may be viewed as a portal through which a person enters the world and by which their experience of the world is interpreted and made personally meaningful. This was important in the context of this study because it enabled me to perceive mentoring from the unique perspectives of each participant. This was about the elicitation of authentic stories of the experiences of mentoring told by the student teachers who were the participants in the study. These stories revealed themselves through the interview process and through their reflective journals.

3.4 Sampling

Sampling is the process by which the researcher selects the specific research participants from the research population (Gentles et al., 2015). In most instances, it is not possible for the researcher to interview all the elements of a research population. Consequently, there is a need to select a manageable number from the research population from a group of elements that can be construed as representative of the whole research population that the researcher is interested in (Palinkas et al., 2015).

Purposive sampling was used in this study. In purposive sampling, researchers select participants on the basis of their (participants’) typicality and access to or in-depth knowledge of the phenomenon being studied (Etikan et al., 2016). Drawing from Bertram and

Christiansen (2014), a specific sample of student teachers was selected for a specific purpose. This sample represents the population of student teachers whose experiences of mentoring are the focus of the study.

Participants in the study included student teachers who were enrolled at local universities, either for the Postgraduate Certificate in Education (PGCE) or the Bachelor of Education Degree (B Ed). Student teachers are placed in schools in term two of each year of study. They spend a period of four to five weeks doing teaching practice under the mentorship of school-based educators who teach subjects that are relevant to their fields of specialisation in their studies. The participants in this study were selected to ensure that there was proper representation among them. This was achieved in several ways. First, I made sure that there was equality in terms of gender when it came to the selection of the research participants. Second, I made sure that the research participants were in either their third or fourth year of study to ensure that they had sufficient experience with teaching practice. This ensured that the information that was obtained was truly representative of student teachers with experience of teaching practice in the field.

3.5 The Research Context

I conducted this study in two schools that form part of the Howick Circuit in the Umgungundlovu District in KwaZulu-Natal, one a high school and the other a primary school. Both schools are located in a township and classified as quintile three in terms of the Department of Education's Norms and Standards for School Funding (DoE, 1998). Schools in this category enrol the majority of their learners from poor households where the parents or guardians of the learners are either unemployed, earn low incomes, or are pensioners and cannot afford to fund the education of their children. The primary school offers education to 794 learners from grades R to 7 and has an educator staff complement of 33 fully qualified teachers, all with more than 10 years of teaching experience. The secondary school enrolls 1024 learners from grades 8 to 12. There are 38 teaching staff in their staff complement and all are fully qualified teachers.

The primary school was selected because I am the principal of the school, and this school is a feeder school for the secondary school selected. The secondary school is located close to the primary school. Both schools annually receive student teachers from various institutions for teaching practice. A close working relationship exists between me and the principal of the

secondary school. All these factors assisted in facilitating easy access to the participants. However, I was continuously cognisant of my positionality, and I ensured that all efforts were made to minimise any effect that this had. I achieved this by ensuring that the questions posed to the participants were neutral and not informed by any prejudices of mine. Participant reflective journals were also utilised to provide a threat-free space for the participants to reflect freely on their teaching practice experience. During participant briefing, I also made an effort to ensure that the participants were put at ease and assured them that the study would not impact their teaching practice reports. They were informed that their confidentiality would be ensured as they would be assigned pseudonyms and were free to recuse themselves from the study at any time if they felt the need to do so.

3.6 Data Collection

Two data collection methods were utilised in my study. These were semi-structured interviews and participant-reflective journals. Both of these approaches were selected in order to seek rich information from the participants regarding their experiences of mentoring during their teaching practice placements. The two methods are explored below.

3.6.1. Semi-structured interviews

Interviews are generally used when collecting primary data in qualitative research (Ary et al., 2010). Merriam and Tisdell (2015) also note that the use of interviews as a form of data collection is common in qualitative studies. Semi-structured interviews were used in this study to obtain the participants' reflections on the mentoring that they received during their teaching practice placements. The semi-structured interviews were conducted using questions that were specifically designed to cover the mentoring concepts that I was interested in. Merriam (2009) explains that a semi-structured interview entails either a set of flexibly structured questions or a combination of structured and less structured questions, so that similar information can be obtained from each participant. Using semi-structured interviews in this study allowed the participants to express their experiences with mentoring and allowed me to probe further into the responses that came up during the interviews. In other words, I used a number of guided questions as well as some open-ended questions in order to gain further clarity through probing. Interviews were conducted once, during the last week of the participants' four-week teaching practice period, and these were audio-recorded. Permission for the audio recording was sought by me and granted by the participants. All interviews were conducted by following strict safety precautions to ensure compliance with the national safety regulations and the

University of KwaZulu-Natal's rules for the prevention of the spread of Covid-19. These safety precautions included the wearing of masks, adherence to social distancing protocols, and the use of hand sanitizers. The interviews were conducted in a well-ventilated room, and there was no exchange of paper or other items. This was all in line with the protocols to limit the spread of Covid-19. The virus is spread by fluid droplets that people expel when coughing, sneezing, talking, or shouting (Rothan & Byrareddy, 2020). Conducting the interviews while observing the safety precautions helped protect all concerned from the possible risk of infection with Covid-19, and all interviews with the participants had a duration of one hour each.

My semi-structured interviews focused on the expectations that the participants had of the mentoring they received during their teaching practice, their actual experiences of mentoring during their teaching practice, as well as the strategies that the participants suggested could be implemented to make student teacher mentoring more effective. The process was guided by my research questions as well as the five factors for effective mentoring suggested by Hudson (2004). In accordance with Hudson's (2004) model, the participants were allowed the freedom to expand on their responses, and I had the opportunity to probe where necessary to elicit richer data that was specific to the study. All participants were asked the same set of questions (see Appendix 4), in line with Panke's (2018) assertion that semi-structured interviews entail a set of pre-determined, open-ended questions that allow for flexibility in follow-up questions. All interviews were conducted after school hours on days arranged and agreed upon with each participant. Before commencing with the interviews, I again explained the purpose of the study to the participants and that their participation was voluntary. We then discussed the issues of ethics and other information pertaining to the study.

Semi-structured interviews were appropriate for this study, as I could elicit rich data by using open-ended questions. They allowed me to ask probing questions so that participants could expand on their responses when I felt it was necessary to do so.

3.6.2. Reflective journals

Another data collection method that I used in this study was journaling. Furman et al. (2008) state that "journal entries and other (writing) exercises may be useful tools for self-discovery and self-reflection as well as a means of inquiry into the world" (p. 75). I created a journal template for each participant to use to facilitate their reflections. The participants were

instructed to make entries twice a week reflecting on their daily experiences of mentoring during their teaching practice (see Appendix 5). I set up a special meeting with the participants from each participating school at the beginning of the data collection process, where I explained the project's purpose, the issues surrounding their participation, and the use of the reflective journals. I collected the completed reflective journals at the end of each week. This allowed me to have a continuous reflection on the data that was being collected and how it related to the overall study. It also helped me to clarify, if necessary, any areas of misunderstanding revealed in the weekly reflections. I phoned each participant once a week to discuss their reflections orally in more detail and to probe and obtain clarification where necessary.

This process was outlined during the first meeting with the participants. All of the participants were able to complete and submit their reflective journals. The continuous contact with the research participants allowed me to keep getting more insight into their experiences of mentoring. Their reflective journals provided another lens with which to understand the student teachers' experiences of mentoring because of their subjective and personal nature.

3.7 Data Analysis

According to Cohen et al. (2017), data analysis includes "organising, describing, understanding, accounting for, and explaining data; making sense of data in terms of the participants' definitions of the situation (of which the researcher is one); and noting patterns, themes, categories, and regularities" (p. 643). An inductive data analysis method was used in this study to understand the student teachers' experiences of mentoring during their teaching practice in the sampled schools. The inductive approach begins with a set of empirical observations, seeks patterns in those observations, and then theorises about those patterns. The deductive approach begins with a theory, develops hypotheses from that theory, and then collects and analyses data to test those hypotheses. The audio-recorded data from the semi-structured interviews was transcribed from the audio format into text format. The participants were then asked to verify the congruence of the data transcripts with their original presentations in order to comply with the ethical requirements of research. The participants' reflective journals were already in text form. I assigned and used participant reference labels to protect the anonymity of the four participants in the study, and they were assigned the labels Participant 1 to Participant 4.

I analysed the data and organised it into a table to identify emerging themes in line with the research questions (Cohen et al., 2017; Naidoo, 2018). I organised the data in the table with the data categories across the top of the table and the participants' responses going down the table. I coded the responses for the emerging themes. Coding entails extracting chunks of data and labelling them in line with the category of their meanings (Rossman & Rallis, 2012). Coding the data required highlighting the significant aspects relevant to the student teachers' experiences of mentoring. According to Rule and John (2011), this process enables a researcher to become familiar with the study's data.

Having completed the coding of the data and developed broad categories, I then grouped the data into themes, drawing upon Hudson's five factors for effective mentoring (Hudson, 2004). Hudson's model provided the theoretical framework that was used as the basis to establish the broad themes and categories in the data (Myende, 2018). Maree (2007) observes that the interpretation of data to elicit useful content must always precede the process of analysing qualitative data. The data collected using the semi-structured interviews and the participants' reflective journals was analysed and sorted into seven categories, namely: the participants' expectations of mentoring during teaching practice; personal attributes; system requirements; pedagogical knowledge; modelling; feedback; and participants' suggested strategies for effective mentoring during teaching practice. The themes that emerged from the study helped to achieve the research's objectives and answer the research questions. The emerging themes were also used to conceptualise new arguments on mentoring as well as to support the existing arguments. This strategy helped me to answer the three research questions explored in this study, namely:

- i. What are student teachers' expectations of mentoring during teaching practice in schools?
- ii. What are student teachers' experiences during teaching practice in schools?
- iii. What strategies do student teachers suggest for effective mentoring during teaching practice in schools?

3.8 Ethical Considerations

I obtained ethical approval for the study from the Humanities and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee, University of KwaZulu-Natal, before collecting the data for this study. I also sought and obtained a letter of permission to conduct research from the KwaZulu-Natal

Department of Education, the manager of the Howick Circuit, the principals of the participating schools, and all of the participants (refer to Appendices 2, 3, and 6).

Ethical considerations refer to avoiding harming research participants (Edwards & Mauthner, 2002). Beckmann (2017) observes that there is a need for guidelines to be followed and considerations to be observed when researching so that the researcher does not take advantage of the research participants. These considerations entail the researcher ensuring adherence to the principles of informed consent by the participants, anonymity, confidentiality, and autonomy (McMillan & Schumacher, 2014). The researcher complied with these ethical principles throughout this study, as detailed below.

3.8.1 Informed consent

Consent refers to participants agreeing, without pressure from the researcher, to be part of the study and knowing the purpose of the study (Bertram & Christiansen, 2014). I had a telephonic session with each participant before the interviews were conducted. During the conversations, I explained the purpose of the research project, what was expected of them, the fact that their participation was voluntary, and that they could withdraw from the research at any time if they needed to. I then asked the participants to sign a consent form to this effect. The consent forms were sent to and returned by all participants via email as a precaution to prevent the spread of Covid-19.

3.8.2 Non-maleficence

Non-maleficence means that “research should not harm research participants or any other people” (Bertram & Christiansen, 2014, p. 66). In my research, the anonymity and confidentiality were ensured by assigning pseudonyms to the participants and schools. These pseudonyms were used in the reflective journals and for the verbatim responses quoted or recorded. The reflective journal templates were also emailed to the participants to protect them from contracting Covid-19.

3.8.3 Beneficence

I explained to the participants that there would be no material benefits accrued to them from the study. I expected the findings from this research to contribute to improving mentoring practices and enhancing the professional development of teachers for the benefit of schools,

student teachers, and the profession. As the researcher, I also considered my position as the principal of one of the participating schools and the issue of power relations that could inhibit free participation by the student teachers in my school. To mitigate against this, I met with the participants and put them at ease, developed a rapport with them, and explained the value of their participation in their development and how their participation in the study and the subsequent research findings could contribute to the field of mentoring. I encouraged them to offer authentic responses and highlighted that these would not be used for anything other than this study.

3.9 Limitations of the Study

The dependability of a study is enhanced when its limitations are mentioned by the researcher (Rule & John, 2011). There were some limitations to this study that need to be highlighted. First, my study was only conducted in two schools and with just four participants, so the findings cannot be generalised across a larger set of schools. To circumvent this, the research results need to be understood and interpreted in the context of this limited sample size. Also, because the study was conducted in KwaZulu-Natal Province, the results cannot be inferred for the rest of the country. However, the purpose of my study was to understand student teachers' experiences of mentoring in selected schools, so the concept of generalisability was not its purpose. Nonetheless, my study does have the potential to connect with or add to other studies in the field of mentoring.

The other limitation was that I am also the principal of one of the schools. This carries with it an association of power, which could be seen to influence the research process, including the authenticity of the student teachers' responses. This meant that from the outset, I needed to recognise this potential and manage my role with sensitivity and openness. This positionality might also be perceived as having the potential to allow some bias to creep into the data collection process, especially the data from the interviews. This limitation was overcome by the fact that the research was conducted across two different schools and two different methods of data collection were used, which contributed to the trustworthiness of the process.

3.10 Research Trustworthiness

According to Bertram and Christiansen (2014), credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability are four elements that qualitative researchers must keep in mind to ensure the trustworthiness of their studies.

Various strategies were used in this study to ensure the trustworthiness of the research. I chose to audio-record all the interviews that were conducted, as suggested by Lincoln and Guba (1985). This was designed to ensure that there would always be a true record of what was said by the participants and that these records would be available verbatim. This ensured that I could always come back to the recordings when analysing the data to ensure that whatever was said was correct. More than one instrument was used for data collection, and this further enhanced the trustworthiness of data, i.e., semi-structured interviews and participants' reflective journals were used as a form of triangulation. Furthermore, the participants were handed their transcribed interviews for member checking, and this contributed to the trustworthiness of the research.

Bertram and Christiansen (2014) explain that the transferability of a study is achieved when the findings can be transferred to similar contexts. This is important for a study because the research findings can be the basis for future research on the subject. As this was a small-scale study, my findings are not transferable; however, the findings could resonate with similar studies in other contexts.

A study is dependable if the strategies employed are explained thoroughly and their effectiveness is properly justified, evaluated, and audited (Yilmaz, 2013). Dependability was achieved in this study because the interview schedule was first subjected to review by my supervisor before implementation. Member checking of the transcribed interviews, plus the use of actual quotations from participants, further contributed to the dependability of the collected data.

Lastly, the confirmability of a study is ensured when its findings are derived from or grounded in the data collected, and this can be audited and confirmed by role players in the study, e.g., the participants and auditors (Cohen et al., 2011; Rule & John, 2011; Yilmaz, 2013). The study's participants were allowed to make any necessary corrections to the data transcripts, and all transcripts were accepted as accurate reflections by the participants. In addition, I detailed all the steps in conducting this study, from the start of the project to reporting on the findings, and all the details of the research process are available. Supporting documents are also included as attachments in this project report.

3.11 Conclusion

This chapter outlined the research design and methodology used in the study. The interpretive research paradigm and the qualitative approach employed were presented. The chapter also outlined and justified the use of two data collection methods, processes, and techniques and why they were relevant to this particular study. A detailed description of the research context, sampling strategy, data collection, and analysis were then given. Finally, the issue of ethics and the limitations of the study, including my position and my trustworthiness, were delineated. The next chapter presents and analyses the data from the semi-structured interviews and the participants' reflective journals.

CHAPTER FOUR

PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

4.1 Introduction

The research design and methodology used in this study were explained in detail in the previous chapter. This chapter provides the presentation and analysis of the data that was gathered using the semi-structured interviews and the participants' reflective journals. The purpose of the study was to explore student teachers' experiences of mentoring during teaching practice in schools. The data collected was used to answer the three research questions that guided this study:

- i. What are student teachers' expectations of mentoring during teaching practice in schools?
- ii. What are student teachers' experiences during teaching practice in schools?
- iii. What strategies do student teachers suggest for effective mentoring during teaching practice in schools?

An inductive approach was used to analyse the data for the first and third research questions. This was because the themes that emerged from the participants' answers on their expectations and improvement strategies suggested the need for such (Cohen et al., 2017). The second question was analysed deductively, with the data arranged and organised by the themes identified in the conceptual framework, namely Hudson's Five-Factor Model for Effective Mentoring. Bingham and Witkowsky (2022) describe the deductive analysis method as a "top-down" approach to data analysis. This means that predetermined data themes are created from concepts drawn from the theory and applied to the data for categorisation and analysis. The five factors identified by Hudson (2004) for effective mentoring were used as the themes into which the data was arranged and organised. The questions and prompts for the data collection instruments were also developed using these five factors as the frame of reference. This provided a useful structure for analysing and interpreting data.

The profiles of the four participants in this study are outlined and the data collected during the research process is presented thereafter.

4.2 Profiles of the research sites and participants

The participants in this study were four student teachers, two males and two females, pursuing their teaching qualifications at local universities. They were placed in the two schools, a primary school and a secondary school, for their routine annual teaching practice sessions, as required by their university courses. Brief profiles and biographies of each participant are outlined below:

The true names of the participants and their schools have been replaced by pseudonyms to protect their identities and to comply with the principle of anonymity. The adopted names of the schools are Emfuleni Primary School and Olwandle Secondary School, both of which are located in the Howick Circuit. Emfuleni Primary School enrolls 794 learners from grades R to 7. Olwandle Secondary School enrolls 1024 learners from grades 8 to 12. Both schools are categorized at quintile three in terms of the Department of Education's Norms and Standards for school funding (DoE, 1998). These are schools that serve learners mostly from poor home backgrounds where the parents or guardians are either unemployed, live on government grants, or are low-income earners and cannot afford to pay school fees. The schools receive student teachers every year who come from the local teacher education training institutions to embark on their teaching practice placements. The pseudonyms used for the participants are: Participant one: Nana; Participant two: Linda; Participant three: Sanele; and Participant four: Philas.

Participant one: Nana

Nana is 21 years of age. She is in the third year of her Bachelor of Education (BEd) degree and is specialising in the foundation phase. She is studying on a part-time basis through the University of South Africa (UNISA) and this is her second year of doing teaching practice at Emfuleni Primary School. She said, *"I started at nursing school but couldn't get a job, and my family persuaded me towards teaching. I have qualities of being a teacher"*.

Participant two: Linda

Linda is a 23-year-old male. He is currently pursuing his Bachelor of Education degree through the University of South Africa (UNISA) and is specialising in the intermediate phase. This is his third year of study, and it is the first time he is doing his teaching practice at

Emfuleni Primary School. He said that the love he has for working with children was a motivating factor for him to pursue teaching as a career.

Participant three: Sanele

Sanele is a 23-year-old student. He completed his matric at Olwandle Secondary School. He is currently in the fourth year of his Bachelor of Education degree through the Durban University of Technology (DUT). His subject specialisations are mathematics and physical science. He has done all of his past teaching practice at Olwandle Secondary School. He said that his physics teacher was his inspiration for following a teaching career.

Participant 4: Philas

Philas is a 24-year-old Postgraduate Certificate in Education (PGCE) student from the Durban University of Technology (DUT). She is in her final year of study and is specialising in further education and training. Her major subjects are mechanical technology and mathematical literacy. Her love for these subjects inspired her to choose the teaching profession to make an impact on school children, especially girl learners, “because they are generally reluctant to choose mechanical technology as a subject”. This is her first placement in teaching practice at Olwandle Secondary School. She did not matriculate at Olwandle Secondary School, and she says she felt she was not as welcome as the other students who had matriculated there and were now coming for their teaching practice at the school. The table below provides a summary of the participants’ profiles:

Table 4.1: Summary of the participants’ profiles

Participant’s name (Pseudonym)	Gender	Age	School (Pseudonym)	Qualification Pursued	Year of Study	Specialisation/ Major Subject
Nana	Female	21 years	Emfuleni Primary	Bachelor of Education	3 rd year	Foundation phase
Linda	Male	23 years	Emfuleni Primary	Bachelor of Education	3 rd year	Intermediate phase
Sanele	Male	23 years	Olwandle Secondary	Bachelor of Education	4 th year	Further education and training - maths and physics
Philas	Female	24 years	Olwandle Secondary	Post Graduate Certificate in Education	Final year	Further education and training – maths literacy and mechanical technology

Data was collected through semi-structured interviews and participants' reflective journals. The participants' responses were categorised according to the research questions of this study. The data gathered was then analysed by reading and re-reading it to get a thorough understanding of all the data. The data was then coded to establish common themes per data category. The participants' responses to research questions one and three were organised according to the themes that emerged from the data on the student teachers' expectations as well as from the data on their suggested strategies for the improvement of mentoring. On the other hand, the themes identified from the conceptual framework were used to organise and analyse the participants' responses to research question two. These are presented and discussed under each research question below:

4.3 What are student teachers' expectations of mentoring during teaching practice in schools?

The purpose of this question was to establish the areas that the participants expected to receive mentoring in during their teaching practice placements in the schools. Student teachers begin their training as teachers with preconceptions of what teaching entails (Lortie, 1975). These preconceptions are developed during their time as learners in schools by observing their teachers as well as during their initial training as teachers. Their expectations in terms of how their development will be shaped and nurtured by mentors are created as a result of these preconceptions, other teachers, and the whole school community in general. In exploring these expectations, the themes presented below emerged from the semi-structured interview data responses of the participants and their journal reflections.

4.3.1 Development of classroom management skills

Creating an environment that promotes co-operation between the teacher and learners is an immediate task for every teacher. Too often, teachers, especially novice and student teachers, express concern over how to achieve "good discipline" in their classrooms (Doyle, 1980). Hudson (2004) lists classroom management strategies among the important mentor attributes for effective mentoring. This was evident in the participants' responses to their expectations in this area.

Nana hoped that her mentors would contribute to her confidence when teaching in the classroom. She commented that she was expecting *“to be given confidence to stand in front of the class and teach”*. This was due to her fear of standing in front of a class to teach. She pointed out that her fear has arisen from her experience at school as a learner observing how fellow learners were noisy and disruptive in class. She was also aware of the behavioural challenges and learner attitudes that student teachers experienced during teaching practice because of disruptive learner behaviour. She felt that learners misbehaved because they knew that *“you are not a qualified teacher, you are only practising”*, especially when the mentor was not in the classroom. For Nana, this had created a great expectation that her mentor would be by her side all the time. Philas similarly frequently mentioned her challenges with classroom management when she pointed out: *“I got a phobia to stand in front of many people. I expected that I would overcome this phobia with the help of my mentor”*.

A phobia is an extreme fear of something. When asked about where this fear had come from, Philas mentioned that large classes could be quite intimidating and the fact that she was doing her teaching practice for the first time in this school as the major factors that contributed to her extreme fear of standing in front of the class. She had also learned that the school did not offer mechanical technology, which was her subject specialisation. This meant that she would be placed with a mentor for a new subject that was not her area of specialisation. She felt that this would expose her vulnerability to the learners because she might struggle to explain certain concepts in the subject, and therefore hoped for a mentor who would provide her with support throughout her teaching practice.

Linda too, explained that he didn't have the confidence to stand in front of the class so *he “needed someone who can give me experience and boost my confidence in front of the learners”*. Linda indicated that part of his worry was that the *“learners would spoil my lesson”* during the university tutor's visits for formal evaluation. His worry arose from thinking that some learners might be unruly, noisy, and not concentrate and, therefore, “spoil” his lessons during his evaluations.

Among the many apprehensions experienced by student teachers, they tend to be more anxious about their formal evaluations as these contribute to their final marks towards completion of their teaching qualifications. In their study on student teachers' anxieties during teaching

practice, Ngidi and Sibaya (2003) found that, together with classroom management concerns, evaluations also ranked among the sources of anxiety for student teachers.

Sanele, however, had a slightly different response regarding his expectations in this area. Because he was in the same school and had the same mentor from the previous year, he was confident that he would fare well in managing classroom behaviour, especially because he was familiar with the group of learners that he was going to work with. He responded as follows when asked about his fears, *“I worked with these learners last year, but my mentor was often away, and I struggle to punish naughty learners. If he can come with me all the time to support me”*. Although Sanele seemed less anxious about disruptive learners, he still expressed a great need for constant mentoring in this area.

Anxiety and fear seem to be the most common emotions among most student teachers. One key expectation during teaching practice is that their mentors will always be there for them to provide support as they find their feet in the profession. The participants expected to be guided and given the skills and confidence to manage their classrooms effectively. Classroom management therefore emerged as a main source of anxiety for the participants leading to an expectation of mentor support in this area.

It was evident from the participants’ reflections that student teachers invest much of their hopes for their development of classroom management skills in their mentors during teaching practice in schools. The same observation was raised by scholars like Rusznyak (2009) who argue that mentors are crucial role models for student teachers and their development.

4.3.2. Development of pedagogical skills

There is agreement among scholars that pedagogical knowledge covers a teacher’s knowledge of the subject matter, the general knowledge of the subject matter, and how to teach in the classroom (Grossman et al., 1989; Marks, 1990; Shulman, 1986; 1987). It entails understanding how subject content is organised, presented, and adapted for instruction to learners with diverse abilities (Shulman, 1987). Mentors can play a critical role in guiding new teachers in the understanding of pedagogical content knowledge. According to Shulman (1987), pedagogical content knowledge represents the blending of subject content and pedagogy into an understanding of how particular topics, problems, or issues are organised,

represented, and adapted to the diverse interests and abilities of learners, and presented for instruction. Hudson (2004) recognises the value of understanding teachers' pedagogical knowledge of content as something that mentees need to be taught as part of their mentoring. All four participants expected to be guided on how to engage such key pedagogical skills as lesson planning, teaching subject content and assessment of different lessons to learners with different levels of understanding and abilities.

Drawing from the participants' interview responses and journal reflections, pedagogical skills evidently emerged as a key finding among the areas that the participants expected to be mentored in during their teaching practice. Previous research has shown that pedagogical skills are not fixed and can change over time, and they are affected by various factors such as experience, educational qualifications, and demographic variables (Amusan, 2016). It has been emphasised that pedagogical skills go beyond just having knowledge of a subject and include effective communication, classroom management, and adaptability (Ikromova, 2020). The results from the participants' interviews shed light on how both mentors and mentees expected flexibility and innovation in facilitating classroom education.

Nana explained that she expected that mentors would give her guidance on the *"planning of lessons to be taught"* and also that a mentor would *"observe how I was teaching a particular lesson"*. In a reflective journal entry, she elaborated that the mentor *"must not spoon feed me but must allow me some independence"*. She further felt that she needed guidance on planning lessons, making lessons more interesting, involving different learners in lessons, and various assessment strategies. She was also of the opinion that a mentor must create a space for her to explore and give her some measure of independence. The use of the term, "spoon feed" indicated that she did not need to be too dependent on her mentor and wanted some flexibility and independence to explore on her own.

A similar expectation was expressed by Philas when she expected that she *"will be more mentored than being just given a lesson, like, uh! to get feedback on how I explained concepts, asked questions to learners and so on, yabo? (you see?)"*. Her journal entry reflected the expectation that she anticipated a mentor who would *"plan all lessons with me, teach or observe me, and provide me with useful feedback to develop me"*. Philas hoped that this would unleash her creativity and that this would also benefit her mentor. She believed that mentors

can also benefit from their mentees because mentees are exposed to the latest research in education, including technological innovations and the latest teaching strategies that student teachers obtain from their university studies. She was therefore also prepared to have her mentor learn from her creative teaching strategies.

Sanele and Linda's expectations similarly centered around being guided on the use of different methods of teaching in the classroom. Sanele had been in the same school for teaching practice the previous year. He was enthusiastic and wanted to learn as much about teaching strategies as possible from his mentor. His expectations were that the mentor would expose him to "*his methods that he uses in teaching of different topics in physics so well*". Sanele felt that he wanted "*to improve my teaching of difficult topics in physical science*". He remembered how he had struggled the previous year when explaining some difficult topics in physics. Sanele was already expecting his mentor's pedagogical skills to brush off on him because he had been mentored by the same mentor the previous year. His mentor also happened to be his former teacher in matric, who was known for producing excellent matric results in physical science and mathematics.

Sanele was inspired by his need to become the best physical sciences teacher, just like his grade 12 teacher who now happened to be his mentor. Linda hoped that his mentor would help him build on the skills he had learned at university. According to him, a mentor must "*give me skills, how to make learners interested in my lessons, like using teaching aids and how to handle behaviors due to different home backgrounds*". Linda felt that the effective use of teaching aids could enhance his lessons and make them interesting for learners, and that this would lead to a better grasp of the subject content. However, the behavior brought by learners from different home backgrounds was one area of anxiety that he expected to be mentored on. This, according to him, could be executed by a mentor teacher who was well-trained, had deep subject knowledge, and had vast experience in teaching his subject.

Experienced teachers can be of assistance in guiding student teachers in navigating their development of pedagogical skills, including lesson planning, lesson presentation, and assessments (Mukeredzi et al., 2015). Mentoring of student teachers by experienced teachers has to include guidance on how to teach different kinds of topics to a variety of learners in terms of their age, ability, and competence. These areas of mentoring emerged as key areas of

expectation among the participants. The findings confirmed that teacher training programs need to be comprehensive and robust to be effective. Scholars have indicated that different variables must be considered and prioritisation must be given to the development of comprehensive skill sets in teaching (Amusan, 2016; Ikromova, 2020). These programs enhance teachers' preparation for both in-service and pre-service educators so that they can address the comprehensive educational requirements of their students effectively.

4.3.3. Relationship with mentors

Literature has provided significant insights regarding the importance of relationships in the educational mentorship process. Research has shown that the relational aspects of mentorship, including trust, open communication, and mutual respect, are crucial for effective educational training (Hudson, 2016; Zachary & Fain, 2022). Mentors require pedagogical and interpersonal skills to transmit knowledge effectively and create a supportive learning environment (Hudson, 2016). Mentorship necessitates a continual focus on the relationship for effective educational training (Zachary & Fain, 2022). The data from the semi-structured interviews indicated that all four participants felt that a mentor should be welcoming towards student teachers before, during, and after lessons, as well as in their general interactions.

On the other hand, the participants' journal entries revealed their expectations of their mentors: they want them to be friendly and prepared to walk with them for the duration of the mentorship period, without the mentees necessarily being too dependent on their mentors. Nana's reflection asserted that she expected a mentor who was welcoming and friendly, but that "*she must not be too friendly, or she will spoil the student-teacher*". This meant that she needed to develop some degree of independence while getting some key support from her mentor. Nana also expected that her mentor would act as a "*role model who has a positive attitude and is enthusiastic about guiding student teachers*".

Philas also shared Nana's sentiment, saying that a friendly mentor must always be by the side of the student teacher, helping and providing support without "*spoon-feeding me*". This indicates that while Philas needed a continuous mentor presence by her side before, during, and after lessons, as well as during their general interactions, she also needed opportunities to explore things on her own. This is similar to the opinion of Krishna et al. (2020), who argue that mentors can improve the self-confidence of student teachers by guiding them instead of resorting to spoon-feeding mechanisms. Philas further expected that her mentor would receive

her warmly and introduce her to the principal, the staff, and other student teachers that were at the school. Linda's expectation was that a mentor would be welcoming and passionate about the work of mentoring. He expected someone who would "*treat me like his child*". For Linda, a mother-child relationship between him and his mentor would provide a comfortable space for him to develop and learn from his mistakes.

Similarly, while Sanele had matriculated at this school and had done his teaching practice at the school in the past and therefore had some understanding of the kind of mentors to expect, he still expected a passionate mentor who would "*frequently come with me to class all the time*". This expectation attests to the need for mentoring to be a process that requires a commitment to building a cordial relationship between the mentees and mentors. A good relationship between a student teacher and their mentor is essential to allay the fears and anxieties of the student teachers. According to Ehren et al. (2019), mentors are important because they also provide emotional support to student teachers, boosting their confidence and improving their self-esteem.

Student teachers have many anxieties about the attitudes and competencies of the mentors they will be allocated during their teaching practice, and they therefore need to be assured and provided with the necessary emotional support by their mentors (Marais & Meier, 2004). This emerged among the participants' expectations as a key factor in the success or failure of their teaching practice. For instance, Linda indicated that he was passionate about teaching and that this was what had led him to choose the profession. He therefore expected to have a mentor who was welcoming and passionate, so as not to dampen his love for teaching. A good relationship between mentors and mentees is among the factors key to effective mentoring of student teachers.

A mentor who is available to listen as the mentee shares his/her frustrations and successes in the classroom is an ideal candidate to provide the emotional support necessary for the mentee (Koballa et al., 2008). Among many factors, this can put student teachers at ease as they navigate through the practices of the teaching profession. The findings reflected that mentor-mentee relationships in educational training settings are a complex interplay of various factors. This resonates with scholarly insights that the factors influencing mentoring outcomes include the nature of the relationship (judgmental vs. developmental), the effectiveness of the relationship (effective vs. dysfunctional), and the desired qualities and roles of mentors (Fairbanks et al., 2000; Manning & Hobson, 2017; Scandura, 1998).

4.3.4 Orientation into the school culture

According to Spillane (2000), the school culture refers to the “socialisation of teachers to the existing organisational norms through policies and procedures that give the direction of the organisation and control how personnel in these organisations conduct themselves” (p. 324). The participants’ journal responses revealed some of the elements of the school culture and routines that they expected to be mentored on as part of their mentoring during teaching practice. The introduction of student teachers to the school principal, the SMT, the staff, and even the learners during a general assembly emerged as some of the main things that the participants expected. The participants believed this could help them feel welcome so that they could settle into the school environment quickly.

This was viewed by Nana as key to ensuring that she was accepted as one of the staff members at the school. According to her, this would formalise her placement in the school so that everyone in the school could recognise her as a teacher in the school. In addition to this, Nana also pointed out her need to get in touch with someone more senior than her mentor if she wanted to seek help that the mentor could not give or when the mentor was absent. She explained her experience as follows: *“Last year, I happened to be in charge of a class when my mentor was sick for two days. I was scared but had to be strong because I had no one to tell”*. This experience had created the need for Nana to become familiar with the school’s management structures and routines that could provide support and guidance over and above what her mentor could provide.

Linda indicated his yearning for the formal introduction to the staff *“so that they know us, and we are part of them, not only of the teachers who are our mentors”*. He remembered that in his previous teaching practice placement, he was introduced to learners and teachers in the general assembly, *“which made me feel that am the part”*. This assertion indicated Linda’s expectation of acceptance by the broader staff and even learners as part of the school community, as this would contribute positively to his development as a professional teacher.

This sentiment was confirmed by Hagenauer et al. (2023), who maintain that student teachers feel motivated, and their confidence is boosted when they are warmly received and supported by their mentors. Other areas of school culture that emerged from Nana’s interview responses included the school times, the timetables, as well as the dates for sports activities. She indicated the following: *“I want to play with learners outside the class in a relaxed*

environment so that they will enjoy my lessons". Nana wanted to play a role in extra-curricular activities and use this to win the hearts of learners so that they could connect, even in class during lessons.

On the other hand, Philas stated that *"I expect that my mentors will introduce me to the principal and staff and introduce me into the school ways of doing things that other student teachers already knew about because they were here last year"*. Philas was placed in this school together with other student teachers who were not participants in this study but who had done their teaching practice in this school in the past. Philas was at this school for the first time and therefore felt that the other students were already familiar with the school environment, while she was not. It was, therefore, her expectation that her mentor would familiarise her with the school's routines, such as the *"starting time and closing of school, where learners play during break, assembly, and to be included in staff meetings to get what is discussed and learn"*. When probed further, Philas indicated that she expected to be mentored in these areas because she wanted to organise herself to ensure that she came to work on time as she stayed quite far away from the school. She further explained that she needed experience in leading an assembly and assisting learners during meals at breaktimes to make a difference in the school.

While Sanele was familiar with some of this school's routines, since he had matriculated at this school and had done teaching practice there in the past, he still expected to be invited to the school's staff and departmental meetings. He explained that in the past, they were not invited to such meetings as student teachers. He further explained his reasons for wanting to attend these meetings as follows: *"I struggle how to punish learners because it is illegal now to use the stick. I end up chucking out learners who disturb during lessons, but they lose out, which is not good"*. Sanele also felt that he was a bit inadequate in explaining certain concepts in the physical sciences and therefore hoped that his mentor would come with him into all of his lessons so that he could be observed, guided, and taught with his mentor's support. Sanele hoped that these lessons would give him the opportunity to learn how to deal with these issues from experienced teachers.

Scholars like Marais and Meier (2004) identify mentors as important people to guide student teachers, not only in the classroom but also outside the classroom. This can be essential in helping student teachers understand their roles and the expectations and policies of the institutions where they have been placed.

Having considered the participants' expectations of mentoring, the next section presents the experiences of the mentees during the mentoring process at the schools.

4.4 How did student teachers experience mentoring during teaching practice?

This study employed Hudson's Five-Factor Model (Hudson, 2004) as a conceptual framework to analyse the elements of mentoring that emerged from the participants' experiences of mentoring during teaching practice. This section covers the mentoring relationships between student teachers, who were the participants in this study, and their mentors and frames the discussion in light of the student teachers' experiences. Hudson's model was used to structure the semi-structured interview schedule and guide the sections in the participants' reflective journals that focused specifically on the experiences of the participants. The findings from the participants' responses in terms of how they experienced mentoring during teaching practice are reported below, in line with each of Hudson's factors as themes.

4.4.1 Personal attributes of the mentors

Personal attributes here refer to the personal characteristics of the mentors that contribute to effective mentee development and assist mentors in reflecting on their teaching practices with confidence (Hudson, 2004). These attributes include taking a keen interest in mentee development and being friendly, approachable, supportive, and encouraging towards mentees (Ackley & Gall, 1992; Bryan & Abell, 1999; Upson et al., 2002). The personal attributes of the mentors are key foundational factors for effective mentoring because the quality of the relationships between the mentors and mentees determines the quality of the mentoring in the other four factors as well.

The participants were prompted to reflect on the personal attributes they had observed in their mentors during the period of teaching practice in their reflective journals and interviews. This was to assist in understanding the extent to which such attributes facilitate the mentor-mentee relationship. They were asked to elaborate on the personal strengths and weaknesses observed in their mentors and whether they were comfortable during their interaction with their mentors.

All four participants felt that their mentors were welcoming and friendly towards them, and this put them at ease when they interacted with their mentors on various teaching and learning

activities. Nana explained that her mentor was always *“helpful, and took me as her child and even shared her lunch with me, and sometimes gave me transport money”*. Nana expressed the special level of helpfulness and care that she received from her mentor. In her reflection, Nana explained that her mentor was like a parent to her, as she was *“easy to talk to”* and she had *“learned a lot”* from her. Linda similarly felt welcomed and reported that his mentor had also *“welcomed”* his *“initiatives”*. He further explained that there was a shortage of resources in the school, so he had *“worked out from my knowledge and created charts for history and geography concepts for displaying in the class. She was excited at what I did”*. He elaborated that this had happened during the week when the subject advisor from the local office of the Department of Education visited. The subject advisor was impressed by the way Linda had used his skills to display the charts as they showcased his creativity.

Responding to the question on the personal attributes of his mentor, Linda felt that his mentor was supportive and instilled confidence in him to talk freely about what teaching involved as well as general issues of personal development. He remembered that *“one day we sat down during break, she shared her lunch with me, and we talked about personal stuff, and she counselled me to focus on my studies, work hard, cope with personal challenges and not be taken by stuff that destroys many young people”*. Linda felt that his mentor provided emotional support for him as well as encouragement to work hard to succeed in his studies. This experience was very similar to Nana’s experience with her mentor.

Sanele stated that his mentor was like a brother, and he even played soccer with him after school hours. It was due to this kind of relationship that Sanele felt encouraged to request his mentor’s help, even after school hours, when he wanted to clarify *“certain areas of physics, like ‘vectors’ and ‘equilibrium’ that I felt anxious to teach”*. However, Sanele also said that his mentor was not approachable to the learners, and the learners ended up asking him (Sanele) for assistance with their projects and other tasks. This suggests that his mentor viewed his mentoring role in a different light from his teacher-learner role.

The three participants described their mentors as friendly and welcoming. They felt that mentors exhibited personal attributes such as being supportive towards their mentees and were always available to listen attentively to their mentees. The use of the phrases *“easy to talk to”* and *“welcomed my initiatives”* by Nana and Linda, respectively, points to mentors who are emotionally prepared to listen to and work with their mentees in order to instill confidence

and positive attitudes. According to Hudson (2007), these mentors' personal attributes are key to effective mentoring of student teachers, as they encourage trust and allow mentees to view feedback in a constructive light.

Philas, on the other hand, felt that while her mentor was welcoming, communication with him about crucial issues of teaching practice was superficial. Philas' frustration arose out of her mentor's indifferent attitude towards their mentor-mentee relationship. She reported that her mentor would, for example, ask her, "*How are the learners treating you?*" with no intention of following up on the challenges that she faced. Philas further reported that she got few opportunities to observe her mentor teaching, and there was therefore limited time for them to establish a mentor-mentee rapport. Philas expressed her discontent when responding to the question about the kind of support she received. She said that her mentor had only supported her with things outside the classroom, for example, "*when grade 11 boys were taking unnecessarily long to get into class*", and never really got to the real business of mentoring in the classroom.

It was evident from the participants' responses that their mentors were generally friendly and welcoming. This allowed them to explore their teaching practice in a supportive environment at the school. Although these mentees' experiences were different with each of their assigned mentors, their mentors were approached to some degree.

4.4.2. System requirements

Education systems worldwide have mandatory system requirements for providing direction on the implementation of education programs, so as to achieve the specific aims of teaching (Hudson, 2004). In addition to the mandatory requirements of the authorities (e.g., Departments of Education), schools have rules, routines, and other directives from the local educational authorities and school management for organising schools' daily educational activities. These requirements consist of curriculum policies, curriculum aims, and other school-related policies. Hudson (2004) recognises the system requirements as an essential factor for effective mentoring and maintains that mentors can contribute to their mentees' understanding of various practices linked to the system requirements. Mentors, therefore, need to have a good grasp of the system requirements, both the mandatory and the internal school requirements, but especially the subject-specific curriculum policies and guideline documents for their mentees' specialisations. This should help them address the requirements of the

curricula to enable mentees to develop effective teaching practices such as planning, teaching, assessment, reflection, and other educational practices (Hudson, 2004).

The data from the participants' reflective journals and semi-structured interviews revealed that mentors engaged their mentees in some of the practices associated with the system requirements. Nana reported that she got to know about various school and curriculum system requirements through daily interactions with her mentor, but also by observing and being part of the school's daily life. She recalled that her mentor had *"introduced to me Covid-19 regulations that were followed by the school. There is also the ATP for the subjects that outlines concepts to be covered in the remaining time"*.

According to Nana, the school followed these regulations to ensure the safety of all staff and learners and mitigate the risk of infection with the coronavirus. The ATPs are the annual teaching plans provided by the Department of Education to guide teachers on subject content, the teaching pace, and assessment tasks to be covered after the loss of time due to the closure of schools during the national lockdown in 2020. Nana further reflected that during her interactions with her mentor, *"I also learned about school times, curriculum and assessment policy documents (CAPS), and Jika Imfundo curriculum coverage guidelines"*. With regard to school times, Nana explained that she was introduced to the composite school timetable in her mentor's class, and they referred to it when planning their day's activities.

Linda similarly also reflected that his mentor shared school timetables with him and that he also *"saw my mentor marking class register of learners, and I asked to assist, and she took me through"*. Linda reported that he went on to help his mentor with the marking of the daily learner attendance register and submitting it to the school administrator for capture on the school's computer system every Friday. Another routine that Linda observed was that *"every day, at the end of the day, the cleaners would come to spray and clean classrooms in compliance with Covid-19 regulations"*. According to Linda, this was one of the safety regulations that he learned about that was observed by all in the school.

Just like Nana, Linda was also exposed to the curriculum policies and documents used by his mentor. The ATP, CAPS, and Program of Assessment (POA) are the curriculum documents that his mentor introduced him to and that she used in planning lessons and assessment tasks. Reflecting on other policies and routines that he learned about, Linda recalled that student

teachers had a separate attendance register from that of the permanent staff. The student teachers had to sign this daily upon arrival and departure. This contributed to their professional development as they experienced the importance of punctuality and school attendance.

Both Nana and Linda reported that they were exposed to the administration of the end-of-term tests in the school. In this regard, Nana explained that *“in the last two weeks of the term, my mentor asked me to type test papers for her. I also helped during writing of tests with invigilating, like everything in exams, even doing marks on SAMS”*. When asked if she was involved in the setting and marking of test papers, Nana responded that her mentor had set and marked the papers on her own, but she had assisted her with adding the marks up and entering them onto the computer system (SA-SAMS). A similar experience was reported by Linda, but in his case, while his mentor had set her papers, Linda was made to mark all the papers in his subject, and they were subsequently moderated by the mentor. Linda also captured all the marks on the computer system. As part of their teaching practice, student teachers need to be mentored in the setting and administration of examination/test papers, invigilation, processing of marks, and other assessment practices in schools.

Sanele, on the other hand, pointed out that he had learned most of the routines and policies at Olwandle Secondary because *“I matriculated here and have done all my TP in this school in the past, so my mentor didn’t have to do much to teach me about school times, code of conduct for learners, uniform rules, and the whole process of exams”*. However, Sanele recalled that at one stage he had punished learners who had come to class late by keeping them outside the class for the duration of the lesson. Sanele added that *“my mentor asked me to refrain from that, but rather give learners more work to do because they lose out on work when outside, which is not good for their studies”*. The issue of learner ill-discipline is considered one of the most pressing problems experienced by student teachers in schools, and they need focused support from their mentors when dealing with it. Hudson (2004) also states that dealing with ill-discipline is an important part of the classroom management strategies that student teachers must master.

Sanele recalled that *“the Deputy Principal of the school called all of us students and told us that we will help to invigilate during writing”* during term-controlled tests at the school. He explained that as student teachers, they were rostered duties on the invigilation timetable but were also sometimes asked to fill gaps when teachers were absent or busy. Except for

invigilation, Sanele's mentor never involved him in the setting of papers and other assessment activities related to examinations.

Contrary to Sanele's experience, Philas' experience was different. Philas explained that there was a staff briefing every morning, and from those she learned about issues concerning the school uniform rules, school times, and the program of examinations that were going to be conducted during that period. Philas also reported that she learned about other school routines from fellow student teachers who happened to have matriculated at that school and had done their teaching practice at this school in the previous year. Philas narrated as follows:

Every morning, there is a staff briefing. From there, one learned about school uniform rules and school times. My fellow student teachers, who happen to have completed their matric in this school, had also told me about it and other daily routines and policies. There was no staff meeting that was held during the four weeks I was there.

According to Philas, she was aware of the various system requirements because of her interaction with the various routines in the school, such as the staff briefings and the school's management practices, as well as through her informal discussions with fellow student teachers who were familiar with the school's practices.

Some participants had the opportunity to attend staff briefings every morning. Linda also reported that his mentor invited him to attend an end-of-term phase meeting where the teachers discussed strategies to improve the learners' performance. Principals normally use the staff briefings for the purposes of updating the staff members about the latest developments in the school policies and the expectations of the staff. These staff briefings deal with the day-to-day routines and adjustments that are needed; for example, if there are teachers attending workshops, there is a need to adjust the timetable and have others close the gaps.

It appeared, both from her reflective journal and her interview, that Philas was inducted into the system requirements of the school through observation of the school's daily practices and by being told about them by fellow student teachers who had done their teaching practice at the school in the past. The experienced teachers guided the mentees by having them observe how to set assessment tests. Besides the informal tests that were conducted on a weekly basis, the mentees also needed to be inducted into the setting of examination papers. The setting of examination papers is a skill that the mentors did not demonstrate to their mentees in this

study. This process is demonstrated, for example, by sitting together while jointly setting an examination paper. The participants in this study were thus not exposed to setting the term-end examinations as part of the mentoring process. This was possibly a result of the perception of the seriousness and confidentiality of the process, which did not allow for this task to be allocated to student teachers.

During examinations, the participants were involved in invigilation in the classrooms where the learners were writing, but they did not assist with marking any of the examination papers. One of the skills that the participants learned as part of their mentoring was how to process the marks in the national school administration system (SA-SAMS). Linda explained that he assisted his mentor in capturing the learners' marks on the school's electronic administration system in the following excerpt: *"Assist my mentor in marking of learner attendance register and capturing of learner marks on the school electronic administration system"*.

Compliance with the Covid-19 safety protocols in schools was one of the Department of Education's requirements that also coincided with the participants' teaching practice period. Linda narrated as follows:

I learned about Covid-19 regulations and its implications for school safety. We attended a workshop done by the school management on Covid-19. I assisted my mentor with keeping of protocols by learners on a daily basis, wearing of masks, washing of hands, keeping social-distance and other protocols.

The observation of these regulations was part of the induction that was unique for participants at that particular time, as they were required to observe the regulations for their own safety and that of the learners. Nana stated:

I also learned about the school timetables, saw my mentor marking learner attendance registers, and also, every day at the end of the day, the cleaners would come to spray/disinfect classrooms in compliance with Covid-19 regulations.

The mentees were inducted into understanding the value of observing the regulations that needed to be followed during this difficult period of Covid-19. Another area of the system requirements that the participants were exposed to was that of the school's feeding scheme. The participants were required to gain an understanding of the functioning of the school's feeding scheme because of the contexts of the schools. Both schools are located in a poor

community, and the majority of the parents are either unemployed, earn low wages, or live on the government's social grants. The schools in this study participate in the Department of Education's feeding scheme, where learners are fed one hot meal every day at school. Nana reflected on her experience of the scheme as follows: *"During breaktime, I assist my mentor, who will dish out food for learners because class teachers have a duty to ensure that learners eat and clean up"*. Sanele reported on his experience as follows: *"In high school, class prefects are responsible for dishing out, but many learners in senior grades do not eat from the food that is provided through the feeding scheme"*.

While the mentors at Emfuleni Primary School were hands-on in terms of feeding the learners and ensuring that they cleaned up after eating, the mentors at Olwandle Secondary School left the task to the class prefects. The student teachers at Olwandle Secondary School's role was thus more of an observational role. The participants were not inducted into having a more hands-on role in supporting the National School Nutrition Scheme, although it could have assisted them in learning how to manage the program at the classroom level.

The participants experienced exposure to the schools' system requirements as part of the mentoring process differently in their schools. These system requirements include management functions such as daily routines, setting of timetables, examination rules, and duty rosters, to mention a few. The participants were not able to participate in some of the meetings, for example, staff meetings. However, because Sanele had matriculated at the school and had done all his teaching practice at this school, he was already aware of the various routines. He thus apprised Philas of all the routines and policies that he was aware of, for example, the school times, the policy on corporal punishment, etc.

Some participants from both schools were not exposed to a staff meeting, which could have also added to their development. This could be attributed to the short time that they were at these schools. According to Awaya et al. (2005), meetings are an important part of creating a sense of cohesion and connection and can thus be beneficial for student teachers. Moreover, such meetings can improve collaboration and teamwork and allow student teachers to learn from each other instead of relying solely on their mentors (Orland-Barak & Wang, 2021).

Different studies attest that mentors can provide important information about school routines and cultural norms (Bartell, 2005). They also suggest that mentors can support their mentees in understanding their teaching within the school culture by co-investigating the curriculum

documents that are available at the school. In other contexts, mentors can also go beyond the day-to-day classroom teaching routines by supporting novice and student teachers to adjust and adapt to the school environment and its organisational culture (Achinstein, 2006).

The findings above indicate that there was a measure of exposure of the mentees to the understanding of the schools' system requirements, for example, the daily routines, feeding scheme, timetables, etc. However, there were not enough helpful programs to address all of the mentees' mentoring needs.

4.4.3 Pedagogical knowledge

Pedagogical knowledge refers to the specialised knowledge required by teachers to create effective teaching and learning environments for all students (Guerriero, 2014). Shulman's (1987) notion of pedagogical content knowledge is characterised as the integration of content knowledge and pedagogical knowledge. Shulman (1987) also outlined other categories of teacher knowledge, including: knowledge of the curriculum; knowledge of the learners; knowledge of the educational contexts; and knowledge of the educational ends, purposes, and values and their philosophical and historical grounds, etc. Collectively, these represent the knowledge base that a teacher draws upon while teaching.

Pedagogical content knowledge also includes lesson planning, preparation, assessments, and classroom management strategies (Shulman, 1987). Shulman (1987) also included the most popular topics in the teacher's subject area in the category of pedagogical content knowledge. Pedagogical content knowledge also considers the manner of presenting those topics and the subject matter, which means that newly appointed teachers have to be guided by experienced teachers in presenting them to learners. Lastly, it touches on how experienced teachers can show the novices the different ways of representing ideas, as well as how to use powerful analogies, illustrations, examples, explanations, and demonstrations while teaching. This means that mentors should demonstrate to the mentees the different ways of presenting and formulating subject matter so that it is easily understood by learners.

This is at the core of the work of teaching, and as such, during the teaching practice period, mentors are called upon to provide mentees with guidance on these practices to facilitate their development. For example, Nana explained, *"My mentor did not spoon-feed me in her*

guidance". This aspect of mentoring is seen as particularly crucial by student teachers during their teaching practice.

Some of the mentors issued curriculum policy documents that contain guidelines on the core business of teaching and learning in preparation for mentoring in the area of pedagogical knowledge. Examples of the policy documents are the CAPS, the Amended Annual Teaching Plans (ATPs), and the Programs of Assessment (POA) for their subjects of specialisation. This can be construed as the first step in the practice of planning for teaching, which is an essential practice of mentoring in pedagogical knowledge (Hudson, 2005).

The data collected revealed that the mentors mostly planned and taught their own lessons and only invited mentees to observe during specific lessons presented by them. With reference to this, Nana explained, "*She (the mentor) did not plan her lessons with me but on her own. I only observed and asked some questions after the lesson*". Nana had hoped that her mentor would mentor her in lesson planning through modelling and discussion. This would have allowed her to understand the various areas of lesson planning, such as introducing and explaining concepts and content, as well as conducting assessments. A similar experience was elaborated on by Sanele:

He (the mentor) planned alone, and I just came to class to observe, take notes. But we didn't have time to plan together and reflect on his lesson. In the lessons I taught, he would occasionally come once a week or so.

Joint lesson planning could have added to the guidance that the student teachers were expecting in their mentoring from the experienced teachers. However, the lack of time assigned for mentors to work together with their mentees on such a key aspect did not add to their confidence in preparing lessons.

The participants also reported that not much time was allocated for collaboration between the mentors and mentees for the planning of lessons. Assertions made by the participants reveal that their mentors did not guide them in this area. However, Philas was the exception here, as her mentor "*sort of dumped his subject to me*". The mentors did make some time to observe the lessons taught by mentees and also allowed the mentees to observe their lessons. The participants indicated that they received guidance and mentoring from their mentors on

teaching strategies from these lesson observations. This was attested to by Sanele's journal entry when she stated:

I once was teaching a lesson on Newtons laws. After the lesson, he (mentor) advised me that I should have started with explaining terms like 'forces', 'types of forces' and how they behave, 'frictional force', as well as '4 cases of normal forces' which was new to me.

Nana similarly reflected that she received guidance on “*introducing the lesson on bullying (in life skills) by asking questions about what learners already know and building my lesson from there*”. Here, through the guidance of her mentor, Nana learned about how to make subject knowledge accessible to learners, a key aspect of teacher knowledge.

During the lesson presentation on this particular topic of bullying, Nana's mentor showed her how to introduce the lesson by asking the learners questions about the bullying that learners generally experienced in schools. By doing this, her mentor demonstrated the importance of adapting teaching to the context of the learners. Philas' experience, however, was starkly different from that of the other participants. Philas met her mentor and was then handed the curriculum documents and introduced to the learners. Philas reported that her mentor “*literally dumped his subject to me*”. Philas recounted one incident where “*a couple of grade 9 learners disrespected me in class, and there was no one to assist me as the mentor was not coming to observe and support me*”. She recalled, “*Oh, I reported to my mentor later, but he just called those girls and asked them to apologise to me*”. Philas' mentor should have used this incident to show her how to deal with such ill-discipline. This could have assisted Philas in appropriately managing any future discipline issues.

Philas, however, did get time in the mornings to ask her mentor questions on certain subject content areas and strategies that could be used to present those particular lessons. She recalled them thus: “*I would ask him questions in the morning about certain areas in the subject that I struggled with, and he would assist*”. It is evident from Philas' reflection that her mentor did provide some of the mentoring that she sorely needed in the area of pedagogical knowledge. However, the guidance provided on subject content and teaching strategies was superficial.

In addition, Philas highlighted the inconsistent manner in which her mentor supported her in developing classroom management strategies, as time was not allocated for such sessions. Sanele similarly reported that he received some advice from his mentor on handling learner ill-discipline, but that this guidance was intermittent and unplanned. It emerged from Nana's responses that her mentor provided some guidance on classroom management by linking it to effective teaching. She explained it as *"managing behaviour by making lessons interesting, like starting a lesson by telling them stories related to the topic"*. It is clear that Nana's mentor understood the importance of being responsive to learners' needs when organising teaching and learning, and through her articulation of this, it is evident that it assisted her with the development of her pedagogical knowledge. Although Linda prepared his own lessons without much input from his mentor, he did get support when needed, as he revealed this: *"Would get support from my mentor when I am stuck and lose control of the class"*. Unfortunately, this was not ideal, as it would then impact his classroom management.

While there was no intentional or purposeful mentoring program in place in the schools in the study, the participants were exposed to some aspects of the development of pedagogical knowledge. Amongst other aspects of pedagogical knowledge, Hudson (2005) mentions planning, teaching strategies, classroom management, and assessment skills as necessary tools for student teachers. These seem to stand out as the areas where the student teachers gleaned some insight about teaching from their mentors. There were instances when Sanele's mentor demonstrated the introduction of lessons using stories in the classroom and drew upon learners' prior knowledge. The mentor also demonstrated the importance of scaffolding by explaining new terms to the learners before getting deeper into the other aspects and content of the lesson.

Classroom management strategies are important, as stressed by Hudson (2004). This explains why, at times, Sanele's mentor showed him how to deal with learners' poor behaviour as the lesson progressed. In other instances of teaching, Linda *"prepared the creative material and displays that were used to enhance the lesson before it was presented in class"*. Shulman (1987) prioritises the importance of pedagogical content knowledge, including categories of teacher knowledge such as classroom management, time allocation, planning, and understanding of the common conceptions, misconceptions, and difficulties that learners might encounter. The data on the experiences of the participants suggests that there was not enough consistent exposure and guidance on the development of these routines and practices

to be integrated into their experience of classroom management and instruction, and Kagan (1992) has emphasised the importance of consistency in these endeavours.

The experiences of the four participants presented above show that some of these participants missed out on the fundamental aspects of mentoring, such as detailed and consistent support and commitment, that would have contributed to their development in the area of pedagogical knowledge. The very point of student practice is for student teachers to gain pedagogical knowledge and real-life experience in the teaching environment before qualifying as teachers. They further illustrate the limitations and shortcomings of the mentoring practices of the mentors in this study, despite some signs of effective mentoring.

4.4.4 Modelling

The modelling of effective teaching practices by mentor teachers plays a significant role in the development of their mentees (Hudson, 2004). The mentors' own practices and experiences, their display of enthusiasm for specific subjects, and involving mentees in lesson plan design and classroom management strategies are all fundamentals for effective modelling of teaching practice (Hudson, 2005; Jones & Straker, 2006). Barab and Hay (2001); and Hudson (2005) maintain that mentors are experts who should be able to demonstrate effective subject-specific teaching practices.

Participants were asked if they got an opportunity to be observed and to observe their mentors teaching. They were further asked to reflect on the experiences they had during such lessons. Data revealed that it was only on rare occasions that the mentors allowed the mentees to observe them in classrooms. This kind of modelling of aspects of pedagogical knowledge that included the management of classrooms and teaching in classrooms was done, but it was infrequent and unstructured. Philas pointed out that her mentor did not really get time to model the necessary teaching practices for the whole duration of the teaching practice period.

However, Nana, Linda, and Sanele acknowledged that their mentors did transfer valuable teaching skills by modelling certain practices during their lessons, though they were sporadic and unstructured. For instance, Nana explained that her mentor “*demonstrated chalkboard usage techniques like dividing the chalkboard into sections, writing legibly, etc.*”. Nana reflected that this contributed to her development in writing on the chalkboard because “*my chalkboard writing is bad, and my mentor told me to improve*”. Sanele recalled a lesson when

he observed his mentor “*explaining the difficult concepts of ‘vectors and four cases of normal forces’*”. Sanele felt that he understood these concepts better after this lesson and was in a position to explain them clearly to learners.

According to Hudson (2005), modelling of teaching practices includes the demonstration of the practice of teaching in a classroom, presenting lessons and the content of the lesson, giving illustrations, making clarifications of concepts, posing different levels of questions to learners, and checking how well the learners understand the subject matter. In Linda’s case, his mentor modelled these practices by working with him to create teaching materials, search for concept illustrations using the Google search engine, and use relevant syllabus language to present to learners.

From the experience above, Linda was able to work jointly with his mentor to develop these practices. Similarly, Nana conceded that her mentor demonstrated teaching techniques like introducing the lesson, the chalkboard usage technique of dividing the chalkboard into sections, writing legibly, and explaining the concepts using different examples. Sanele also learned how to introduce the lesson and explain concepts. Sanele conceded that at times his mentor would introduce the lessons by explaining the new concepts to the learners before the lesson progressed further.

Furthermore, the enthusiasm and passion for the subject that Sanele’s mentor demonstrated led to Sanele wanting “*to become like him in teaching physical sciences and maths*”. The mentor was showing how to influence learners to receive the lessons in physical science and maths in a positive manner. Sanele was greatly influenced by the manner in which the mentor was engaging the learners in his lesson presentations. The participants’ reflections reveal that while Philas had limited opportunities to experience modelling by her mentor, Linda, Sanele, and Nana had some opportunities to observe modelling by their mentors, particularly the modelling of preparations for lessons and the drawing up of lesson plans, the use of syllabus language, and the demonstration of enthusiasm for teaching. These are among the eight practices associated with modelling, as suggested by Hudson (2005). Darling-Hammond (2006) also suggests that mentors can play a key role in delivering quality modelling and demonstrations that present opportunities for mentees to observe and engage in effective teaching practices.

Although modelling was done, it was generally infrequent and not deliberate. As a result, the student teachers did not get the full benefit of this form of support from their mentors, who were supposed to model effective teaching practices to assist in their development as professionals.

4.4.5 Feedback

The provision of feedback to mentees is one of the very crucial elements of mentoring that helps mentees develop into fully-fledged professionals who are reflective practitioners. Among the key practices related to feedback, Hudson (2007) emphasises the review of mentee lesson plans, observation of lessons, and the provision of oral and written feedback to the mentees. This is supported by Glen (2006), who asserts that mentors are expected to provide feedback in the form of written and oral comments to novice teachers. Glen (2006, as cited in Hudson, 2007) believes this can result in building confidence, positive attitudes, and pedagogical skills from the experiences of the mentees.

In her interview response to the kind of feedback she received from her mentor, Philas reported her plight: that her mentor stood outside and looked through the window while she was teaching on a few occasions but then disappeared a few minutes thereafter. Philas felt that there was no meaningful feedback from her mentor, except when he asked her, “*How are the learners treating you?*” He did not even follow up on the concerns she raised in response to this question. Philas felt that this was due to the fact that this mentor did not make time to guide her on lesson planning or to observe her teaching lessons in the classroom. Two of the practices associated with feedback are the mentor’s review of the mentee’s lesson plans and observation of the mentee teaching lessons (among many other things) (Mosoge & Pilane, 2014). Nana and Sanele explained that while they had planned their lessons on their own, without feedback from their mentors, their mentors did occasionally observe them teaching. The lack of feedback and time for reflection between the mentors and mentees robbed the latter of crucial information about their progress. When asked to expound on the feedback she received from her mentor, Nana responded as follows:

For instance, I taught about bullying types like physical, emotional, and cyberbullying, as well as a lesson on emotions. We would sit down and discuss, like she would tell me to use group activities more before learners are given individually.

Nana does acknowledge that there were instances after she had taught a specific lesson where she was given tips on how she could have done it differently. Linda's mentor also provided some feedback. Linda recalled a particular lesson that he taught and thereafter received feedback. The mentor made some comments and suggested the use of groupwork. He also gave feedback on how to use the chalkboard. In another instance, when giving feedback on his lesson introduction, Linda's mentor demonstrated how to use stories as part of introducing a lesson.

Sanele was advised by his mentor to introduce a lesson by explaining key terms during a reflection session with him. This kind of feedback encouraged Sanele to spend more time preparing for a topic before teaching it. Participants reported that the feedback they received from their mentors was helpful because they learned about new and unfamiliar subject content, concepts, and teaching strategies. It thus appears that some feedback was provided to Nana, Sanele, and Linda as they experienced three of the practices associated with feedback, i.e., observation of their practice, provision of oral feedback, and evaluation of and guidance on their teaching practices. However, since this feedback was unsystematic and generally provided orally, it was not comprehensive, and it did not afford them the opportunity to become deeply reflective about it. Had it been, it would have given them more opportunities for their professional development.

Insufficient time allocated for mentors to provide feedback to student teachers is considered a serious shortcoming in any mentorship program (Jones & Straker, 2006). The data collected in this study revealed that the time allocated for reflection on the lessons that were taught by both the participants and mentors was very limited. This was attested to by Sanele, who explained, *"I think he came once in two weeks to observe me teaching, and we would sit informally to discuss the lesson"*. Similarly, Linda confirmed that her mentor would normally leave her to teach learners on her own, and she only got feedback on a few of the lessons that she taught. These shortcomings were possibly a result of the mentors' workloads as well as a lack of formal instruction to develop their mentoring knowledge.

It is clear from the participants' responses that while some helpful feedback was received from their mentors, it was sporadic, unstructured, and limited in terms of the amount of collaboration at the level of lesson planning between the mentors and their mentees. This led to disjointed feedback being given to mentees without their needs being intentionally

identified at the planning stage. It is therefore essential to look at some of the strategies for effective mentoring suggested by the student teachers who participated in this study.

4.5 What strategies are suggested by student teachers to improve their teaching practice mentoring experiences?

Several strategies for effective mentoring in schools are suggested in the literature. Mukeredzi et al. (2015) conclude that training of mentors and deliberate collaborations between teacher-training institutions, the schools, and the Departments of Education are good practices for mentoring in schools. This is supported by Du Plessis et al. (2010), who explain that the expectations of both student teachers and mentors should be clarified and understood by everyone, and mentors must receive some form of training on the roles they should play during teaching practice.

The participants' responses drawn from the interviews and journal reflections revealed various suggestions on what they thought schools and other role-players in the teaching practice process should do to improve student teachers' experiences. These are presented below.

4.5.1. Mentoring programs

Three of the participants agreed that mentors should give thought to supporting and collaborating with their student teachers to assist them with their development, especially in terms of their pedagogical knowledge and skills. Linda suggested that "*Mentors must be deliberate in giving student teachers a reasonable number of lessons to teach under their supervision. This does not happen often as a planned activity*". The use of a word like "deliberate" suggests that Linda expects schools to collaborate with universities to devise a specific, well-planned program of mentoring that regulates the number of lessons to be observed and taught, the number and type of feedback sessions to be held, etc. This points to a need by mentees for adequate support and development in various aspects of teaching. In addition, Philas made the following assertion:

Schools must set-up clear programs in which student teachers and mentors will be received, allocated, and guided from when they arrive to actual teaching practice up until they finish their teaching practice.

Philas expressed the dire need for regulated mentoring that would benefit her optimally in terms of the support and development she needed. The experiences of some participants revealed that they had limited access to their mentors. Nana's experience reflects the shortcomings of inadequate mentoring discussed in scholarly literature (Manning & Hobson, 2017). She explained her experience with her mentor, highlighting that *“she (the mentor) did not plan with me but on her own. I only observed and asked some questions after the lesson”*.

This situation aligns with Hudson (2016), who asserts that effective mentoring necessitates regular and constructive feedback, as well as strategic planning. Nana's situation exhibited a compromised feedback loop and a neglected planning stage, both of which are essential components of pedagogical practice. A mentee's professional development is significantly affected by limited interaction with their mentor, as it creates the sense of being deprived of valuable practices.

Sanele believed that guidance and support by mentors must be continuous and *“not on and off, like once a week or so”*. This suggests a lack of regulation regarding the mentoring practice, which he believed could be overcome if mentors understood their roles and a strict program was followed. According to Sibaya (2003), creating mechanisms or policies that require mentors to report back on their evaluations according to a strict program and timeframe can be effective in improving the commitment and support that mentors provide for student teachers.

4.5.2. Introduction of student teachers to mentors and staff

Hudson (2004) acknowledges personal attributes of mentors as key in mentoring of student teachers. Therefore, familiarizing student teachers with their mentors through induction becomes one important activity of mentoring practices.

Induction of student teachers into the school culture and introduction to their mentors and the whole school staff complement were raised firmly by Philas and Sanele. Philas felt that the introduction of student teachers to the whole staff and to their mentors in the school was very important, *“so that all staff will know and not see us as strangers in the school premises”*. She further stated, *“as student teachers, we are still practicing but they expect that we are going to take over their subjects”*. Philas and Sanele felt that introductory sessions would help clarify

the roles that mentors and other staff should play to aid the professional and personal development of student teachers.

Sanele felt that formal introduction to the school staff was still important, even though he had been sent to the same school for his previous teaching practice. In his journal entry, he revealed his concern that *“when there are briefings and staff meetings, we are not called. We just sit and wait for teachers to finish”*. He explained that formal introductions and attendance of staff meetings were important so that student teachers could get to be known by all staff and get to know all of the teachers and the general culture of the school. Nana and Linda also shared similar views on the importance of being introduced to staff and even to all learners in the school for them *“to feel accepted and welcome”* (Linda).

Given the extensive scholarly literature on mentorship and educational training, the concerns raised by the participants regarding the integration of student teachers into the school culture are highly relevant. Integrating student teachers into a school setting involves more than just placing them logistically. It is a complex process that requires careful planning and thoughtful interaction (Fairbanks et.al., 2000; Manning & Hobson, 2017; Scandura, 1998).

Introducing student teachers to the entire school staff can establish a supportive and growth-oriented educational environment, aligned with the developmental approach advocated by Manning & Hobson (2017). The school can reduce the negative perceptions of student teachers being inexperienced and less competent by introducing them to the staff (Manning & Hobson, 2017). This also aligns with the participants’ observations that student teachers are frequently required to assume responsibility for subjects without proper introduction and mentoring, implying an existing anticipation of their proficiency in their subjects of specialisation. Furthermore, facilitating the introduction of student teachers to their mentors and the entire staff may mitigate the likelihood of dysfunctional mentoring relationships, as explicated by Scandura (1998). Introducing oneself formally can enhance accountability, transparency, and effective communication (Scandura, 1998). According to Fairbanks et al. (2000), a thorough introduction is important for selecting mentors who can support the professional growth of student teachers. It enables mentors to assume their roles as both subject-matter experts and guides/facilitators in the intricate realm of education. Scholars like Gallant et al. (2015) insist that induction and counselling are also some of the important processes that mentors should carry out in order to develop student teachers effectively.

4.5.3. Universities and schools must work together during teaching practice

This seemed to be a common suggestion for the improvement of the teaching practice process. The participants felt that this collaboration should entail the careful selection of host schools, identification and training of mentors, and regular support visits to schools by lecturers, among other things. As Sanele pointed out:

Lecturers must not come only for evaluation but regularly to support and to reinforce the buy-in by the schools.

During regular support visits, universities can play a key role in developing mentors in areas of subject content knowledge and pedagogical content knowledge which are at the centre of Hudon's (2004) five-factor model for effective mentoring

Philas also supported this point, suggesting that “*universities must have bootcamps for school mentors and mentees to guide them before teaching practice sessions start*”. Philas felt that lecturers and mentors alike seemed not to take teaching practice seriously, and that the process was more about compliance with a required process than actual student teacher development. Philas felt that bootcamps or workshops could assist by teaching mentors what is expected of them. Nana added that the collaboration process between the universities and schools to develop student teachers should give careful consideration when allocating student teachers to different mentors. Linda was of the view that mentors must initiate communication with the universities to establish the mentoring expectations that the universities want fulfilled by them during teaching practice.

The strong need for a school-university partnership was expressed by the participants. Philas said:

Universities must have bootcamps for school mentors, to guide them before teaching practice sessions start. Schools must set up structured internal mentoring programs in which student teachers and mentors will be received, allocated, and guided from when they arrive to actual teaching practice, up until they finish their teaching practice.

The proposal suggests that universities should introduce bootcamps for school mentors and schools should establish structured internal mentoring programs. This initiative aims to address the significant deficiencies in the existing mentorship practices. In her reflection, Nana emphasized the need for universities to train mentors before teaching practice placement starts

and to issue the mentors with certificates as recognition of their commitment to the process or program. She believed this would sharpen and encourage mentors, which would in turn benefit student teachers as they would experience effective mentoring practices by trained mentors. Sanele, on the other hand, felt that ongoing interaction between university tutors and the school should be maintained and that the university tutors should conduct regular site visits for follow-up and monitoring purposes: “*university tutors must not come only for assessment and that’s all*”. Linda felt that it was the responsibility of the university to communicate with schools for placements and to train mentors, rather than to leave these functions to the student teachers.

These suggestions are in line with the findings from previous research on educational mentorship and professional development. University-organised bootcamps offer preemptive training for mentors and equip them with the essential skills and frameworks necessary for effective mentorship. Manning and Hobson (2017) emphasize the multifaceted nature of mentoring, and advocate for mentors to engage in both evaluative and developmental mentoring for optimal effectiveness. Bootcamps could facilitate a focused setting for mentors to acquire comprehensive knowledge of their multifaceted responsibilities. This idea is consistent with Fairbanks et al.'s (2000) emphasis on the mentor's dual role as a subject-matter expert and a source of emotional support and guidance. Structured internal mentoring programs in schools offer numerous benefits. Implementing such would help streamline the process of introducing and assigning student teachers, thereby addressing the challenges previously mentioned in this study by Philas and Sanele. The sentiments are also confirmed by Bernay et al. (2020), who maintain that school and university partnerships can be a “potential avenue for joint research, and a platform to enhance student teachers’ preparedness for their first classroom” (p. 1).

4.6. Conclusion

The data from the semi-structured interviews and the participants’ reflective journals was presented and discussed in this chapter. The purpose of this chapter was to describe and analyse the mentoring expectations and experiences of four student teachers during their teaching practice placement at two selected schools. The student teachers’ suggestions for improving their mentoring experiences were also analysed, and the data presentation was guided by the three research questions.

A summary of the findings reveals that the participants view the role of mentors as central to the teaching practice component of their study program and to their whole journey of learning about the work of teaching. The experiences that the participants had with mentoring during their teaching practice differed from participant to participant in particular areas, although there were areas of similarity. While they felt welcomed and supported by their mentors through the guidance provided on valuable pedagogical skills and learning about various curriculum policies and the daily school routines, they felt that their mentors did not allocate adequate space for collaboration, especially in the area of lesson planning, where the expectations of mentees can be established, and their needs can be identified. The feedback that was given to them was also superficial, infrequent, and mainly oral, and therefore not as comprehensive as it would have been if it had also had a written component and been considered more carefully.

Various reasons may have led to the mentors' reluctance to collaborate with the student teachers on planning lessons, observing lessons, and helping the student teachers to evaluate their teaching practices. This could include a lack of training of the mentors, forced or poor allocation of mentors, workload pressures, including curriculum coverage pressures, and the timing of the teaching practice placements near examinations.

The next chapter presents and discusses the summary of the study, provides the conclusions drawn from the findings, and suggests recommendations.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY OF THE FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1. Introduction

I presented and analysed the data generated from the semi-structured interviews and the reflective journals in the previous chapter. Common themes in the data were identified using thematic analysis, and these were used to answer the research questions that were guided by the conceptual framework of Hudson's Five-Factor Model. The primary objective of the study was to explore student teachers' experiences of mentoring during their teaching practice placements in a primary and a secondary school. The following research questions guided the investigation and allowed the objective of the study to be accomplished:

- iv. What are student teachers' expectations of mentoring during teaching practice in schools?
- v. How do student teachers experience mentoring during teaching practice in schools?
- vi. What strategies are suggested by student teachers to improve their teaching practice mentoring experiences?

The study employed a qualitative research design, and data was collected from two groups of student teachers using semi-structured interviews and participants' reflective journals. One group experienced mentoring during their teaching practice placement at a primary school, and the other experienced mentoring during their teaching practice placement at a secondary school. Thematic analysis was used to identify and interpret the patterns and themes that emerged from the data.

This chapter provides a summary of the key themes that emerged from the analysis, including the expectations of the student teachers, their experiences of mentoring during their teaching practice, and the strategies they suggested to improve their mentoring experiences. In addition, the chapter draws conclusions that summarise the key findings of the study. The conclusions are then used to develop recommendations that have the potential to connect with other studies in the field and contribute to the practice of mentoring student teachers.

5.2 Summary of the Findings

This section provides a summary of the key findings of the study, which aimed to explore the mentoring experiences of student teachers during their teaching practice in primary and secondary schools. The summary of the findings is presented in relation to the research questions that guided the investigation and concludes with a discussion of the implications of the findings of the study.

5.2.1 What are student teachers' expectations of mentoring during teaching practice in schools?

The study explored student teachers' expectations of mentoring to determine if these expectations were met during teaching practice. The participants expected mentoring in the following areas: development of classroom management skills, development of pedagogical skills, orientation into the school culture, and they anticipated relationships with their mentors. Lortie (1975) asserted that student teachers bring preconceived notions of teaching into their training, and this research aimed to understand these expectations as part of understanding their experiences.

The findings indicated that the participants were anxious about classroom management and expected support from their mentors in terms of how to manage their classrooms. Given the context of the two schools in the study (they are under-resourced and have large classes) and the participants' own experiences of schooling, it is unsurprising that the participants highlighted this as a key expectation. This is in line with Hudson (2013), who argues that the primary role of mentors is to provide personal support to student teachers in need of support. There was a clear sense from the participants that confidence is a strong ingredient that can be used by teachers to maintain order in classrooms. These participants expected their mentors to help them boost their confidence and, thus, to equip them to handle disruptive learner behaviours in classes. One participant expected her mentor to be available in the classroom to help boost her confidence. This also stems from the fear that learners often disrespect student teachers since they are not qualified teachers yet. This explains why some participants expected that their mentors would provide continuous support, especially in dealing with disruptive classroom environments.

The emphasis on summative student teacher assessments rather than on developmental mentoring in many higher education institutions further adds to their anxieties and lack of

confidence. As pointed out by Ngidi and Sibaya (2003), student teachers worry about their evaluations; hence, they would not want to face a disruptive class that could negatively impact their evaluations. However, the reality of mentors not being present during every teaching session led to disappointment. Moreover, some mentors could not handle disruptive classes effectively themselves, thus, they lacked the necessary expertise to guide their mentees effectively. These findings align with Bartell's (2005) research, which also identified a lack of mentor knowledge and training in guiding student teachers.

All four participants understood the importance of pedagogical skills and expected their mentors to guide them on how to develop their pedagogical skills from lesson preparation to delivery of content, especially for students with different levels of understanding and abilities. All the participants expected to gain some preparation and teaching strategies that their mentors used. However, two participants did not want their mentors to spoon-feed them with strategies but rather to give them a level of independence to introduce their own strategies to deliver knowledge and keep their lessons interesting. The other two participants also expected guidance on different teaching methods and techniques. However, one participant who had already had the same mentor in the previous year expressed how he copied his mentor's teaching strategies, thereby making it easy to deliver knowledge even for difficult subjects such as physics. This aligns with Hudson (2004), who emphasises that various subjects have different pedagogical knowledge requirements that the mentor must be able to articulate clearly for the benefit of their mentees.

All of the participants expected to have good, close relationships with their mentors in order to learn from them easily. They expected their mentors to be welcoming and sociable before, during, and after classes. One participant emphasised that the relationship should be like that of a mother-child relationship, in other words, nurturing, to allow the student teachers to learn from their mentors. However, all of the participants made it clear that they did not expect their mentors to be too friendly, as that could lead to overdependence on them. The level of sociability that the student teachers expected extended to their mentors introducing them to the school principal and the school culture to enable them to feel welcomed. The expectation of supportive, trustworthy relationships between mentors and mentees is also highlighted by Hudson (2004), who argues that good relationships underpin effective mentoring.

5.2.2 How did student teachers experience mentoring during teaching practice?

The student teacher experience is a complex phenomenon that varies depending on a multitude of factors. The experiences of the participants showed that not all of their expectations were met. The participants were asked to reflect on the personal attributes of their mentors in order to understand the extent to which such attributes facilitated a relationship between student teachers and their mentors. As suggested by Hudson (2004), mentors' personal attributes, such as being friendly, accessible, and committed, are crucial to effective mentoring and can contribute to student teachers' professional development. All four participants felt that their mentors were friendly and welcoming. These attributes helped them adapt to their new environment.

The responses from two of the participants focused mainly on the parental, nurturing nature of the relationships rather than on collaborative partnerships. One participant labelled her relationship with her mentor as a mother-child relationship. She felt that her mentor treated her as her own child, as she assisted her in the classroom as well as outside of it by providing her with transport money when she needed it. Another participant similarly emphasised the counselling nature of their relationship with their mentor by reflecting on their shared lunches and the opportunities to speak about her personal life while being counselled to focus on her studies. Another participant highlighted the social nature of the relationship by reflecting on the games of soccer that he played with his mentor, showing how their relationship extended beyond the classroom. There was more equality and collaboration in a third participant's relationship where her mentor actively encouraged her to be more creative and independent while still being supportive, and this improved her confidence in class. The experiences of these three participants showed that their mentors were welcoming and friendly; personal attributes that underpin effective mentoring, according to Hudson (2004).

In contrast, the relationship of the fourth participant with his mentor revealed superficiality regarding the level of communication and support. To supplement gaps like this in the mentoring relationship, Hobson (2012) recommends that such mentees engage in collaborative learning with other student teachers or even with other mentors or teachers not assigned to them. This suggests that there need to be more opportunities for informal mentoring in the case of inadequate or dysfunctional mentoring. Scandura (1998) also highlights the need to understand the nature of any interpersonal difficulties in a mentor-mentee relationship, as they may include diversity issues.

Hudson (2004) also refers to the importance of inducting and mentoring student teachers in the system requirements of both the school and the broader educational context. System requirements include management practices such as daily routines, timetables, examination rules, and duty rosters, to mention a few. According to Tourigny and Pulich (2005), mentors should know their institution's mandatory system requirements for them to assist their mentees effectively. For example, student teachers need to develop effective teaching methods based on standard curriculum policies, know the right content to teach, and prepare assessments and other educational practices. Two of the participants indicated that they had received support in this area, and one of them referred to receiving support in understanding the school timetable and the covid regulations at the time. The second participant referred to being introduced to the curriculum policies of the school as part of the system requirements. What also assisted these two participants was the nature of the mentoring, which included both formal and informal elements that arose from the friendships they developed with their mentors. This meant that the mentoring was not limited to school times as it also occurred after school hours during informal conversations.

The third participant indicated that he did not need any support in understanding the system requirements of the school as he had previously been a learner at the school. Despite his contextual knowledge, he also indicated that he had attempted his own strategy of promoting punctuality by denying latecomers entry into his classroom when they arrived late. Here, the role of the mentor was crucial, as he intervened and advised the student teacher to rather punish these students by giving them more work than by denying them the right to learn. This is echoed by Rusznyak (2009), who argues that the role of mentors is to guide mentees through constant monitoring and close interactions. In summary, the experiences of the three participants showed positive system support from their mentors. The importance of drawing on other sources of mentoring and collaborative learning was also highlighted by one participant, who felt that she had learned more about the school's routines from fellow student teachers who happened to have matriculated and then done their teaching practice in this school in the previous year.

Mentoring in the development of pedagogical knowledge is also one of the important elements of effective mentoring. Hudson (2005) lists planning, teaching methods, classroom management, and assessment skills as pedagogical knowledge components. The data revealed that all of the participants received some level of support from their mentors on various aspects

of pedagogy. This ranged from mentoring on the importance of assessing learners' prior knowledge for two of the participants to strategies for scaffolding in order to make subject knowledge accessible to learners for another participant. There were also examples of mentoring in classroom management. Despite the positive contributions made by their mentors, the participants generally felt that there was not much time set aside for mentors and mentees to work together on lesson planning. The lack of structured and deliberate guidance in developing pedagogical knowledge was also highlighted in the study by Maphalala (2013), however, the experiences of the three student teachers demonstrated that mentors did make time to see the classes presented by their mentees and also enabled their mentees to observe their teaching sessions. The one exception was the participant who felt that her mentor had just dumped his subject on her.

Modelling by mentors of lesson plan preparation, syllabus language, and enthusiasm in teaching are among eight practices associated with modelling (Hudson, 2005). Darling-Hammond (2006) insists that mentors can play a key role in delivering quality modelling and demonstrations that provide opportunities for mentees to observe and engage in practices. Three of the participants acknowledged that their mentors demonstrated valuable teaching skills by modelling certain practices during their lessons, though they were sporadic and unstructured. In addition, one of the participants felt inspired by his mentor's demonstrable passion for teaching science because of his powerful modelling. This suggests that the modelling aspect of mentoring was partially exercised in this study, but while it was effective, it was only sporadic and not structured enough to run throughout the teaching practice period for the mentees' benefit. Insufficient preparation led the mentors to lack awareness of the necessary level of engagement in modelling activities.

The fifth element of effective mentoring, according to Hudson's model, is feedback. This involves providing feedback on teaching practices and other aspects of professional practice to help mentees develop and improve their professional practice. Effective feedback can have a positive impact on the mentee's self-esteem and confidence, leading to better performance and outcomes in the classroom (Hattie & Timperley, 2007).

One participant felt that her mentor did not provide proper feedback, as he opted to stand and observe her teaching, disappear, and then ask vague questions about the lesson afterwards. Though feedback can be presented orally, the participant indicated a preference for both written and verbal feedback, as this would have given her time to be more reflective about the

lesson. Similarly, two of the other participants reflected upon the inadequacy of the feedback they received, having planned their lessons, and then been observed teaching these lessons. Another participant revealed that she received feedback on strategies for introducing and presenting a lesson. However, since this was not structured and deliberate, it was not comprehensive. The study thus showed that feedback was inadequate in the student teacher experience. Student teachers received minimal feedback, which was not timely or constructive enough to help them improve their skills. This was due to a lack of time and resources dedicated to mentoring in schools, as well as the mentors' own workload and responsibilities. As a result, student teachers felt they were left to their own devices to figure things out, which can lead to feelings of inadequacy and frustration.

The findings suggest that student teachers' professional development could be enhanced if they were given regular feedback, both verbal and written, from their mentors (Hudson, 2016). The insufficiency of feedback within the mentor-mentee relationship is a significant concern that this study's findings address. The narratives from the participants highlight various challenges, such as the need for prompt, constructive, and thorough feedback. This aligns with Hudson's (2016) framework, which highlights the importance of consistent and constructive feedback in establishing successful mentor-mentee relationships. According to Hudson (2016), meaningful feedback facilitates mentees' engagement in critical self-reflection, which is essential for their professional growth and development. The participant's recognition of the significance of verbal and written feedback aligns with the pedagogical strategies emphasised by Manning and Hobson (2017). The findings reflect the scholarly insight that the developmental mentoring approach ought to prioritise participation and dialogue rather than focusing solely on evaluation (Manning & Hobson, 2017). Hence, it is crucial to note that written feedback is a documented resource for self-reflection and subsequent discussions, while verbal feedback offers immediate delivery and interpersonal nuance.

The findings of the study shed light on the misalignment between student teachers' expectations and the realities of mentoring during teaching practice. For instance, the time constraints faced by mentors are also relevant to the examination of the importance of effective mentors in professional development. Fairbanks et al. (2000) argue that effective mentors provide both pedagogical knowledge and emotional support. The study indicates a disparity between the theoretical ideal and the practical limitations of time and resources within educational institutions.

5.2.3 What strategies are suggested by student teachers to improve their teaching practice mentoring experiences?

Effective mentoring is critical to the development of student teachers (Hudson, 2012). To this end, institutions must develop innovative strategies that can help mentors and train their student teachers effectively. Secondary literature revealed that training mentors and establishing deliberate collaborations between teacher training institutions, schools, and education departments are some of the best practices for the development of mentoring in schools (Mukeredzi et al., 2015). The data revealed that all four participants identified strategies such as planned programs of mentoring, the introduction of student teachers to mentors and staff, and collaboration between universities and schools as essential for the improvement of teaching practice and their mentoring experiences.

Three of the participants highlighted the need for mentors to understand the importance of feedback as one of their roles in particular, while another focussed on the need for accessibility to the mentor through more regulated mentoring processes. This therefore suggests that mentors need to know their roles and follow a strict program of mentorship.

All participants felt that the university and schools should work together collaboratively to improve teaching practice and the experiences of the student teachers. Two participants pointed out that lecturers' visits to the student teachers during their teaching practice should not just be summative but rather have a developmental focus. This approach is also highlighted by Manning and Hobson (2017), who comments on the emphasis on judgemental mentoring rather than developmental mentoring in both schools and teacher training institutions. Strategies suggested by the participants included increased communication between student teachers and their university mentors, and the provision of mentor- student teacher workshops, referred to as "bootcamps" by one of the participants, prior to the commencement of the teaching practice as an opportunity to develop a mutual understanding of the mentoring process.

The findings suggest the need for the development of formal mentoring programs in schools, where both school mentors and universities understand their roles and responsibilities in enhancing the professional development of student teachers.

5.3 Recommendations

5.3.1 New policies and procedures on mentoring

Based on the expectations and shortcomings identified in the current mentoring practices for student teachers, it is imperative for the districts within the Department of Education and schools to undertake a comprehensive revision of their policies and procedures pertaining to mentoring. These revisions should aim to enhance the performance and development of student teachers within the education system. Collaborating with teacher training institutions and the establishment of a structured mandatory mentoring program are highly recommended. Bartell (2005) emphasises the necessity of clearly outlining the roles and expectations of both mentors and student teachers in these policies and procedures. Such clarity is crucial for fostering a productive working relationship that benefits all stakeholders involved in the education sphere.

One of the key elements in the revised policies and procedures should be the implementation of internal structured and mandatory mentoring programs at the school level. This aligns with Hudson's notion of system requirements, which was identified as a crucial factor in facilitating the effective professional development of student teachers. Notably, Smolik (2003) underscores the significance of school-based policies in this context.

Mentor teachers play a pivotal role in guiding student teachers, and having policies that outline the district and school curriculum requirements can ensure consistency and address discrepancies in the mentoring approaches. For instance, some mentors may limit their mentees to observational roles, while others may actively involve them in lesson planning and preparation. By introducing mandatory policies, schools can establish a standardised framework for mentoring and promote a more comprehensive and consistent approach. These policies should encompass various aspects, including mentor-mentee interactions, lesson planning, classroom observations, and feedback mechanisms. Additionally, they should underscore the importance of collaboration and communication between student teachers, mentors, other school staff members, and university tutors.

In conclusion, the development of revised policies and procedures is essential to address the existing gaps and enhance the quality of mentoring for student teachers. Collaborative efforts between districts, schools, and teacher training institutions will be crucial in formulating structured mandatory mentoring programs. These policies can contribute to the effective professional development of student teachers by clearly articulating their expectations and providing a systematic framework for mentoring, ultimately improving their performance within the education system.

5.3.2 Institutional culture that supports mentoring

Student teachers often enter schools with a limited understanding of the organisational dynamics and intricacies of school life (Bird, 2012). Mentors thus play a crucial role in helping student teachers navigate and comprehend the school culture to bridge this knowledge gap. Schools, in turn, must re-evaluate their existing mentoring programs and consider implementing changes to foster an institutional culture that supports effective mentorship for student teachers. This shift requires a collective effort and a collaborative culture among school staff members, as highlighted by Maphalala (2013).

Developing a collaborative culture entail promoting openness, teamwork, and active cooperation between mentors and mentees in their daily work within the school setting. It is essential that mentors and mentees engage in knowledge sharing, skill development, and competency enhancement to facilitate the growth and improvement of student teachers. The insights shared by Saha and Dworkin (2009) emphasise the significance of the school environment in shaping the teaching practices of mentees. Collaborative mentorship thrives when there is a genuine exchange of knowledge between mentors and mentees, enabling them to explore and adopt the most effective strategies for managing their classes. By fostering a collaborative culture and encouraging knowledge sharing, mentors and mentees can align their expectations and work together towards achieving optimal teaching and learning outcomes. This deliberate engagement allows for thoughtful deliberations where mentors and mentees can jointly explore and identify the most beneficial approaches to classroom management and instruction.

In conclusion, the mentoring process for student teachers should encompass the establishment of a collaborative culture within schools. This culture promotes teamwork, open communication, and knowledge sharing between mentors and mentees. By embracing such an

environment, schools can effectively shape the teaching practices of student teachers and meet the expectations of both mentors and mentees. Ultimately, this collaborative mentorship approach contributes to the professional development and success, not only of student teachers but also the mentors themselves in their educational journey.

5.3.3 Compliance with Quality Management System (QMS) requirements

The study recognises that many schools have already established structures for effective mentorship programs in line with the Quality Management System policy of the Department of Education. This includes regular training and development initiatives aimed at developing all categories of teachers in schools. This existing framework provides a foundation for enhancing the skills and capabilities of educators, departmental heads (DHs), deputy principals, and principals. This indicates that the challenge lies not in the absence of policies (e.g., the QMS), but rather in their implementation. To address this, schools should focus on the implementation of the QMS by creating internal audits and policies that ensure compliance with the evaluation and development requirements of the QMS, more especially the requirements regarding the mentoring and continuous development of subordinates including student teachers. By doing so, schools can establish a culture of accountability and adherence to best practices. One vital aspect of this implementation is the organisation of regular and continuous refresher sessions aimed at improving the competencies and attitudes of both mentors and mentees. These internal practices should serve as mechanisms for monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness of mentorship programs. They can provide valuable insights into areas where improvements are needed, identify gaps in current practices, and facilitate ongoing professional development for mentors and mentees alike. Through these measures, schools can ensure that the mentoring programs align with the desired outcomes and contribute to the continuous growth and enhancement of teaching practices.

In summary, while schools may already possess structures for mentoring programs, their focus should shift towards effective implementation. This entails the establishment of internal audits and policies that promote compliance with QMS categories, facilitating regular refresher sessions, and fostering a culture of accountability. By embracing these measures, schools can optimise the impact of mentoring programs and ultimately enhance the competencies and attitudes of both mentors and mentees.

5.3.4 Incentives for mentors

While mentors are employed educators and receive their salaries for their work as educators, the study recommends that the education sector consider offering rewards to the mentors for the purposes of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation for their added roles as mentors. This may include a reduction of workloads for mentors as well as financial and non-financial incentives.

5.3.5 School-university partnerships

Moreover, the study recommends closer collaboration between universities and schools so that mutually beneficial relationships can be fostered, where there is a common understanding of what mentoring means and the roles played by the various parties can be clarified and supported. This will help to facilitate a more productive mentoring experience for student teachers, thereby enhancing their professional development as well as contributing to teacher education.

5.4 Recommendations for future research

The limitation of my study was that it was a small-scale study, conducted with just four participants in two quintile 3 township schools. This means that the findings cannot be generalised across all schools. Research could be extended to schools in different quintiles and contexts, and from this, deeper insights can be established regarding the mentoring experiences of student teachers. Teacher professional development policies (e.g., IQMS, CPTD, and ISPFTED) regard mentoring as an integral element of teacher professional development. A policy framework is therefore in place that supports the development of mentoring as an essential component of teacher professional development. Further research into implementing this aspect of the relevant policies could provide insights into how mentoring could be developed within the framework of these policies.

5.5 Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to explore student teacher experiences of mentoring during teaching practice in schools. Reflective journals and semi-structured interviews were used to generate rich data about the participants' experiences. The study identified that student teachers expected mentoring to be accompanied by strong support from their mentors regarding how to manage their classes effectively. The participants also expected close

relationships to exist between mentors and mentees in order to allow them easy access to their mentors for help and to build their confidence. The participants also articulated the importance of pedagogical skills and expected their mentors to guide them on school policies, provide support with preparation and teaching strategies without spoon-feeding them, and provide classroom management skills to manage students with disruptive behaviours. Overall, the study identified that student teachers expected their mentors to play a crucial role in their development through a feedback mechanism that allows student teachers to reflect on their teaching practices.

Using Hudson's Five-Factor Model, the study identified that the experiences of the student teachers revealed the importance of mentors' personal attributes for the development of strong relationships between the student teachers and their mentors. They felt that when the relationship between a mentor and a student teacher exists inside and outside the classroom, it builds trust. Their experiences also revealed the importance of mentors and their assistance with pedagogical knowledge components such as teaching methods, classroom management, and assessment skills. Moreover, the experiences revealed the importance of modelling, especially the ability of mentors to demonstrate their passion for teaching in order to motivate and inspire student teachers to have the same passion. However, the experiences of the student teachers showed that feedback from the mentors was crucial, but this mechanism was not fully utilised by mentors. Various strategies were suggested to improve their teaching practice mentoring experiences. These included strategies such as planned programmes for mentoring, the introduction of student teachers to mentors and staff, and collaboration between universities and schools. These strategies were regarded as essential for improving student teachers' teaching practices and their mentoring experiences. Based on the shortfalls of the current mentoring practices, the study also recommended that schools conduct a comprehensive revision of their policies and procedures pertaining to mentoring. The main focus of these policies and procedures should be the need to strengthen the implementation of policy rather than an approach that is focused on mere compliance.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1: ETHICAL CLEARANCE

 UNIVERSITY OF
KWAZULU-NATALTM
INYUVESI
YAKWAZULU-NATALI

27 August 2020

Mr Wonderboy Mpisi (217080204)
School Of Education
Pietermaritzburg Campus

Dear Mr Mpisi,

Protocol reference number: HSSREC/00000968/2020
Project title: EXPLORING STUDENT TEACHER EXPERIENCES OF MENTORING DURING TEACHING
PRACTICE IN TWO SCHOOLS A PRIMARY SCHOOL AND A SECONDARY SCHOOL
Degree: Masters

Approval Notification – Expedited Application

This letter serves to notify you that your application received on 07 January 2020 in connection with the above, was reviewed by the Humanities and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee (HSSREC) and the protocol has been granted **FULL APPROVAL**


Any alteration/s to the approved research protocol i.e. Questionnaire/Interview Schedule, Informed Consent Form, Title of the Project, Location of the Study, Research Approach and Methods must be reviewed and approved through the amendment/modification prior to its implementation. In case you have further queries, please quote the above reference number. PLEASE NOTE: Research data should be securely stored in the discipline/department for a period of 5 years.

This approval is valid until 27 August 2021.
To ensure uninterrupted approval of this study beyond the approval expiry date, a progress report must be submitted to the Research Office on the appropriate form 2 - 3 months before the expiry date. A close-out report to be submitted when study is finished.

All research conducted during the COVID-19 period must adhere to the national and UKZN guidelines.

HSSREC is registered with the South African National Research Ethics Council (REC-040414-040).

Yours sincerely,



Professor Dipane Hlalele (Chair)

/dd

Humanities & Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee
UKZN Research Ethics Office Westville Campus, Govan Mbeki Building
Postal Address: Private Bag X54001, Durban 4000
Tel: +27 31 260 8350 / 4557 / 3587
Website: <http://research.ukzn.ac.za/Research-Ethics/>

Founding Campuses: ■ Edgewood ■ Howard College ■ Medical School ■ Pietermaritzburg ■ Westville

INSPIRING GREATNESS

APPENDIX 2: LETTER TO PRINCIPAL

43 Waltdorf 771
Town Bush Rd
Oak Park 3200

23 October 2019

Dear Sir/Madam

My name is Wonderboy M. Mpisi (Student No. 217080204), a master's in education (MEd.) student in the School of Education at the University of KwaZulu-Natal (Pietermaritzburg campus). I am required to conduct a research project as part of the requirement for this degree. The title of my research study is 'Student teacher Experiences of Mentoring During Teaching Practice in a Primary and a Secondary School'.

The aim and purpose of this research study is to explore student teachers' experiences of mentoring during teaching practice in schools. I request your assistance in this research project by granting me permission to conduct my study in your school/institution. This study is expected to use four participants who are student teachers in grades 8 - 12 in your school and will involve the following procedures: Participants will be interviewed about their experiences of mentoring and the data will be generated outside normal teaching periods. They will also be required to keep reflective journals for a period of five weeks of teaching practice. Follow-up interviews may be conducted if necessary. Each interview will be voice- recorded. The duration of their participation, if they choose to participate and remain in the study, is expected to be 4-5 weeks.

This study will not involve any risks and/or discomfort for the school and participants. Also, the study will not provide direct benefits for the school or participants. However, this may contribute to the improvement of schools'/institutions' mentoring practices with student teachers and novice teachers.

DECLARATION OF CONSENT

I JOSEPH BONGANI MABANGA

(Full names of the

school principal) have been informed about the study entitled 'Student Teacher Experiences of Mentoring During Teaching Practice in a Primary and a Secondary School', conducted by Wonderboy M. Mpisi.

I understand the purpose and procedures of the study.

_____

SIGNATURE OF PRINCIPAL

19-10-2019

DATE

APPENDIX 3: PARTICIPANT CONSENT LETTER

43 Waltdorf
771 Town Bush Rd
Oak Park 3200
23 October 2019

Dear Participant

REQUEST FOR PARTICIPATION IN RESEARCH PROJECT

My name is Wonderboy M. Mpisi (Student No. 217080204), a master's in education (MEd.) student in the School of Education at the University of KwaZulu-Natal (Pietermaritzburg campus). I am required to conduct a research project as part of the requirement for this degree. I request your participation in this research study. The title of my study is 'Student Teacher Experiences of Mentoring During Teaching Practice in a Primary and a Secondary School'.

The aim and purpose of this research study is to explore student teachers' experiences of mentoring during teaching practice in schools. This study is expected to use four participants who are student teachers in grades between grade 1-12 and will involve the following procedures: Participants will be interviewed about their experiences of mentoring to gather data and this will be done outside normal teaching periods. They will also be required to keep reflective journals for a period of five weeks of teaching practice. Follow-up interviews may be conducted if necessary. Each interview will be voice-recorded. The duration of their participation, if they choose to participate and remain in the study, is expected to be 4-5 weeks.

In the event of any problems or concerns/questions, you may contact me, my supervisor, or the UKZN Humanities & Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee. Contact details are as follows:

My contact details:

Email: w_mpisi@yahoo.com Cell: 082 637 1656

Supervisor

Jane Pennefather Email address: pennefatherJ@ukzn.ac.za Telephone: 033 260 5867

UKZN Research Office

Research Office, Westville Campus

Govan Mbeki Building

Private Bag X 54001

Durban

4000

KwaZulu-Natal, SOUTH AFRICA

Tel: 27 31 2604557- Fax: 27 31 2604609

Email: HSSREC@ukzn.ac.za

Participation in this research study is voluntary and participants may withdraw participation at any point. In the event of refusal/withdrawal of participation the participants will not be penalized. There are no consequences for participants who withdraw from the study.

No costs will be incurred by participants as a result of participation in the study and there are no incentives or reimbursements for participation in the study.

All names of schools and participants will be changed, and pseudonyms will be used so that schools and participants remain anonymous. Information provided by participants will remain confidential and will not be shared with anyone else. Data generated through semi-structured interviews and reflective journals will be stored in my supervisor's office, at the School of Education, Pietermaritzburg campus for five years, and thereafter be destroyed.

Thank you for your cooperation.

Yours in Education

Wonderboy Mpisi

DECLARATION OF CONSENT

I, _____ (Name of participant) have been informed about the study titled 'Student Teacher Experiences of Mentoring During Teaching Practice in a Primary and a Secondary School', to be conducted by Mr W. M. Mpsi.

I understand the purpose and procedures of the study.

I have been given an opportunity to ask questions about the study and have had answers to my satisfaction.

I declare that all my participation in this study is entirely voluntary and that I may withdraw at any time without any negative consequences to myself.

If I have any further questions/concerns or queries related to the study I understand that I may contact the researcher on Cell: 082 637 1656 or email: wmpisi@yahoo.com

If I have any questions or concerns about my rights as a study participant, or if I am concerned about an aspect of the study or the researcher then I may contact the

HUMANITIES & SOCIAL SCIENCES RESEARCH ETHICS ADMINISTRATION

Research Office, Westville Campus

Govan Mbeki Building

Private Bag X54001

Durban

4000

KwaZulu-Natal, SOUTH AFRICA

Tel: 031 260 4557 Fax: 031 260 4609

Email: HSSREC@ukzn.ac.za

Additional consent.

I hereby provide consent to:

Participate in semi-structured interviews YES/NO

Keeping a reflective journal about my daily experiences of mentoring YES/NO

Signature of Participant

Date

APPENDIX 4: INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

The focus of this study is the experiences of student teachers during teaching practice in schools.

A. Research Questions

- 1) What are student teacher's expectations of mentoring during teaching practice in schools?
- 2) How do student teachers experience mentoring during teaching practice in schools?
- 3) What strategies are suggested by the student teachers to improve their teaching practice mentoring experiences?

B. Initial Interview Questions

- 1) What qualification do you have or are you currently completing?
- 2) Why do you want to become a teacher?
- 3) What do you think the role of a mentor entails?
- 4) What would you like to gain from this mentoring experience?
- 5) What are your expectations of the relationship with your mentor?

C. Personal Attributes (mentor's personality)

- 1) What kind of characteristics did your mentor display?
- 2) Do you think these are things that can be learned? If so, how do you think these characteristics can be learned?
- 3) Do you feel comfortable talking to your mentor? Elaborate.
- 4) What are your mentor's strengths and weakness?

D. System/Policy Requirements

- 1) What school policies, subject policies, and curriculum requirements did your mentor discuss with you?
- 2) Are there other policies/guidelines that you think she needed to discuss with you?

E. Pedagogical Knowledge (knowledge about teaching)

- 1) In what ways did your mentor assist you with classroom management strategies for teaching your subject?
- 2) In what ways has your mentor assisted you in mastering different ways of presenting specific content topics (e.g., using different explanations, different activities, different resources)?
- 3) What teaching strategies have you mastered? What other strategies do you think you still need assistance with?

F. Modelling

- 1) Did you get an opportunity to observe your mentor teaching? Did your mentor observe you teaching?
- 2) What did you learn from that experience?

G. Feedback

- 1) Did you get feedback from your mentor after a practice teaching lesson?
- 2) What kinds of feedback did you get concerning your teaching generally and your subject specifically?
- 3) What have you learnt from the experience?
- 4) How do you think your mentor or this school need to improve to help your teaching practice experience?

Thank you for participating in this interview.

APPENDIX 5: REFLECTIVE JOURNAL TEMPLATE

APPENDIX B: PARTICIPANT REFLECTIVE JOURNAL TEMPLATE

Week No _____ Week ending _____ 2020 Participant No _____

Write your daily reflection on mentoring experiences you had during your teaching practice. Think of both negative and positive experiences. Ask yourself questions such as:

- What did I do today/this week?
- What did I expect?
- What did I learn? How did I feel?
- Why do I feel this way?

Think/reflect also along the following themes:

Relationship with your mentor

Subject knowledge or knowledge about teaching demonstrated by your mentor

Subject policies, school or other policies you used or learnt about.

Did you observe your mentor teaching a lesson?

Did you teach lesson while you mentor is observing you

Your general feeling about your experience this week

APPENDIX 6: GATEKEEPER'S LETTER



education

Department:
Education
PROVINCE OF KWAZULU-NATAL

Enquiries: Phindile Duma

Tel: 033 392 1063

Ref.:2/4/8/4020

Mr WM Mpisi
43 Waltdorf
Oakpark
PIETERMARITZBURG
3200

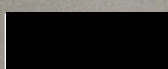
Dear Mr Mpisi

PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH IN THE KZN DoE INSTITUTIONS

Your application to conduct research entitled: **"EXPLORING STUDENT-TEACHER EXPERIENCES OF MENTORING DURING TEACHING PRACTICE IN TWO SCHOOLS – A PRIMARY SCHOOL AND A SECONDARY SCHOOL"**, in the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education Institutions has been approved. The conditions of the approval are as follows:

1. The researcher will make all the arrangements concerning the research and interviews.
2. The researcher must ensure that Educator and learning programmes are not interrupted.
3. Interviews are not conducted during the time of writing examinations in schools.
4. Learners, Educators, Schools and Institutions are not identifiable in any way from the results of the research.
5. A copy of this letter is submitted to District Managers, Principals and Heads of Institutions where the Intended research and interviews are to be conducted.
6. The period of investigation is limited to the period from 19 November 2019 to 30 June 2022.
7. Your research and interviews will be limited to the schools you have proposed and approved by the Head of Department. Please note that Principals, Educators, Departmental Officials and Learners are under no obligation to participate or assist you in your investigation.
8. Should you wish to extend the period of your survey at the school(s), please contact Miss Phindile Duma at the contact numbers below.
9. Upon completion of the research, a brief summary of the findings, recommendations or a full report/dissertation/thesis must be submitted to the research office of the Department. Please address it to The Office of the HOD, Private Bag X9137, Pietermaritzburg, 3200.
10. Please note that your research and interviews will be limited to schools and institutions in KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education.

UMGUNGUNDLOVU DISTRICT


Dr. EV Nkomo
Head of Department: Education
Date: 21 November 2019

...Leading Social Compact and Economic Emancipation
Through a Revolutionary Education for All...

KWAZULU-NATAL DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Postal Address: Private Bag X9137 • Pietermaritzburg • 3200 • Republic of South Africa

APPENDIX 7: LETTER TO THE CIRCUIT MANAGER

43 Waltdorf 771

Town Bush Rd

Oak Park 3200

23 October 2019

Dear Sir

My name is Wonderboy M. Mpisi (Student Noo 217080204), a Master's in Education (MEd.) student in the School of Education at the University of KwaZulu-Natal (Pietermaritzburg campus). I am required to conduct a research project as part of the requirement for this degree. The title of my research study is 'Student teacher Experiences of Mentoring During Teaching Practice in a Primary and a Secondary School'.

The aim and purpose of this research study is to explore student teachers' experiences of mentoring during teaching practice in schools. I request your assistance in this research project by granting me permission to conduct my study in the school in your circuit. This study is expected to use four participants who are student teachers in grade 4-7 in the school in your circuit and will involve the following procedures. Participants will be interviewed about their experiences of mentoring. Data will be generated and collected outside normal teaching periods. The student teachers will also be required to keep reflective journals for a period of five weeks of teaching practice. Follow-up interviews may be conducted if necessary. Each interview will be voice-recorded. The duration of their participation, if they choose to participate and remain in the study, is expected to be 4-5 weeks.

This study will not involve any risks and/or discomfort for the school or the participants. The study will not provide direct benefits to the school or the participants. However, it may contribute to the improvement of schools'/institutions' mentoring practices for student teachers and novice teachers.

In the event of any problems or concerns/questions you may contact me, my supervisor, or the UKZN Humanities & Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee-contact details as follows:

My contact details:

Email: w_mpsisi@yahoo.com Cell: 082 637 1656

Supervisor

Jane Pennefather Email address: pennefatherj@ukzn.ac.za

UKZN Research Office

Research Office, Westville Campus

Govan Mbeki Building

Private Bag X 54001

Durban

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KwaZulu-Natal, SOUTH AFRICA

Tel: 27 31 2604557- Fax: 27

312604609 Email: HSSREC/a

ukzn.ac.za

Telephone 033 2605867

Participation in this research study is voluntary and participants may withdraw their participation at any point. The participants will not be penalized in the event of refusal/withdrawal of their participation. There are no consequences for participants who withdraw from the study.

No costs will be incurred by participants as a result of participation in the study' and there are no incentives or reimbursements for participation in the study.

All names of schools and participants will be changed, and pseudonyms will be used so that schools and participants remain anonymous. Information provided by the participants will remain confidential and will not be shared with anyone else. Data generated through semi-structured interviews and reflective journals will be stored in my supervisor's office at the School of Education, Pietermaritzburg campus, for five years, and thereafter be destroyed*

Thank you for your cooperation.

Yours in Education

Wonderboy M.. Mpsi

DECLARATION OF CONSENT

I N.P. MTSHELI (Name of official)

have been informed about the study entitled 'Student Teacher Experiences of Mentoring During Teaching Practice in a Primary and a Secondary School', conducted by Wonderboy Mpsio.

I understand the purpose and procedures of the study.



28/10/19

APPENDIX 8: TURNITIN REPORT

MEd dissertation

ORIGINALITY REPORT

13%

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APPENDIX 9: LETTER OF EDITING



Pauline Fogg
54 Grundel Road
Carrington Heights
Durban
4001
074 782 5234

26 November 2023

Letter of Editing

This report serves to state that the dissertation submitted by Wonderboy Mpisi titled 'Student-Teacher Experiences of Mentoring During Teaching Practice in a Primary and a Secondary School' has been edited.

The dissertation was edited for errors in syntax, grammar, punctuation and the in-text referencing system used.

The edit will be regarded as complete once the necessary changes have been effected and all of the comments addressed.

Thank-you for your business.

P4ogg

Pauline Fogg