



**Preservice Teachers' Mentoring Experiences of Teaching Practice as
Distance Learners**

By

Julia Rozelin Oželenis Ross

204505759

Submitted in Fulfilment of the Requirements for the Degree of:

MASTERS IN EDUCATION

UNIVERSITY OF KWAZULU-NATAL

School of Education: Teacher Development Studies

Supervisor: Professor P. Ramrathan

October 14, 2024

Ethical clearance number:

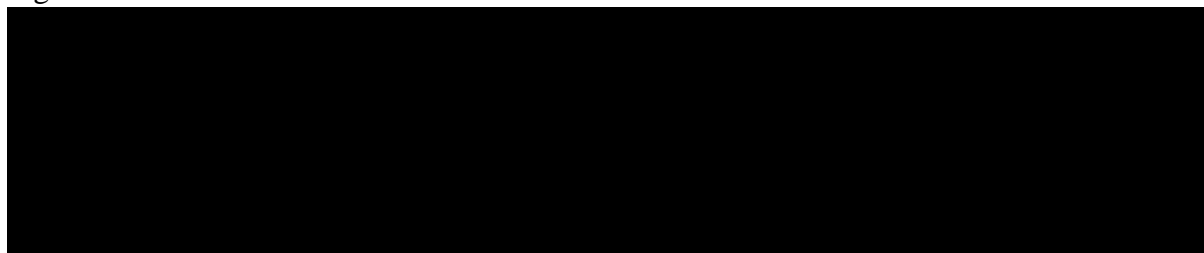
HSSREC/00004985/2022

Supervisor's Authorisation

As the candidate's supervisor, I ~~agree~~/~~do not agree~~ to the submission of this dissertation.

Supervisor: Professor P. Ramrathan

Signed:

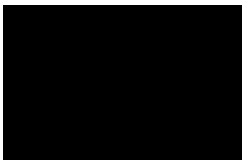


Date: 14 October 2024

Declaration

I, Julia Rozelin Ozelenis Ross (student number 204505759), declare:

1. This dissertation except where otherwise indicated, is my own and original work.
2. This dissertation has not been submitted for degree purposes or examination here at the University of KwaZulu-Natal or at any other tertiary institution.
3. This dissertation does not contain other person's data, tables, graphs, or any other information unless specifically acknowledged as such.
4. This dissertation does not contain other persons' writing unless specifically acknowledged as being sourced from other researchers. Where other written sources have been quoted, then:
 - a. Their words have been paraphrased but the general information attributed to them has been referenced,
 - b. Where the exact words have been used, these have been placed within quotation marks and properly referenced.



J.R.O. Ross
Researcher

14 October 2024
Date

Dedication

To my parents: You instilled in me the value of education and have been so supportive and encouraging of my academic pursuits. You have been instrumental in shaping me into the person I am today. Thank you for showing me the importance of perseverance and hard work.

To my husband: Your tireless efforts to pursue your own academic goals have been a source of inspiration to me. Your dedication to learning and personal growth have been a stellar example to our family, and I am grateful to have you as a partner on this journey.

To my precious children: You remind me daily why this journey is worth it. May this achievement serve as a testament to the power of resilience and determination, and may you always remember that with perseverance and passion, you can achieve anything you set your minds to.

Acknowledgements

Foremost, I thank God for making this opportunity possible. Against the odds, He made a way for me to enter this life-changing experience. I give all glory and praise to Him for giving me the strength and fortitude to complete my thesis.

My sincere gratitude goes to my family for their unwavering support, understanding, and encouragement throughout this challenging journey. Their love, patience, and belief in me have been a great source of strength. To my husband, Sean, for pushing me to apply for my Masters and further myself; and to my children, Isabelle and Ethan, thank you for being so understanding when I had to work on my Masters. To my sister, Maryse, for her motivation when I called her in tears of frustration.

Thank you to my supervisor, Professor Ramrathan, for his invaluable guidance, support, encouragement, and patience throughout the research and writing process. His expertise, insightful feedback, and commitment played a pivotal role in shaping the direction and quality of my work.

I am grateful to my friends and colleagues: Priya, Theresa, Jodi, Vanessa, Amanda, Joash, Viona, Sagren, Sarah, Charli, Nirashnee, Mandy and Leanne for their encouragement and support. Further, I am immensely thankful to my friends, Godson and Marinda, who mentored me in my Masters journey. Godson, words cannot express the depth of my appreciation for the time you have given to me. Marinda, thank you for your keen interest in my progress and for your advice. Both of you have given me valuable insights, constructive criticism, and scholarly contributions, which have greatly enriched the content and rigour of this thesis.

Finally, I am indebted to my participants who volunteered their time and shared their experiences, without whom this research would not have been possible. Thank you all for being part of this journey and for contributing to the realisation of this milestone in my academic career.

Table of Contents

Supervisor’s Authorisation	ii
Declaration.....	iii
Dedication	iv
Acknowledgements	v
Table of Contents	vi
Abstract.....	x
List of Tables	xiii
List of Figures.....	xiii
Chapter 1: Introduction and brief overview	1
1.1 Introduction	1
1.2 Background of Study that Locates the Study within a Focus Area.....	1
1.3 The Problem Statement that Necessitates the Research.....	3
1.4 Aims, Objectives and Purpose Statement of the Study.....	3
1.5 Research Questions	4
1.6 Rationale for the Study	4
1.7 Significance of the Study.....	5
1.8 Clarification of terms and concepts central to the study	5
1.8.1 <i>Distance Learning</i>	5
1.8.2 <i>Preservice teacher</i>	6
1.8.3 <i>Mentor teacher</i>	6
1.8.4 <i>Teaching Practice</i>	6
1.9 Brief Presentation of the Paradigm and Research Methodology	7
1.10 Theoretical Framing of the Study	7
1.11 Limitation of the Study	8
1.12 Structure of the Study	8
1.13 Conclusion.....	9
Chapter 2: Literature review	11
2.1 Introduction	11
2.2 Massification of Education	11

2.3	The Growth of Private Higher Education in South Africa	12
2.4	Demand for Distance Education in South Africa	16
2.5	Teaching Practice in Initial Teacher Education	17
2.6	How Sites of Teaching Practice Influence Mentoring Experiences	20
2.7	Professional Learnings Gained through the Mentoring Process during Teaching Practice	21
2.8	Insights into Mentors Experiences of Mentoring Preservice Teachers	23
2.9	Mentoring Experiences of Distance Learning Preservice Teachers	24
2.10	Conclusion	29
Chapter 3: Theoretical Framework		30
3.1	Introduction	30
3.2	A Brief Engagement on Behaviourism in relation to Learning	30
3.3	From Behaviourism to Social Learning Theory	32
3.4	Social Cognitive Theory: An Explanation	33
3.5	From Social Learning Theory to Social Cognitive Theory: A Brief Comparison .	34
3.5.1	<i>Reciprocal Determinism</i>	35
3.6	Bandura's Social-Cognitive Theory in Context	36
3.7	Conclusion	39
Chapter 4: Research Methodology		41
4.1	Introduction	41
4.2	Research Design	41
4.3	Epistemological Stance: Interpretivist Paradigm	41
4.4	Research Approach: Qualitative Research	42
4.5	Research methodology: Narrative inquiry	44
4.6	Site of Research	45
4.7	Participants	45
4.8	Data Collection	47
4.8.1	<i>Research methods: Digital collages</i>	47
4.8.2	<i>Interviews</i>	48
4.9	Data Analysis Method	49
4.10	Ethical Considerations	50

4.10.1	<i>Bias</i>	50
4.10.2	<i>Credibility and Trustworthiness</i>	50
4.11	Limitations of the study	51
4.12	Conclusion	51
Chapter 5: Data Presentation		53
5.1	Introduction	53
5.2	Narrative 1: Crescente	53
5.3	Narrative 2: Docendo	63
5.4	Narrative 3: Doctrina	70
5.5	Narrative 4: Notitia	80
5.6	Narrative 5: Praemium	95
5.7	Conclusion	104
Chapter 6: Discussion of Findings		105
6.1	Introduction	105
6.2	Developing the Themes for the Data Analysis	105
6.3	Mentoring Experiences	107
6.4	Learning from Mentoring	109
6.4.1	<i>Being a Teacher: What does it mean for preservice teachers?</i>	110
6.4.2	<i>Perspectives on Teaching the Content</i>	112
6.5	Challenges Experienced	114
6.5.1	<i>Limited Access to and Time with Mentor Teachers</i>	114
6.5.2	<i>Constructive Feedback</i>	115
6.6	Learnings Not Covered by Mentors	116
6.6.1	<i>Being a Teacher</i>	116
6.6.2	<i>Being in a School</i>	117
6.7	Theorisation of Key Findings	118
6.7.1	<i>Adaptability and Flexibility</i>	118
6.7.2	<i>Multi-faceted Roles and Responsibilities of a Teacher</i>	119
6.7.3	<i>Omissions from the Mentoring Experience</i>	119
6.8	Conclusion	120
Chapter 7: Summary, Conclusions and Recommendations		122

7.1	Introduction	122
7.2	Responses to Research Questions	122
7.2.1	<i>What were Final Year Distance Learning Preservice Teachers' Experiences of Mentoring during School-based Teaching Practices?</i>	123
7.2.2	<i>What Professional Learnings were Received from the Mentor Teachers across the Mentoring Sessions during School-based Teaching Practices?</i>	123
7.2.3	<i>What did the Final Year Distance Learning Preservice Teachers Gain from these Professional Learnings?</i>	123
7.3	Significance of and Recommendations Arising from the Study	124
7.4	Limitations and Challenges of the Study	125
7.5	Areas for Further Research	126
7.6	Conclusion	126
	References	127
	Appendices	151
	Appendix A: Crescente's digital collage	151
	Appendix B: Docendo's digital collage	152
	Appendix C: Doctrina's digital collage	153
	Appendix D: Notitia's digital collage	154
	Appendix E: Praemium's digital collage	155

Abstract

Despite the transformation and evolution of the higher education landscape since distance learning was introduced in South Africa, the mentoring experiences of distance learning preservice teachers during Teaching Practice block sessions, remains under researched. This study aimed to ascertain the mentoring experiences of distance learning preservice teachers' mentoring experiences during Teaching Practice. The purpose of the study was to investigate the mentoring experiences that private higher education distance learning preservice teachers experienced during their Teaching Practice block sessions, with specific focus on the learnings gained from the mentoring process, the challenges experienced, and the learnings omitted by mentor teachers.

The study addresses the knowledge gap in academic literature by asking the following research questions:

- 1) What were the final year distance learning preservice teachers' experiences of mentoring during school-based teaching practices?
- 2) What professional learnings were received from the mentor teachers across the mentoring sessions during school-based teaching practices?
- 3) What did the final year distance learning preservice teachers gain from these professional learnings?

Using a qualitative research approach and narrative inquiry to explore the mentoring experiences of final year distance learning preservice teachers, the study combined digital collages and unstructured interviews to generate data for analysis. This approach is suitable for gaining in-depth insights into preservice teachers' experiences and professional learnings during Teaching Practice because it uncovered themes in the digital collages and interviews and allowed for a deeper understanding of the context and nuances surrounding the data. A thematic approach was used to analyse the data and organise the findings. The study adopted a relativist ontology, subjective epistemology, and an interpretivist philosophy. The interpretivist paradigm, which assumes that reality is subjective and differs from one individual to another, enabled the exploration and understanding of the preservice teachers' mentoring experiences.

A total of 5 participants were purposively selected for the study. Alongside other vital skills and knowledge, the study revealed that, among other things, the preservice teachers developed a

nuanced understanding of the multifaceted roles and responsibilities of teachers, cultivating essential skills and knowledge that foster adaptability, flexibility, and teacher agency. The study is significant to teacher education institutions, preservice teachers and mentor teachers. It is recommended that:

- 1) teacher education institutions provide explicit guidelines to the mentor teachers to facilitate effective mentoring of the preservice teachers
- 2) preservice teachers have a full understanding of their roles and responsibilities within in the mentor relationship and the kinds of learning they could achieve
- 3) mentor teachers engage in mentor development workshops to better understand the process and extent of mentoring.

Key words: teaching practice, preservice teachers, mentor teachers, higher education institution, initial teacher education

Acronym and Abbreviations

CHE	Council on Higher Education
DHET	Department of Higher Education and Training
HEI	Higher Education Institution
MRTEQ	Minimum Requirements for Teacher Education Qualifications
PHEI	Private Higher Education Institution
SACE	South African Council for Educators
TP	Teaching Practice

List of Tables

Table 1: Ranking of top South African higher education institutions	16
Table 2: Participant profiles.....	47
Table 3: Themes and sub-themes.....	106

List of Figures

Figure 1: Total enrolments at public universities in South Africa (n. 1994-2017).....	12
Figure 2: Enrolment and Graduate Trends in Public and Private HEIs (2019 and 2020)	15
Figure 3: Gibbs' Reflective Cycle.....	27
Figure 4: Bandura's reciprocal determinism	35
Figure 5: Adaptation of the components of Bandura's observational learning.....	36

Chapter 1: Introduction and brief overview

1.1 Introduction

The higher education landscape has transformed and evolved since the introduction of distance learning as it offers learning opportunities that are both flexible and accessible. In spite of the transformation, the mentoring experiences of distance learning preservice teachers' during their Teaching Practice block sessions is still under researched. This research aims to address this gap in knowledge as it explores the mentoring experiences of distance learning preservice teachers in a Bachelor of Education Foundation Phase programme at a national private higher education institution. This study will contribute to understanding what, according to the distance learning preservice teachers, constitutes effective mentoring practices in undergraduate contexts. Additionally, the study will inform the further development of supportive programmes or modules for preservice teachers.

1.2 Background of Study that Locates the Study within a Focus Area

Since the adoption of The White Paper on Education and Training (1995), wherein the Department of Education outlined its intention to widen access to higher education through transforming the education system, there has been an increase in registration at higher education institutions (HEIs). The vital statistics for 2011 published by the Council for Higher Education in 2013 indicated a substantial increase in student population over the years since democracy. In recent years, there has also been a positive trend in learners achieving the National Senior Certificate (NSC) with passes sufficient to access higher education qualifications, be it higher certificate, diploma, or degree. The 2020 NSC Report indicated that “there is a general trend of decline in the number of candidates achieving at higher certificate level and a noticeable increase in the number of learners achieving at Bachelor and diploma levels” (Department of Basic Education, 2021, p. 91). Of the 76.2% of school leavers who obtained their NSC, 36.4% fell into the Bachelor achievement category, 26.0% into the diploma category and 13.7% into the higher certificate achievement category (Department of Basic Education, 2021, p. 50). The growing number of school leavers who are eligible for higher education and training has resulted in the massification of higher education. The term ‘massification’, first coined by Martin Trow, is defined as “mass enrollments in a national system” (Noui, 2020, p. 97).

Although access to higher education has widened and school leavers have achieved the requisite results to gain access to higher education, the cost of such education, especially via contact learning, and access to university or college campuses is still prohibitive to many citizens. As a result, the demand for distance learning education has increased. As outlined in White Paper 3: A Programme for the Transformation of Higher Education, “higher education has to be internally restructured to face the challenge of globalisation...the breaking down of national and institutional boundaries which removes the spatial and geographic barriers to access” (Department of Education, 1997, p. 5).

In 2020, UNISA, the largest higher education distance learning institution in South Africa, reported an approximate enrolment figure of 389 876 undergraduate students with the College of Education having the highest number of enrolments, a figure of 102 309 students (UNISA, 2020). The demand for teaching qualifications in the distance mode of delivery is substantial in South Africa. Private higher education institutions offering teaching qualifications are also on an upward trajectory in enrolling teacher education students through a distance learning mode of delivery. Rosebank, Richfield, MANCOSA, Varsity College and STADIO Higher Education are some of the private higher education institutions that have, over the last decade, introduced distance learning opportunities to students and a steady increase in enrolments across these institutions has been noted. Indicative of the aforementioned, STADIO Higher Education reported in a BusinessTech article (‘South Africa Private Higher Education Group Boosted by Growth in Student Numbers’, 2022) that in the first half of the year in 2022, STADIO saw an increase of 11% in student enrolments, bringing the total number of students to 38 348. STADIO stated that distance learning student enrolments indicated good overall growing of 14%, to a Distance Learning enrolment to 32 686 students. From these figures it can be seen that Distance Learning is the most popular of the two learning modes at that institution.

A key component of the initial teacher education programmes is the work integrated learning module, Teaching Practice. While much has been researched and published on the experiences relating to Teaching Practice block sessions within face-to-face offerings, there is limited literature within the South African context that is available on distance learning preservice teachers’ experiences of Teaching Practice block sessions. Hence, the focus of my research is on the experiences of Teaching Practice block sessions within a distance learning mode of initial teacher education. More specifically, my focus is on the mentoring experiences of final-year

distance learning preservice teachers who have registered with a private higher education institution.

The mentoring process that occurs during Teaching Practice block sessions is of vital importance to the professional development of the preservice teachers as the expectation is that they will gain exposure to the various expectations of the school workplace as well as ethical practice and behaviour over and above pedagogical content knowledge (Moosa & Rembach, 2020). An essential aspect of the Teaching Practice block session experience is the expectation that mentor teachers assess their mentees formally and informally on their teaching and planning and provide them with constructive feedback so that the preservice teachers can improve on their weaknesses and know what their strengths are (Tindowen, Bangi and Parallag Jr., 2019). Mentorship by supervising teachers is vital to preservice teachers' growth and professional development. This study specifically focuses on the mentoring experiences of distance learning pre-service teachers.

1.3 The Problem Statement that Necessitates the Research

In Mokoena's (2017) study of preservice teachers' experiences of Teaching Practice at an open and distance learning institution in South Africa, more than half of them stated that they did not receive meaningful mentoring, and they were used to support the teachers and serve relief rather than observing their mentors and learning from them. Furthermore, the nature and quality of mentoring received is relatively unknown and as such the preservice teachers received very little experiential learning. This study, therefore, attempted to know and understand the challenges from a preservice teacher's experience discourse so that these issues can be illuminated for intervention.

1.4 Aims, Objectives and Purpose Statement of the Study

The aim of this study was to ascertain the distance learning preservice teachers' mentoring experiences of Teaching Practice block sessions. The purpose of this study was to investigate the mentoring experiences that private higher education distance learning preservice teachers had during their Teaching Practice block sessions. Specific focus was on the learnings they gained from the mentoring process, the challenges they experienced, and the learnings not covered by mentor teachers. This study aimed to contribute to the body of knowledge of mentoring experiences of preservice teachers and prompt further research into the mentoring experiences of

distance learning preservice teachers at private higher education institutions. The objectives of the study are (1) to explore final year distance learning preservice teachers' mentoring experiences during school-based Teaching Practice block sessions; (2) to determine the professional mentoring obtained from the mentor teachers while at school-based Teaching Practice block sessions; and (3) to understand how the professional mentoring gained during mentoring influenced their Teaching Practice block sessions.

1.5 **Research Questions**

This study sought to explore (1) what final year distance learning preservice teachers' experiences of mentoring during school-based Teaching Practice were, (2) what professional learnings were received from the mentor teachers across the mentoring sessions during school-based Teaching Practice; and (3) what did the final year distance learning preservice teachers gain from these professional learnings?

1.6 **Rationale for the Study**

I am a teacher educator working at a national private higher education institution and am responsible for a Teaching Practice module. In this role, I have engaged with the preservice teachers, read their Teaching Practice reflections and noted the successes, gaps in their learning, and the challenges they experienced. This study provided me with deep insights into their experiences related to mentoring which I could then use to inform my perspectives, planning and interventions to better prepare the preservice teachers for Teaching Practice block session.

Extensive research has been conducted in the exploration of preservice teachers' mentoring experiences of Teaching Practice (Peiser, 2020; Tyrer, 2023; Wexler, 2020; Wilson & Huynh, 2020.) However, most of the research is based on the experiences of students who are studying in the contact learning mode and campus-based environment. Due to the upsurge of distance learning enrolments because of the massification of tertiary education and the COVID-19 pandemic of 2020, more research needs to be conducted into the mentoring experiences of distance learning preservice teachers. Further, over the last decade, much of the research conducted in South Africa into mentoring experiences of preservice teachers, and published in national and international education journals, has taken place at a provincial level and at public universities (Bertram, 2023; Davids & Waghid, 2020; Jita & Munje, 2022; Moosa & Rembach, 2020; Sokhulu, 2018). There

is no evidence of research in any of the accredited education journals published in South Africa over the last five years which has explored final year distance learning preservice teachers' mentoring experiences at a national private higher education institution. Therefore, further research needs to be conducted. There is a lack of research related to the Teaching Practice mentoring experiences of preservice teachers enrolled in distance learning studies, at a national level and in private higher education institutions.

1.7 **Significance of the Study**

The study is significant to mentor teachers as it gives insight into the mentees' (preservice teachers) experiences of being mentored during Teaching Practice, the learnings that were gained, and what the mentees believed to be lacking in their mentoring at Teaching Practice. Further, it is significant to future preservice teachers as they can gain an understanding of their expected roles and responsibilities within the mentoring relationship. Davis and Fantozzi (2016) state that conversations should be had with preservice teachers regarding their expectations they have of their mentor teachers. By sharing these expectations of the preservice teachers with the mentor teachers, it will help bridge the gap in communication between the two parties. It is significant to teacher education institutions as it can allow the coordinators of the Teaching Practice modules to provide the mentor teachers with explicit guidelines to facilitate effecting mentoring and highlight particular areas in which mentees need guidance in a 'real world' situation based on the feedback from the preservice teachers. This could be in the form of mentor training programmes (Baartman, 2020). Lastly, teacher education scholars are provided with the lived experiences of Teaching Practice from the perspective of preservice teachers.

1.8 **Clarification of terms and concepts central to the study**

1.8.1 *Distance Learning*

The concept of distance learning is viewed in different ways by various authors. Mishra, Sahoo and Pandey (2021) refer to distance learning as e-learning. However, the definition provided by Greener (2021) is most akin to my view of distance learning and the way in which it should be interpreted in this study. Greener (2021) explains that distance learning is where study materials are available digitally or in hard copy and the materials are supported through synchronous contact during the course of the module and the studying culminates in a summative assessment. The way

in which distance learning should be perceived in my study, is as a mode of learning where students and lecturers are physically separated and where various supportive technologies facilitate communication and enhance learning.

1.8.2 *Preservice teacher*

A common understanding among academics is that preservice teachers are students enrolled in teacher preparation programmes and are in the process of studying to become qualified teachers (Chand et al., 2022; Kakazu & Kobayashi, 2022). My interpretation of the concept is a student engaged in initial teacher education studies, i.e., a Bachelor of Education degree, at an accredited higher education institution.

1.8.3 *Mentor teacher*

A mentor teacher is someone who is skilled and guides the inexperienced preservice teachers towards their professional development (Baartman, 2020). Mullen and Klimaitis (2021) define a mentor teacher as someone who develops a preservice teacher through engagement and cultivation. Given that there are multiple definitions of what a mentor teacher is, the meaning of a mentor teacher utilised in this study is a supervising teacher that hosts preservice teachers in their classroom. Mentor teachers orientate their mentee into the roles and responsibilities of the teaching professional and provide the requisite guidance and support.

1.8.4 *Teaching Practice*

Taylor (2023) defines Teaching Practice as a chance for preservice teachers to gain teaching experience in a classroom environment. In line with the private higher education institution where this study was located, Teaching Practice is the six-week block session per year of the 4-year Bachelor of Education degree when preservice teachers spend time in the classroom and school environment to gain 'real world' experience and are given opportunities to practice and hone their teaching skills.

1.9 **Brief Presentation of the Paradigm and Research Methodology**

This study used a qualitative research approach to explore the mentoring experiences and expectation of final year distance learning preservice teachers. This approach is suitable for gaining in-depth insights into preservice teachers' experiences and professional learnings during Teaching Practice. The study adopted a relativist ontology, recognising that multiple realities exist and can be explored through human interactions. Participants experienced mentoring differently, and each experience constituted their reality. A subjective epistemology, focusing on social and subjective means of gaining knowledge, was used as an interpretivist philosophy assumes that humans cannot be divided from their knowledge. The study used an interpretivist paradigm, which assumes that reality is subjective and differs from one individual to another. This paradigm was suitable for exploring and understanding preservice teachers' mentoring experiences.

The study used narrative inquiry, exploring participants' realities through their stories. Participants represented their mentoring experiences using digital collages and virtual interviews. Overall, the study aimed to gain a deeper understanding of preservice teachers' mentoring experiences during the Teaching Practice block sessions, recognising that each participant's experience was unique and subjective.

1.10 **Theoretical Framing of the Study**

My study used Bandura's social cognitive theory as the theoretical framework, which allowed me to examine the distance learning preservice teachers' mentoring experiences. I elected to use this framework and Hargreaves and Fullan's (2012) notion of professional capital in order to explain the findings of the study. My chosen framework guided my research process and data analysis in various ways. It informed the development of my research question and data collection methods, as well as my data analysis procedures. It helped me identify the themes and sub-themes such as the participants' perceptions of mentoring, the challenges they experienced, the learnings they gained, and the expected learnings that were not covered by their mentor teachers. By applying Bandura's social cognitive theory and Hargreaves and Fullan's professional capital, I uncovered insights which might otherwise have remained hidden. I was thus able to present my findings in a meaningful and contextualised way within the literature.

1.11 **Limitation of the Study**

The research was only focused on one private higher education institution. While this was the intended design of the research, the limitation associated with this design is that of institutional cultural and policy differences amongst distance learning institutions which this study did not privilege and which may influence the experiences of the pre-service teachers during Teaching Practice mentoring processes.

1.12 **Structure of the Study**

The study consists of seven chapters. The chapter outline is as follows:

Chapter 1: Introduction

Chapter 1 provides an overview of the study. It provides background information, the problem statement, purpose statement, rationale and significance of the study, clarification of the terms and concepts, presentation of paradigm and research methodology, and finally, the limitations to the study.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

This chapter presents literature on the massification of education and the growth of private higher education. Thereafter it explores on the reason for the demand for distance education in South Africa. The chapter then discusses the Teaching Practice component of initial teacher education and the mentoring experiences of distance learning preservice teachers.

Chapter 3: Theoretical Framework

Chapter 3 elaborates on the theoretical framework of Bandura's social cognitive theory and the history of behaviourism which contributed to the development of Bandura's social cognitive theory.

Chapter 4: Research Methodology

Herein the research design and methodology used in the study are discussed in detail. The reasoning behind the selection of the interpretive paradigm and qualitative approach is provided. Additionally, the sampling procedure of five participants and the data collection process are

explained. The use of a digital collage and unstructured interviews with presentation of the collages, support the research design of the study. The chapter also elaborates on the data analysis process using thematic approach. The chapter highlights the measure taken to ensure trustworthiness and adherence to the ethical requirements. Finally, the chapter identifies the limitations of the study.

Chapter 5: Narratives

Chapter 5 presents the narratives of the five participants written by the researcher. The narratives are the personal accounts of each participant's experiences of mentoring during their Bachelor of Education: Foundation Phase Degree's Teaching Practice block sessions. The narratives incorporate the presentation of the digital collage as well as the participants' explanations of their experiences.

Chapter 6: Analysis of Narratives

This chapter is an analysis of the narratives of the participants. Themes and sub-themes are presented and linked to literature and the theories of Bandura, and Hargreaves and Fullan. All five participants' narratives were analysed to gain a deeper understanding of their mentoring experiences as distance learning preservice teachers and how these experiences and learnings influenced the development of their teacher identity.

Chapter 7: Findings and Conclusion

The final chapter of this study presents the summary, conclusions and recommendation of this study. The chapter discusses the responses to the research questions, the significance of and recommendations arising from the study, limitations and challenges of the study and finally, the areas for further research.

1.13 Conclusion

Chapter One introduced the topic of the study which is on the mentoring experiences of distance learning preservice teachers in a private higher education institution. It provided a background of the study and outlined the rationale for the study. It further presented an overview of the research design and methodology, and clarification of terms.

The next chapter presents a literature review exploring the current literature on massification of education, the growth of private higher education in South Africa, demand for distance education in South Africa, Teaching Practice in initial teacher education, how sites of Teaching Practice block sessions influence mentoring experiences, professional learning gained through the mentoring process during Teaching Practice block sessions, insights into mentors' experiences of mentoring preservice teachers, and lastly, mentoring experiences of distance learning preservice teachers. This literature review will provide background to the study as well as informing the development of the conceptual framework that will guide the study in the chapter that follow.

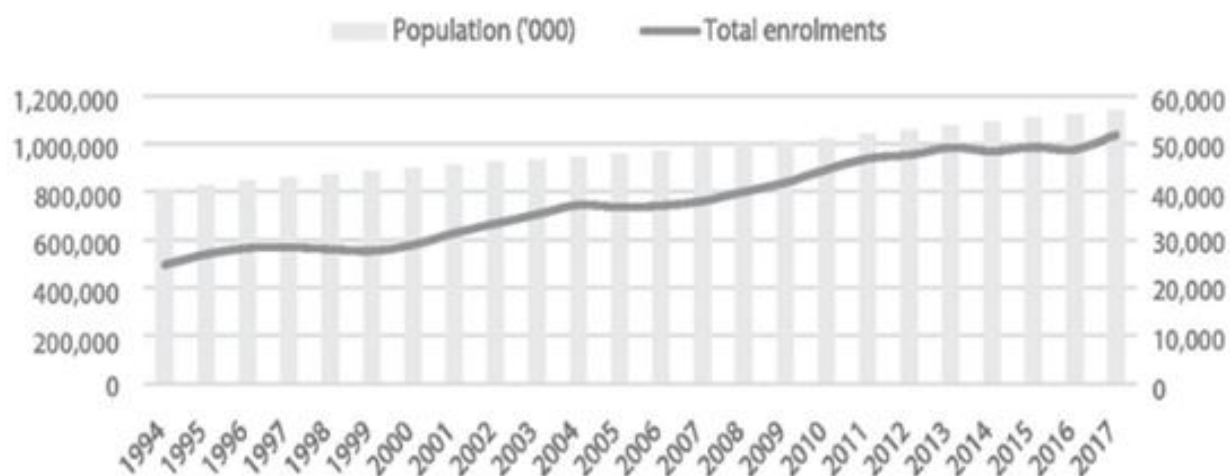
Chapter 2: Literature review

2.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the literature review of the study. Firstly, the chapter offers a brief history of the massification of education and the growth of higher education in South Africa. Secondly, the chapter discusses the demand for distance education offerings in teacher education programmes and Teaching Practice block sessions in initial teacher education and the Teaching Practice block session requirements and guidelines of the PHEI where the study took place. The penultimate section of this chapter explores the mentoring experiences of preservice teachers while the final part concludes the chapter.

2.2 Massification of Education

Due to White Paper 3 on Education and Training (Department of Education, 1995) democratising education and widening access to tertiary and higher education institutions to address previous inequalities, there has been a steady increase in the number of student enrolments at the aforementioned institutions [Figure 1]. Figure 1's data for the years 1994 to 2004 reflects enrolments as pre-merger higher education institutions, including Technikons. The information in the figure on the left, Y axis, demonstrates how the number of students enrolled in public universities increased from 495,438 in 1994 to 1,036,984 in 2017 (van Schalkwyk et al., 2022). In addition to the approximately one million students enrolled in South Africa's 26 public universities, a further 700,00 students were enrolled at 50 Technical Vocational Education Training colleges and another 90,00 at private institutions (Tjønneland, 2017). This brings the total number of students registered at tertiary and higher education institutions in 1,826,984 students in 2017, representing a 268,828% increase in the 1994 enrolment number.

Figure 1: Total enrolments at public universities in South Africa (n. 1994-2017)

Total enrolments at public universities in South Africa (n. 1994–2017). Note: For total enrolments, we include South African and non-South African students. Sources: DHET HEMIS aggregate tables (1994–2017); Stats SA: Mid-year population estimates 2010 and 2018, Report PO302

Note: (van Schalkwyk et al., 2022)

2.3 The Growth of Private Higher Education in South Africa

Globalisation and the massification of education have resulted in the issue of too few institutions of higher learning to handle the high demand for places, which is a problem prevalent in many nations throughout the world (OECD, 2018; Tian, Wu & Liu, 2019; Pillay, 2020; Sabzalieva et al., 2022). To meet the market demand for tertiary education, new trends in the higher education landscape have appeared with the move towards the creation of additional private higher education institutions, hereon referred to as PHEIs, locally and internationally (Rughoobur-Seetah, 2019; Noui, 2020). One of the narratives that has emerged in response to the higher education reform, is the “steady emergence and consolidation of Private Higher Education Institutions” (Davids & Waghid, 2020). According to Levy's (2018) survey, private higher education institutions have 56,7 million students worldwide, accounting for 32.9% of total enrolment. Private higher education enrolment exceeds 40% in regions such as Latin America, the Caribbean, and Asia (Levy, 2018). Many PHEI's have been established and subsequently registered by the Council on Higher Education (CHE) and Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET) to meet the demand for tertiary education in South Africa (Bezuidenhout, De Jager, & Naidoo, 2013; Davids & Waghid, 2020). Examples of which are Management College of

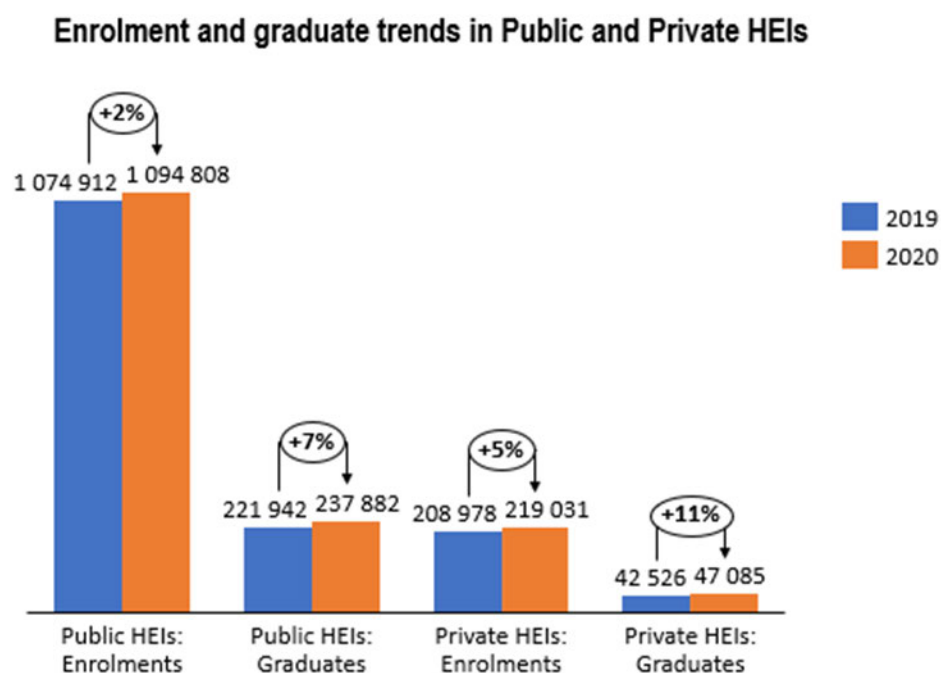
South Africa (MANCOSA), Independent Institute of Education (IIE), Damelin and STADIO Higher Education. The abovementioned institutions and others must be registered companies and adhere to the Department of Education and Training's registration regulations. Furthermore, they are subject to programme accreditation requirements, as well as the qualification registration policy and criteria of the National Qualifications Framework (NQF) need to be accredited by the Higher Education Quality Committee (HEQC) and registered with the South African CHE. Registered PHEIs with accredited modules offer degree programmes equivalent to that of a university according to the provisions outlined in the *Higher Education Act* 19 of 1997. The PHEIs offer a legitimate alternative to public universities that only accept a limited number of students. Additionally, there are no higher education reservations¹ or equity quotas for the places available at PHEIs, which is an attraction for many prospective students (Lee, 2020). With reference to the above enrolment figures, class sizes at public universities are relatively large. In South African universities, classes often comprise of 300 to 400 students which is considered very large when measured against Mateo and Fernandez's classification system which was founded on international research and likens a very large class as 150 students and more (Pillay, 2020). Pillay (2020) highlights the difficulties that students face as a result of large class sizes, physical discomfort due to cramped and over-crowded venues, a sense of invisibility and feeling overwhelmed and unheard by lecturers and peers in a large class. Of course, lecturers can mitigate these issues to an extent through efficient facilitation by encouraging participation, breaking students into smaller groups and flipping the classroom (Connell, 2019; Maunula et al., 2023). Despite these possible solutions to the problem, many students, if given the opportunity, would select private higher education over public for various reasons. In a study on the factors that influence the choice of PHEIs. Bezuidenhout, De Jager and Naidoo (2013) discovered that it was the safety and security that the institution provided that was the primary influencer as many students and their families are concerned by the almost annual strikes or protests that take place at the public universities near the commencement of the academic year whereas this does not occur at PHEIs. This was followed by

¹ “A higher education reservation is an allocation of seats within a national college or university system or within a singular institution for a group that has collectively experienced some level of educational disadvantage” (Warikoo & Allen, 2020).

employment prospects, as a result of the high unemployment rate in South Africa (Bezuidenhout, 2012; Bezuidenhout, De Jager, & Naidoo, 2013). The contact learning students at PHEIs tend to have smaller classes in comparison to the larger numbers that attend public universities and thus the students will receive more individualised attention and are able to build a rapport with their learners, which they would be unlikely to achieve in classes of over 150 students.

The number of students enrolled in private and public higher education institutions in South Africa has steadily increased and year on year from 2018 to 2022 the student enrolment target has been achieved and exceeded (Department of Higher Education and Training, 2020). According to the Statistics on Post-School Education and Training in South Africa 2020 Report (Department of Higher Education and Training, 2022), more than 1,2 million students enrolled in public and PHEIs in 2019. Of the 1,2 million students, 1,074,912 students enrolled in public higher education institutions and 208,978 were enrolled in PHEIs. In 2020, more than 1,3 million students enrolled in public and private higher education institutions with 219,031 students enrolled in PHEIs. Figure 2 illustrates the increasing trend of enrolments and graduates in both public and private sector higher education institutions. It also highlights that the PHEIs are gaining impetus in both student enrolment and the number of students graduating as the growth in enrolments is more than double what it is for public higher education institutions albeit off a lower base (Department of Higher Education and Training, 2022).

Figure 2: Enrolment and Graduate Trends in Public and Private HEIs (2019 and 2020)



Note: (Department of Higher Education and Training, 2020, 2022)

Many of the PHEIs now offer accredited distance learning qualifications over a range of programmes from Higher Certificate to Doctoral qualifications (NQF levels 5 to 10) as well as a variety of faculties and disciplines (Damelin Online, 2023; IIE Varsity College Distance (Online), 2023; MANCOSA, 2023; STADIO Higher Education Distance Learning, 2023). The swift rise in the supply of private higher education has caused significant concern in the public sector which views that sharp rise as a direct threat to its existence (Davids & Waghid, 2020). Tankou epse Nukunah, Bezuidenhout and Furtak, (2019) purport that in certain countries, the private education sector is so significant that it could potentially satisfy the need for higher education on its own.

Table 1 was published by Cybermetrics Lab in January 2023. This ranking of 123 South African higher education institutions is based on the quantity of web content as well as the visibility and effect of web publications as measured by the number of external site citations they receive. The ranking's objectives are to enhance academic and research organisations' online visibility and to encourage the open access publication of scientific findings. While this is not an indicator of the number of registered students or graduates per institution, it is a sign that PHEIs are being recognised in their online footprint as well as publications.

Table 1: Ranking of top South African higher education institutions

Ranking	University	Impact rank*	Openness rank*	Excellence rank*
7	University of South Africa	1235	912	873
25	MANCOSA	9063	6547	7206
35	Independent Institute of Education (Rosebank College, College Campus, Varsity College, Vega, The School of Brand Communications)	11714	6547	7206
39	Damelin	12429	6547	7206
42	STADIO Higher Education	12636	6547	7206
<i>*lower is better</i>				

Note: Adapted from Webometric's Ranking of South African Universities – January 2023 (Cybermetrics Lab, 2023)

2.4 Demand for Distance Education in South Africa

Further to the need for an increase in higher education institutions in South Africa, there is also a need for distance learning offerings due to financial and logistical constraints of prospective students (Lekhetho, 2022). The non-lecture room form of study is referred to by different names and each has a different definition, so the terminologies are not synonymous. Distance learning, also known as distance education, e-learning, and online learning is a type of education where students and teachers are physically separated during instruction and where various supportive technologies are used to facilitate communication between students and teachers as well as between students (Simonson & Berg, 2024). Haughey, Evans and Murphy (2008) and Keegan (1996) describe distance learning as varied forms of study which are not under constant direct supervision of lecturers or tutors present with students, but which are provided with and guided by planning, direction, and instruction from the institution. According to Simonson and Berg (2024), there are four main characteristics of distance learning:

- It is conducted through education institutions, albeit not in the conventional classroom-based style.
- It entails geographical distance from peers and lecturers. While this may seem detrimental, it does have its advantages in its accessibility and convenience in that regardless of locale, provided you have access to print or electronic study material, students can for the most part, study at times convenient to them.
- Another characteristic is that although there is little to no face-to-face contact between students and lecturers, electronic or digital communication encourages interaction. Examples of this include emails, online learning management systems, such as Moodle, Blackboard and Canvas, webinars, and classrooms. The modes of electronic communication and interaction are available via mobile phones, tablets and computers thus making study available to most persons wanting to pursue distance learning.
- Lastly, distance learning creates communities made up of students, lecturers or tutors and instructional materials such as study material, videos and slideshow presentations allowing students access to the curriculum. Online networking, as well as group work, facilitates student interaction and lessens isolation (Simonson & Berg, 2024).

2.5 Teaching Practice in Initial Teacher Education

As per South Africa's teacher education policies, all students enrolled in Bachelor of Education programmes at higher education institutions must attend schools wherein they can engage in the classroom and school environment for a set period (Department of Higher Education and Training, 2011). This time in the classroom and school environment is known as teaching practicum, teaching practice, clinical experiences, or work integrated learning. For this study, it will hereon be referred to as teaching practice (TP). Preservice teachers are given the opportunities to practice and refine their teaching techniques in actual classroom situations while they are attending TP block sessions. One of the main purposes of TP block sessions is to give preservice teachers the opportunity to bridge the gap between theory and practice by applying the knowledge to real life situations (Darling-Hammond, 2023).

Brooks (2021) addresses the challenge of quality teacher education iterating that this programme of study is a fundamentally practical activity that occurs between higher education institutions and school classrooms. Throughout the degree programme, preservice teachers

experience countless interactions between individuals, and they are required to make sense of the experiences. Preservice teachers must apply their teacher education pedagogies, knowledge, and ideas to the real-life classroom environment.

Research (Podolsky, Kini & Darling-Hammond, 2019; Tatto & Menter, 2019) supports the notion that TP can have a positive impact on the effectiveness of preservice and novice teachers. A study by Podolsky, Kini and Darling-Hammond (2019) found that preservice teachers who received more extensive TP experiences were more effective in the classroom than those who were not as “well-developed programmes help produced novice teachers who are able to practice like many seasoned veterans” where they can successfully manage classes while teaching difficult concepts effectively to learners from a variety of backgrounds and with diverse learning styles. Further to this, Podolsky, Kini and Darling-Hammond's study (2019) on teacher effectiveness noted that novice teachers who had attended higher education institutions where extensive TP block sessions took place and where feedback on their teaching was received and coursework on specific aspects of teaching was completed, were more effective in their post-graduate teaching roles. It is of vital importance to elucidate how teacher education programmes put theory into practice in a manner not dissimilar to those professions that derive competency through work-integrated integrated learning or clinical practice (Tatto & Menter, 2019).

The Minimum Requirements for Teacher Education Qualifications (MRTEQ) policy (2011) states that all preservice teachers, in full-time contact programmes as well as distance learning, “should spend a minimum of 20 weeks and a maximum of 32 weeks in formally supervised and assessed school-based practices over the four-year duration of the degree” (Department of Higher Education and Training, 2011). During this school-based placement for TP, students are expected to be mentored by university mentors and fully qualified school-based supervising teachers. The supervising teachers that host preservice teachers in their classroom are known as mentor teachers. Mentor teachers perform the tasks of host, tour guides to teaching, cheerleaders, planners, instructional advisors, and partner teachers to their mentees (Rakes et al., 2022).

As per the Revised Policy on the Minimum Requirements for Teacher Education Qualifications (Department of Higher Education and Training, 2015), structured supervision, mentoring, and assessment are required for the preservice teachers' time in school. It is crucial for preservice teachers to spend time working in the field as it will give them a genuine setting in

which to practice and show how the skills, they acquired throughout the course of their education, fit together. Also, it is crucial that students gain first-hand knowledge of the various and strikingly different contexts of South African education (Department of Higher Education and Training, 2015).

During this time at school, while under the guidance and leadership of the mentor teacher, that the distance learning preservice teachers will gain exposure on how to enhance their teaching skills as well as use their pedagogical and subject knowledge to offer learners valuable insights for learning when teaching lessons (Moosa & Rembach, 2020; Dani et al., 2021). Furthermore, preservice teachers engage in a mentor-mentee relationship where they gain the classroom experience and skills to develop in the teaching profession.

During these TP block sessions, preservice teachers should be given the opportunity to observe and engage in various forms of professional and practical teacher knowledge as demonstrated by their mentor teachers (Mokoena, 2017). In addition to observation, preservice teachers are expected to provide classroom assistance as well as teach some lessons under the supervision of their mentor teacher as well as an assessor appointed by the higher education institution at which they are studying their teaching qualification (Gravett, Petersen & Ramsaroop, 2019).

While at TP, preservice teachers are engaged in observing their mentors' teaching, planning and teaching their own lessons as well as reflecting on the lessons they have taught, formally with their mentor teachers and informally when reflecting on the events of the day. TP is a period where preservice teachers are exposed to and can participate in a real-world school environment under the mentorship and leadership of a qualified, and hopefully experienced, supervising teacher (Moosa & Rembach, 2018; Jita & Munje, 2022).

The requirement of the mentor teachers is to assess the preservice teachers' teaching formally and informally and provide them with constructive feedback and support. This aligns with a study conducted by Parker, Zenkov and Glaser (2021) which found that participants believed that effective mentor teachers recognise the feedback. Consequently, they can have honest and productive discussions, engage in reflective practice of their own teaching and can facilitate the same with their mentees. This post-lesson reflection discussion that occurs between mentor and mentee can be emotive and thus should take place in an environment which facilitates

a positive experience where students feel supported rather than victimised when given constructive feedback from their mentors (Loukomies et al, 2021).

2.6 How Sites of Teaching Practice Influence Mentoring Experiences

Kraft and Papay (2014) suggest that the site of TP has significant impact on teachers and preservice teachers because one of the ways preservice teachers learn to teach is through the guidance of mentor teachers (Muyengwa & Jita, 2020). The contexts of the host schools, i.e. the social and physical contexts, including aspects such as the learner demographics, school culture and classroom environment affect the mentoring relationship, positively or negatively (Ronfeldt, 2012). If a school is well resourced and the mentor teacher is well-organised with a smaller class size, the preservice teacher's mentoring experience is more likely to be a positive one with the focus being on teaching and learning. If the environment is under-resourced with a large class size, the experience may be stressful and littered with obstacles hindering learning during the mentoring process and in the classroom, and for this reason, poorly resourced schools are not commonly selected by preservice teachers as sites for TP (Mukeredzi, 2017). When preservice teachers are warmly received by their host school, they feel a sense of belonging (Hagenauer, Waber & de Zordo, 2021; Rauduvaitė, Lasauskienė & Barkauskaitė, 2015; Jita & Munje, 2022). Research suggests that preservice teachers reproduce the type of teaching they encounter at their TP schools (Ronfeldt, 2015). Studies show that preservice teachers should conduct their TP in better functioning, more supportive and collaborative host schools (Ronfeldt, 2015) as these offer better mentoring experiences since the mentor teachers tend to be more engaged with their mentees (Lofthouse & Thomas, 2017). Further, the core values of the host school may influence the mentoring focus and style (Sezgin, Sönmez, & Naillioğlu Kaymak, 2020) as some schools prioritise the socio-emotional development of the learners while others are more academically focused. Collaboration has been identified as one of the skills of highly effective mentors which is essential to practice in mentorship programmes (Hill et al., 2022). "Collaboration fosters innovation, creativity, and synergy, leading to more successful and impactful outcomes than individual efforts" (Ulland, 2024, p. 20). These factors can affect the self-efficacy of the preservice teachers while at TP, however, there is research to the contrary as well. Moulding, Stewart and Dunmeyer (2014) report that in their study, the preservice teachers' level of self-efficacy increased regardless of the physical location of the school. They purport that the mentoring experiences can

be viewed as successful, provided the mentor teachers are capable of navigating difficult situations, and model strategies effectively (Moulding, Stewart & Dunmeyer, 2014).

The demographics of the school community also impact the mentoring experiences as schools in diverse communities as well those that are under resourced face their unique opportunities and challenges. Preservice teachers may require additional support from their mentor teachers in order to navigate the equity and inclusions issue faced in these culturally diverse settings (Jefferson Jr., 2022). Preservice teachers would need to adapt their pedagogies to be more culturally responsive, which will ultimately enhance the effectiveness of their teaching (Koubek & Wasta, 2022). Mentor teachers who are familiar with the socio-economic and cultural contexts of their learners can guide their preservice teachers in dealing with the challenges experienced by their learners (Muyengwa, 2018).

The structures and policies of the schools affect the mentoring experience as school that have created a formalised mentoring programme tend to give clearer expectations and resources for the mentor and mentees (Galamay-Cachola, Aduca, Calauagan, 2018). Policies on the mentoring of preservice teachers prioritise the mentoring programme which creates a more supportive learning environment and allows them access to mentor teachers who are experienced and can offer valuable guidance and feedback (Bird & Hudson, 2015).

The combination of the above factors related to the site of TP schools collectively impact the professional development and mentoring experiences of the preservice teacher. Positive mentoring experiences result in increased confidence and improved teaching techniques and practices (Bowman, 2014).

2.7 Professional Learnings Gained through the Mentoring Process during Teaching Practice

Mentoring whilst at TP is an integral part of initial teacher education as it is through mentoring that professional growth and development is gained and nurtured (Mukeredzi, Mthiyane & Bertram, 2015). Mentoring creates an environment in which preservice teachers can explore and adapt various teaching strategies. (Baker, Stickney & Sachs, 2024). Being afforded this opportunity allows the preservice teachers to improve their lesson planning, classroom

management skills and other various pedagogical skills (Hudson, 2013). Through observation and feedback, mentor teachers provide practical solutions to enhance instructional effectiveness, and it is this practical knowledge which pairs with the theory that the preservice teachers gained at their HEI (Maphalala, 2013). Mentors who model successful teaching practices contribute to the professional development of preservice teachers since the mentoring process bridges the gap between theory and practice (Pillay, 2015).

Emotional resilience is a topic which is often implicitly taught to preservice teachers through the relationship a mentor has with their preservice teacher (Thieman, Marx & Kitchel, 2014; Pillay, 2015). The teaching profession is challenging and overwhelming at times which can result in stress and feelings of isolation (Wilson & Huynh, 2020). A strong relationship with a mentor can aid in navigating through these feelings as the mentor will likely offer their mentee reassurance and validation thus creating a sense of belonging in the school community as well as emotional resilience (Pillay, 2015). Ingersoll and Strong (cited in Pavao, 2018) highlight the value of emotional support as it reduces the chance of burnout as well as allowing preservice teachers to focus on their professional development rather than being consumed by the challenges of teaching.

It is reported that TP is “an experience of intense and vulnerable exploration of the self” (Ó Gallchóir, O’Flaherty & Hinchion, 2019, p. 374) and thus reflective practice is a vital learning of initial teacher education and preservice teachers’ professional development (Hahl & Mikulec, 2018) and mentoring promotes critical self-reflection (Suphasri & Chinokul, 2021). Preservice teachers should be guided in analysing their teaching thus promoting continuous improvement (Korthagen, 2017). Effective mentoring entails reflective dialogue which aids preservice teachers in pinpointing areas for improvement and celebrating their successes (Ciampa & Gallagher, 2015; Meierdirk, 2017). Reflection fosters insights into their teaching philosophies which not only improves teaching strategies but also develops a strong professional identity (Pillay, 2015). Mentors who engage in and promote reflective thinking create learning environments which support lifelong professional growth, and thus through “self-observation, self-analysis, and self-evaluation, they can explore their experiences, discover ‘the truth’ about themselves, and improve their professional life” (Suphasri & Chinokul, 2021).

2.8 Insights into Mentors Experiences of Mentoring Preservice Teachers

Hagenauer, Waber and de Zordo (2021, p.1) state that “the quality of the relationship between the mentor teacher and the student [preservice] teacher is crucial for successful training”. Mentor-mentee relationships in which trust and respect exist, allow preservice teachers to develop their teacher identities and the way they teach (Hudson, 2016; Izadinia, 2018). Many mentor teachers engage with their preservice teachers voluntarily which strengthens their leadership characteristics (Sawalhi & Chaaban, 2021). Mentor teachers have described the benefits of mentoring preservice teachers as “increased self-reflection and continuing reflective practice” (Baker, Stickney & Sachs, 2024, p. 4) as well as the process of mentoring being beneficial to their own professional and personal development (Gul, Demir & Criswell, 2019).

Mentor teachers who volunteer to host a preservice teacher in their classroom find the mentoring experience rewarding as they are able to contribute to the teaching profession by sharing their knowledge and observing and guiding the development of their preservice teacher mentee (Hobson et al., 2015; van Ginkel, Verloop & Denessen, 2016), however this is not always the case as there are also schools who allocate preservice teachers to mentor teachers based on the mentor’s availability (Gut et al., 2014). Through the mentoring process, mentors can engage in reflective practice since they need to critique their own teaching methods in order to guide their mentees (Lofthouse, 2018). The mentoring relationship is not always smooth, especially when some preservice teachers do not demonstrate a passion for teaching as results in them being a burden to their mentor teachers (Hoben, 2021) as the mentors have to coax them over the proverbial finish line. Mentor teachers’ often have to sacrifice their free time to support their mentee because their workloads usually remain unchanged which results in a lack of time for the mentor to engage fully in both teaching and mentoring and this may cause the preservice teachers’ needs not being met so that the mentor can complete the syllabus (Jita & Munje, 2022). Other challenges are when the preservice teachers do not have the requisite content knowledge of the subjects they are required to teach (Hoben, 2021), when the teaching approaches and personalities of the mentor and preservice teacher are not aligned (Gut et al., 2014), and the preservice teachers’ unpreparedness for TP block sessions (Muyengwa, 2018). Siebert et al. (cited in Gut et al., 2014) explain that when mentor and mentee have not had the chance to meet prior to the commencement of TP, they may not get the opportunity to discuss their expectations of the mentoring relationship. Izadinia (2017) indicated the importance of understanding the roles and expectations of preservice teachers by

mentor teachers as these expectations either cause the preservice teacher to flourish or have a negative experience of mentoring. Niklasson (2018) states that the mentor teachers often have conflicting views to the higher education institutions' teachings of mentoring as they believe that the HEIs are out of touch with the goings-on of the classroom. In a study by Gut et al. (2014), they stated that mentor teachers reported that the preservice teachers who were older than 25 years old were seen as more committed and mature. These preservice teachers were said to have "more realistic expectations of the students [learners] and a greater willingness to push them harder to achieve" (Gut et al., 2014, p. 251). Mentor teachers reported that their preservice teachers know how to plan but they struggle with time management and thus the primary focus was to aid the preservice teachers in planning and implementing while managing the class and time.

2.9 Mentoring Experiences of Distance Learning Preservice Teachers

Sokhulu (2018, p. 2) defines mentorship as "a professional experience consisting of a mentor and a mentee who work together constructively to stimulate professional development and knowledge". Preservice teachers observe the actions of their mentor teachers and aim to emulate what they see and implement the corrective measures their mentor teachers advise.

Templeton, Abdelrahman and Donop (2023) refer to mentoring as a symbiotic relationship which is beneficial to both the mentor and mentee as each learns from the other. The mentor benefits through being exposed to new ideas, educational methods, perspectives, and technologies by conversing with the mentee as well as gaining a sense of achievement in helping someone develop professionally, and the mentee becomes more confident in decision making through the guidance of the mentor, gains new ideas and technical expertise and develops managerial and interpersonal skills, among others (Asogwa & Mathenjwa, 2023). Mentoring plays a significant role in the professional development of all involved and should be seen as essential for all educators, from preservice and novice teachers to veterans (Handrianto et al., 2022). Moosa and Rembach (2018) claim that preservice teachers view their mentor teachers as role models who should encourage and empower them. In the past, mentoring was a one-way learning relationship where the preservice teacher was given the role of learner and the mentor teacher given the role of the teacher (Mullen & Klimaitis, 2021) whereas nowadays mentoring is dialogic and there is a level of reciprocity to the relationship (Merket, 2022).

Teaching is a multi-faceted and complex task which requires scaffolding (Moosa & Rembach, 2020). Scaffolding is a process wherein a teacher adds support for learners to better

their learning experiences and assist in the acquisition of skills. This is done by gradually adding to the learners' experiences and knowledge as they develop new skills (IRIS, n.d.). Teachers are required to fulfil multiple roles in the classroom, such as learning mediator, interpreter and designer of learning programmes and materials, leader, administrator and manager, scholar, researcher, and lifelong learner, community, citizenship, and pastoral role; assessor; and learning area specialist as per the Norms and Standards for Educators (Department of Education, 2000). Keeping abreast of knowledge and content development and change is vital for teachers so that they are teaching the most up-to-date information to their learners. Through observing their mentor teacher keeping up to date with content development and change, the preservice teacher is initiated into a lifelong investment in their professional development (Ball-Smith, 2020, p. 127).

There are seven roles of a teacher outlined in the *National Education Policy Act 27 of 1996: Norms and Standards for Educators* (S.Afr) policy, however, the role of the teacher has evolved to where teachers' roles and responsibilities include planning excursions and field trip coordinator, technology support, administrator, parent communication manager, et cetera, as well as ensuring that learners have opportunities to develop and participate in critical thinking and problem solving (Paddock, 2021; Llego, 2022). While these additional roles are not explicitly taught to preservice teachers during their initial teacher education, they are exposed to these, and the roles outlined in policy when hosted at schools for their TP. It is through mentor teachers that preservice teachers learn how to fulfil the plethora of foregoing roles. Learner discipline and classroom management is an aspect of teaching that preservice teachers tend to struggle with. In a study of 530 novice teachers in South Africa, cited in Bertram's article (2023), the main findings indicated that the largest challenge that was faced related to discipline and classroom management. Preservice teachers can bridge the gap between theory and practices (Kakazu & Kobayashi (2022); in this instance the ability to effectively manage unpredictable classroom situations and dynamics, by having acquired sufficient understanding of teaching strategies, including classroom management skills, prior to attending TP, through their university studies. With this knowledge, preservice teachers can "learn to act as teachers" (Kakazu & Kobayashi, 2022, p. 11).

Thus, PHEI's TP requirements and expectations surrounding mentoring feedback on the lesson assessments of the preservice teachers and workload pressures on mentor teachers can shape the feedback process. This may lead to a focus on technical aspects of teaching rather than fostering a more holistic and reflective approach to professional development which promotes a growth

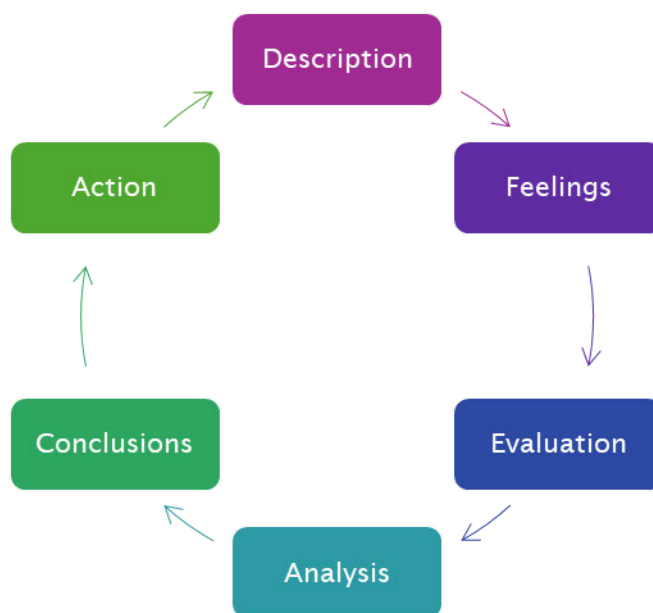
mindset (Tyrer, 2023). A quality mentor teacher should provide the preservice teacher with regular, timely critical and actionable feedback which relates to practice (Ellis, Alonzo & Nguyen, 2020). Duran (2022) proposes that “the post lesson mentoring conversation is key to reflect on what was done and what can be done differently in the future to improve” (Duran, 2022, p. 248).

Keiler et al. (2020) maintain that mentor teachers have the power to significantly change the paths that their mentees take, which helps the preservice teacher succeed and remain in the profession if the mentoring experience has been a positive one or change career paths if it was the converse. Research (Jita & Munje, 2022; Mena, Hennissen & Loughran, 2017; Orland-Barak & Wang, 2021) on mentoring and mentorship of preservice teachers suggests that it is a vital yet complex responsibility and thus it is imperative that only suitable teachers are given this responsibility. Being a good or expert teacher (Hattie, 2003) does not equate to being a good mentor since to achieve professional development and progress for student teachers, mentor teachers must engage in complicated social interactions with their preservice teacher mentees (Gravett, Petersen & Ramsaroop, 2019). Mentoring of preservice teachers requires supervising teachers to be cognisant of the needs of the preservice teachers and having the demeanour which facilitates implicit and explicit learning and of the school environment and the curriculum (Jita & Munje, 2022; Mena, Hennissen & Loughran, 2017; Orland-Barak & Wang, 2021). It is worth noting however that the onus for a successful mentor-mentee relationship is not only reliant on the suitability of the mentor teacher but also on the willingness of the preservice teacher to accept the guidance and constructive criticism as well as their openness to learning about and their passion for their teaching profession (Hagenauer, Waber & de Zordo, 2021; Hoben, 2021).

Studies such as Hagenauer, Waber and de Zordo (2021) and Sokhulu (2018) have shown that the success of mentor-mentee relationships is largely reliant on the welcome the preservice teachers receive at the school and by their mentor teacher. If the preservice teacher feels unwelcome or a burden to the mentor, the relationship will likely be one filled with predominantly negative experiences whereas in a situation where the mentor invites the preservice teacher to be an active participant in the teaching and learning environment of the classroom and in the school as a whole, the experiences will be more positive in nature due to the trust and respect that exists. In such a situation, the preservice teachers are more likely to display a greater amount of confidence since they will feel valued and motivated due to the mentor teacher's initial reaction toward his/her preservice teacher.

Similarly, a study by Jita and Munje (2022), which explored preservice teachers' mentorship experiences during TP in a post-graduate certificate of education programme in South Africa, utilising Gibb's Reflective Cycle, describes how the varying characteristics of a mentor teacher impact the quality of the mentor-mentee relationship and thus the experiences that preservice teachers have while at TP. The participants in the study stated that they had learnt professionalism and content presentation, classroom routine such as effective lesson introduction, content delivery and lesson conclusion as well as encouraging engagement with learners. One mentor teacher also demonstrated effective marking, evaluations and setting class tests. In addition to this, the mentor teacher also "set a good example regarding professional dress, classroom behaviour and management" (Jita & Munje, 2022). Figure 3 reflects the movement from description to action.

Figure 3: Gibbs' Reflective Cycle



Source: (Ezezika & Johnston, 2022)

In the research conducted by Tindowen, Bangi and Parallag Jr. (2019) on preservice teachers' evaluation of their student internship programme in the Philippines, there was positivity in the responses from their participants. Many preservice teachers felt that the school was welcoming and lent itself to being a positive learning environment, they felt that they had been

given opportunities to apply relevant knowledge and skills acquired from their university studies to the actual classroom setting, and they were ready to venture into the world of work and the teaching profession.

While there are often positive comments made about mentoring experiences in a post-TP block session reflection, negative experiences are also mentioned. One such experience was identified in Jita and Munje's study (2022) where one of the preservice teachers felt their negative experience was a consequence of their mentor teacher having a particular stereotype of preservice teachers which was based on prior bad experiences with them. It was reported that gaining any knowledge was a challenge and that they had to find a teacher to observe but that teacher could never observe them and thus they had to arrange with another teacher to evaluate them. This preservice teacher states their mentor teacher believed "student teachers are lazy and will never work as hard as they [the mentor teacher] did...that student teachers are there to assist them rather than them helping the student teacher become good teachers" (Jita & Munje, 2022, p. 147). An experience such as this one is often resultant of the negative attitudes held by some mentor teachers which are based on stereotypes due to negative experiences with preservice teachers (Hagenauer, Waber & de Zordo, 2021). Another participant explains that due to having very lazy mentor teachers, everything was left to him/her, and this participant was responsible for teaching all their mentor teachers' lessons as well as arrange revision classes ahead of the learners' assessments. Negative mentor-mentee relationships can potentially hinder the pedagogical practices of the preservice teachers, which can be transformed into learning curves (Al-Jaro, Asmawi & Khaleel Mohammed Abdul-Ghafour, 2020). In another study by Gravett, Petersen and Ramsaroop (2019) which aimed to explore schools as places of learning conducive to preservice teachers' development of professional knowledge and practice, it was identified that some mentor teachers "vanish" from their classrooms when their preservice teachers arrive for their TP. As a result, the unqualified preservice teachers are left to "run" the classroom with limited to no mentorship or supervision taking place.

The abovementioned experiences imply that negative and positive mentoring experiences exist. The research discussed indicates that some preservice teachers experience their TP mentor teacher engagements as a collection of lessons they were instructed to teach in accordance with the requirements and expectations of the mentor teacher rather than a discussion about what needs to be taught and how. Conversely, other preservice teachers reported that they

were provided with multiple occasions in which to participate in the instructional tasks linked to the daily work of teaching. When a mentor teacher has faith in the capabilities of their preservice teacher, they give them more responsibilities, which in addition to enhancing their learning, strengthens the relationship between them.

2.10 Conclusion

In summary, this literature review has provided a comprehensive overview of the current state of research on preservice teachers' mentoring experiences of TP block sessions as distance learners. Based on current publications (Mena, Hennissen & Loughran, 2017; Sokhulu, 2018; Moosa & Rembach, 2018, 2020; Al-Jaro, Asmawi & Khaleel Mohammed Abdul-Ghafour, 2020; Muyengwa & Jita, 2020; Hagenauer, Waber & de Zordo, 2021; Hoben, 2021; Nesje & Lejonberg, 2021; Orland-Barak & Wang, 2021), it is evident that extensive research has been conducted to explore the preservice teachers' mentoring experiences of TP. Due to the Covid-19 pandemic that presented itself in 2020 as well as the massification of tertiary education, there has been an upsurge in studying via correspondence (through distance learning). Additionally, much of the research that has been reported on in the last 5 years in national and international education journals that published research conducted in South Africa has taken place at public universities in specific provinces. More especially there is no evidence of research which has explored final year distance learning preservice teachers' mentoring experiences at a national private higher education institution in any of the accredited education journals published in South Africa over the last 5 years. Therefore, further investigation needs to be conducted.

The next chapter deals with the theoretical framework that underpinned my study.

Chapter 3: Theoretical Framework

3.1 Introduction

The previous chapter presented a review of the literature related to distance learning, TP and mentoring of preservice teachers. This chapter outlines the theoretical framework that guides this study. A theoretical framework provides a conceptual structure for interpreting and understanding research findings and helping in identifying the connection between variables and concepts (Grant & Osanloo, 2014). In this study, the theoretical framework is essential to understand the complexities of the mentoring experiences of the participants as preservice teachers.

This chapter will provide an overview of Bandura's social cognitive theory (1986) and will help to contextualise the research findings and provide a deeper understanding of the phenomena being investigated. In situating this study within a theoretical framework, this research aims to contribute to the existing body of knowledge and provide a more comprehensive understanding of the mentor experiences of final year distance learning preservice teachers at a private higher education institution.

In this chapter, I discuss the theoretical framework that underpins this study. Albert Bandura's social cognitive theory (1986) will be unpacked and the reason for its implementation in this study will be elaborated upon. In arguing for the use of Bandura's social cognitive theory, a brief evolutionary perspective from behaviourism, through social learning theory and onto the social cognitive theory will be presented to illuminate the progression in thoughts on learning as a way of arguing that this evolutionary development from behaviourism to social cognitive learning are not discrete processes of learning but that they collectively contribute to how learning is currently conceptualised. Hence this chapter will commence with an engagement on behaviourism informing how learning was perceived to have taken place, followed by an engagement on social learning processes that included significant others in the learning processes, leading to an engagement on the key theoretical framework guiding this study – that of Bandura's (1986) social cognitive theory on learning,

3.2 A Brief Engagement on Behaviourism in relation to Learning

Behaviourism is a thought movement that all behaviours are learned by interacting with external stimuli in the environment and this view is different from other theories which purport that behaviours are innate parts of biology (Aiken, 2023). Skinner, in the early 1960s, proposed

that the environment shapes a person's behaviour through a process of stimulus-response correlations (Akpan, 2020). The primary focus of behaviourism is on how environmental stimuli and consequences influence a person's behaviour and learning (Efgivia et al., 2021). It therefore disregards internal mental processes such as thoughts, beliefs, and emotions. The primary learning and behaviour change mechanisms of behaviourism are strongly linked to classical conditioning, the association between stimuli and responses, and operant conditioning, learning through reinforcement or punishment (Walinga, 2014).

Skinner referred to himself as a *radical behaviourist* (Moore, 2011; Rumjaun & Narod, 2020; Richelle, 2016) as his approach to behaviourism was not concerned with unobservable mediating terms, inferred constructs, validation etc. like his neo-behaviourist contemporaries such as Hull, Spence and Tolman (Moore, 2011) but rather that human and animal behaviour is completely determined by environmental and genetic influences (Nevid, 2021). Skinner's approach to behavioural science is known as *behaviour analysis*. Skinner proposed the concept of *operant conditioning*. Through operant conditioning, behaviour is learned, and strengthened through positive or negative reinforcement (Akpan, 2020; McLeod, 2023b). The consequences of a behaviour or response determine the probability that the behaviour will occur again. Behaviours that are met with positive reinforcement will likely occur again, thus becoming a habit, and those that are met with negative reinforcement will usually lead to the removal of the 'bad' behaviour (Nevid, 2021; Moore, 1999). Positive reinforcement is therefore introduced to increase the behaviour while negative reinforcement is introduced to decrease a behaviour (Leeder, 2022). One of the key critiques of Skinner's learning theory based on behaviourism was the question of who controls the behaviour (Watts, 1975), meaning that the preferred behaviour modification in an individual is dependent upon what kind of behaviour is being targeted by the manipulator of such behaviour patterns. Hence issues of what is deemed appropriate or not is dependent on the controller of the manipulation of the behaviour pattern and as such is very subjective.

In terms of mentoring, if a preservice teacher receives praise for their lesson planning and presentation abilities, they will likely continue in the same vein. Conversely, if the preservice teacher is criticised for their planning and presentation, they will probably attempt to improve on their shortfalls so that when they receive feedback the next time, they will receive praise rather than criticism.

3.3 From Behaviourism to Social Learning Theory

Albert Bandura is a behaviourist who developed the social learning theory in 1977 in response to the omission of social processes from Skinner's behaviourism model (McLeod, 2023a). Bandura pioneered concepts of observational learning and self-efficacy and added them to the theory of behaviourism (Bandura, 1986, 2006, 2008; Gauthier & Latham, 2022; McLeod, 2023a). Despite the efforts of theorists, such as Neil Muller, John Dollard, Julia Rotter, Robert Burgess, and Ronald Akerto, to develop a theory that would incorporate learning and the influence of sociocultural elements, only Bandura was able to build social learning as a theory that moved away from the prevalent behaviourist methods (Rumjaun & Narod, 2020).

The core concepts of Bandura's social learning theory are observational learning, reinforcement (vicarious or direct), learning as a socially informed behavioural process, and includes the identification of model behaviours (Nanda, 2023). Bandura's social learning theory asserts that learning occurs socially through the observation of a model's action in conjunction with the consequences of that action (McLeod, 2023a). Bandura proposed 'observational learning' or 'modelling', wherein people learn through observing the actions of those around them, as he believed that development in isolation could not explain behavioural changes (Rumjaun & Narod, 2020). According to Bandura, if the observer believes that reactions are primarily regulated by external stimuli or internal mediating events, behaviour change will be interpreted differently (ben Asher, 2021). Skinner's operant conditioning theory proposes that learning occurs when behaviour is followed by consequences whereas Bandura's social learning theory asserts that learning occurs through observation (Akpan, 2020; McLeod, 2023a). Operant conditioning explains how reinforcement and punishment work whereas key concepts in social learning's observation are identification with a model, reinforcement, and reflective processes (Nanda, 2023). While both theories pertain to shaping behaviour, behaviourism's operant conditioning emphasises the role that consequences play, and social learning highlights the role of observation, imitation, and modelling.

According to Bandura (1977), when someone observes an individual engaging in a particular activity and the results of that conduct, they can memorise the series of events and use that information to inform their future behaviour. Bandura believes that people are active in navigating their lives rather than "simply onlookers of their behaviours" (Bandura, 2006, p. 164). He asserts that behaviour is impacted by the environment through the observational learning

process. Bandura's social learning theory asserts that people learn by observing the actions of others including the consequences of those actions (Nanda, 2023). People are more likely to mimic activities that they consider to be rewarding or that they see being reinforced in some positive way (ben Asher, 2021).

Despite the aforementioned inclusions in Bandura's social learning theory, there are limitations to the theory which lead to the inclusion of the social cognitive elements resulting in the development of Bandura's social cognitive theory (1986). Bandura's social learning theory neglects the internal cognitive processes (Schunk & DiBenedetto, 2020). Further, the simplification of the complexity of individual learning processes overlooks the unique cognitive factors that influence learning (Manik et al., 2022). In Bandura's social learning theory, cognitive factors are recognised as playing a role in the acquisition of new behaviour but having a limited role in the production of the behaviour (Nanda, 2023). These limitations then led to the inclusion of the cognitive aspect of learning.

3.4 Social Cognitive Theory: An Explanation

Bandura's social cognitive theory (1986) is a more modern theory of learning which highlights learning from the social environment. It states that learning supports the view that human behaviour is a result of the interaction between three factors: personal factors, behavioural patterns and environmental influences. The social cognitive theory proposes that humans are influenced by and actively influence their environments (Nickerson, 2024). Bandura highlighted the role that observational learning, reciprocal determinism and social experiences play in human behaviour, proposing that humans are influenced by and actively influenced by their environments. The social cognitive theory is an expanded form of the social learning theory and contend that “learning occurs through observation of a behaviour and that the manifestation of that behaviour in the learner is regulated by reciprocal determinism between personal (cognitive) factors, the behaviour itself, and the environment (reinforcement)” (Brown, 2020). Further, the social cognitive theory emphasises the key roles played by vicarious, symbolic, and self-regulatory processes as people seek to develop a sense of agency in their lives (Schunk & DiBenedetto, 2020).

According to Nickerson (2024), the fundamental concepts of the social cognitive theory are that people strive to establish a sense of autonomy and assert influence over the significant circumstances that shape their lives, as well as observational learning and its four components

(attention, retention, reproduction and motivation – see Figure 5 below), reciprocal determinism, and self-efficacy (Nanda, 2023). Nanda (2023) explains that the cognitive factors play as vital a role as environmental factors or reinforcement in the learning and production of new behaviour.

3.5 From Social Learning Theory to Social Cognitive Theory: A Brief Comparison

The social learning theory proposes that learning occurs socially via observation of a behaviour and the consequences that follow it, whereas the social cognitive theory is an expanded form of the social learning theory and contends that “learning occurs through observation of a behaviour and that the manifestation of that behaviour in the learner is regulated by reciprocal determinism between personal (cognitive) factors, the behaviour itself, and the environment (reinforcement)” (Brown, 2020, para. 7). Bandura's social learning theory is limited to dealing with the learning process in the social context whereas his social cognitive theory has wider theoretical scope since it includes the conceptualisation of human agency where humans can shape their environment, and of self-regulation (Nanda, 2023). Social learning theory's foci are reinforcement, learning through observation and individualistic learning while social cognitive theory's foci are the role of cognitive processes, learning through experiences, and acknowledging the importance of environmental factors (Nickerson, 2024).

According to Bandura's social cognitive theory, cognitive elements play a major and equal role in the acquisition and production of new behaviour but little to no part in its production (Moore, 1999; Nevid, 2021). Reinforcement and cognitive factors, in social cognitive theory, have equal value in the learning and production of behaviour (Moore, 1999; Nevid, 2021). Social learning theory, however, gives more prominence to consequences and reinforcement in behaviour acquisition, and production (Bandura, 1969, 1977, 1986; Brown, 2020; McLeod, 2023a; Rumjaun & Narod, 2020).

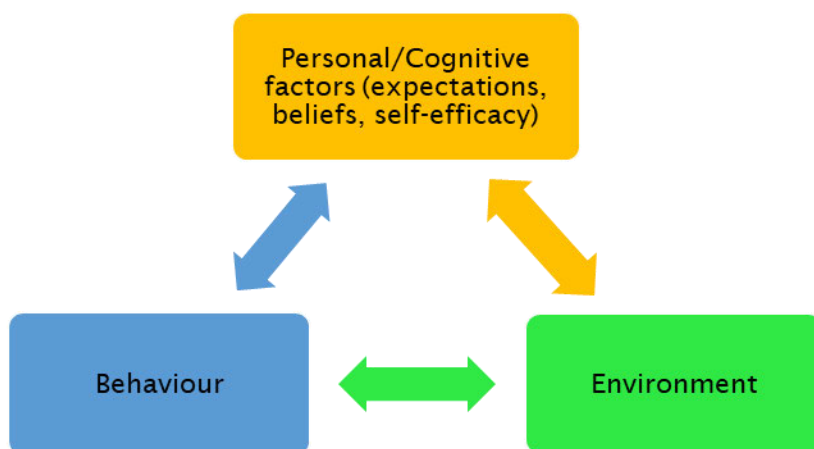
Bandura's social cognitive theory acknowledges the role that cognitive processes, including thoughts, beliefs, and perceptions, play in shaping behaviour. It recognises that individuals can influence and be influenced by their environment through cognitive processes like observation, modelling, and self-evaluation. The social cognitive theory elaborates on Skinner's behaviourism by incorporating cognitive processes such as attention, memory, and self-regulation. It purports that learning occurs through observation and imitation of others' behaviour and through self-directed processes like goal setting and self-reflection. The role of the individual in their own

learning and behaviour modification is emphasised in the social cognitive theory. It acknowledges that people can engage in self-regulation, set goals, make choices, and exert control over their own behaviour. This is referred to as reciprocal determinism.

3.5.1 *Reciprocal Determinism*

Reciprocal determinism is the notion that personal or cognitive events, the external environment and overt behaviour influence one another (Nevid, 2021).

Figure 4: Bandura's reciprocal determinism

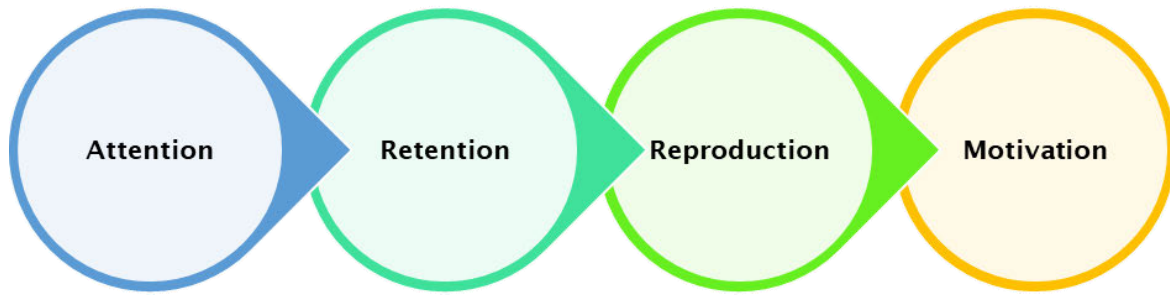


Source: Adapted from Bandura, 1986

Bandura's concept of reciprocal determinism accounts for causes of human behaviour regarding the interconnectedness of three types of influences or determinants, namely: personal influences, behavioural, and environmental influences (Bandura, 2018).

Bandura believes that people are active in navigating their lives rather than "simply onlookers of their behaviours" (Bandura, 2006, p. 164). He asserts that behaviour is impacted by the environment through the observational learning process.

Figure 5: Adaptation of the components of Bandura's observational learning



As seen in Figure 5, the social cognitive theory's observational learning consists of four components, namely:

- attention,
- retention,
- reproduction, and
- motivation (McLeod, 2023b; Rumjaun & Narod, 2020).

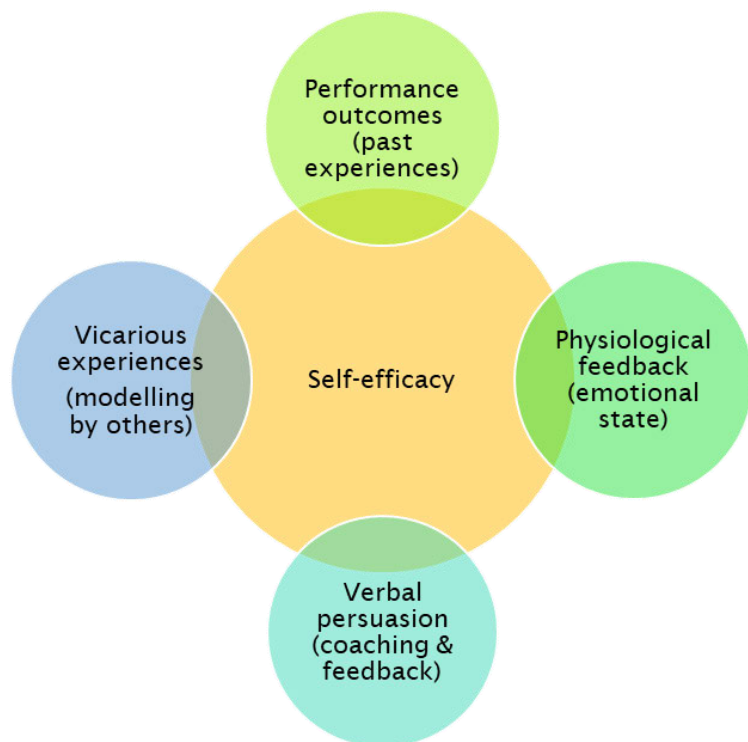
McLeod (2023b) and Rumjaun and Narod (2020) explain the four components of observational learning as follows: In the beginning, one needs to pay close attention to the behaviour they are observing, necessitating concentration and a focus on the model's actions. After that, the individual must remember the observed behaviour, which involves cognitive processes and recall. To replicate the behaviour, the individual needs to practice and refine it until its reproduction is equivalent to what was observed. Finally, individuals require motivation to re-enact the observed behaviour, which may come in the form of reinforcement, social approval, or other incentives (Rumjaun & Narod, 2020).

3.6 Bandura's Social-Cognitive Theory in Context

Bandura's social cognitive theory has been incorporated into this research since it enables researchers to consider how people acquire knowledge through observation and modelling. Within Bandura's theory, "learning takes place in a social setting via observation, but it also involves cognitive processes...learners internalise and make sense of what they see in order to reproduce the behaviour themselves" (Horsburgh & Ippolito, 2018, p. 2).

Bandura (2018) focuses on the reciprocal interaction between what we do (behaviour) and what we think (cognition). He emphasised the importance of learning by observing and imitating the behaviour of others in social contexts, as well as two variables in cognition: outcome expectations and efficacy expectations. Outcome expectations are predictions of the outcomes of a behaviour as, according to Schunk and DiBenedetto (2020) “people act in ways they believe will lead to desired outcomes and attend to models whom they believe will teach them valued skills” (Schunk & DiBenedetto, 2020, p. 4). For examples: if an individual is outgoing, friendly, and polite to the staff at the school, they will likely have a good relationship with them and a more pleasant TP block session. Efficacy expectations are personal predictions about your ability to perform a task you set out to accomplish (Bandura, 2018, 2019; Nevid, 2021). For example: if an individual puts a lot of effort into planning their lesson and takes heed of the previous feedback from their mentor teacher, their lesson should be successful (Bandura, 1989, 1997, 2006, 2008; Bandura, Blanchard & Ritter, 1969; MacBlain, 2021; McLeod, 2023b; Nevid, 2021).

According to Bandura (1986), observational learning occurs when an organism responding is influenced by the observation of others. Bandura (1986) affirms that people's characteristics are influenced by the 'models' they are exposed to; thus, a model is a person whose behaviour is observed by another. In the case of TP, this would be a mentor teacher. As previously iterated, people learn through imitating the actions of those surrounding them, through identifying with others, and assimilating new ideas of learning with pre-existing concepts (Akhigbe, 2019). It is through this that those behavioural patterns are internalised and made manifest since “the higher the observer's motivation, the more likely they will be to imitate the observed behaviours/opinions” (Patil, Malhotra & Maity, 2022, p. 1431). For purposeful learning to occur in preservice teachers, the behaviours and attitudes that are being adopted should be appropriate, for example, the manner in which the mentor teacher conducts themselves should set a good example to the preservice teacher. This includes the appropriate dress code, the way in which they address their learners and colleagues as well as in their approach to teaching.

Figure 6: Self-efficacy model

Bandura (1997), as cited by Walinga (2014, p. 752) defined self-efficacy as “the extent or strength of one's belief in one's own ability to complete tasks and reach goals”. He emphasised the concept of self-efficacy when explaining how various aspects of personality govern one's behaviour. Self-efficacy is impacted by the degree of self-confidence of a person; a person's belief in their capacity to perform well and succeed in various situations, as well as the ability to demonstrate control over their actions (Bandura, 1997). This is evident with regards to the impact that a mentor teacher's welcome of a mentee affects their relationship with their mentor. If a mentee feels welcomed and 'wanted', they will feel more comfortable in the mentor's presence and thus demonstrate a greater degree of self-confidence which will in turn translate into a higher level of self-efficacy. Thus, using Bandura's social cognitive theory to examine mentoring experiences, it is possible to see theory in practice where preservice teachers emulate the actions of their mentor teachers as well as how the school environment impacts on the development of the preservice teacher.

The above theory is suited to the exploration and understanding of the preservice teachers' mentoring experiences while at TP since the preservice teachers have been placed in an unfamiliar environment where they will gain knowledge and expertise through observation, and the guidance

and coaching of the mentor teachers. It is in being in a school environment that one is exposed to commonly accepted positive behaviours. Work-integrated learning, in this case, TP block sessions, and immersion in the school environment is where theory is practiced, and real-life experience occurs (Ashman, Rochford & Slade, 2021). It is one thing to learn about classroom management techniques, for example, but when it comes to putting it into practice, it is so often best to observe an expert in the field performing the task. They often have developed their own style of executing the particular task that they have honed and developed over years of practice.

Self-efficacy has been established as a key element in performance and skills development (Baroudi et al., 2022), and thus the more guidance a preservice teacher receives from their mentor teacher, the better their self-confidence will be and in turn their level of self-efficacy will increase too. When the preservice teacher is 'neglected' by the mentor teacher, they do not develop to their full potential. When the converse occurs, preservice teachers thrive under the guidance and leadership of their mentor teachers (Baroudi et al., 2022). They develop not only through mediation and observation but through reflection and exploration of new techniques.

While Bandura's social cognitive theory was selected over other theories, such as Skinner's operant conditioning theory, due to its applicability and effectiveness in the nuanced and interactive setting of mentoring, there are some limitations to the theory. Criticisms of Bandura's social cognitive theory are that it oversimplifies the complexities of human behaviour and external influences at the expense of internal motivations and beliefs, and it does not consider cultural contexts and biological and individual differences.

In this study, participants engaged in reflection on their TP mentoring experiences and the professional learnings received from their mentor teachers. The theory outlined effectively guided the researcher and the participants in the exploration and investigation of their TP mentoring experiences and learnings.

3.7 Conclusion

This chapter has reviewed the theoretical framework of Bandura's social cognitive theory. This framework provides a lens through which to understand the complexity of the mentor-mentee relationship and how this relationship affects the development of the preservice teachers' self-efficacy and engagement with others. The social cognitive framework suggests that mentoring relationships and the resultant experiences are formed by interactions with others. This study draws

on the theoretical framework to explore the mentoring experiences of distance learning preservice teachers. Through applying this framework, this study aims to investigate what the preservice teachers' experiences of mentoring during school-based TP block sessions were; what professional learnings were received from the mentor teachers across the mentoring sessions during school-based TP block sessions; and what the preservice teachers gained from these professional learnings. In the next chapter, the research methodology will be discussed.

Chapter 4: Research Methodology

4.1 Introduction

In Chapter 2, the literature review elucidated the need for research into the mentoring experiences of distance learning pre-service teachers. The focus of this chapter is the research design adopted for this study. This chapter provides a comprehensive overview of the research design, and includes elaboration on the data collection strategies, data analysis techniques, and ethical considerations. This chapter includes a rationale for the use of a qualitative narrative inquiry to explore the mentoring experiences of five distance learning pre-service teacher participants at a PHEI. A detailed discussion of the sampling and selection of participants follows. By understanding the methodology employed, an insight into the foundation upon which the research is built will be gained, allowing a critical assessment of the credibility and trustworthiness of the findings. This chapter acts as a bridge between the research's theoretical framework and the evidence, illustrating how the research questions are transformed into actionable investigations.

The study sought to answer the following research questions:

1. What were final year distance learning preservice teachers' expectations on mentoring during school-based Teaching Practices?
2. What professional learnings were received from the mentor teachers across the mentoring sessions during school-based Teaching Practice?
3. What did the final year distance learning preservice teachers gain from these professional learnings?

4.2 Research Design

Kumar (2019) defines research design as a set of requirements for data gathering and analysis that strive to combine relevance to the study purpose with procedural economy. These requirements include the paradigm for the study, the research approach, and the research methodology, all of which frame the research intent.

4.3 Epistemological Stance: Interpretivist Paradigm

Kamal (2019) describes a research paradigm as a researcher's opinions and beliefs about the phenomenon under investigation, which then influence their actions. The choice of paradigm

determines and controls the study technique, which includes data collecting and analysis (Kamal, 2019). The interpretivist paradigm was adopted for this study. Interpretivism aims to understand and interpret the meaning a subject/participant is making of the context (Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017). The intent of the interpretivist paradigm is to "develop a deep insight of how people make sense of the world around them" (Kistan, 2019, p. 40) and explore and understand the subjective view of human experience (Alharahsheh & Pius, 2020).

The main aim of this research was to explore and understand the mentoring experiences of the preservice teachers while at school-based TP block sessions and thus the interpretivist paradigm was best suited to this study. Interpretivism assumes that reality is subjective and will differ from one individual to the next (Matta, 2022). This aspect of the research study design allowed for the interpreting of five participants' mentoring experiences through their prompted narration around key aspects of mentoring whilst doing their TP block sessions. The stories of the participants' mentoring experiences were diverse as each participant had different encounters with TP; for some it would have been an adventure and for others it would have been an ordeal. However, after analysing their experiences, there were some similarities in their experiences although none of them were the same as the others. Each participant had a story to tell, and that version of reality was their truth regardless of another's perspective.

The interpretivist paradigm allowed the researcher an opportunity to study and explore the mentoring experiences of final year distance learning preservice teachers because the study illustrates that the preservice teachers' experiences are subjective and there are multiple realities within the phenomenon studied.

4.4 **Research Approach: Qualitative Research**

To comprehend and analyse the experiences and interactions that final year distance learning preservice teachers had with their mentor teachers during their TP block sessions, this study employed a qualitative research approach. Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2017) explain that qualitative approaches focus on description, induction, generation, and subjectivity rather than prediction, deduction, verification, and objectivity. Qualitative data can be collected or generated in many ways such as narrative documents, visual representations, observations, and interviews, to name but a few.

Through this study the researcher gathered rich descriptions of the participants' mentoring experiences and professional learnings gained during their TP block sessions and these descriptions form the qualitative aspect of the research design. The participants were asked to reflect on their TP block sessions and generate digital collages using images and phrases to represent their experiences in relation to the prompts they needed to consider. In an unstructured interview after their collages had been received, participants explained the significance of the imagery in their digital collages and described their mentoring experiences and professional learnings.

According to Guest, Namey and Mitchell (2013), qualitative research acquires data that cannot be easily obtained through quantitative methods. The researcher elected to use the qualitative approach to research because participants would be able to tell their lived experiences whereas if quantitative research had been employed the data yielded would not have been as rich in detail. The experiences that were shared during the interviews were filled with emotions and this would not have been evident if quantitative research was used. Furthermore, qualitative research answers questions of human behaviour, opinion, and experience (Guest, Namey & Mitchell, 2013) and in this study, the researcher wanted to explore the mentoring experiences of pre-service teachers. It is through qualitative research that the researcher gained a deeper understanding of the experiences of the preservice teachers as well as the professional learnings they received and gained while under the guidance of a mentor teacher at TP. The five participants were asked to reflect on the mentoring which occurred during their TP sessions and illustrate their experiences within a digital collage. Richer explanations were gathered through the qualitative approach where the participants represented their experiences using a digital collage as well as verbalise, through description, during the unstructured interviews, their stories of their mentoring experiences during the TP. Each story was an original account, yet no less credible, given that this approach to research is subjective. Some examples of the probing questions used in the unstructured interviews were: "Can you explain to me how that particular quote affected or propelled your learning to become a teacher?" and "What were the things that you did not learn from your mentors, but which you thought were important for your learning to become a teacher?"

4.5 Research methodology: Narrative inquiry

Narrative inquiry is a research methodology wherein the research explores participants' realities of their truth through their stories. "It [narrative inquiry] provides researchers with a rich framework through which they can investigate how humans experience the world depicted through their stories" (Mertova & Webster, 2019, p. 10). Chase (2018) defines narratives as:

"Meaning making through the shaping of experience; a way of understanding one's own or others' actions; of organising events, objects, feelings, or thoughts in relation to each other; of connecting and seeing the consequences of actions, events, feelings, or thoughts over time (in the past, present, and/or future)" (Chase, 2018, p. 951).

Such a definition of narrative is broad and encompasses much of what was done within this study to generate the information from the participants to form coherent narratives for each of the participants.

Three features of narratives that are critical for the construction of meaning: presupposition, subjectification and, lastly, multiple perspectives (Makar, Ali & Fry, 2018). *Presupposition* is the creation of implicit meanings brought into a situation, such as people being encouraged to interpret a problem, drawing on prior knowledge to make personal connections with the problem. *Subjectification* locates the experiences and sharing their story. Therefore, subjectification identifies narratives from the standpoint of an agentic participant as opposed to a passive recipient of knowledge (Makar, Ali & Fry, 2018). *Multiple perspectives* acknowledges that the narrator's viewpoint is not the only possible perspective and that others may hold different opinions. Participants are different people, and they tell differing versions of the similar incident (Makar, Ali & Fry, 2018).

According to Schurink, Jordaan and Schurink (2021), art must be part of narrative inquiry as arts-based methods are central to telling stories and the interpretation of experiences. In this study, participants represented their experiences of the mentoring process while at TP block sessions using a digital collage and discussing and elaborating further during virtual interviews. There was a diverse sample of preservice teachers engaged in the research, due to them having attended different schools, where they were situated in the country as well as what their role in the school was. In the research, participants were asked to reflect on their TP block sessions and exhibit their mentoring experiences in collage format. The participants discussed their collages, and their

experiences uncovered the mentoring they received from their mentor teachers during their TP block sessions and the professional learnings gained from said experiences.

4.6 **Site of Research**

This study was conducted at a selected private higher education institution which originated in a major city (Durban), and which now has a national footprint both in the contact learning and distance learning spheres. Its student population is from a diverse socio-economic background. As this is a private higher education institution, the fees paid by the students are largely self-funded, suggesting that they do emerge from households that can afford tertiary education. The student population is from across the country and includes all race and gender groups. The focus of this research was on the final year of the Bachelor of Education Foundation Phase degree in the distance learning mode. The research participants were the first cohort to complete the Bachelor of Education in Foundation Phase degree via distance learning at this PHEI. Before attending Teaching Practice, the preservice teachers' mentor teachers are provided with a Mentor Guide by the PHEI which outlines the requirements and expectations of the mentor teachers. While the mentor teachers do not sign documentation acknowledging these responsibilities, the school principals are informed of and agree to these requirements by signing a document indicating the schools' willingness to host the preservice teachers. Neither the schools nor the mentor teachers are compensated for hosting the preservice teachers or engaging in reflective sessions with their mentees.

4.7 **Participants**

The participants of this study were distance learning preservice teachers in the final year of their Bachelor of Education Foundation Phase degree at a PHEI in South Africa. These preservice teachers provided in-depth information about their mentoring experiences and expectations while at TP block sessions during their 4-year degree programme.

The sampling strategy was purposeful sampling, an aspect of qualitative research. In qualitative research, the researcher is searching for insights, detailed understanding, and richness of data. This can only be achieved through purposive sampling since a purposive sample is one whose characteristics are defined for a purpose that is relevant to the study (Andrade, 2021). The rationale for the use of purposive sampling is that the sample is better matched to the objectives of

the research study and thus it improves the credibility and trustworthiness of the study (Campbell et al., 2020). Purposive sampling allows researchers to select participants based on them meeting certain criteria which serves a particular purpose, in this case, being able to share and discuss their mentoring experiences of TP as well as the professional learnings they gained.

Participants in this study were selected according to the following criteria: (i) final (fourth) year students who completed their Foundation Phase Bachelor of Education degree in 2022; (ii) have been distance learning students during their studies towards their Bachelor of Education degree; (iii) have done school-based TP block sessions under mentor teachers; and (iv) were registered at a particular private higher education institution in South Africa. A group of five participants were selected using the above criteria for inclusion.

For the recruitment of participants, an information sheet to the fourth-year distance learning Bachelor of Education January intake cohort of preservice teachers and consent form were placed on the learner management system for the preservice teachers to read through and those interested accessed an online form where they indicated their willingness to participate in my research and provide information required for the research to assess their suitability for the study. Once they completed the online form, they submitted the consent form via email to the researcher. The selected participants volunteered to be part of the research process and met the criteria for inclusion. An initial group of nine volunteering preservice teachers was selected based. An initial virtual engagement with these nine preservice teachers took place to ascertain suitability. The suitability was established based on the nature of the information being provided by them as storied individuals, the quality of information in relation to the study intent and availability and commitment for the duration of the project. From the initial group of nine preservice teachers, five preservice teachers became the participants for the study's narrative inquiry.

At the time that the participants were recruited they were in the fourth year of their Bachelor of Education Foundation Phase degree and when the initial meeting, digital collage creation and unstructured interviews took place they were in the first five months of their first year of teaching.

The participants' pseudonyms are the Latin translations of the words the participants used to describe their TP block sessions and mentoring experiences. Table 2 offers a summary of the participants' biographical information.

Table 2: Participant profiles

Pseudonym	English translation	Age group	Province	Position at school during TP
Crescente	Growing	20-25	Gauteng; KwaZulu-Natal	Preservice teacher
Docendo	By teaching	31-35	Western Cape	Unqualified teacher; preservice teacher
Doctrina	Teaching	36-40	KwaZulu-Natal	Preservice teacher
Notitia	Informative	31-35	KwaZulu-Natal	Preservice teacher
Praemium	Rewarding	20-25	KwaZulu-Natal	Preservice teacher

4.8 Data Collection

Two methods of data collection were used for the data collection methods for this study and the first informed the latter. The methods of collection were digital collages and unstructured interviews. The data collection instruments used provided variety, which strengthened the data collected. This variation triangulated the data collected to attain consistency.

4.8.1 Research methods: Digital collages

McNiff (2019) considers art-based research as one that transcends academic disciplinary boundaries and provides an avenue of communication that is available to every person just as oral language is. The term *collage* is derived from the French verb ‘coller’ which means to paste, stick, or glue. Fredman (as cited in Higgins, 2019, p. 18) defines collage as a combination of two actions, “the selection of objects from the real world for incorporation into an artwork, and the juxtaposition of objects in unexpected – that is, nonlinear, irrational, or antihierarchical – ways”. Collage as a qualitative research method is significant as participants can assemble aspects of their experiences into a visual depiction of their story which can offer more insight than merely words (McMillan-Chabot, 2024). A digital collage is a combination of computer images such as photographs, comics, and memes, layered or pieced together on a virtual canvas (Kannan & Khuri, 2018). Since all participants had laptops, as per the agreement when registering with the PHEI, and the abundance of free software packages, the researcher decided to opt for a more modern take on a collage. The creation of the digital collage was a precursor to the narrative style unstructured interview which

engaged participants in lateral thinking and providing more creative answers. The digital collage encouraged the participants to engage in reflection on their experiences of mentoring while at TP and help them unearth emotional issues which may have remained hidden if another method of data generation was used (Bagnoli, 2019). Reflection is the thought process when one, in this case a preservice teacher, recounts an event or experience which occurred and examines it to gain insight into how it can change future events and actions (Shavit & Moshe, 2019).

To introduce the participants to digital collage making, the researcher set up a meeting with each participant on Microsoft Teams wherein a brief overview of the concept of digital collages and its uses in art and education was provided. The researcher demonstrated the basic ways in which a digital collage can be created using software such as Canva. The researcher explained that participants could use any software they felt comfortable with. Thereafter the researcher advised participants that the digital collage making was an independent activity which involved each participant creating one depicting their experiences of mentoring while at TP. The researcher encouraged the participants to use various images, such as cartoons, photos and memes, font type and size, colours and phrases to convey their ideas and experiences. The researcher was available via email or WhatsApp message for participants to discuss any challenges they were experiencing in the creation of the digital collage during the collage making process. Upon completion of the collage, the participants emailed the researcher their digital collage which was then downloaded to a secure cloud and was used during the narrative style unstructured interviews for analysis and interpretation.

4.8.2 *Interviews*

Through the digital collages, the creators, the participants, could express themselves symbolically and metaphorically (Ferro, 2022), and their representations were explored in the virtual unstructured interviews. The unstructured interviews took place over Microsoft Teams and were recorded. The presentations of the digital collages were closed in nature and permission for the recording of the interviews had been obtained prior to the interview. Participants could elect to have their video cameras off during the presentation so that they could retain confidentiality from the researcher. The digital collages informed the unstructured interviews, and these digital collages were presented to the researcher. The purpose of the presentation was for the participants to share their meaning of the collage to enhance the interpretation. Thereafter, the researcher asked

probing questions pertaining to the participants' experiences of mentoring and the professional learnings gained during TP. Each participant's recording and interview transcript was available to them should they have wished to receive a copy. The interviews were iterative, and the questions posed were dependent upon the responses provided by the participants in relation to the digital collages.

Conducting the Unstructured Interviews: The participants were asked to select a suitable time slot over a 3-week period in which to participate in the unstructured interviews. Once the interview times were confirmed, the researcher emailed the participant a Microsoft Teams meeting invitation for the selected date and time. The individual interviews were held after hours to limit the possibilities of distractions and disturbances. Participants were advised, in the information letter, as well as prior to the interview, that it would be recorded. They were also advised that they could keep their camera off for further confidentiality. Only one participant opted to have their camera switched off. Before the commencement of the recording of the interviews, the researcher conversed with the individual participants to put the participant at ease and create a comfortable environment. The interviews were scheduled for 1 hour per participant; however, many participants continued the interview over the allocated 60 minutes.

The unstructured interviews were conducted in English and recorded for accuracy and trustworthiness. The interviews were transcribed using the Microsoft Teams platform and were checked against the video recording for accuracy.

4.9 **Data Analysis Method**

The data gathered from the digital collages and unstructured interviews was analysed using thematic narrative analysis. Thematic analysis is "a method of analysis that allows us to draw reproducible and valid inferences from texts to their contexts of use" (Maunula et al., 2023, p. 3). Once the interviews were transcribed and presented in narrative format, the researcher analysed the content of the narratives to identify the main themes that emerged in the interviews based on digital collages and the questions asked. According to Kumar (2019), to identify the main themes, the researcher must review the descriptive responses given to each question to understand the meaning of the response and thus from the responses, broad themes will develop. Kumar (2019) stresses the importance of selecting the wording of the themes as these are the basis for analysing the unstructured interviews.

Participants' responses were classified under the main themes by the researcher reviewing the interview transcripts. Thereafter the themes and responses were combined into findings of the research.

4.10 Ethical Considerations

Ethical clearance from the university and gatekeeper's permission from the PHEI was granted for this study to be conducted. Permission from schools was not sought since the focus of this study was the preservice teachers' experiences and no mention of school names was made. Each participant was assigned a pseudonym based on the word that the participants gave during their interviews to best describe their mentoring experiences while at TP. The research then translated that word into Latin. Any names of schools or persons mentioned during the interviews were removed from the transcripts. The pseudonym for the institution, *Laude*, was selected for its Latin meaning, 'praise', which is what many students in the higher education sphere wish to receive for their diligence in their studies. The researcher gave the PHEI a pseudonym to ensure that the institution was protected and there was no link to the name of the institution. Participants were aware that their involvement in the study was voluntary, and they could withdraw from it at any point.

4.10.1 *Bias*

Prior to the engagement of the participants, the researcher was the module coordinator and lecturer for a distance learning module which the participants were studying. To minimise the possibility of bias towards all distance learning students, the researcher ensured that all assessments for that module were marked by another assessor to guarantee impartiality.

4.10.2 *Credibility and Trustworthiness*

The digital collage informed the unstructured interviews and there was an intersect between the instruments because the themes that were identified by the participant in the collage were then discussed with the researcher in the unstructured interview. In developing the narratives, the researcher triangulated the data from the narrative interviews with the explanation of the digital collages that were presented. This triangulation produced more accurate and detailed information from the participants, contributing towards the trustworthiness of the data. These instruments thus

provided a depth of data. By seeking out similarities and differences across the participants' accounts of mentoring through thematic analysis, the researcher was able to ensure different perspectives were represented. The record-keeping and transcription of the interviews were meticulous and verbatim. The transcriptions were made available to the participants for reviewing and validation before the analysis of the data. The virtual interviews were recorded for reference purposes as well as to ensure the credibility of the research.

4.11 **Limitations of the study**

Prior to the creation of the digital collages, the researcher had an introductory meeting with each participant where the purpose of the research was discussed. The researcher outlined what was required of the participants and to circumvent any possible misunderstanding or misconceptions, the researcher detailed what each concept, i.e. mentoring experiences, professional learnings, digital collage etc. meant. For the method of data generation, the digital collage, the researcher explained the reason behind the use of arts-based research and the decision for them being asked to create a collage as well as what a collage entails. Where a participant required further assistance, the researcher provided guidance. The researcher was flexible to an extent with the timeframe for the creation of the digital collage as the researcher was aware that the participants were novice teachers in 2023. All participants had access to a computer or laptop to engage in virtual interviews, however, the researcher had told them that the interview could be held telephonically or via a WhatsApp call if necessary. All participants opted to meet via Microsoft Teams on their computers or laptops

4.12 **Conclusion**

This chapter has outlined the qualitative narrative inquiry research design used to explore the mentoring experiences of distance learning final year preservice teachers. Digital collages and unstructured interviews were used to gather data from five participants. Thematic analysis was employed to analyse the data from the unstructured interviews and identify the themes. While computer literacy may have been identified as a possible limitation, the meeting prior to the making of the digital collages and the availability of the researcher to the participants for guidance and support counteracted the limitation. This study aims to contribute to the existing body of knowledge of mentoring experiences of preservice teachers by providing new insights into the

limited pool of knowledge of the experiences of distance learning preservice teachers. The following chapter presents the narratives of the participants in this study.

Chapter 5: Data Presentation

5.1 Introduction

Chapter 5 presents the narrative data collected from the narrative style unstructured interviews of the distance learning preservice teachers who participated in this study. The data presented herein offers a detailed account of the participants' mentoring experiences during TP block sessions. Through the participants' narratives, insight is gained into the complex nature of the mentoring relationships, the successes and challenges they faced, and the ways in which they fulfilled their roles as preservice teachers. The full versions of the participants' digital collages have been included as Appendices A to E and extracts of the collages have been used in the narratives.

This chapter explores the preservice teachers' experiences in their own words thus highlighting the key themes and trends that emerged from the rich data. The narratives are presented in a manner that respects the participants' voices and points of view, while offering a critical analysis of data. The narratives were developed based on the digital collages and the unstructured interviews of each participant. The researcher worked with the information gathered to generate the narratives. For the reader's ease of access, the researcher snipped the images from the collage to give context to what was being discussed. Where text appears in italics, the researcher has included the exact wording from the unstructured interviews to add depth and credibility to the data presentation.

5.2 Narrative 1: Crescente

Crescente (Growing) is a white South African female who falls within the 20–25-year-old age category. She attended her first- and third-year TP block sessions as a preservice teacher at schools in Midrand, Johannesburg in the Gauteng province, and her fourth year in Mooi River, KwaZulu-Natal as a teacher's assistant. Her first-year school was a public school, and the third- and fourth-year schools were private.

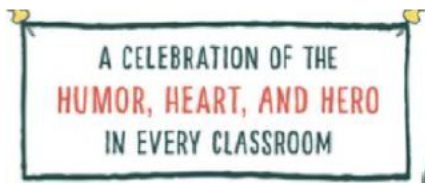


The title of her collage is *Growing*. The meaning of the title reflects how Crescente grew in her knowledge, classroom management, and relationships with other teachers from her first to her fourth year of TP. She likened the experience to a mustard seed which starts its life as small and having to weather many adversities and challenges. For example, if the soil is not

right, it will not grow; someone needs to water it; someone needs to add nutrients to the soil, and then it grows into this big tree. Crescente said that she is growing into a teaching tree.

Crescente's definition of mentoring is the *guiding and facilitating of learning to be a teacher*. Mentoring is *showing what it should be like and then giving the student teacher the opportunity to practice those skills*. The most important thing *giving an example of what a good teacher is and sharing ideas*.

Understanding the role of a teacher



Crescente used the quote 'A celebration of the humor, heart, and hero in every classroom' to reflect on her understanding of the role of a teacher. Crescente found the quote inspiring because *each of those aspects is what teaching is*. She believes as a teacher you have to *have a sense of humour*, you have to *take things lightly and be flexible*, and you have to have fun in *learning*; you have to *have a heart or passion for teaching, mentoring and growing in a school*; a teacher is often seen as a *hero in a child's eyes*, with regards to mentoring, *you want your mentor to be your hero and save you by answering your questions and just be amazing*. Crescente stated that this quote is something that she witnessed first-hand during her third year of TP. Her mentor teacher then really was a hero to her because *she answered all questions, gave tips, and shared the wisdom she gained over many years of teaching, as well as demonstrating the 'humour' and 'heart' aspects of teaching*.

In her mind, a teacher was, first and foremost, a master of humour. The rigours of teaching often demand an ability to take things lightly, to adapt with a sense of flexibility that could navigate even the most unpredictable circumstances. South African schools are no strangers to the capricious nature of load shedding, where lessons could be affected by power outages. She stated that she had to improve activities to save the lessons and make them fun *because not everything goes to plan*. Being able to laugh at oneself and life's little disruptions is an essential trait of a good teacher.

Crescente said she felt a surge of gratitude for profound impact her mentor had on her journey. From these lived experiences, Crescente understood that teachers must be able to make

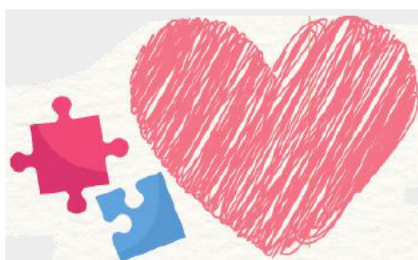
learning enjoyable, show compassion to their learners and passion for the teaching profession, and provide a nurturing and positive environment for the learners in their care.

Enhancing pedagogical skills



The phrase ‘Think outside’ was used to describe what Crescente learned about enhancing her teaching skills. The phrase refers to thinking outside of the classroom. Through observing her mentor teachers and the differences in their teaching styles, where her first-year mentor teachers adhered to customary practices by following the status quo, her third-year mentor teacher was more uncharacteristic in her teaching philosophies resulting in Crescente adopting the same. Her third-year mentor teacher was a *catalyst for the change* in the way Crescente viewed teaching and her pedagogical skills. For quite a few of her lessons in third- and fourth-year TP, Crescente taught her lessons outside of the classroom because she found the *learners enjoyed being in a different environment*. She had observed her mentor teacher in her third-year TP block sessions conducting a lot of lessons outdoors and implemented it a lot in her fourth year because the school was quite strict, and she found that doing this gave the learners a chance to unwind.

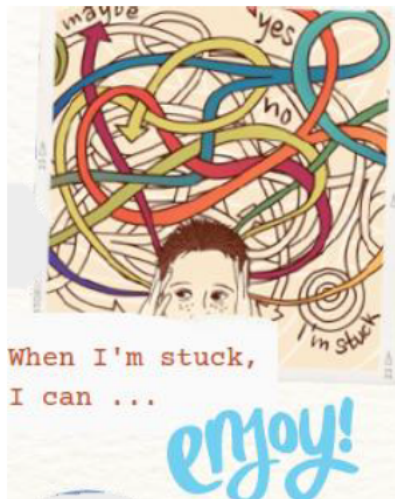
Navigating classroom dynamics



To explain how Crescente navigated classroom dynamics, she used a pink heart and two puzzle pieces, one pink, one blue, these colours had no meaning. Crescente stated that she has a *heart for children*, especially those with special educational needs or learning difficulties. When working with learners, we often think *I am a teacher and I have to figure how to get through to them but sometimes the child themselves is the missing piece of the puzzle* and if the

teacher just asks, ‘how can I help you?’ rather than the teacher telling them what the teacher is going to do helps the child. You need both pieces, the teacher and the child, to complete the puzzle and complete the learning in the class. We each have aspects of ourselves *that are unique that can help the situation* and maybe someone is missing that piece *but if we work together, we can get the learning done.*

Understanding and implementing effective learner discipline strategies



Crescente selected the image of a child who looks confused and is holding their head. There is a muddle of thoughts above the child's head resembling a ball of spaghetti with the words 'maybe', 'yes', 'no', and 'I'm stuck'. Underneath the image is the phrase 'When I am stuck, I can ... enjoy!' This image is representative of a learner in one of Crescente's TP classes. When he (the learner) was struggling with a particular concept or emotion, e.g. anxiety or sadness, he would say 'when I am stuck, I can...enjoy' or '...skip' or '...breathe'. This was a coping mechanism that his teacher (Crescente's mentor teacher) had taught him. *This coping mechanism helped with learner discipline* because he was disruptive and would lash out if he was overcome with 'big' emotions and this affected those around him. The grounding coping mechanism prevented the rest of the learners from being disturbed. Crescente's second-year mentor teacher taught her to *take the child [disruptive learner] out* and away from the stimulus and *give them something to say* or do that would re-centre and ground them. The mentor used the phrase 'When I am..., I can...' and the learners would *identify* what they were feeling and give an alternate, less disruptive reaction. In this way the teacher was giving the learners *the tools to discipline themselves* through working through their frustration or anger and self-regular instead of the teacher having to constantly raise their voice or reprimand the class. This observation has shifted the way Crescente views learner behaviour issues because rather than

thinking 'this child is irritating', she asks, 'why is this child being irritating?' and she tries to assist the child with whatever issues they are experiencing.

Unlocking collaboration: Lessons learning in teacher partnerships through the mentoring process



In the first school Crescente attended for TP, Crescente attended a school where the staff worked in bubbles of isolation and *did not share ideas* or collaborate. She said when she was being mentored, she felt she *could not ask* for lesson ideas and other essential support advice. She got the impression that she was on her own. In the second school she attended, everyone had their classrooms and own ways of doing things but *there was a common thread of ideas* and if you needed help, you could ask for it and *you were not looked down upon* for asking. In her subsequent TP schools, Crescente found the *common thread of shared ideas* and collaboration, with everyone working together towards a common goal. Crescente also experienced collaboration between schools in her fourth year. Staff from her TP school and 2 other schools from different areas would meet once a month to share what they had been doing in class and what was or was not working. Crescente found this very helpful and a mentoring experience she *looked forward to*.

Uncharted learnings: essential lessons not covered by mentors in teacher development



The images representing the essential lessons Crescente did not learn from her mentor teachers are a person with empty speech bubbles around their head and an illuminated light bulb. Crescente's first mentor teacher had *boring ideas* when teaching which, to Crescente, are

represented by the empty speech bubbles. She felt the mentor *did not put much thought* into her teaching. Crescente *did not learn how to think outside the box and how to make learning fun* from this mentor teacher. Her mentor teacher at the second school was much the same and taught *by the rulebook*. The school seemed to have the attitude that even though their strategies weren't as effective as in the past, they would continue because they would not *have to think about it*. Crescente said that with her first two mentor teachers, she did not learn how to actually teach but rather followed exactly what CAPS outlined. While at third year TP, however, Crescente met a teacher at the school who taught her how to *think outside the box*. She told Crescente that when she plans her lesson activities, she *puts herself in the child's position and does the activity* to ascertain what could go wrong in the activity so that she can create a contingency plan.

Challenges faced during TP mentoring



Crescente used two images to express the challenges that she experienced. The first is a clock and the second is a woman juggling various items, e.g. reports, to-do lists, envelopes and a clock to name a few, while holding a cup of coffee and a laptop. Crescente identified this as a challenge experienced in her first year of TP with a slight reoccurrence in her third year TP. In the first year, the mentor teacher was also the principal of the school and in the third year, the mentor teacher was the HOD. In both instances, the mentor teachers were very busy and had a lot to do aside from mentoring Crescente. In her first TP block sessions, the mentor teacher was *barely in the class* for more than an hour each day and Crescente was *barely mentored by her*. Crescente had to ensure that she taught her required lessons in that hour because thereafter, the mentor would leave to continue her responsibilities as school principal. When the mentor was not in the classroom, Crescente *was expected to manage and teach the class and without supervision*. As a result, Crescente requested that she be hosted at another school because she was not learning anything, and she was not being mentored. After moving

schools, Crescente found that she had a lot more time with her mentor teacher, but she *did not learn much* from her because her mentor teacher *followed the rulebook* rather than using interesting teaching strategies. Crescente added that seeing how the teachers taught made her ask *'is this really what I'm going to do?'* and question whether this was the profession she wanted to pursue and fortunately her experiences with her third- and fourth-year mentors changed her perception of teaching.

Catalyst for learning: Unveiling the pivotal moment in becoming a teacher



The image is branches of lavender in an archway. This represents Crescente's third year of TP, specifically the week that she spent at a Learners with Special Education Needs (LSEN) school. The incident described below ignited Crescente's passion for learners with special educational needs. In the LSEN class, there was a boy who was autistic, but his parents did not want to accept this diagnosis, and he would get anxious, and it broke Crescente's heart that he needed help, but his parents refused to give it to him because they did not believe he had a problem. Taking him outside was the mentor teacher's way of helping him to de-stress, breathe, and get some fresh air. The mentor teacher had planted lavender bushes around the school because lavender has a calming effect if you breathe in its perfume. If the learner became anxious about a particular subject, *the mentor teach would take him out of the class*, and he would be sent to pick a piece of lavender from every bush around the school and bring them back to her. She would then hang them in the window to dry them out. At the end of the week, she would take the lavender down and crush it and the learner would take it home to use in his bath or make soap with it. By the mentor teacher just take the time to observe the learner and see how she could *adapt her teaching to accommodate his needs* had such a meaningful effect on the child's learning and path to success. This act of compassion had a profound impact on

Crescente. She affirmed that *that's the power of being a hero* and says that that is the kind of teacher she aims to be.

Reflecting on gaps: The missed element in my mentoring journey



A question mark, a tick, and a cross as well as the words ‘reports and analysis’, were used to identify the elements Crescente missed in her mentoring journey. Crescente believes that the significant learning incident she missed in her TP block sessions was that she was not involved in *assessing of learners’ progress* and *analysing the assessment results* which then informs the report card writing process. It is an important aspect of teaching that should be covered while at TP with the mentor teacher so that the student can see it in action. When you are a novice teacher, *you are expected to have this knowledge, but you cannot have it if no-one has mentored you in how to do it.*

Reflecting on a memorable mentoring incident: Lessons learned and personal growth



After a formally assessed lesson during her fourth year, during her post-lesson feedback, Crescente’s mentor teacher asked her to look in the mirror and tell her what she saw. Crescente was sceptical and uncertain of why the mentor was telling her this. Crescente responded saying that she saw herself. The mentor responded saying, *“I see someone who is learning and who is being a teacher and who is trying her best to teach”*. This activity was to encourage Crescente

because the lesson that the mentor had observed has not been as successful as Crescente had hope for and she thus doubted her capabilities as a teacher. Her mentor was trying to teach her that what a person sees in the mirror is not always the whole picture and the way you perceive yourself is not often the way other people perceive you, and that we are often our worst enemies. Crescente's mentor also taught her the *value of reflecting on her lessons*, reflecting on both the challenges and successes, what caused the challenges and how they can be rectified. The incident helped her remember to reflect on her teaching and *see herself accurately as a teacher*, rather than being too critical or too complimentary.

Crescente feels that her mentoring experiences were predominantly positive. She stated that if I had asked her at the end of her first- and second-year TP block sessions, she would have said they were negative experiences. In hindsight, and now as a graduate, she views the mentoring experiences in a more positive light because of the learnings that occurred because of the negative experiences.

Crescente identified the lavender image as the image that best represents her mentoring experiences because of how much she learned through the incident it symbolises. She learned so much from it because she was also very involved in the school. The one week of TP spent in the LSEN school stood out the most out of all the weeks of TP over the four years,

The words she chose were *growing* and *perseverance*. 'Growing' because of how she grew from a nervous first year to a fully-fledged fourth year. 'Perseverance' because of the *adversities* she faced in her TP block sessions.

Narrative analysis

Crescente's mentors in her first year TP provided superficial support and mentoring. As a result, Crescente believes that she did not learn anything because the mentor just went through the motions of being a teacher and gave Crescente very little of her time to guide her in her TP. In contrast, Crescente's environment during her third and fourth years of TP had a profound impact on the style in which she was mentored and the knowledge she gained compared to her first year. This suggests that those who mentor preservice teachers and the context within which the mentoring occurs have a significant impact on the learning process of becoming a teacher.

Crescente learned that being a teacher is more than standing in front of the class and teaching subject content. Through observing her third year TP mentor teacher, Crescente

learned to *think outside of the box* and teach outside of the classroom. She discovered that learning is bi-directional and that the relationship between teacher and learners is symbiotic in nature since teachers not only impart knowledge to the learners but gain knowledge from the learners. Crescent learned that being a teacher means being emotionally present and available to the learners in the class, understanding the uniqueness of each learner and how to tailor the teaching to their needs and organising the learning environment to accommodate the learners. Crescente gained an appreciation for collaboration and shared ideas through intra- and interschool collaborative efforts pertaining to the curriculum. Crescente believes that despite the adversities she overcame in her first year TP, she grew from the experiences of mentoring, both positive and negative. Self-learning, through observation and reflections derived through her mentoring experiences, strengthened her notion of what it means to be a teacher beyond teaching subject content knowledge.

Crescente's narrative reveals that positive mentoring experiences, wherein learning occurs, are largely dependent upon who is doing the mentoring and the context in which the mentoring takes place. The process of mentoring and the environment in which it occurs matters. Her direct mentoring experiences highlighted the importance of careful selection of mentor teachers as they need to be available to support and guide their preservice teachers along their journey. Crescente flourished in rich mentoring contexts, but equally learnt from unfavourable mentoring contexts. Through the mentor-mentee relationship, Crescente gained a better understanding of situational issues that present themselves in a teacher's daily life as well as how to deal with them. Crescente learned to pay attention to the details through observation of how her mentors catered for and assisted with learners' individual needs. Additionally, she learned about herself through critical reflection and a growth mindset which is a skill that teachers should employ to continually improve their craft.

5.3 Narrative 2: Docendo

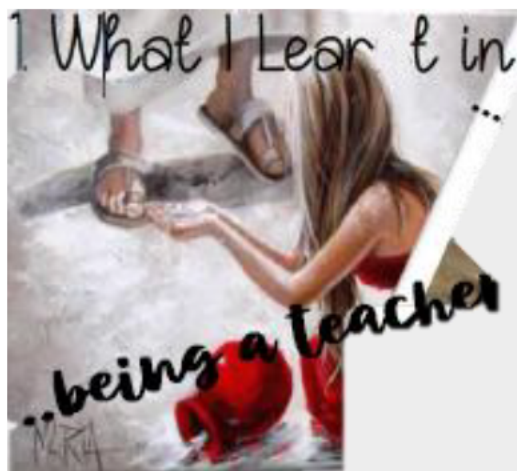
Docendo (By teaching) is a white South African female who falls within the 31–35-year-old age category. She attended all her TP block sessions at private schools in the northern suburbs of Cape Town in the Western Cape. In her first year, Docendo completed her TP at her place of employment where she was working as an unqualified Early Childhood Development teacher with her own class of children but completed her TP in another class with a qualified mentor teacher. In her third and fourth years of study, she attended different schools, which were in the independent school network, for her TP block sessions.



The title of the collage is **Docendo Discimus**. The phrase is a Latin proverb which means ‘By teaching, we learn.’ The title was chosen because she believes that is part of what teaching is. Docendo explained that *as you teach there is so much you learn daily, even if it is something that the children teach you. It is not always knowledge but also things about yourself and your own emotional intelligence. Teaching teaches the teachers.*

Mentoring according to Docendo’s definition is to *be the perfect example of a teacher* and to *show somebody how to teach the proper way.*

Understanding the role of a teacher



To explain what Docendo learned from her mentor about being a teacher, she used the image of a painting of a woman with a clay pot of water who is washing someone’s feet. The

image was based on her third year TP which was conducted in Grade 1. Docendo explained that you need to *lead by example* because when you teach children, *you do not only teach content but also how to be 'proper' [good] human beings*. She further explained *a person being in an act of service to another person*.

Docendo witnessed her mentor teacher making a minor error on the board and one of the learners noticed it and told her about the mistake. She added that the mentor teacher apologised to the learners and corrected the mistake. It was at that time that Docendo noticed that the learners watch every move their teachers make. She also noted that by apologising to the learners, the mentor teacher showed her that *it was okay to make mistakes*, all we need to do is *apologise, rectify, and move on*.

Docendo stated that this was when she realised that we need to be the *best version of ourselves, because children learn from us, not only the curriculum, but vital life lessons and being decent human beings*.

Enhancing Pedagogical Skills and Understanding and Implementing Effective Learner Discipline Strategies



In the painting that Docendo used as an image, two children playing in a farmyard, she illustrated the knowledge that she gained on teaching content and classroom management. The image depicts a girl jumping in the air and a boy is 'flying' around while wearing a homemade cardboard aeroplane (a box with a fan 'propeller' on it). The image also captures the phrase *'If you never did, you should. These things are fun, and fun is good.'* Docendo used these images to describe her third year TP experience which was in a Grade 1 class. Docendo explained that *when you teach your content, it needs to be as fun as possible for the children because they need to have fun to learn*. She went on to explain that *regarding learner discipline,*

there is a fine line between discipline and being a good teacher because you need to keep a balance between being strict and keeping the learning environment positive.

She said that these characteristics of teaching were not observed much during her TP but rather they stemmed from her experience as an unqualified ECD teacher. What Docendo observed throughout her TP block sessions was that *teachers were too focused on getting through the content and did not make the learning fun for the children which resulted in the learners being inattentive because they were bored.* The rationale she advanced for focusing on her third-year TP experience was that she did not enjoy her third year TP because she did not agree with how the school did certain things. Docendo compared her third year TP experience to her being an employee within the school's network, wherein she was able to realise that what the school was doing was not what was expected of them by the network.

Uncharted Learnings: Essential Lessons Not Covered by Mentors in Teacher Development



Three paintings were used to highlight the important learnings that Docendo felt were not covered by her mentor teachers. One painting is of two children bending over and examining something in the sand; another is a painting of a girl with her chin on her arms folded and resting on her knees with the phrase 'Patience is key' and the third is of Jesus bending down, holding the head of, and talking to a downtrodden looking woman. This image is accompanied by the phrase 'Be a way maker'. Docendo noticed that teachers tend to be *very impatient* with the learners because *they [teachers] are so focused on getting through the content that some children are left behind.* Docendo believes that teachers need to *focus more*

on the learners and *what they have accomplished*. She added that if a teacher ‘loses’ their learners, the teacher should *be patient* and *work through what they do not understand*. In this way, they will be a *way maker* for their learners’ success and support them.

Challenges faced during TP mentoring



Docendo used a comic image to depict the challenge she experienced related to mentoring. In this comic, a woman is sitting at a cluttered desk talking to a man who is standing next to her, and she is saying ‘Time management is a great concept but who has time for it?’ Docendo explained that this image represented her experience of TP where *there was never time* for Docendo to talk to her mentor and ask questions. It was always *a rush*, especially with large class numbers. When asked whether the mentor set aside time to mentor her, Docendo said the mentoring was done *during class*, so it was not a *focused* mentoring session.

Catalyst for Learning: Unveiling the Pivotal Moment in Becoming a Teacher



The painting used was of Jesus washing the feet of someone and the words ‘Then Jesus said, “Take what I have given you and change the world”.’ The phrase ‘Be the change you wish to see in the world’ was also used to express her feelings of becoming a teacher. During TP,

Docendo noticed many things in the schools that she did not like much, and she believes that *the only way to make the [necessary] changes is to make the changes yourself*. This belief motivated Docendo to become a better teacher for the learners in her TP classes. The way the schools disciplined the learners stood out for Docendo because being an employee of the network, she was aware that the network promotes *positive discipline with no shouting at or aggressive behaviour towards the learners*. Across her TP experiences she recounted that at one of the schools, the teachers would raise their voices, to the point that it was no longer to get the learners' attention, and it came across as rude. Docendo explained that she did not like this because *it affected the learners and the mood of the classroom*. She noticed the learners *being scared*.

Reflecting on Gaps: The Missed Element in My Mentoring Journey



The images used to explain the gaps in Docendo's learning were Scrabble tiles spelling the word *transparency*, the quote 'Mistakes are always forgivable, if one has the courage to admit them,' and then a water droplet on a tree stump and within the droplet, you can see a large tree in a forest. This selection, she says, *is representative of a positive incident that emerged from her third year TP*. Her mentor teacher was *transparent with the learners; if she made a mistake, she would own up to it and apologise for it*. Docendo found this *openness and honesty was commendable*. The mentor would always tell the learners what they would be doing so that they could prepare themselves, mentally, for whatever it was, *and they felt safe*. This, for her, made the learners feel *at ease and created a more pleasant teaching environment*.

Reflecting on a Memorable Mentoring Incident: Lessons Learned and Personal Growth



Docendo's memorable mentoring incident is depicted through a painting in which there is an image of a woman with her hand on a girl's shoulder and pointing a finger at the child while she is scolding her harshly, and the girl is crying. Docendo placed a 'no entry' symbol over this image and indicated that she inserted this 'no-entry' sign *as a protest to this kind of behaviour*. She also used a painting of a woman and child sitting on a beach with a 'vintage' Volkswagen combi in the background. Docendo stated that the issue being highlighted was done by another teacher at the school, not her mentor. She explained that the teacher reprimanded the child *severely and vocally and the child was eventually taken to the Phase Head's office*. She added that the *Phase Head continued to lambaste the child rather than calmly speaking to the child and asking why they acted in that manner*. The painting with the woman and child sitting on the beach, Docendo says, is what she expects from being a teacher, that, *especially with young learners, there is always a reason that they 'act out' or react in a certain way, and thus if you take the child away from the area where the incident occurred and speak to them calmly, you will get more of a response from them than if you raise your voice to them because then they will just close up or withdraw*.

Docendo found that her TP experiences were positive despite the negative incidences.

When asked which image best represents her mentoring experiences during her TP block sessions, Docendo selected the painting of Jesus holding the dejected girl and explained that this picture *represents the role that teachers have in teaching learners how to be good*

citizens and how to treat others. She added that teachers must lead by treating learners with the care, love, and encouragement that they need to fulfil their roles as responsible citizens.

Narrative analysis

Docendo's experiences of mentoring tell of a journey characterised by a deep commitment to teaching learners through fostering the development of humanness and academic growth. Much of her learnings, both positive and negative, were based on what she observed her mentor teacher doing. Mentoring was incidental rather than deliberate. Docendo had very little direct mentoring because all her mentor teachers were always busy.

Docendo, based on the values of the network schools that she worked in, advocates for non-aggressive approaches to disciplining learners and asserts that a positive learning environment lends itself to positive discipline strategies. Her observations, both, during TP sessions as well as while working as an intern, were that learning can be fun and a healthy balance between playfulness and discipline can be struck. She observed the importance of balancing engaging 'fun' lessons with positive discipline as well as demonstrating patience to learners who are lagging and in turn acknowledging learners' accomplishments. These observations are a result of her observing the converse.

Docendo reflected on the vital aspects of effective teaching and mentorship and concluded that transparency, patience and calm communication, empathy and understanding towards learners facing challenges, as well as acknowledging errors/mistakes make a good teacher.

5.4 Narrative 3: Doctrina

Doctrina (Teaching) is a white South African female who falls within the 36-40-year-old age category. She attended her TP block sessions at one private school and one government school in Westville. Her first year TP block session was at a private school, and her third year TP block sessions was at a public school, Doctrina returned to the third-year school for her fourth year TP block session. This suburb is within the city of Durban, KwaZulu-Natal. For the duration of her TP block sessions, Doctrina's position in the schools was as a student/preservice teacher.



The title of the collage is **The Journey of a Smile**. During her TP block sessions, Doctrina formed relationships with the 'unlovable' (misbehaved/misunderstood) learners and through this relationship, she saw their journey of a smile while they grew in the care and attention, she gave them.

Doctrina's understanding of mentoring is *people showing you what to do and guiding you, developing you*.

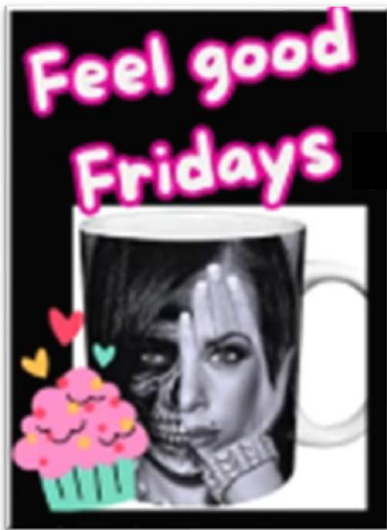
Understanding the role of a teacher and understanding and implementing effective learner discipline strategies



"WHILE YOUR LESSON PLANS WERE PERFECT,
AND YOUR BULLETIN BOARDS WERE TERRIFIC...
YOUR CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT SKILLS NEED WORK!"

A comic was used to depict the learning that occurred regarding being a teacher and learner discipline. The cartoon is of a dishevelled preservice teacher gagged and tied to a chair with the mentor teacher stating, “While your lesson plans were perfect, and your bulletin boards were terrific...your classroom management skills need work!” This comic depicted Doctrina’s first-year TP. Doctrina planned well-thought-out and interesting lesson plans but when it came to teaching them, they did not work properly because she did not have the expertise of discipline with the learners. Her mentor teacher intervened and *she* [mentor teacher] *gave me practical tips to implement in my lessons ...they helped me with classroom management.* This practical advice and tips on how to manage the learners more effectively gave her a better understanding that effective teaching is reliant on classroom management and discipline. Her mentor teacher explained that when the learners are becoming agitated or restless, Doctrina should not let it dictate the course of the lesson but rather channel it positively by involving the learners in a quick exercise or movement, for example, a stretch, touching their toes, et cetera. This mentoring incident enabled Doctrina to ground her learners and reset their focus and she implemented it in her subsequent TP block sessions to maintain learner and classroom control. Doctrina stated that once she employed this strategy in her teaching, she was able to redirect the learners’ energy, and they were better able to engage in her lessons.

Unlocking Collaboration: Lessons Learned in Teacher Partnerships through the Mentoring Process



A cupcake, the phrase ‘Feel Good Friday’ and a coffee mug depict the lessons learned in teacher partnerships. The mug bears an enigmatic image of a woman’s face, split into

contrasting halves. One side of the face is shrouded by a delicate hand, an impromptu mask fashioned from a black-and-white image of another woman's face. This secondary image, though in grayscale, exudes a light quality. In stark contrast, the other half of the woman's face was a darker depiction, reminiscent of the intricate skulls portrayed in the Latin American festival of *Día de los Muertos*.

To promote teachers working together and maintaining a good school culture, the school management, of the school Doctrina attended for her 3rd and 4th year TP, would organise 'Feel Good Fridays' for the teachers every Friday. The teachers would get a coffee and a cupcake, or something sweet. The teachers would *put on a mask of 'niceness'* in the staff room but realistically, in the grades and the teachers you were collaborating with, there was *backstabbing and unpleasantness*. This was something that Doctrina noted in her grades for both third- and four-year TP at the school. In the third year, there was uneasiness among the teachers in the grade indicative of teacher factions in the school, and in the fourth year, her mentor teacher was the one being attacked. Doctrina said that the *perpetual scepticism* seemed fuelled by *professional jealousy*.

Doctrina viewed these observations and experiences as a learning moment because they opened her eyes to the reality of teaching in schools with bigger staff complements as compared to her first year TP school, where there was one teacher per grade, and everyone *got on with one another*. Additionally, she admitted that because her mentor teacher was *being 'attacked'* and *disliked the perpetrator* as a result, Doctrina found that the mentor's *feelings had filtered down* to her, resulting in her developing a *dislike of the perpetrator as a result of the negative treatment* of her mentor. The lesson Doctrina took away from the 'Feel Good Friday' farce and the issue with collegiality is that *nobody is really your friend* because when someone says they will help you *they may have an ulterior motive*, e.g. they will tell someone that you couldn't do a particular task, so they had to help you.

Exploring collegial dynamics



This topic is closely related the previous one about collaboration among the teachers. It pertains to the third and fourth year of TP and the image is of hands of different races coming together in a hand stack. The school made a *concerted effort* to get all the staff to *work together* to foster collegiality. Doctrina stated that she knew that her mentor teacher in the fourth year brought her grade's issues to the attention of the Head of the Department. Doctrina was never told explicitly by her mentors to be cautious of the troublemaking teachers but there were indirect messages to *be wary*. Doctrina explained that in her fourth-year grade, there were four teachers in the grade and only one of them was the troublemaker so while there was collaboration that took place, the troublemaker was always undermining the grade head's (the mentor teacher's) decisions and thus the collaboration did not seem genuine. Doctrina witnessed how when there is professional jealousy, the leader's decisions are undermined by others who believe they are better and that not all smiles are genuine.

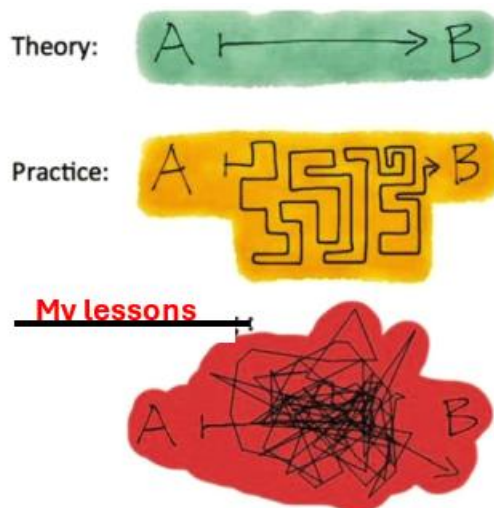
Uncharted Learnings: Essential Lessons Not Covered by Mentors in Teacher Development



The image is of a seedling in someone's hand and the word 'Patience' is at the bottom of the image. This image is related to Doctrina's fourth year of TP.

The mentor teacher did not demonstrate patience for a learner in her class with behavioural problems because the mentor teacher had exhausted all her efforts of getting him involved in the lesson when he was having a meltdown. The boy required *more effort, patience, and attention than the other learners*, and as a result, the mentor teacher would *brush him aside* and would not entertain his behaviour. Doctrina surmised that *this may have been the mentor teacher's way of dealing with the problem*, but she felt that the mentor should have been patient and taken the time to collaborate with the learner. Doctrina explained that she personally *took the time* to be with the learner and she saw *how much he grew* in the six weeks she spent in the class for TP. Although Doctrina had not observed her mentor teacher demonstrating the patience that was required, it was noted that because of her (Doctrina's) patience and efforts, the boy was *better behaved*, at times, with her than with her mentor teacher. He was one of the learners she referred to when discussing her title. She saw his *journey of a smile*.

Challenges faced during TP mentoring

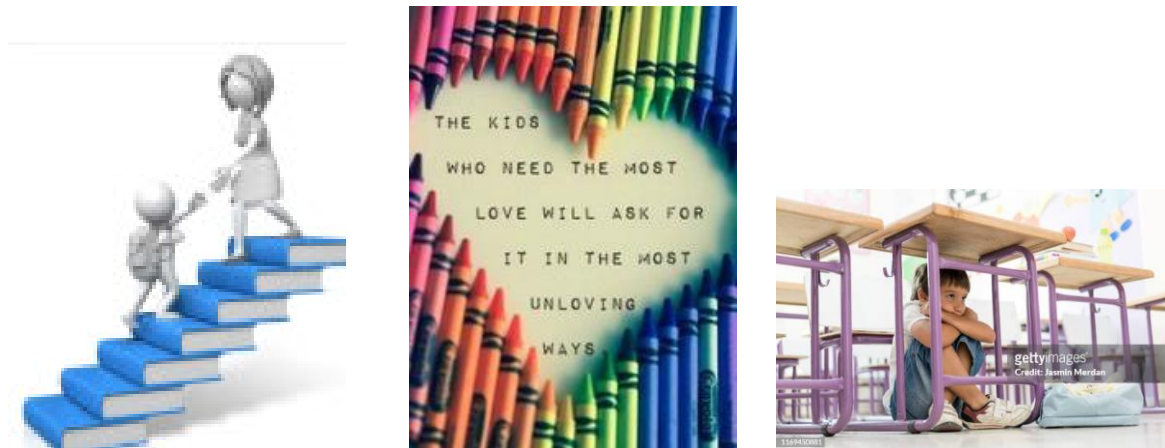


The image contains the word 'Theory' and a straight line from A to B, the second is 'Practice' and a 'maze' where you must find your way from A to B, and the third is 'My lessons', and a line that has been jumbled and knotted with A and B somewhere in the 'confusion' and is indicative of Doctrina's third and fourth years of TP. Doctrina said that sometimes she found the actual presentation of the lessons *quite daunting* because of the aforementioned learner and another learner with similar issues. These learners took her focus away from what needed to be taught and done in the lesson because she was *trying to control them* and as a result her lesson went *to pieces*, and it was *hard to try to rein it all back in again*. Doctrina said that the mentor left it up to her *to manage how the lesson ran*, and she did not

get involved in *how it played out unless it got completely out of hand*. The mentor teacher told Doctrina that this was because she wanted Doctrina to *'figure it out'*.

The fourth-year mentor teacher *allowed for some conversation and deviation* during the lesson whereas the third-year mentor teacher *followed the lesson plan and did not allow the learners to interrupt the flow of the lesson*. Doctrina believes that this variance in approach to learner discipline management *could have been prevented* if her mentor teachers had *guided* her more with the *management of the lessons and the troublesome learners*. She feels that they *could have spent time* with her *reflecting on the issues* she experienced and asking her why she thinks the issues arose and then giving advice as to how to *deal with them* or *prevent them from recurring*, as her first-year mentor teacher did. After Doctrina taught lessons, it was rare for the third- and fourth-year mentor teachers to sit with her to discuss and reflect upon the lesson's successes and challenges.

Catalyst for Learning: Unveiling the Pivotal Moment in Becoming a Teacher



Three images were used to depict the pivotal moment in Doctrina's becoming a teacher. The first one is of a teacher holding a child's hand leading them up a flight of stairs which are made of books. The second is an image of rainbow colour wax crayons in the shape of a heart with the quote 'The kids who need the most love will ask for it in the most unloving ways' inside the heart. The third image is of a scared-looking boy sitting under a desk with his arms wrapped around his knees. All the images pertain to the fourth-year TP.

All the images relate to the learner with behavioural issues. According to Doctrina, he was a *highly intelligent boy*, but he was *extremely hard on himself*. If he got something wrong, he would slide under his desk and remain there until he was ready to re-emerge despite Doctrina and the mentor teacher asking, encouraging, and commanding him to sit at his desk and continue working. While under the table he was rude and said nasty things to make her leave

him alone. This experience then leads to the image of the crayon heart. Doctrina believes that the boy needed love and once a relationship was built with him, he was much better behaved but would still act out sometimes. *It was frustrating* as there were approximately 25 more learners who needed her attention too. To help him grow, he needed someone to *pull him along and hold his hand, guiding him along*. Once he got this, he made progress. The mentor teacher did not get angry with him, but Doctrina was not sure how she reacted to him at the beginning of the year because her TP was in the middle of the year when a relationship had been formed. Doctrina stated that the mentor teacher had not written him off as a lost cause but *had reached a level of understanding* where she would leave him for the time being so that he could self-regulate and then *she would approach him to encourage him to return to his work*.

This learner made Doctrina aware that many learners are *misunderstood and act out* because they need help, but do not know how to ask for it; they have other issues that the teachers are not aware of. This prompted Doctrina to want to *be a change maker* and those children's *"little ray of sunshine"* on an otherwise gloomy day. She wanted to be the teacher who *supports the learners that other teachers just write off as problem children*. Doctrina said she found herself sitting on the floor with him trying to do the work while pacifying him. He would engage with her occasionally when she could adapt her lessons to accommodate him, and she would pretend that she did not know how to do something that they were learning about because then he thought he was teaching her something. Doctrina learned that a teacher must *persevere* with the so-called problematic learners. Through observing him being left to his own devices, Doctrina was prompted to sit with him and motivate him to participate.

Reflecting on Gaps: The Missed Element in My Mentoring Journey



The image of Sponge Bob Square Pants holding a rainbow with the words 'constructive feedback' above the rainbow relates to Doctrina's third year of TP. In her third year, Doctrina

got excellent results for her lesson planning and presentations, which Doctrina sometimes thought were overinflated and unwarranted, *I got really nice results for teaching my lesson* but the mentor teacher *never explained* or *gave constructive feedback* on the reasons why the lesson was awarded such a good mark or which areas needed improvement. The comments were *always positive but not constructive*. Doctrina explained that she needed something that she *could work with* and felt like the mentor was giving her marks *for free* because she was helping the mentor when the class was busy with assessments. Doctrina identified that what she wanted from the mentor teachers' feedback was to *know how her lesson was and what needed improvement*, e.g., This was a good lesson, but you need to teach more content, or: your extension activities need to extend the learners more rather than just keeping them busy - here are some examples... The third-year mentor teacher was often preoccupied and could not find the time to complete the relevant planning documents for the PHEI, for example when the lessons the students were required to teach would be taught. According to Doctrina, halfway through the TP block session, the mentor realised that she only had 3 weeks left and then plotted dates when she could teach her lessons. Doctrina explained that this mentor teacher was a PGCE graduate so did not have a four-year teaching degree in the Foundation Phase, *was fairly new to the teaching profession*, and it appeared that this mentor did not have much experience with mentoring students, and this could have been the reason for her lack of feedback because she had not gone through the process as a BEd student. Doctrina found her to be *disorganised* and her dealings with her demonstrated *a lack of planning*. The fourth-year mentor teacher had more experience with mentoring as well as in the profession. I asked Doctrina whether she had allocated lesson reflection sessions, to which she answered *no*. Her third- and fourth-year mentor teachers *only gave written feedback on the assessment forms*. The fourth-year mentor gave *constructive feedback*, but the third-year mentor's comments were *superficial* and *did not have much substance*. Thus, Doctrina stated she missed out on receiving feedback that would have further guided her on her preservice teacher journey.

Reflecting on a Memorable Mentoring Incident: Lessons Learned and Personal Growth



The image is of various mathematical resources of the several types of measurement, e.g., tape measure, balance scale etc. indicates a memorable moment in Doctrina's TP. She observed her mentor teacher's Integrated Quality Management System (IQMS) lesson which was on the topic of Measurement. She observed an interactive Maths lesson which involved group work. She said it was impressive because all the learners were engaged and enjoyed the lesson and group work and moving around to the various workstations. She learned that 'thinking out of the box' was an important part of teaching. While this mentor teacher was thorough in her lesson preparation, Doctrina noted that the level of detail in the planning of the IQMS lesson was more when compared to the usual lessons which were not for teacher review. The significant mentoring incident was the observation of the lesson and how it was conducted successfully using concrete manipulatives and 'play'. The mentor teacher demonstrated the importance and impact of tangible manipulatives and experiential learning through 'playing' with the measurement instruments on the understanding of mathematical concepts.

Doctrina's use of rainbows and bright colours in her digital collage was because the colours were significant as they are based on her personality which is *outgoing and vibrant*. These colours would also be used to decorate her classroom because learners *like bright colours because they engage the learners and attract their attention*.

Doctrina believes that the images and phrases in the collage are *more positive than negative and even those that depict a struggle or challenge were not horrendous experiences*. Holistically she views the mentoring experiences as positive because of what learning took place because of them.

The images that speak most to the mentoring experiences are the comic, the lesson plan 'knot' and the Sponge Bob Square Pants ones, as these were most significant to the mentoring experiences' journey through TP as a distance learning preservice teacher.

Doctrina described her TP mentoring experiences as *positive* and *learning*.

Narrative analysis

The essence of the teaching profession was encapsulated in Doctrina's mentoring experiences which was a journey fraught with triumphs and challenges. Doctrina identified her struggle with learner discipline and classroom management during her first year of TP. The journey from a well-designed lesson plan to a vibrant, engaging classroom had been bridged by the art of discipline, and the comic panel highlighting this journey was a reminder of the learning experience etched into her teaching journey.

Under the leadership of her first-year mentor teacher, a teacher who was not in a position of leadership, Doctrina learned more than from those who were in managerial positions. Through direct mentoring, she learned the art of positively channelling learners' energy which resulted in a transformation of her teaching approach and fostered a more engaging classroom environment. This learning highlighted the value that a healthy mentor-mentee relationship has in linking theory and practice in the preservice teacher's journey to novice teacher status. Doctrina indicated a lack of time with and feedback from her mentor teachers were challenges in her TP as there was no time for debriefing of her lessons. Doctrina was confronted with the complexities of school dynamics and collegiality, and the duplicity of some staff members. Doctrina noted that the size of the staff complement impacted the extent of school politics. Through observation, Doctrina learned the value of an individualised approach to teaching and learner behaviour management, and personal connections to her learners. Observation of her fourth-year mentor teacher's teaching methods, Doctrina asserts that innovative teaching methods, including the use of concrete manipulatives, and flexibility will promote experiential learning and learner engagement which will ultimately result in a positive learning experience.

Doctrina experienced a lack of direct mentoring in her third- and fourth-year TP. She required guidance in dealing with learners with unique needs as well as thorough post-lesson reflection and feedback to help her overcome her issues rather than the superficial written comments.

As a result of Doctrina's third-year TP experiences, she believes in the importance of a mentor teacher having teaching experience so as to mentor preservice teachers effectively and have prior knowledge and lived experiences to share with their mentees to enable them to grow.

5.5 Narrative 4: Notitia

Notitia (Informative) is a South African Indian female who falls within the 31 – 35-year-old age category. She attended all her TP block sessions at government schools in the suburb of Overport in Durban, KwaZulu Natal. Notitia completed her fourth year of TP block session at the same school as her third-year TP block session. Although both schools were ranked at quintile level 5, the class size varied dramatically.

The title of the collage is: *Wake up, Smell the Coffee...And drink lots of it!* The intended meaning behind “Wake up, Smell the Coffee...” is the realisation of the realities of teachers and that it is not all glitz and glamour, and it relates to the multitude of roles and responsibilities of a teacher.

The definition of mentoring according to Notitia is *when someone takes you under their wing, guides you, and leads by example.*

Understanding the Role of a Teacher



Notitia’s image to address this topic is a depiction of a woman with multiple arms, each one engaged in a different task. Behind the figure was a clock, a constant reminder of time slipping away. Beads of perspiration run down her forehead, evidence of the pressure she feels. With this striking image in mind, Notitia connected her years of teaching experience with the profoundness of what it means to be a teacher.

As a teacher, she likened herself to someone racing against a relentless deadline. It was during her first TP block session that she truly comprehended the myriad functions a teacher must fulfil, shattering the illusion that teaching solely involved imparting knowledge. The responsibilities were vast and diverse.

With a reflective tone, she expressed that being a teacher meant constant multitasking, a never-ending pursuit to beat the proverbial clock. From managing lesson plans and grading

assessments to addressing learners' individual needs and fostering a supportive classroom environment, the demands were endless. Always rushing from one task to the next, teachers must deftly juggle their various roles to ensure everything gets accomplished.

Through being mentored, Notitia learned that being a teacher epitomised the adage, "So much to do, so little time." The truth in those words resonated deeply with her, for no matter how dedicated and passionate a teacher may be, time always remained an ever-elusive resource. Yet, she embraced the challenges and the sense of purpose that teaching brought, knowing that despite the constant rush, making a positive impact on young minds was truly invaluable.

Lesson Preparation Insights: Learnings from the Mentoring Process



While searching for an image to represent what she had learned about preparing to teach as well as the significance of preparation, Notitia stumbled upon an amusing meme that depicted a young boy frantically rushing to complete his work. The words "Lesson Planning, 5 minutes before class" were used to describe on the meme, encapsulating the essence of the image. This seemingly light-hearted meme would later become a poignant symbol for Notitia's reflections on her journey as a teacher.

As she compared her experiences in the first year of teacher preparation to her subsequent third and fourth years, a noticeable difference emerged in the level of readiness to teach that she observed. During her initial year, Notitia's mentor had left a lasting impression on her. The *mentor's extraordinary organisation and dedication* were evident as she witnessed the mentor's lesson plans being meticulously prepared and ready a whole term in advance. The mentor's foresight and planning had left Notitia in awe and instilled in her a sense of the importance of being well-prepared as a teacher.

However, as the years progressed, Notitia found herself observing a stark contrast in her later mentors' approaches. In her third and fourth years of TP, she noticed that her mentor teachers seemed to lack the same level of preparedness she had witnessed in her first-year

mentor. Instead of having lesson plans neatly laid out, she often saw them hurriedly rummaging through their desks, seemingly looking for something to teach only minutes before the next class.

Despite the lack of visible lesson planning, Notitia acknowledged that her mentor teachers managed to deliver their lessons adequately. However, she couldn't help but notice a decline in the quality of instruction. To her discerning eyes, it seemed that they were relying on their memory and experience rather than careful preparation. This realisation struck a chord within her, cementing the importance and value of thorough preparation and lesson planning.

From that moment on, Notitia resolved to always prioritise preparation in her own teaching. She understood that a well-structured lesson plan, not only enhanced the learning experience for her learners but also provided her with a sense of confidence and control in the classroom. Emulating the meticulous approach of her first-year mentor, Notitia took it upon herself to craft lesson plans that were well-thought-out, engaging, and tailored to her learners' needs. Through this deliberate effort, she aimed to uphold the standards of quality teaching and ensure that her learners received the best possible education. The meme of the young boy rushing to complete his work had inadvertently sparked a profound lesson for Notitia - one that would shape her teaching philosophy for years to come.

Discovering Effective Approaches to Grasping and Teaching Subject Matter



The image used to address the discovery of effective approaches to grasping and teaching subject matter is a woman attempting to pole vault over a massive mound of books. Notitia highlighted the symbolism behind the image, noting that the tall stack of books represented the huge content that teachers are obliged to teach, while the apex of the books symbolized teachers' ambitions. She explained that “teachers have a commitment to lifelong learning” as this is a characteristic of a good teacher. From her observations, however, Notitia noted that teachers often improvise which causes them to not meet the objectives of the content despite the objectives being achievable. She believes that it is because *some teachers don't take*

the time to familiarise themselves with and learn the content. She purports that “content is out there and always changing. Something that worked 10 years ago is not going to work today” due to knowledge constantly evolving. She further supports this, saying that even seasoned teachers must refresh their content knowledge continuously. The image used relates to her experiences in her third year of TP.

Despite her belief that teachers should embrace life-long learning, during her observations during mentoring, Notitia noticed that many teachers often resorted to improvisation in their teaching, which sometimes led to them falling short of meeting the objectives of the content, even when those objectives were achievable.

Upon investigating the reasons behind this observation, Notitia discerned that some teachers failed to invest enough time in familiarising themselves with and thoroughly learning the content they were expected to teach. She emphasised that the content teachers are responsible for is continuously evolving; it is not static. What might have effectively worked a decade ago may no longer be suitable for today's dynamic educational landscape.

In support of her perspective, Notitia highlighted that the ever-changing nature of knowledge requires teachers to stay curious, open-minded, and willing to adapt their methods to best serve their learners' needs. Notitia observed her first-year mentor embracing this notion as the mentor teacher was regularly researching content and consulting with peers. The mentor emphasised the importance of improving one's knowledge and, more significantly, sharing that knowledge with others. This insightful advice from her mentor resonated deeply with Notitia, reinforcing her conviction that a commitment to lifelong learning was the key to becoming an effective educator. As she moved forward in her journey as a teacher, Notitia embraced the challenge of staying well-informed and continuously refining her teaching methods to ensure that she would not only meet the objectives set before her, but also provide her learners with a rich and meaningful educational experience. The image of the woman pole vaulting over the mountain of books served as a poignant reminder of the heights she aimed to reach in her quest to become a dedicated and adept lifelong learner and educator.

Exploring collegial dynamics



Notitia used an illustration of a group of ‘stick people’ standing in a circle holding hands to explain her experience of collegiality. Notitia said although she had struggles at her third- and fourth-year TP school, there was a palpable sense of collegiality amongst the staff. This was not evident at her first-year TP school. In fact, she was told by her mentor to avoid engaging too much with other teachers because of workplace politics. At her second school, however, she experienced a strong sense of ‘togetherness’ and teamwork. Her mentors encouraged the unified approach when tackling a problem or task. Notitia said this community of practice was something that she admired.

In her reflective narrative, Notitia recounted her experiences during her third and fourth-year TP school, using a simple yet meaningful illustration of ‘stick people’ standing in a circle, holding hands. This image symbolised the essence of collegiality and unity she felt among the staff in that environment. Notitia acknowledged that despite facing challenges at this school, the sense of camaraderie among the educators was palpable—a stark contrast from her experiences at her first-year TP school.

During her initial year of TP, Notitia recalled encountering a different atmosphere altogether. She shared how her mentor had advised her to be cautious about engaging too much with other teachers, citing workplace politics as the reason for such caution. This advice left her feeling somewhat isolated and disconnected from her colleagues. The lack of collegiality and support was apparent, which hindered her growth and learning as a teacher.

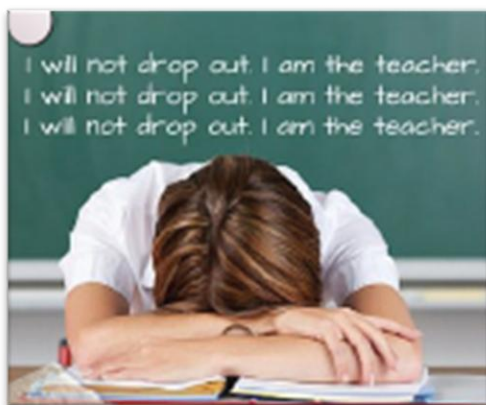
However, her narrative took a positive turn when she spoke about her second TP school. There, she experienced a remarkable sense of ‘togetherness’ and teamwork among the staff. Her mentors actively encouraged a collaborative approach, emphasising the mantra of “us versus the problem.” This philosophy fostered a strong community of practice where teachers worked together, supporting each other to overcome challenges and improve their teaching practices collectively.

The spirit of camaraderie and collaboration she witnessed at her second school resonated deeply with Notitia. The sense of belonging and the mutual support among the educators was something she admired and valued highly. It was evident that being part of such a community of practice had a positive impact on her personal and professional growth as a teacher.

As Notitia continued her journey towards becoming an educator, the image of the 'stick people' standing in a circle, holding hands, became a symbol of the importance of collegiality and collaboration in the teaching profession. She aspired to emulate the sense of togetherness she experienced at her second TP school, knowing that a supportive community of practice could not only enhance her teaching skills but also contribute to a more fulfilling and enriching educational environment for her learners.

With the memory of both the challenges and the encouragement she encountered during her teacher preparation, Notitia was determined to cultivate a strong and collaborative network of fellow educators in her future teaching career. She understood that by working together and supporting each other, teachers could create a positive and nurturing learning environment for themselves and their learners—a goal she was eager to pursue with enthusiasm and dedication.

Uncharted Learnings: Essential Lessons Not Covered by Mentors in Teacher Development



A meme of a person with their head on a desk with a chalkboard behind them with the words 'I will not drop out; I am the teacher' was indicative of what Notitia felt was an important aspect of teaching that was not covered in her mentoring experiences was coping mechanisms. Notitia said that what she did not learn from any of her mentor teachers was how to cope with the stressors and challenges of the teaching profession. They did not demonstrate what keeps them going and remaining in the profession. She stated that stress management was never

brought up and it appeared that they believed the notion of “you chose this career so deal with it [the stresses that accompany the title]”. Notitia believes that the teaching profession is glamourised and teachers seem to feel “I’m a superwoman and just do it all”. She had to find her own ways to cope as there was no explanation of the coping mechanisms and supporting each other [other teachers]. Notitia motivated herself by saying “at times you have to be your own hero” and find a way. On one occasion when things seemed insurmountable and complaining to fellow students did not help, she contacted a lecturer from her PHEI to share her worries and frustrations. The lecturer assured Notitia that she could relate to the situation, and she changed Notitia’s perspective. She proposed that instead of viewing the extra duties and the relief work in a negative light and as a burden, she should see it positively in that the school trusted her with the additional responsibilities and with the young learners. Notitia said that this was a turning point in her coping with the struggles and it gave her a positive outlook towards her TP.

Notitia vividly described a meme that portrayed a person resting their head on a desk, with a chalkboard in the background displaying the words, ‘I will not drop out; I am the teacher.’ This image became a focal point for her reflections on the challenges she faced during her TP journey. Notitia candidly revealed that while her mentor teachers imparted valuable knowledge and skills, there was a crucial aspect they did not address—coping mechanisms to navigate the stresses and demands of the teaching profession.

Throughout her time under the guidance of her mentor teachers, Notitia noticed that stress management was never discussed. It seemed that her mentors held the belief that since she had chosen this career, she should simply accept and cope with the pressures that came with it. The teaching profession, she observed, was often glamorised, and there was an unspoken expectation for teachers to embody a "superwoman" persona, juggling countless responsibilities effortlessly.

Feeling the weight of these expectations and lacking guidance on how to cope, Notitia recognised that she had to find her own ways to navigate the challenges that came her way. Drawing strength from within, she told herself that sometimes, she had to be her own hero and find a path forward.

In a particularly overwhelming moment, when venting to fellow students did not alleviate her frustrations, Notitia decided to reach out to a lecturer from the PHEI she was studying through. This decision proved to be a turning point in her coping process. The lecturer not only empathised with her situation but also offered a fresh perspective that shifted Notitia's outlook.

The lecturer suggested that instead of viewing the extra duties and relief work as burdens, Notitia should see them as opportunities to prove herself and demonstrate her abilities. By reframing her perspective, she could appreciate that the school had entrusted her with additional responsibilities and the care of young learners. This empowering perspective resonated deeply with Notitia and transformed her approach to her teacher preparation.

With newfound strength and a positive outlook, Notitia tackled her TP with renewed determination. She found her own coping mechanisms, seeking solace and inspiration from within and recognising that reaching out for support and guidance could be a source of encouragement during difficult times.

As she continued her journey to becoming an educator, Notitia remained committed to being proactive in her own well-being and actively supporting her fellow teachers. She realised the value of acknowledging the challenges of the profession and creating a supportive community where teachers could share coping strategies and lend each other a helping hand.

The meme of the person with their head on the desk and the words on the chalkboard served as a reminder to Notitia that despite the hurdles and stresses that accompanied her chosen path, she was determined to persevere. Her journey was about embracing the challenges, finding her own strength, and supporting others along the way—a journey that she was now navigating with resilience and a sense of purpose.

Challenges faced during TP mentoring



In her recollection of her third year of TP, Notitia used a humorous meme to depict a common challenge she encountered. The meme featured a frazzled-looking teacher standing at the classroom door with his head cocked, addressing an unsuspecting person with the words, 'Teachers be like... I heard about you. I was waiting for you at the door!' This image

humorously symbolised the situation she faced upon entering the classroom, where she was immediately put to work, and tasked with various responsibilities.

During her third year TP, Notitia found herself inundated with duties the moment she walked through the classroom door. The list of tasks was extensive, from tidying up the classroom to marking books and creating a proper library corner. She likened this experience to First National Bank's slogan, 'FNB. How can we help you?', but with a twist, humorously noting it as "Student teacher... how can I use you?" She felt that her mentor teacher's approach to mentoring was more centred around what the students could do for the mentor, rather than how the mentor could support the student.

Notitia stated that she felt that she was drowning under the workload given to her by the mentor teacher as well as the TP requirements from the PHEI. She felt that rather than being mentored and supported, she was being taken advantage of.

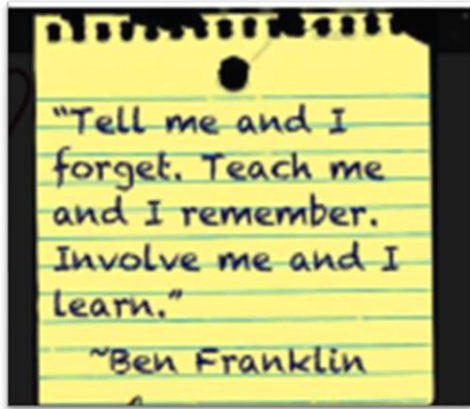
Bearing the advice given to her by the PHEI lecturer, Notitia shifted her perspective, and she felt less resentful about what she perceived as 'abuse' and instead *began viewing it as a compliment*—a sign that her mentor had faith in her capabilities. This *newfound perspective* allowed her to navigate the situation with greater positivity and resilience.

Later in her TP journey, Notitia had the opportunity to serve as a relief teacher in an extremely organised class. The experience was vastly different from her previous encounters. The mentor's attention to detail was evident in the meticulous planning and preparation, as well as the organisation of resources. Teaching in such an environment made Notitia appreciate the value of preparedness even more, recognising the positive impact it had on the teaching and learning process.

The experience in the well-prepared classroom inspired Notitia to adopt a similar approach when she would have her own class in the future. She understood the importance of being organised and planning meticulously to create an environment conducive to effective teaching and learning.

Through the challenges and insights gained during her third year TP, Notitia continued to grow as a future educator. Armed with a new perspective and a determination to adopt best practices, she looked forward to embracing her own classroom one day, equipped with the valuable lessons learned throughout her teacher preparation journey.

Catalyst for Learning: Unveiling the Pivotal Moment in Becoming a Teacher



In her reflections on her fourth year of TP, Notitia found inspiration in a quote from Ben Franklin that perfectly encapsulated a significant incident that profoundly influenced her journey to becoming a teacher. During this pivotal year, Notitia encountered a girl in her class who was a foreigner and struggled with English, the medium of instruction at the school. Witnessing this young learner's difficulties in communication, Notitia observed her mentor teacher's approach with great interest.

Notitia's mentor demonstrated an admirable commitment to inclusion and encouragement, making a conscious effort to support and uplift the struggling learner. Taking cues from her mentor's compassionate approach, Notitia also embraced this methodology in her own teaching. She praised and included the foreign learner, providing a supportive environment that boosted the girl's confidence and sense of belonging.

As Notitia's fourth year TP progressed, she began to witness the positive impact of her and her mentor's actions on the foreign learner. On her last day of TP, a heart-warming and unexpected moment occurred when the learners took turns standing in front of the class to express what they would remember about Notitia. To her delight, the foreign learner volunteered to give a short speech about her experience with Notitia.

Although the girl spoke in broken English, her words carried a profound message of gratitude and appreciation. Notitia was overwhelmed with emotion, knowing that her efforts and the inclusive atmosphere she fostered had contributed to the growth of the learner's confidence and self-expression.

A significant factor that contributed to Notitia's growth and development during her fourth year TP was her mentor's approach. Unlike previous mentors, the fourth-year mentor recognised the importance of allowing Notitia the time and space to explore and experiment in

the classroom. The mentor actively involved her in decisions pertaining to class and lesson planning, which greatly boosted Notitia's confidence as a preservice teacher.

This freedom to explore various teaching methods and strategies had a positive impact on Notitia's self-efficacy as an aspiring educator. She found herself empowered to take risks, try new approaches, and adapt her teaching based on the needs of her learners.

The combination of witnessing the transformative power of inclusion and encouragement and experiencing the mentor's supportive approach, cultivated a sense of purpose and passion within Notitia. Armed with newfound confidence, compassion, and innovative teaching strategies, she felt more than ready to embark on her journey as a teacher, eager to create an inclusive and nurturing learning environment for all her future learners.

Reflecting on Gaps: The Missed Element in My Mentoring Journey



In her reflections on the significant aspect that she missed in the mentoring process during her third and fourth years of TP, Notitia used a poignant image of a yellow flower growing in between paving stones, with its reflection captured on the surface. This image was chosen to symbolise the difficult experiences she faced during these TP block sessions and the potential for beauty and growth even in seemingly impossible circumstances. The focus of the image was on the reflection of the flower, emphasising the importance of self-reflection and learning from one's experiences.

Throughout her third- and fourth-year TP, Notitia felt a crucial element was lacking - the opportunity for reflection. Mentoring in reflective practice was sparse due to time constraints, preventing her from engaging in meaningful self-assessment and learning from her experiences. Notitia believed that if she had not missed the chance for constructive feedback and criticism in post-lesson assessments and had been mentored in reflective practice, she could

have grown both personally and professionally, much like the flower emerging in an unexpected place.

Notitia's first-year TP mentor, on the other hand, had been instrumental in guiding her through the process of reflection. The mentor encouraged her to analyse and critically assess her lessons and her overall experiences at school. This valuable guidance set her on the right path for future TP block sessions, helping her to navigate challenges and identify areas for improvement.

While Notitia achieved excellent results for her formally assessed lessons in her third and fourth TPs, *I was fortunate to get good marks*, she yearned for more than just accolades. She desired to receive constructive feedback that would help her enhance her teaching abilities and further develop her teacher identity. Although being awarded outstanding results may boost one's confidence levels, she understood that true growth in teacher identity and professionalisation came from introspection and self-improvement; there is *always room for growth in anything*.

The image of the yellow flower growing amidst the paving stones and its reflection served as a powerful reminder for Notitia. It highlighted the importance of self-reflection and the growth potential, even in the face of adversity. Notitia realised that had she been provided with more opportunities for reflection and mentoring in this aspect, she could have cultivated a stronger foundation for her teaching career, allowing her to blossom and flourish like the beautiful flower thriving in an unlikely environment. Notitia explained that the shadow cast by the yellow flower is the missed opportunity *to sit back and reflect and to say, 'did I actually reach what I set out to do?'*. Notitia acknowledged that her TP assessor from the PHEI *took the time* to sit with her and explain the successes of her lesson and how she could improve. Armed with this advice, Notitia feels that she will be able to teach a lesson which will be *closer to perfection* the next time.

Looking ahead, armed with the wisdom gained from her past experiences, Notitia aspired to incorporate reflective practice into her future teaching endeavours. She understood that self-assessment and a willingness to learn from both successes and challenges were essential for personal and professional growth. Through self-reflection and mentorship in reflective practice, she aimed to nurture her teaching skills, shape her teacher identity, and continue her journey towards becoming a skilled and passionate educator.

Reflecting on a Memorable Mentoring Incident: Lessons Learned and Personal Growth



In the account of her significant mentoring incident, Notitia described an image of a teacher reading a book to a group of learners seated on a mat in front of her. This scene served as a reminder of a crucial lesson she learned during her first year of TP.

On her second day of her first year TP, Notitia's mentor teacher asked her to read a story to her Grade R class. Eager to make a positive impression, Notitia focused intensely on using expression and varying her vocal range while reading. However, in her enthusiasm to demonstrate her storytelling skills, she inadvertently overlooked an essential aspect of reading to young learners—showing the pictures on each page.

As the story unfolded, some of the learners began to get up from their seats, trying to peer over the book to catch a glimpse of the pictures. Others interrupted her, urging her to show them the illustrations. Feeling flustered by the interruptions, Notitia persisted and managed to finish reading the story.

After the learners were dismissed for the day, Notitia's mentor took the time to offer her constructive feedback and positive correction. The mentor recognised the value of reflection and the impact it could have on a teacher's growth and development. She kindly and tactfully advised Notitia on how to improve her storytelling techniques, emphasising the importance of engaging the learners visually by showing them the pictures as she read.

Taking her mentor's advice to heart, Notitia embraced the suggested strategies and worked diligently to improve her storytelling skills. With each subsequent reading, she applied the valuable feedback and noticed a remarkable improvement in her ability to captivate and engage her young audience.

This mentoring incident left a lasting impression on Notitia, highlighting the value of reflection and the positive effects it can have on a teacher's professional journey. Through

constructive feedback and guidance, her mentor had shown her the importance of critically analysing her teaching practices and making necessary adjustments.

Armed with this newfound understanding of reflection's impact, Notitia became more receptive to feedback and actively sought opportunities to grow and refine her teaching techniques. As she continued her teacher preparation journey and eventually stepped into her own classroom, she made a conscious effort to incorporate reflection as an integral part of her teaching process.

The image of the teacher reading a book to eager learners on the mat became a symbol of this significant mentoring incident for Notitia. It reminded her of the pivotal lesson she learned in the value of reflection and the profound impact it had on her teaching skills. With gratitude for the guidance she received, Notitia embarked on her teaching career with a sense of purpose and dedication, knowing that continued reflection would be a driving force in her professional growth and journey as an educator.

Notitia contends that the visual depiction associated with understanding the role of a teacher notably encapsulates her mentoring encounters, illustrating the extensive responsibilities that a teacher must undertake. Despite certain remarks characterising her experiences as a distance learning preservice teacher during TP in a somewhat negative light, she maintains that these encounters were instructive in nature, as she derived valuable lessons from them. Notitia emphasises the notion that one's perspective significantly influences the potential to effectively transform circumstances and challenges into opportunities for growth and improvement.

Notitia chose the adjectives "informative" and "tiring" to describe the essence of her TP mentoring experiences. The term "informative" denotes the substantial acquisition of knowledge and insights garnered throughout the TP period, signifying a noteworthy educational experience. Conversely, the term "tiring" pertains to the arduous and demanding nature of her responsibilities as a preservice teacher during TP. This designation encompasses the enduring physical and mental exertion she endured due to the confluence of multiple obligations. Specifically, upon the conclusion of the school day, Notitia was compelled to return to her full-time job, further compounded by the imperative to fulfil her domestic duties, alongside the completion of assigned tasks and the preparation of TP lessons. The amalgamation of these multifarious responsibilities significantly contributed to the taxing and fatiguing nature of her TP journey.

Narrative analysis

Notitia's narrative of her preservice teacher journey reveals an insightful evaluation of various aspects of teacher preparation and the mentoring process. Through the imagery in her digital collage and reflective anecdotes, Notitia's experiences of mentoring brought to light the realities of teaching. She gained an understanding of the multifaceted nature of being a teacher, dealing with challenges such as chasing deadlines, continuous professional development and ultimately embracing the joys and responsibilities of the profession. Notitia learned that being a teacher required constant multitasking while still appreciating the sense of purpose that accompanies teaching, making a positive impact on young minds. The narrative captures Notitia's evolution from a novice preservice teacher navigating the complexities of lesson planning and time management to a resilient final-year preservice teacher committed to lifelong learning and collaboration.

Notitia's narrative demonstrates that learning through mentoring is reliant on who mentors, the purpose of mentoring, and when mentoring occurs. Notitia's story indicates various experiences of what she received during mentorship and varying focus on what was to be learned during mentoring, which was greatly reliant on who mentored her.

Her direct mentoring experiences revealed a focus on relationships and the importance of preparation for teaching and actual teaching. Her various mentor teachers highlighted the different ways of interacting with peers and learners. A mentee's decision on what aspects to adopt as positive learning from the mentoring experience is greatly dependent on the mentee's perceptions and past experiences in addition to exposure to the result of such mentoring, as evident in the storytelling lesson Notitia discussed.

Notitia's observations of her mentor teachers were revealing about both positive and negative aspects of being a teacher. For instance, not coming to class prepared to teach resulted in achievable lesson outcomes not being met.

5.6 Narrative 5: Praemium

Praemium (Rewarding) is a white South African female who falls within the 20 - 25-year-old age category. She attended all her TP block sessions at one private and two government schools. Her first year of TP was at a private school on the Bluff; her third year TP was at a public school in Umbilo; and her fourth year TP was at a public school on the Bluff. All these suburbs are within the city of Durban, KwaZulu-Natal. Praemium noted that her third-year school was well-resourced and that both public schools had class sizes of approximately 33 learners. For the duration of her TP block sessions, Praemium's position in the schools was as a preservice teacher.

The title of the collage is: **Navigating the Maze**



The intended meaning behind the title is that Praemium's mentoring experience was challenging. Her experiences were a mix of good and bad and therefore reflected as challenging to navigate through that maze because once she felt that she had come out of the other end, there was another corner to take, or she was stuck.

Praemium believes that a mentor is someone who is meant to *guide you* [the mentee] *towards reaching your* [their] *goals* thus the mentor needs to be someone who will *encourage* and help the mentee *build* their *self-confidence*. She elaborates stating that a good mentor will give

their mentee the *space to explore different techniques and procedures* in order for them to *discover what works best* for them.

Understanding the Role of a Teacher



The image used to address what Praemium learned about the role of the teacher is one of two women doing yoga stretches. In the background is a multi-coloured spring and the word “Flexible”. These images and the phrase “Flexible” cover all of Praemium’s TP block sessions. Through her mentoring experiences, Praemium learned that as a teacher you need to be *flexible* because *things won’t always go as planned*, even with excellent lesson planning. She explained that a teacher must *allow for adjustments* in the classroom as the lesson goes on, depending on whether what they have planned is working. Praemium stated that a teacher needs *to be able to adapt and make the necessary accommodations* for their lesson while they are teaching. As a result of her mentoring, she gained an understanding that despite always being well-planned and well prepared, she must adjust to changes happening in her classroom and that a teacher must be able to think on her feet and go with it and see where they end up.

Discovering Effective Approaches to Grasping and Teaching Subject Matter



The wording and images used to outline what knowledge Praemium gained about understanding and teaching the content of the curriculum include a woman looking at a child while she's holding a clipboard, a child in a wheelchair, the words 'acceptance', 'understanding', and 'one-of-a-kind', there is a circle of painted hand prints, a box of chocolates and lastly, four hands, of varying skin tones, each holding onto another's wrist. These images relate to TP block sessions from the first to fourth year. Praemium believes that each learner is unique and is going to influence the choice of the teaching strategies and techniques that you employ during the teaching of the lessons. She feels that there are learners who need more support than others and a teacher should accept this, offer understanding and guidance, and support each learner to reach their full potential. 'Acceptance' and 'understanding' play an important part in the classroom in acknowledging where the learner's behaviour is coming from. The box of chocolates represents the variety of learners a teacher encounters and that while they are all different, they must be treated fairly and respected as individuals. The hands holding onto the wrists is an illustration of how everyone in the school came together as a support structure for the staff and the learners. Praemium observed that if a teacher was struggling and was not sure about what they should do in a situation, they would be able to reach out for support and get experience and insights from their colleagues and peers.

Uncharted Learnings: Essential Lessons Not Covered by Mentors in Teacher Development



Praemium used the images of a group of people with speech bubbles and the word ‘meeting’ underneath it, two people holding puzzle pieces, one blue and one green, and coming together to piece them together, and a frame with little hearts on it to explain what lessons she feels were not covered by the mentor teacher during her TP. Praemium identified that this was based on her fourth-year TP block session experiences. She identified that what she believed was important for her but which she did not observe in action was *how to engage with the learners’ parents in terms of the standards, procedures, and boundaries*. She remarked that it was not that she was not educated about this by the mentor teacher; she simply did not have the opportunity to see it and understand exactly how it should play out.

She said that if she went into a classroom of her own it would be something like this that she would need to adjust to as it would be a very new experience for her. Thus, in the interview, she explained that the image on her digital collage of the person talking to other people with the speech bubbles is indicative of *parent-teacher meetings* and the two people holding the puzzle pieces coming together is her literal interpretation of *feeling puzzled*.

Challenges faced during TP mentoring.



The images used to highlight the challenges Praemium faced during her TP mentoring experiences are two people holding their heads, one looking dejected and the other with swirly eyes making them look confused. There is also a pleased-looking lady with her hand up in the air, almost as if to cheer and then there are two phrases one stating 'you are enough' and another that says, 'growth takes time'. These images relate to Praemium's third-year TP experience. She indicated that she struggled with dealing with her mentor teacher's double standards and unrealistic expectations of her. She believes that she was giving her best, but her mentor teacher felt that her best was not good enough. Praemium resolved to keep trying regardless of her mentor teacher's unrealistic expectations and she stated that it helped her to grow as an individual as well as a preservice teacher. While this challenge was exceedingly difficult when she was experiencing it, she believes that it made her stronger in the end. Her mentor teacher was a Head of Department in the school and thus her expectations were high. She would often nitpick on certain things that Praemium did, but she would not do better on those things herself, for example, writing on the board, she told Praemium that her handwriting was untidy but when the mentor teacher wrote on the board, her handwriting was untidier. Praemium stated that her mentoring experience with this mentor teacher was a master-apprentice approach to development because Praemium could not teach in her own way or style since the mentor teacher wanted her to *teach in her style*. Praemium was under the impression that these issues may stem from the fact that *the mentor teacher felt that she was inexperienced due to being younger* than the other preservice teachers who were attending

TP at the school at the time. These preservice teachers were more mature in age, however, they were in the same year of study as Praemium. Thus, Praemium believes that she was treated worse than they were *due to a perceived sense of immaturity*.

Catalyst for Learning: Unveiling the Pivotal Moment in Becoming a Teacher



Praemium unveiled the pivotal moment through the use of various images: a child reaching into the sky to touch a butterfly, there is a background of space containing clouds and stars as well as a map, two hands making a heart shape, a child reading, and a child looking through a magnifying glass at an insect on a plate. She also used the phrases ‘attract positivity’, ‘I am one-of-a-kind’, ‘I am confident’, and ‘dedicated to do good’. These images and phrases relate to fourth-year TP. Praemium identified this as the silver lining to her TP experiences. She felt that her mentor teacher in her fourth year gave her the *space to explore* the type of teacher she wanted to become, which is why she selected the space background and the map for exploration. Praemium stated that her mentor teacher in her fourth year was *very encouraging* and *supportive* and gave her the *self-confidence* she needed to *push herself* beyond certain boundaries and challenges. Praemium said that observing the mentor teacher’s *level of dedication and care towards the learners* reminded her of why she chose to study teaching and reaffirmed her love for the profession. Praemium explained that despite a *big [college] workload*, she came out of that TP block session experience feeling that she had *made the right career choice*, and she was in the *right profession just based on how she had mentored me throughout that TP*. This mentor teacher was younger than

Praemium's third-year mentor teacher and not as high-ranking but was the grade head for Grade 2. She used her experience to guide Praemium instead of using it against her. The mentor teacher guided her by looking through her lesson plans and giving advice, but it was coming from a *place of support*, not judgment.

Reflecting on Gaps: The Missed Element in My Mentoring Journey



The images used to identify the significant thing or incident that was missed are a man scratching his head, two learners, one with a light bulb next to their head and one holding a book in their hand, two books stacked on top of each other with an apple on top, the word teachers, and then an image of a biscuit with a pair of glasses holding a book and it says 'smart cookie'. This incident occurred in year one of TP. Praemium stated that she missed the opportunity to learn from her mentor teacher because the mentor teacher was so busy as a teacher and the principal of the school. While she had so many years of teaching experience and so much knowledge and wisdom to provide, she could not share it with Praemium because of her busy schedule. Praemium believes that she *could have learned a lot more* from her mentor teacher *if time was not as limited*. Saying that, however, Praemium does feel that the mentor teacher made a difference in her experience as a preservice teacher in the school because she did learn something, but she feels that she could have benefited from more time with the mentor teacher and observing the mentor teach.

Reflecting on a Memorable Mentoring Incident: Lessons Learned and Personal Growth



The following images identify the mentoring incident that Praemium remembered a heart hugging itself, a rainbow with the word inclusivity over it, a picture of the left and right hemispheres of the brain with the right hemisphere being multi-coloured, a child that has painted hands and a painted apron, and then another child with a prosthetic arm and wearing a pair of glasses, reading a book. The incident took place in Praemium's third year of TP. In their third year of TP, all Foundation Phase preservice teachers must attend a week of TP at a Learners with Special Education Needs (LSEN) school. In the LSEN week of TP, the mentor teacher *changed* Praemium's *views* on what it is to teach learners with special needs. *Due* to the mentor teacher's knowledge, skills, and compassion, Praemium gained a *better understanding* of remedial education and *learned not to underestimate the capabilities of these learners*. Praemium said she entered that week not knowing what to expect. She stated that the LSEN week was *an eye-opening moment* and a very good experience, and it definitely *shifted* my *mindset* in terms of the learners' capabilities.

Praemium rates her mentoring experiences as reasonably positive, either 6 or 7 out of 10. Her rating of the mentoring experiences is based on the Covid-19 lockdown and other factors that hindered the full experience of mentoring, like college work and stress. These influenced her time at school, so she did not have the opportunity to fully immerse herself in the experience. Year one and year four were the best mentoring experiences so those were classified as positive but overall, all years were worthwhile and Praemium would not change anything because they helped give her

a better understanding of the different schooling systems and a better view than if they were all positive because Praemium took the negative experiences and grew from them.

Praemium believes that the image that best represents her mentoring experiences at TP as a distance learner is the one with the phrase that states growth takes time because to her it was a process from the first year to the fourth year in which she grew from a preservice teacher to being ready to take on the role of a novice teacher.

The pastel colours used in the collage were a personal preference of Praemium's because they were representative of her personality traits which she states are happy, positive, and calming. She stated that she was trying to show what kind of teacher she would be and the types of colours she would have in her classroom.

Multiple images on the collage contained more than one person. When questioned about the rationale for this, Praemium stated that teamwork played an integral role, mainly evident in the interactions she observed of her fourth-year mentor teacher and other staff at the school. Most staff were extremely helpful, and she could see the influence of teamwork in the way that the teachers ran their classrooms. All mentor teachers over her four years of TP displayed effective communication with their colleagues and she feels the support they provided for each other helped tremendously. She saw this daily in casual conversations, during break time, and in formal settings like meetings.

The two words Praemium chose to describe her mentoring experiences were *challenging but rewarding*.

Narrative analysis

Praemium's TP mentoring experiences reveal a journey of adaptability, understanding, and personal development. She observed that, despite rigorous lesson planning and preparation, modifications, and thus flexibility, are frequently required during lessons to promote learner engagement and understanding. Praemium's narrative illustrates resilience, adaptability, and the transformative power that a *supportive mentorship has in shaping a preservice teacher's professional identity*.

Each of Praemium's mentoring experiences was diverse across the 3 periods of TP, and feels that, in spite of the challenges faced in her third year TP, that the periods were positive in that she experienced personal growth. Praemium discovered the paradox that mentor teachers who

were school leaders actually provided the least amount of mentoring and focused their support on what might make her a good teacher, whereas class-based mentor teachers provided the nuances of what it means to be a teacher and how to be a teacher. Praemium grew in her confidence and positivity as a result of this supportive relationship.

5.7 Conclusion

This chapter delved into the world of preservice teachers as they navigated the complex relationship of mentoring during their TP block sessions and explored how their mentoring experiences influenced their development. Through their narratives, a deeper understanding was gained of the ways in which a mentor can support or stunt the growth of preservice teachers as well as elucidating the implications of this knowledge for initial teacher education programmes and mentoring practices.

Chapter 6: Discussion of Findings

6.1 Introduction

Chapter 5 presented the narratives of my participants wherein they had expressed their experiences of mentoring while at school-based TP block sessions. The focus of this chapter is on the analysis of narratives presented by my participants. The analysis of narratives is presented across four themes. These themes were developed whilst constructing the narratives for each participant. As the narratives were being developed, common components of each narrative emerged, and these were then used as the themes for the analysis of narratives. Within each theme, sub-themes are also entered in the form of cognate groupings within each theme. The findings of the study are located within each of these sub-themes. The findings are then engaged with to offer possible explanations using both, the literature that informed this study as well as the theoretical constructs that frame the study analysis.

6.2 Developing the Themes for the Data Analysis

To analyse the findings, I have identified four themes, namely: (1) mentoring experiences, (2) learning from mentoring, (3) challenges experienced, and (4) learnings not covered by mentors. Themes 2, 3 and 4 have sub-themes. The themes and sub-themes can be found in Table 3.

Table 3: Themes and sub-themes

Theme	Sub-theme	Focus of sub-theme
1. Mentoring Experiences		
2. Learning from Mentoring	Being a Teacher: What does it mean for preservice teachers?	The complexities of teaching, including pedagogical tactics, socio-emotional support, and learner involvement.
	Perspectives on Teaching the Content	The interconnectedness of a supportive learning environment, the evolution of professional identity, learner discipline and communities of practice and the impact on teaching the content.
3. Challenges Experienced	Professional Challenges	The challenges of time constraints with mentor teachers, highlighting the impact on mentee development, constructive feedback.
4. Learnings Not Covered by Mentor Teachers	Being in School	Mentees missed the opportunities to be able to immerse themselves as teachers while at TP.
	A Teacher as a Reflective Practitioner	Reflective practice is a key aspect of professional growth which encourages self-discovery and empowerment through introspection and self-assessment.

6.3 Mentoring Experiences

The concept of mentoring evolved from being a master-apprentice perspective to learning on-site to a more inclusive understanding of relationships between mentor and mentee, the contextual environment that informs mentoring and the professional development of the mentee on the range of aspects that are needed to be fully functional within a workspace (Gravett, Petersen & Ramsaroop, 2019; Rupenthal & Furuness, 2020; Li, Sani & Azmin, 2021; Merket, 2022). In analysing the perspectives of mentoring held by the participants, mentoring is seen to be a nurturing and guiding experience. Participants believed that a mentor should give support to their mentee and care for them in their growth during TP block sessions. This finding is consistent with Grimmett et al., (2018, p. 348) who purport that an aspect of the mentor teacher role is that of a nurturer who "should be looking after their [mentee] well-being".

All participants were asked to present their understanding or conception of mentoring and a mentor in terms of what they experienced over their four years of TP. Drawing from the data set located across the narratives of the participants, the perspectives of mentoring are about developing a preservice teacher. It includes guidance for effective teaching and creating opportunities for practice and reflection. As indicated in the data by Docendo, mentoring is to *show somebody how to teach the proper way*. What is defined as the proper way of showing someone how to teach will vary from one person to another, but there are some commonalities that researchers agree on. These commonalities include planning together, observation, and providing feedback (Gravett, Petersen & Ramsaroop, 2019; Rupenthal & Furuness, 2020; Li, Sani & Azmin, 2021; Merket, 2022). In planning lessons, the mentor may discuss their thoughts with their mentee and spend time exploring the content together, while focusing on the learners' needs and the lesson objectives. Doctrina highlighted two aspects of what mentoring is to her: *people showing you what to do and guiding you* as well as *developing you*, and then Crescente elaborated further, stating that it includes *giving the student [preservice] teacher the opportunity to practice those skills*.

A mentor is seen as someone who has the knowledge and skills of a profession to undertake personal and professional development of a novice teacher. A mentor teacher plays an influential role in the professional development of the mentee, as the extent to which the preservice teacher is involved in the teaching and interactions with the learners in addition to the feedback received

is determined by the mentor (Wexler, 2020). The personal aspect of development includes being caring, encouraging and supportive while the professional aspect of development includes learning by modelling, review comments and allowing for decision making. A mentor is seen as someone who *takes you under their wing, guides you, and leads by example* (Notitia). Praemium believes that a mentor is meant to *guide* their mentee *towards reaching your [their] goals* thus the mentor needs to be someone who will *encourage* and help the mentee *build* their *self-confidence*. She elaborates stating that a good mentor will give their mentee the *space to explore different techniques and procedures* in order for them to *discover* what works best for them. Docendo defines a mentor as someone who can *be the perfect example of a teacher*. A mentor should go beyond merely supporting their mentee's emotional and learning needs and focus on supporting the mentee in setting long-term learning goals towards becoming an effective teacher (Wexler, 2019), which also resonates with the findings of this study. Hence guiding the mentees to becoming an effective teacher and nurturing them to grow the desired attributes of an effective teacher.

These conceptions of mentoring and mentors provided by the participants are consistent with the literature (Rupenthal & Furuness, 2020; Li, Sani & Azmin, 2021; Merket, 2022). Mentoring is a process that includes the interconnections of the personal, professional and contextual realities needed for being a teacher where issues such as diversity of learners, diversity of learning contexts and biographical variances influence how teaching and learning happen in contexts. To understand the nuances and intricacies of teaching and learning in diverse contexts, guidance and support for personal and professional development are needed.

Templeton, Abdelrahman and Donop (2023) refer to mentoring as a symbiotic relationship which is beneficial to both the mentor and mentee as each learns from the other. This is because the mentors would benefit through being exposed to new ideas, educational methods, perspectives and technologies by conversing with the mentee. This symbiotic relationship that Templeton, Abdelrahman and Donop (2023) speak of has not been a perspective mentioned by any of the participants. The reason for this could be attributed to the preservice teachers privileging themselves in the learning process rather than recognising that they can also create learning moments for the mentors. Perhaps, moving forward, the preservice teachers should be alerted to recognise their strengths and how they could use these strengths to forge better and more mutual

relationships between themselves, the schools where they are doing their TP block sessions in, and the mentors assigned to them.

Bandura's (1986) model of reciprocal determinism advocates for a mutual relationship during mentoring process, but not in the way suggested above where there is potential learning both ways. He (Bandura) argues that the mentee's expectations and level of self-efficacy (personal factors) is influenced by the mentor they are placed with (environment) as well as how the mentee is treated by the mentor (behaviour). The more guidance and support the preservice teacher receive in the mentoring relationship, the higher their level of self-confidence will be which will elevate their self-efficacy. The reciprocity in Bandura's model is about the pre-service teachers' commitment to learn from their mentoring, and not about the mentor learning from the preservice teachers.

The concept of mentoring would seem to have evolved beyond a master-apprentice perspective to a reciprocal relationship encompassing a more inclusive understanding of the mentor-mentee learning relationship, responsive to the diverse contextual environment, and an ongoing professional development. Participants perceived mentoring as a nurturing and guiding experience, emphasising support, care, and guidance for effective teaching, practice, and reflection.

6.4 Learning from Mentoring

Herein I examine the various ways in which preservice teachers learned from their mentoring experiences during TP, focusing specifically on being a teacher and teaching the content. Mentoring is a vital aspect of teaching training and understanding what and how preservice teachers learnt from their mentors will provide understanding into the development of the participants' professional identities and practices. The data revealed that valuable learning emerged during TP which will be discussed in the topics below.

Mentoring is an invaluable tool for professional development and personal growth which offers opportunities for mentees to learn from those who are more experienced (Maphalala, 2013). A mentee can gain meaningful insights, skills and knowledge in addition to acquiring a greater appreciation of themselves and their aspirations (Ellis, Alonzo & Nguyen, 2020). Through implementing the learnings that were gained during their time with a mentor who had knowledge

and skills to share, preservice teachers were able to boost their development, gain confidence and ultimately be successful in their careers (Wexler, 2020).

The relevance of this theme relates to what participants learnt during their mentoring experiences during their TP block sessions across the four years of their study to becoming a teacher. The nuances of workplace-based learning are not possible whilst at university and as such the mentoring exposure can reveal knowledge, skills and competencies that would enable a teacher to be effective in their teaching (Bradbury, 2023). The sub-themes present different aspects of the learnings gained from mentoring and they influenced the preservice teachers' personal or professional development. Hence, within this theme two sub-themes were identified to capture the learnings that the mentees experienced through mentoring or the lack thereof. These sub-themes elaborate on the various kinds of learnings that the participants gained, and the following have been identified when working with the data: Being a teacher: what does it mean for preservice teachers? and Preservice teachers' perspectives on teaching the content.

6.4.1 *Being a Teacher: What does it mean for preservice teachers?*

While the policy on teacher education in South Africa (Department of Higher Education and Training, 2015) specifies seven roles of being a teacher which needs to find expression through the six knowledge components of a teacher education programme, the data from the participants reveal that being a teacher goes beyond these seven roles. Hence this sub-theme illuminates the roles of a teacher within an authentic context of the school and classroom which may be in addition to what is learnt through the official teacher education programme. What it means to be a teacher in such an authentic environment for teacher development is revealed by participants as they recount their experiences of mentoring, which at times, have been identified by the preservice teachers through observing their mentor teachers and reflection on these observations. The data revealed that being a teacher is a multi-faceted profession that requires constant adaptability, flexibility and creativity and that learning these roles and responsibilities are largely through experiential learning. Each of these aspects of being a teacher is expanded further and supported by extracts from the narratives.

Within this sub-theme, the need for teacher adaptability and flexibility and the multi-faceted roles of a teacher are explored from the perspective of the participants as they observed their mentors teaching.

Ted Aoki (1999) speaks of curriculum as intended and curriculum as lived (experienced) in relation to what is planned and what occurs in class when teaching and learning happens. These key constructs of Aoki (1999) are useful to understand preservice teachers' notions of what it means to be a teacher as experienced during their TP block sessions. Drawing from the data, the participants experienced varying degrees of what it means to be a teacher. Some participants reported that, through their observations of their mentors teaching in class, the mentors are agile and responsive to the unfolding teaching moments as a teacher *needs to be able to adapt and make the necessary accommodations* (Praemium). Crescente further explained that flexibility is a necessary quality of a teacher in South Africa due to the fluctuating stages of loadshedding *because not everything goes to plan*. Conversely, other mentors adhered largely to their intended plan for a lesson and *did not allow the learners to interrupt the flow of the lesson* (Doctrina). Kyriacou (2018) promotes flexibility in planning lessons and encourages teachers (and preservice teachers), when faced with learners who are having difficulties, to change from their plan to something more appropriate and suited to the learners' abilities. These observations would tend to confuse the preservice teacher who comes into their TP block sessions with an understanding that all lessons need to be thoroughly planned. This understanding of careful planning has been developed whilst at university and further reinforced by the policy requirements of students being required to develop teaching plans as part of their portfolio of evidence required of TP.

Teaching is a complex and multifaceted profession with responsibilities that exceed the traditional notion of teaching which is instruction (Chaaban & Sawalhi, 2020; Paddock, 2021). In recent times, the responsibilities of a teacher involve learning facilitation, emotional support, and opportunities for critical thinking and problem-solving (Llego, 2022). The busy-ness of teaching was alluded to when Notitia used the proverb *so much to do, so little time* to describe her experience of being a teacher. She elaborated stating that teachers *don't just stand there and teach, there are so many other functions...teachers are always rushing and conscious of time*. These statements reveal the multiple roles teachers are required to fulfil during a school day. Van Hai (2023) contends that teaching in real contexts (e.g. a classroom with learners) is far more revealing about what teaching is as opposed to theoretical knowledge of what teaching is, as in the applied science notion to teacher development (Samuel, 2010).

According to Williams and Sembiente (2022), experiential learning in effective teacher education has great impact on the future educators and their learners' success. Although the

participants studied various theories and methodologies for teaching the different subjects, some of their lecturers would not have had recent exposure to the classroom setting to “adequately model effective instructional strategies” (Williams & Sembiante, 2022, p. 2). This highlights the importance of preservice teachers being placed with a mentor teacher who can properly expose them to the variety of strategies and styles so that the preservice teachers can explore them and implement those which best suit them. Many participants benefited from interventions proposed by their mentor teachers. Doctrina struggled with classroom management but *she* [mentor teacher] *gave me practical tips to implement in my lessons... they helped me with classroom management.* Praemium had a positive experience pertaining to her experiential learning as her mentor teacher gave her *the space to explore different techniques and procedures* that take place in a classroom for her to *discover* what worked best for her.

To summarise, participants observed their mentor teachers’ adaptability and flexibility in their lessons and the multi-faceted nature of teaching. These observations align with literature emphasising the need for teachers to be flexible and adaptable, making adjustments based on learner responses and changing contexts. By emulating these skills, preservice teachers can develop effective instructional strategies and critical characteristics of good teachers.

6.4.2 *Perspectives on Teaching the Content*

This sub-theme explores the perspectives held by preservice teachers on teaching the content with reference to acknowledging learner accomplishments and the development of teacher identity through teacher agency and teacher autonomy. A basic aspect of teaching is to disseminate knowledge through teaching content and examining the participants’ views on this sub-theme will provide insight into their beliefs and practices. The data that follows reveals that preservice teachers highlight the significance of acknowledging the accomplishments of learners, as well as emphasising the need to be able to develop their teacher identity.

Teachers' foci on meeting curriculum objectives and *getting through the content that many children* [learners] *are left behind* (Docendo), highlighting the need to *focus more* on the learners and *what they have accomplished* (Docendo) thus indicating that teachers should prioritise learners over the curriculum objectives. Peiser (2020) provides a possible reason for the teachers’ content driven approach to teaching; teachers are accountable for their learners’ progress and thus “teachers are under continual pressure to ensure pupils meet academic standards (Peiser, 2020, p.

104). As teachers it is important to acknowledge learners as a way of motivation, and recognising their efforts (Filgona et al., 2020). In the mentoring process, the preservice teachers were not exposed to issues around acknowledging learners in their observations of the mentor teachers, however, when preservice teachers were given opportunities to teach, they acknowledged the learners' accomplishments and realised that when they acknowledged the learners' achievements, they got better responses from the learners. Docendo was determined to *be a way maker* and facilitate the progress of the learners' learning journey and in motivating them through acknowledging their achievements, she did just that.

Teacher identity refers to the beliefs, values, and the sense of self teachers develop as they engage in the teaching profession (Boer, 2023). Teacher identity is linked to and influenced by teacher agency and autonomy as agency is the teacher's ability to exercise professional discretion in their curricular and pedagogical practices (Campbell, 2012), and teacher autonomy is "the capacity, freedom and/or responsibility to make choices concerning one's own teaching" (Aoki, 2002, p. 111). Teacher identity is formed based on positive and negative experiences with their mentor teachers over their four years of study and its formation is dynamic and is recreated continuously through being a preservice student and as a qualified teacher (Hahl & Mikulec, 2018). A quality mentor plays a crucial role in supporting preservice teachers in developing their identity, teaching style, and feelings of competence, well-being, and success (Ellis, Alonzo & Nguyen, 2020). While all participants indicated that they had gained much knowledge from their TP and mentoring experiences, they also encountered obstacles during their four years where they felt inadequate because either they or their mentors doubted their capabilities, and this interrupted their teacher identity development. Praemium explained that her third-year mentor teacher ascribed to the master-apprentice style of mentoring as she wanted to see Praemium *teach in her* [the mentor] *style*. Participants indicated that they were not encouraged to be adventurous in their teaching strategies and styles and *think outside of the box* (Crescente). Praemium explained that this mentor's approach may have been because her mentor teacher perceived her as *immature* due to her age. Fortunately, her identity and confidence were bolstered in her final year as her mentor teacher gave her *the space to explore different techniques and procedures that take place in a classroom* for her to *discover* what worked best for her. The relationship between the mentor teacher and preservice teacher influences the teacher identity, agency and autonomy of the preservice teacher (McElwee et al., 2018) and mentor teachers have the ability to instil confidence

and agency in their mentees or negatively affect their teacher identity formation (Izadinia, 2015; Wilson & Huynh, 2020).

6.5 Challenges Experienced

This sub-theme explores the professional challenges the preservice teachers experienced while at TP, focusing on the limited access to and time with the mentor teachers, and the lack of constructive feedback received after an assessment. Examining these issues will provide insight into issues affecting their professional growth. The data below shows that the participants had limited time with their mentor teachers which resulted in insufficient support and guidance as well as inadequate constructive feedback that thus hindered their ability to reflect and improve their teaching strategies and styles.

6.5.1 *Limited Access to and Time with Mentor Teachers*

A lack of time with their mentor teachers was identified as a challenge of many participants. Crescente stated that one of her mentor teachers was *barely in the class* and that she was *barely mentored by her* which left Crescente feeling like she had been thrown in the deep end. When discussing her limited time with mentor teacher, Docendo explained that there was *never time* for anything. She did not have proper time to sit down with her mentors to ask questions. Due to the roles of teachers being so vast and time-consuming, the mentor teachers may simply have had insufficient time in their day. Docendo stated that mentoring only occurred *during class*, so it was not a *focused* mentoring session. Crescente explained that she had to cram all of her teaching *into that hour or so* because then the mentor would have to leave to fulfil her responsibilities as a principal. Praemium had a similar experience with her first-year mentor teacher who was also the principal. She believes that she *could have learned a lot more* from her mentor teacher *if time were not as limited* (Praemium). Some mentor teachers battle to find time for the mentoring sessions during the school day (Tyrer, 2023) because not all teachers involved in the mentoring of pre-service teachers are released or given a respite from their teaching commitments. Some of the mentor teachers were grade heads and heads of the Foundation Phase, some were even school principals. Their involvement in the management of the school may have been part of the reason for their inaccessibility. Wexler (2020) identified some of the many practices that the mentors

should engage in to help their mentee learn to teach, such as "planning together, observing and providing feedback, and together analysing pupil work" (Wexler, 2020, p. 2014).

Preservice teachers need this time with the mentor teachers to discuss ideas for upcoming lessons, for guidance on classroom management, as well as the post-lesson observation feedback. Nahmad-Williams and Taylor (2015), Manning and Hobson (2017), and Jones et al., (2021) concur that unfamiliarity with the environment as well as time pressure contribute to a reduction in dialogic feedback that what is recommended in literature about mentoring feedback. The limited time with the mentor teachers resulted in superficial feedback on their preservice teachers' lesson planning and presentation, including their teaching strategies and classroom management.

6.5.2 *Constructive Feedback*

Feedback has a variety of uses and forms which are beneficial to the improvement and optimisation of learning (Hattie & Timperley, 2007). The preservice teachers stated that they did not receive constructive feedback to guide them towards novice teacher level using formal and informal formative methods. The post-lesson debriefing should include both oral and written feedback to stimulate deeper learning and professional development (Tyrer, 2023), and Doctrina stated that her mentor teacher *never explained* or gave her *constructive feedback* about the lesson. Doctrina explained that she needed something she *could work with*. Li, Sani and Azmin (2021) emphasise that mentor teachers' feedback should provide critical and useful comments, enabling preservice teachers to reflect on their teaching.

Both Notitia and Doctrina indicated that they scored very good results for their formally assessed lessons: *I got really nice results for teaching my lessons* (Doctrina); *I was fortunate to get good marks* (Notitia) but they knew that there was *always room for growth in anything* (Notitia). However, the comments on their lesson assessment reports were superficial, for example, 'A lovely lesson. The learners enjoyed it'. Doctrina stated the mentor teacher *never explained*, never commented or gave her *constructive feedback about the lesson*. Mentees need feedback that they can *work with* (Doctrina) in order to improve. Li, Sani and Azmin. (2021) emphasise that mentor teachers' feedback should provide critical and useful comments on preservice teachers' observations, enabling them to reflect on their teaching and assess improvement. Preservice teachers usually cannot see their own teaching clearly so observations from an outsider are of great help.

6.6 Learnings Not Covered by Mentors

This sub-theme investigates the learnings that the preservice teachers state they did not receive from their mentor teachers. These learnings include demonstrating patience for learners and personalising learning; being a part of a school community by engaging in meetings and parental engagements; and developing the art of being a reflective practitioner. Examining this subtheme provides important insights into the professional development of the preservice teachers. The findings show that the participants felt that they were inadequately prepared for the emotional strain and demands of teaching, for example, the need for patience and empathy, being excluded from important aspects of school life resulting in participants feeling isolated, and not showing their mentors how to be reflective practitioners. These findings emphasise the importance of mentors prioritising such critical aspects of teaching and learning.

6.6.1 *Being a Teacher*

Mentoring feedback has the capacity to improve both the mentee and mentor's teaching and learning methods by encouraging critical reflection and inquiry (Hobson, 2016; McGraw & Davis, 2017; O'Leary, 2020; Jones et al., 2021; Tyrer, 2023).

While mindfulness and reflection are encouraged in teaching, reflective practice is not something that is often observed by mentees, resulting in a lesson that was missed. Notitia confirmed that there was not an opportunity *to sit back and reflect and to say, 'did I actually reach what I set out to do?'* Reflective practice is an invaluable tool to teachers (Ezezika & Johnston, 2022), from preservice teachers to veteran teachers alike. By mentor teachers encouraging their mentees to engage in self-assessment and reflection helps them improve their approach to teaching and their classroom management strategies (van Hai, 2023). A mentor should prepare their mentee to become a reflective practitioner and give them the requisite knowledge and tools on how to engage in reflective practice (Clarke & Sheridan, 2016; Nguyen & Parr, 2018; Sweeney & Nielsen, 2018; Young, Cavanagh & Moloney, 2018; Ellis, Alonzo & Nguyen, 2020). Three participants acknowledged the importance of self-reflection and learning from experiences. They felt that their mentors *could have spent time with her reflecting on the issues* (Doctrina) and how to *deal with them or prevent them from recurring* (Doctrina). Rather than letting preservice teachers doubt their capabilities, mentors should teach their mentees how to reflect on the challenges and successes, what caused the challenges and how they can be rectified (Moosa & Rembach, 2020). Notitia

explained that her mentor teachers did not engage in reflection with her but that it was the Teaching Practice assessor sent by the PHEI who engaged in reflection with her. She *took the time* (Notitia) with me at the end of the lesson assessment to explain the successes of the lesson and how she could improve. She feels that she will be able to teach a lesson which will be *closer to perfection* the next time (Notitia). Tiainen, Korkeamäki and Dreher (2018) assert that becoming a reflective practitioner takes time and thus preservice teachers should be taught how to be reflective early on in their studies, in theory and practice.

Mentoring feedback and reflective practice are essential for improving teaching and learning methods (Tonna, Bjerkholt & Holland, 2017), yet the participants stated that they missed the opportunity to observe reflexive practice in action. Mentor teachers should encourage preservice teachers to engage in self-assessment and reflection to develop their approach to teaching and classroom management strategies. By teaching the mentees the value of self-reflection and providing them with the necessary tools and knowledge, mentors can help prepare them to become reflective practitioners. This is crucial, as becoming a reflective practitioner takes time and should be taught early on in preservice teachers' studies. The participants' experiences highlight the importance of mentor teachers prioritising reflective practice, providing opportunities for preservice teachers to reflect on challenges and successes, and guiding them towards growth and improvement.

6.6.2 *Being in a School*

Rakes et al. (2022) assert that mentor teachers should include preservice teachers in staff meetings, grade planning meetings as well as, with permission from management and the parents, allowing them to practice communication with parents. Participants identified this lack of exposure as leaving them unprepared for such engagement. One participant explained that it was not that her mentor teachers had not explained parent engagement to her, but she had never had the opportunity to see it play out. Praemium feels that she did not learn *how to engage with the learners' parents in terms of the standards, procedures, and boundaries* (Praemium). School principals and mentor teachers should provide preservice teachers with opportunities to participate in staff meetings, grade planning, and parent communication, with appropriate permissions, to prepare them for novice teacher roles (Rakes et al., 2022; Wexler, 2020). The lack of practical observation

and experience, highlights the importance of hands-on exposure to understand the standards, procedures, and boundaries of effective parent communication.

6.7 Theorisation of Key Findings

6.7.1 *Adaptability and Flexibility*

A common thread among all participants is the adaptability and flexibility needed in being a teacher. No explicit mentoring to harness the seven categories of teacher knowledge identified by Shulman (1987 as cited by de Almeida, 2019) on being a teacher was evident in the mentoring experiences of the participants. Although they all implemented these knowledges when teaching, what stood out most to them was the adaptability and flexibility required when teaching. Teacher agency and teacher autonomy are theoretical constructs and based on teacher professionalism. A teacher can use their agency to change things in the lesson, to draw on things necessary for learners to understand better and learn (Campbell, 2012; Aoki, 2002). The participants observed the agility required, and implemented it, when teaching content that learners struggle to understand. Despite thorough planning and preparation, teachers still need to 'think on their feet'. Thinking on one's feet is related to Hargreaves and Fullan's (2012) notion of professional capital. Hargreaves and Fullan (2012) speak of *professional capital* as comprising of three forms: decisional capital, social capital, and human capital. an example of *decisional capital* is thinking on your feet, as teachers develop sufficient exposure and experience of making decisions on the spur of the moment and reflecting on the outcomes of the decisions. When reflecting on the outcomes, they begin to develop trust in their decisions. By them developing trust means that they are able to make decisions, and those decisions are more often appropriate and needed. Decisional capital is the accumulation of making decisions that will resolve their current issues. The humanness of teaching was evident in their experiences is the *human capital*. Human capital is about caring, compassion, empathy and understanding learners' needs, etc. As teachers begin to understand who the learners are and care for them, they begin to accumulate the human aspects of teaching and therefore they begin to gain confidence in how they address the human needs of caring, interest, etc. In developing human capital, they can trust what they do. This was observed by participants who saw that teaching needs to be adapted to suit the individual learners as well as the class size.

Mentor teachers serve as role models for their preservice teachers by demonstrating positive behaviours and in so doing, mentor teachers influence their mentees to adopt these behaviours. The participants saw the benefits of adaptability and flexibility in their observations of how the mentor teachers went about teaching their lessons, adjusting their strategies as the lesson progressed. Seeing these adjustments being made gave the preservice teachers the confidence to adapt their lessons rather than persisting with a strategy that was not effective.

The development of a teacher's professional identity is shaped by social interactions and mentoring relationships. The experience of the participants exemplifies the positive impact of supportive mentoring on professional growth. Despite encountering challenges, preservice teachers can overcome adversity and build resilience by drawing strength from their positive mentoring experiences and prior experiences, enabling them to persevere and strive to become a supportive teacher rather than internalising the negative influence of their other mentor teachers. This relates to the issues of the agility of the teacher and issues around teacher autonomy and teacher agency. Teacher identity is about being professional and being professional means different things to different people in different contexts. The participants developed a sense of identity and linked that identity to how they experienced being a teacher. These include issues around adaptability and flexibility.

6.7.2 Multi-faceted Roles and Responsibilities of a Teacher

The roles and responsibilities of teachers were realised through the mentoring process while others were realised as incidental experiences by the preservice teachers and not as a result of mentoring in the classroom.

6.7.3 Omissions from the Mentoring Experience

Bandura's reciprocal determinism explains how mentors have a particular idea of what the preservice teachers must learn during TP or what the school wants them to do. Mentor teachers do not focus on things that are nuanced to what happens in the classroom. Aoki's (1999) notion of learning through experiencing the curriculum proposes the preservice teachers need to experience the curriculum in a meaningful and authentic way which includes the nuances and complexities of classroom practice. If these are not focused on by mentors, the preservice teachers may not gain a rich understanding of how to teach effectively. Possibilities for the omission of these nuanced

aspects are lack of resources and or time, concentrating on generalised aspects of teaching, and the presumption that the preservice teachers will learn these skills on their own. The lack of focus may lead to the preservice teachers having limited opportunities for experiential learning which will impact their development as effective teachers since a lot of the learning happens as they are living the curriculum in the classroom.

While preservice teachers may not have much to contribute to a staff meeting or a meeting with parents, it is essential that they have exposure to such meetings so that they are aware of how to conduct themselves accordingly. The preservice teachers should be told what needs to be considered when engaging with parents, especially when giving feedback on a learner's progress or discussing a difficult issue, for example, bullying. Although there are confidentiality issues that need to be considered, with a parent's consent to the preservice teacher being in attendance, a lot can be learned from these engagements. This is another example of something that the participants as novice teachers would need coaching in by an experienced teacher. Wexler (2020) affirms the importance of preservice teachers being involved in their community, in this case, the school staff. In this way both the preservice teachers and the school teachers learn from one another. The mentees are able to better understand factors that support them as they learn to teach, as well as the mentors may change their way of mentoring as they learn about the knowledge and experiences of the preservice teachers.

Only one of the participants had direct mentoring in reflective practice. Many other participants had incidental mentoring about it. Reflection is not something that comes naturally to everyone and it is a practice that needs to be learned. Mentor teachers should be actively encouraging their mentees to engage in self-assessment and reflection by providing them with the relevant knowledge and tools needed (Clarke & Sheridan, 2016; Nguyen & Parr, 2018; Sweeney & Nielsen, 2018; Young et al., 2018; Ellis, Alonzo & Nguyen, 2020) because it is through self-reflection that a teacher can develop their teacher identity more fully as it will become evident what aspects of their teaching styles are working effectively and which are not.

6.8 Conclusion

This chapter presented the results of the data analysis which investigated distance learning preservice teachers' mentoring experiences of TP block sessions. Through analysis of the narratives, the four themes derived from the data were: (1) mentoring experiences; (2) learning

from mentoring; (3) challenges experienced; (4) learnings not covered by mentor teachers, yielded that (a) a common thread among all participants is the adaptability and flexibility needed in being a teacher, (b) the multi-faceted roles and responsibilities of teachers, (c) omissions from the mentoring experience were: preservice teachers learning effective teaching strategies through living the curriculum, the values of full immersion and involvement in school life, and the importance of reflective practice. The analysis revealed the learnings that were gained from the mentor teachers, the challenges preservice teachers encountered and the learning that were not covered by the mentor teachers which suggest that not all mentoring experiences are alike, and some preservice teachers benefitted more in certain areas than others did. These findings have significant implications for the mentoring of preservice teachers at school-based TP block sessions, underscoring the need for a more rigorous outline of what is required of the mentor teachers for an effective mentoring experience to take place. This study contributes to the extant literature and provides novel insights into preservice teachers' mentoring experiences of TP block sessions as distance learners.

Chapter 7: Summary, Conclusions and Recommendations

7.1 Introduction

This study sought to explore the final year distance learning preservice teachers' mentoring experiences during school-based Teaching Practice, determine the learnings gained during the professional mentoring while at TP, and to understand how the professional mentoring gained during mentoring influence their TP.

The research drew on the experiences of five final year distance learning preservice teachers in a qualitative narrative inquiry to highlight their mentoring experiences. An interpretivist paradigm was used to analyse the raw data. The research questions were designed to explore the mentoring experiences of the preservice teachers while at TP, what learnings they gained during the mentoring process and how the learnings influenced their TP.

The literature, theoretical framework and the data generated from this study informed the narrative response to each of the three research questions based on the key findings of this study. The key research questions are:

1. What were final year distance learning preservice teachers' experiences of mentoring during school-based teaching practices?
2. What professional learnings were received from the mentor teachers across the mentoring sessions during school-based teaching practices?
3. What did the final year distance learning preservice teachers gain from these professional learnings?

7.2 Responses to Research Questions

The research questions provided in Chapter 1 framed the research process and in this section, I present a narrative in response to the research questions.

7.2.1 What were Final Year Distance Learning Preservice Teachers' Experiences of Mentoring during School-based Teaching Practices?

The preservice teachers had varied experiences over during their TP block sessions across the four years of study. Emotionally they expressed their mentoring ranging from being challenging to very positive learning outcomes, for example, where a mentor misjudged a

preservice teacher's capabilities based on her age to a preservice teacher being given opportunities to find a teaching style that suited her best. The mentoring experiences were identified as being informative, rewarding and a period of growth, however, they were also challenging and tiring, and at times perseverance was required of the preservice teachers. Although each participant had their own experiences based on their TP journey, when asked to define what a mentor is and what mentoring means, they all held the view that a mentor is someone who gives support and care for their mentee and the mentee's growth during TP. The participants' notion of mentoring is that it is a guiding and nurturing experience. Recent literature (Gravett, Petersen & Ramsaroop, 2019; Rupenthal & Furuness, 2020; Li, Sani & Azmin, 2021; Merket, 2022; Grimmett et al., 2018) supports these views and perceptions. Valuable insights into the teaching profession were gained through their mentorship while at TP, whether they were gained through the mentoring process or if the insights were as a result of omissions in mentoring.

7.2.2 What Professional Learnings were Received from the Mentor Teachers across the Mentoring Sessions during School-based Teaching Practices?

The preservice teachers learned the value and necessity of adaptability and flexibility in teaching. This adaptability and flexibility are linked to teacher agency, teacher autonomy and ultimately teacher identity. As per Bandura's observational learning model, the teachers' adaptability and flexibility were observed and replicated. Based on the efficacy of this behaviour replication, the preservice teachers would have been praised or criticised.

7.2.3 What did the Final Year Distance Learning Preservice Teachers Gain from these Professional Learnings?

The preservice teachers acquired insights and skills from their professional learnings, particularly in the spheres of adaptability, flexibility, and teacher agency. They developed the ability to think on their feet, making decisions on the spur of the moment and reflecting on the outcomes, which contributed to their decisional capital. They developed their human capital by understanding and caring for their learners, which led to an increased confidence in addressing learner needs.

Through their mentoring, the preservice teachers developed a sense of professional identity, linking it to their experiences as teachers. They learned to adjust their lessons to suit individual

learners and class sizes and gained confidence in their ability to teach effectively. However, the preservice teachers also highlighted omissions in their mentoring, including limited exposure to nuanced aspects of classroom practice, staff meetings, and parent-teacher conferences. They acknowledged the importance of experiential learning and reflective practice in developing their teaching skills and identity.

In summary, the preservice teachers gained a deeper understanding of the complex roles and responsibilities of teachers, including the need for adaptability, flexibility, and teacher agency. They developed valuable skills and knowledge, including decisional capital, human capital, and a sense of professional identity, which will support their growth as effective teachers.

7.3 Significance of and Recommendations Arising from the Study

The study is significant to mentor teachers in schools in the sense that it provides the opportunity to understand the preservice teachers' experiences of mentoring, what kinds of mentoring they should be receiving in highlighting concerns and the areas of development that the preservice teachers felt was missing, and the learnings gained from the mentoring relationship. It is therefore recommended that mentor teachers engage in mentor development workshops to understand the process and extent of mentoring.

The study is significant to preservice teachers at Teaching Practice to understand their roles and responsibilities within the mentoring relationship, the expectations they have of mentoring, and the kinds of learning they could achieve. It is recommended that preservice teachers be fully aware of the kinds of support that they need during school-based Teaching Practice so that they will get the full benefit of it. This can be done during HEI lectures prior to Teaching Practice wherein lecturers will discuss the common challenges and support needs of preservice teachers and how to approach a mentor for assistance and guidance. These challenges and needs could be addressed through peer support groups and reflective journaling; the school and mentor teachers should make the preservice teachers feel comfortable enough that they do not feel intimidated if they express their concerns or needs; preservice teachers should be encouraged to reach out to their lecturer at the HEI to address their concerns and needs. The preservice teachers should endeavour to engage in self-development pertaining to teaching skills and classroom management, be responsive to constructive criticism and set realistic expectations for their TP.

The study is significant to teacher education institutions to enable them to provide explicit guidelines to facilitate effective mentoring of their preservice teachers during TP. A mentoring

framework or model could be developed to guide the mentors and principals in what the mentees require during their TP; a check in with mentors and preservice teachers mid-practicum would highlight areas where preservice teachers need additional support; mentoring guides could be created or further developed regularly to identify areas in which mentees need further guidance, or the HEI could identify what the mentors need to ‘teach’ their mentees in each year of study.

The research is also significant to scholars of teacher education, in the sense that when designing programmes or researching issues of teaching practice and mentoring, it provides the lived experiences from preservice teacher’s perspectives from which they can draw further insights.

7.4 Limitations and Challenges of the Study

As I am employed at Laude University and lectured the preservice teachers who participated in my study, some researchers may see this as a challenge because this relationship could cause participants to refrain from being honest in their responses for fear of seeming negative or disrespectful. However, I believe that it is due to this relationship with my participants that they were more willing to share their experiences and be honest in their responses, both positive and negative. It may seem that because of my connection with the participants that there was bias in the study, but I made a conscientious effort to remove any possible bias and remain objective focusing on the data.

Another limitation is that my research was only focused on one private higher education institution, however, I believe the results of the study are consistent with studies conducted at other institutions as indicated in the literature.

A challenge was the limited research available on private higher education distance learning preservice teachers’ mentoring experiences. My literature searches often led to studies conducted at public universities with contact learning students. There was a paucity of literature into distance learning preservice teachers’ mentoring experiences as well as of preservice teachers studying at private higher education institutions.

Although I encountered some limitations and challenges, they did not obstruct my research or the study.

7.5 Areas for Further Research

I propose that further research be conducted in following areas:

- A comparative study to compare mentoring experiences of distance learning and contact learning preservice teachers as well as those enrolled in public universities and private higher education institutions.
- Investigate the mentor teachers' experiences of mentoring distance learning preservice teacher.
- Examine the efficacy and impact of mentor training programmes on mentoring and to identify effective support structures for mentors.
- Analyse the role of institutional support structures, including administrative support, resources and policies in facilitating or hindering mentoring relationships.
- Conduct longitudinal studies to investigate the long-term impact of mentoring on preservice teachers' career development and retention.
- Investigate the role of reflective practice in mentoring relationships and preservice teacher development.

7.6 Conclusion

This study has investigated preservice teachers' mentoring experiences of Teaching Practice as distance learners and made several important findings. The main findings are: preservice teachers gained an in-depth understanding of the complexities of the roles and responsibilities of teachers and they developed important skills and knowledge which will aid their development as effective teachers. Based on these findings, it is recommended that mentor teachers engage in mentor development workshops to further their understanding of the process and extent of mentoring; a mentoring framework and guides could be created by the HEIs to guide mentors and principals in what the preservice teachers require of them during their Teaching Practice. Preservice teacher should be familiar with the support they require during their Teaching Practice so that they can benefit from it fully. Additionally, the preservice teachers should engage in personal development regarding teaching skills and classroom management as well as being accepting of constructive criticism and set themselves realistic expectations for the Teaching Practice. It is hoped that the findings and recommendations of this study will inform the development of supportive mentoring programmes for preservice teachers.

References

- Aiken, S. (2023, November 21). *Behaviorism overview*. Study.com.
<https://study.com/academy/lesson/behaviorism-overview-practical-teaching-examples.html>
- Akhigbe, T. (2019). Cognitive-behaviourism, constructivism and humanism in paediatrics specialty training: From theory to practice. *International Journal of Medical Reviews and Case Reports*, 3(10). <https://doi.org/10.5455/IJMRCR.Cognitive-Behaviourism-Constructivism>
- Akpan, B. (2020). Classical and operant conditioning – Ivan Pavlov; Burrhus Skinner. In B. Akpan & T.J. Kennedy (Eds.), *Science education in theory and practice: an introductory guide to learning theory* (pp. 71-84). Springer Texts in Education.
<https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-43620-9>
- Al-Jaro, M.S., Asmawi, A., & Khaleel Mohammed Abdul-Ghafour, A.Q. (2020). Supervisory support received by EFL student teachers during practicum: The missing link. *International Journal of Language and Literary Studies*, 2(4).
<https://doi.org/10.36892/ijlls.v2i4.437>
- Alharahsheh, H., & Pius, A. (2020). A review of key paradigms: Positivism vs interpretivism. *Global Academic Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences*, 2(3).
<https://doi.org/10.36348/gajgss.2020.v02i03.001>
- Andrade, C. (2021). The inconvenient truth about convenience and purposive samples. *Indian Journal of Psychological Medicine*, 43(1). <https://doi.org/10.1177/0253717620977000>
- Aoki, N. (2002). Aspects of teacher autonomy: capacity, freedom, and responsibility. In P. Benson & S. Toogood (Eds.), *Learning autonomy 7: challenges to research and practice* (pp. 110-124). Authentik. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-0-387-46301-8_48
- Aoki, T. (1999). Interview: Rethinking curriculum and pedagogy. *Kappa Delta Pi Record*, 35(4).
<https://doi.org/10.1080/00228958.1999.10518454>

- Ashman, K., Rochford, F., & Slade, B. (2021). Work-integrated learning: The new professional apprenticeship? *Journal of University Teaching & Learning Practice*, 18(1).
<https://ro.uow.edu.au/jutlp/vol18/iss1/5>
- Asogwa, V.C., & Mathenjwa, M. (2023). Mentorship theory: Development and explication. *International Journal of Social Sciences and Management Research*, 9(8). 39-59.
- Baartman, N. (2020). Challenges experienced by school-based mentor teachers during initial teacher training in five selected schools in Amathole East district. *Journal of Social Sciences and Humanities*, 17(4), 149-161.
- Bagnoli, A. (2019). Self-portraits and maps as a window on participants' worlds. In P. Liamputtong (Ed.), *Handbook of Research Methods in Health Social Sciences*, (pp. 1255-1267). Springer.
- Baker, K.M., Stickney, K.W., & Sachs, D.D. (2024). STEM cooperating teachers' professional growth: The positive impacts of a year-long clinical residency collaboration. *Education Sciences*, 14(899), 1-13. <https://doi.org/10.3390/educsci14080899>
- Ball-Smith, C. (2020). Peer mentoring relationships for professional placements. In C. Woolhouse & L.J. Nicholson (Eds.), *Mentoring in Higher Education* (pp. 115-134). Palgrave Macmillan. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-46890-3_7
- Bandura, A. (1969). Social-learning theory of identificatory processes. In D.A. Goslin (Ed.), *Handbook of Socialization Theory and Research* (pp. 213-262). Rand McNally College Publishing Company.
- Bandura, A. (1977). *Social learning theory*. General Learning Press.
- Bandura, A. (1986). *Social foundations of thought and action: a social cognitive theory*. Prentice-Hall. <http://ereserve.library.utah.edu/Annual/PSY/3960/Gelfand/social1.pdf>
- Bandura, A. (1989). Social Cognitive Theory. In R. Vasta (Ed.), *Annals of Child Development: Theory of Child Development: Revised Formulations and Current Issues*. JAI Press.
- Bandura, A. (1997). *Self-efficacy: the exercise of control*. W.H. Freeman.

- Bandura, A. (2006). Toward a psychology of human agency. *Perspectives on Psychological Science, 1*(2). <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1745-6916.2006.00011.x>
- Bandura, A (2008). Observational learning. In W. Donsbach (Ed.), *International Encyclopedia of Communication*. John Wiley & Sons, Ltd.
<https://doi.org/10.1002/9781405186407.wbieco004>
- Bandura, A. (2018). Toward a psychology of human agency: Pathways and reflections. *Perspectives on Psychological Science, 13*(2). <https://doi.org/10.1177/745691617699280>
- Bandura, A. (2019). Applying theory for human betterment. *Perspectives on Psychological Science, 14*(1). <https://doi.org/10.1177/1745691618815165>
- Bandura, A., Blanchard, E., & Ritter, B. (1969). The relative efficacy of desensitization and modeling approaches for inducing behavioural, affective and cognitive changes. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 13*. <https://doi.org/10.1037/h0028276>
- Baroudi, S., Hojeij, Z., Meda, L., & Lottin, J. (2022). Examining elementary preservice teachers' self-efficacy and satisfaction in online teaching during virtual field experience. *Cogent Education, 9*(1). <https://doi.org/10.1080/2331186x.2022.2133497>
- ben Asher, M. (2021). *Social learning theory and community organizing*. California State University, Northridge.
https://scholarworks.csun.edu/bitstream/handle/10211.3/222737/SOCIAL_LEARNING_CO.pdf?sequence=1
- Bertram, C. (2023). A systems approach to understanding novice teachers' experiences and professional learning. *Journal of Education, 90*. <https://doi.org/10.17159/2520-9868/i90a01>
- Bezuidenhout, G. (2012). *Factors that influence the choice of private higher education institutions by students* [Doctoral dissertation, Tshwane University of Technology].
https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Gerhard-Bezuidenhout/publication/346653897_FACTORS_THAT_INFLUENCE_THE_CHOICE_OF_PRIVATE_HIGHER_EDUCATION_INSTITUTIONS_BY_STUDENTS/links/5fc

[c239592851c00f8547241/FACTORS-THAT-INFLUENCE-THE-CHOICE-OF-PRIVATE-HIGHER-EDUCATION-INSTITUTIONS-BY-STUDENTS.pdf](https://doi.org/10.20853/27-5-286)

- Bezuidenhout, G., De Jager, J.W., & Naidoo, V. (2013). Factors that influence students' choice of private higher education institutions. *South African Journal of Higher Education*, 27(5). <https://doi.org/10.20853/27-5-286>
- Bird, L. & Hudson, P. (2015). Investigating a model of mentoring for effective teaching. *Journal of Teaching Effectiveness and Student Achievement*, 2(2), 11-21.
- Boer, S. (2023). A review of instructional coaching model – the support for novice teachers. *Journal of Education and Educational Research*, 5(3). <https://doi.org/10.54097/jeer.v5i3.13729>
- Bowman, M. (2014). Teacher mentoring as a means to improve schools. *BU Journal of Graduate Studies in Education*, 6(1), 47-51.
- Bradbury, A. (2023). *Reconceptualising the third teacher: A study of trainee experiences of work-based learning on Level 3 Early Years programmes*. [Doctoral dissertation, University of Derby]. <https://doi.org/10.48773/q218z>
- Brooks, C. (2021). The quality conundrum in initial teacher education. *Teachers and Teaching*, 27(1-4). <https://doi.org/10.1080/13540602.2021.1933414>
- Brown, G. (2020, July 14). *Difference between social cognitive theory and social learning theory: difference between similar terms and objects*. <https://www.differencebetween.net/science/difference-between-social-cognitive-theory-and-social-learning-theory/>
- Campbell, E. (2012). Teacher agency in curriculum contexts. *Curriculum Inquiry*, 42(2). <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-873X.2012.00593.x>
- Campbell, S., Greenwood, M., Prior, S., Shearer, T., Walkem, K., Young, S., Bywaters, D., & Walker, K. (2020). Purposive sampling: Complex or simple? Research case examples. *Journal of Research in Nursing*, 25(8). <https://doi.org/10.1177/1744987120927206>

- Chaaban, Y., & Sawalhi, R. (2020). The role of agency in the development of a teacher leadership stance among student teachers during the practicum. *Research in Post-Compulsory Education*, 25(2). <https://doi.org/10.1080/13596748.2020.1742987>
- Chand, R., Alasa, V.M., Chitiyo, J., & Pietrantonio, Z. (2022). Preparation of pre-service teachers: Assessment of Generation Z students. In J. Keengwe (Ed.), *Handbook of research on digital-based assessment and innovative practices in education* (pp. 116-130). IGI Global.
- Chase, S. E. (2018). Narrative inquiry: Toward theoretical and methodological maturity. In N. K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), *The SAGE handbook of qualitative research* (pp. 546-560). SAGE Publications.
- Ciampa, K., & Gallagher, T. (2015). Blogging to enhance in-service teachers' professional learning and development during collaborative inquiry. *Educational Technology Research and Development*, 63(6), 883-913. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11423-015-9404-7>
- Clarke, M., & Sheridan, L. (2016). Heroes and villains: the insistence of the imaginary and the novice teacher's need to believe. *Asia-Pacific Journal of Teacher Education*, 45(2). <https://doi.org/10.1080/1359866X.2016.1199775>
- Cohen, L., Manion, L. & Morrison, K. (2017). *Research methods in education* (8th ed.). Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315456539>
- Connell, R. (2019). *The good university: What universities actually do and why it's time for radical change* (4th ed.). Zed Books Ltd.
- Council of Higher Education. (2013). *Vital Stats 2011*. <https://www.che.ac.za/file/6413/download?token=2W1RioMz>
- Cybermetrics Lab. (2023, February 9). *South Africa ranking web of universities Webometrics ranks 30000 institutions*. Webometrics. <https://webometrics.info/en/Africa/South%20Africa>
- Damelin. (2023, February 5). *Full qualifications*. Damelin Online. <https://damelinonline.co.za/full-qualifications/>

- Dani, D., Harrison, L., Felton-Koestler, M., Kopish, M., Dunham, J., Hallman-Thrasher, A., & Shaw, O. (2021). Nature of mentoring interactions to support teacher candidate learning in clinical settings. *Peabody Journal of Education*, 96(1).
<https://doi.org/10.1080/0161956X.2020.1864248>
- Darling-Hammond, L. (2019). Response to how teacher education matters. *Journal of Teacher Education*, 74(2). <https://doi.org/10.1177/00224871231160378>
- Darling-Hammond, L. (2023). Response to how teacher education matters. *Journal of Teacher Education*, 74(2), 157-159. <https://doi.org/10.1177/00224871231160378>
- Davids, N. & Waghid, Y. (2020). Tracking five years of teacher education enrolment at a South African university: Implications for teacher education. *South African Journal of Higher Education*, 34(2). <https://doi.org/10.20853/34-2-4044>
- Davis, J. S. & Fantozzi, V. B. (2016). What do student teachers want in mentor teachers?: Desired, expected, possible, and emerging roles. *Mentoring & Tutoring: Partnership in Learning*, 24(3), 250-266. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13611267.2016.1222814>
- de Almeida, P.C.A., Davis, C.L.F., Calil, A.M.G.C., & Vilalva, A.M. (2019). Shulman's theoretical categories: An integrative review in the field of teacher education. *Cadernos de Pesquisa*, 49. <https://doi.org/10.1590/198053146654>
- Department of Basic Education. (2021). *National Senior Certificate Examination Report 2020*. <https://www.education.gov.za/Portals/0/Documents/Reports/2021%20NSC%20Reports/2020NSCREPORT.pdf?ver=2021-07-19-142304-897>
- Department of Education. (1995). *White Paper on Education and Training: Education and training in a democratic South Africa* (Notice 196 of 1995). Government Gazette, 16312. South African Government.
https://www.gov.za/sites/default/files/gcis_document/201409/16312gen1960.pdf
- Department of Education. (1997). *White Paper 3: A programme for the transformation of higher education* (Notice 1196 of 1997). Government Gazette.
https://www.gov.za/sites/default/files/gcis_document/201409/18207gen11960.pdf

Department of Education. (2000, February 4). *National Education Policy Act (Act no. 27 of 1996): Norms and standards for educators (Notice 82 of 2000)*. Government Gazette, 20844. South African Government.

https://www.gov.za/sites/default/files/gcis_document/201409/20844.pdf

Department of Higher Education and Training. (2011, July 15). *National Qualifications Framework, 2008 (Act no. 67 of 2008): Policy on the minimum requirements for teacher education qualifications (Notice 583 of 2011)*. Government Gazette, 34467. South African Government.

<https://www.dhet.gov.za/Part%20C%20Policies/HIGHER%20EDUCATION/14.%20Policy%20on%20minimum%20requirements%20for%20teacher%20education%20qualifications.pdf>

Department of Higher Education and Training (South Africa). (2015, 19 February).

National Qualifications Framework Act, 2008 (Act no. 67 of 2008): Revised Policy on the Minimum Requirements for Teacher Education Qualifications (Notice 111 of 2015). *Government Gazette*, 38487.

https://www.dhet.gov.za/Teacher%20Education/National%20Qualifications%20Framework%20Act%2067_2008%20Revised%20Policy%20for%20Teacher%20Education%20Qualifications.pdf

Department of Higher Education and Training. (2020). *2019/20 Annual report*. South African Government. [https://nationalgovernment.co.za/department_annual/320/2020-department-of-higher-education-and-training-\(dhet\)-annual-report.pdf](https://nationalgovernment.co.za/department_annual/320/2020-department-of-higher-education-and-training-(dhet)-annual-report.pdf)

Department of Higher Education and Training. (2022). *Infographics for Statistics on Post-School Education and Training*. South African Government.

https://www.dhet.gov.za/Information%20Systems%20Coordination/Infographics_Statistics%20on%20Post-School%20Education%20and%20Training%20in%20South%20Africa%202020.pdf

Duran, A.M. (2022). The unforgotten pre-service teachers [participants]: did the pandemic affect learning while on practicum? What uncompleted pre-service teachers' mentoring experience [data] can tell us. In B. Cahusac de Caux, L. Pretorius, & L. Macaulay (Eds.),

- Research and Teaching in a Pandemic World*. Springer.
https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-19-7757-2_28
- Efgivia, M.G., Ardiansyah, C., Rasmayana, T., & Zuhdi, M. (2021). Implementation of behavioristic learning theory in the online learning process at SMP PGRI Gandoang Class VII. *Advances in Social Science, Education and Humanities Research*.
<https://doi.org/10.2991/assehr.k.211020.031>
- Ellis, N., Alonzo, D., & Nguyen, H. (2020). Elements of a quality pre-service teacher mentor: a literature review. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 92.
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tate.2020.103072>
- Ezezika, O., & Johnston, N. (2022). Development and implementation of a reflective writing assignment for undergraduate students in a large public health biology course. *Pedagogy in Health Promotion: The Scholarship of Teaching and Learning*, 9(2),
<https://doi.org/10.1177/23733799211069993>
- Ferro, M. (2022). Connecting within: Digital collage as art-based research to process a pandemic. *Journal of Applied Arts and Health*, 13(1).
https://doi.org/10.1386/JAAH_00087_1
- Filgona, J., Sakiyo, J., Gwany, D.M., & Okoronka, A. (2020). Motivation in learning. *Asian Journal of Education and Social Sciences*, 10(4).
<https://doi.org/10.9734/ajess/2020/v10i430273>
- Galamay-Cachola, S., Aduca, M., & Calauagan, F. (2018). Mentoring experiences, issues, and concerns in the student-teaching program: towards a proposed mentoring program in teacher education. *IAFOR Journal of Education*, 6(3), 7-24.
<http://doi.org/10.22492/ije.6.3.01>
- Gauthier, J., & Latham, G. (2022). Albert Bandura (1925-2021). *Canadian Psychological Association*, 63(1). <https://doi.org/10.1037/cap0000311>
- Grant, C., & Osanloo, A. (2014). Understanding, selecting, and integrating a theoretical framework in dissertation research: creating the blueprint for your "house".

- Administrative Issue Journal: Connecting Education, Practice, and Research*, 4(2), 12-26. <https://dc.swosu.edu/aj/vol4/iss2/4/>
- Gravett, S., Petersen, N., & Ramsaroop, S. (2019). A university and school working in partnership to develop professional practice knowledge for teaching. *Frontiers in Education*, 3, 1-12. <https://doi.org/10.3389/feduc.2018.00118>
- Greener, S. (2021). Exploring remote distance learning: what is it and should we keep it? *Interactive Learning Environments*, 29(1), 1-2. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10494820.2021.1848506>
- Grimmett, H., Forgasz, R., Williams, J., & White, S. (2018) Reimagining the role of mentor teachers in professional experience: Moving to I as fellow teacher educator. *Asia-Pacific Journal of Teacher Education*, 46(2), 1-14. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1359866X.2018.1437391>
- Guest, G., Namey, E.E., & Mitchell, M.L. (2013). *Collecting qualitative data: a field manual for applied research*. SAGE Publications. <https://doi.org/10.4135/9781506374680>
- Gul, T, Demir, K., & Criswell, B. (2019). Constructing teacher leadership through mentoring: Functionality of mentoring practices in evolving teacher leadership. *Journal of Science Teacher Education*, 30(3), 209-228. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1046560X.2018.1558655>
- Gut, D.M., Beam, P.C., Henning, J.E., Cochran, D.C., & Knight, R.T. (2014). Teachers' perceptions of their mentoring role in three different clinical settings: Student teaching, early field experiences, and entry year teaching. *Mentoring & Tutoring: Partnership in Learning*, 22(3), 240-260. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13611267.2014.926664>
- Hagenauer, G., Waber, J., & de Zordo, L. (2021). 'She never actually let you walk into a trap': exploring relational turning point events in the mentor-mentee relationship in the practicum'. *Professional Development in Education*, 49(3), 402-415. <https://doi.org/10.1080/19415257.2021.1876155>
- Hahl, K., & Mikulec, E. (2018). Student reflections on teacher identity development in a year-long secondary teacher preparation program. *Australian Journal of Teacher Education*, 43(12), 42-58. <https://ro.ecu.edu.au/ajte/vol43/iss12/4>

- Handrianto, C., Jusoh, A., Syuraini, S. Rouzi, K., & Alghazo, A. (2022). The implementation of a mentoring strategy for teachers' professional development in elementary school. *Elementary: Islamic Teacher Journal*, 10(1), 65-80.
<https://doi.org/10.21043/elementary.v10i1.13676>
- Hargreaves, A., & Fullan, M. (2012). *Professional capital: Transforming teaching in every school*. Teachers College Press.
- Hattie, J. (2003, October). *Teachers make a difference, what is the research evidence?* Paper presented at the Building Teacher Quality: What does the research tell us? ACER Research Conference, Melbourne.
http://research.acer.edu.au/research_conference_2003/4/
- Hattie, J. & Timperley, H. (2007). The power of feedback. *Review of Education Research*, 77(1), 81-112. <https://doi.org/10.3102/003465430298487>
- Haughey, M., Evans, T. & Murphy, D. (2008). Introduction: from correspondence to virtual learning environments. In T. Evans, M. Haughey & D. Murphy (Eds.), *International handbook of distance education*. Emerald Group Publishing.
- Higgins, S. (2019). *Collage and literature: the persistence of vision*. Routledge.
<https://doi.org/10.4324/9780429447280>.
- Higher Education Act 19 of 1997* (S. Afr).
- Hill, S.E.M., Ward, W.L., Seay, A., & Buzenski, J. (2022). The nature and evaluation of mentoring relationship in academic health centers. *Journal of Clinical Psychology of Medical Settings*, 29(3), 557-569. <https://doi-org.trmproxy.mnpals.net/10.1007/s10880-022-09893-6>
- Hoben, N. (2021). Challenges for mentors in working with secondary school pre-service teachers. *New Zealand Journal of Educational Studies*, 1-23.
<https://doi.org/10.1007/s40841-021-00198-0>
- Hobson, A.J. (2016). Judgementoring and how to avert it: introducing ONSIDE mentoring for beginning teachers. *International Journal of Mentoring and Coaching in Education*, 5(2), 87-110. <https://doi.org/10.1108/IJMCE-03-2016-0024>

- Hobson, A., Maxwell, B., Stevens, A., Doyle, K., & Malderez, A. (2015). *Mentoring and coaching for teachers in the further education and skills sector in England*. Education Research Centre, University of Brighton; Centre for Education and Inclusion Research, Sheffield Hallam University.
<https://cris.brighton.ac.uk/ws/portalfiles/portal/353637/Hobson%20et%20al%202015%20mentoring-full-report.pdf>
- Horsburgh, J., & Ippolito, K. (2018). A skill to be worked at: using social learning theory to explore the process of learning from role models in clinical settings. *BMC Medical Education*, 18(156), 1-8. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12909-018-1251-x>
- Hudson, P. (2013). Strategies for mentoring pedagogical knowledge. *Teachers and Training Theory and Practice*, 19(4), 363-381. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13540602.2013.770226>
- Hudson, P. (2016). Forming the mentor-mentee relationship. *Mentoring & Tutoring: Partnership in Learning*, 24(1),30-43. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13611267.2016.1163637>
- IIE Varsity College. (2023, February 5). *Distance (Online)*. IIE Varsity College.
<https://www.varsitycollege.co.za/campuses/distance>
- IRIS. (n.d.). *Page 1: What is instructional scaffolding?*
<https://iris.peabody.vanderbilt.edu/module/sca/cresource/q1/p01>
- Izadinia, M. (2015). A closer look at the role of mentor teachers in shaping preservice teachers' professional identity. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 52, 1-10.
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tate.2015.08.003>
- Izadinia, M. (2017). From swan to ugly duckling? Mentoring dynamics and preservice teachers' readiness to teach. *Australian Journal of Teacher Education*, 42(7), 66-83.
<https://doi.org/10.14221/ajte.2017v42n7.5>
- Izadinia, M. (2018). Mentor teachers: Contributions to the development of preservice teachers' identity. In P.A. Schutz, J. Hong & D.C. Francis (Eds.), *Research on teacher identity* (pp. 109-119). Springer Nature. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-93836-3_10

- Jefferson Jr, D. (2022). *The impact and effect of a school-based mentoring program on students at-risk in the virtual learning environment of an urban school district* [Doctoral dissertations, Saint Elizabeth University].
- Jita, T. & Munje, P.N. (2022). Preservice teachers' mentorship experiences during teaching practice in a South African teacher preparation program. *International Journal of Higher Education*, 11(1), 141-150. <https://doi.org/10.5430/ijhe.v11n1p140>
- Jones, L., Tones, S., Foulkes, G., & Jones, R.C. (2021). Associate teachers' views on dialogic mentoring. *Teachers and Teaching*, 27(1-4), 181-192. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13540602.2021.1933421>
- Kakazu, K. & Kobayashi, M. (2022). Student teachers' development through a first-time teaching practicum and challenges: a qualitative case study approach. *Journal of Education for Teaching*, 49(3), 401-415. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02607476.2022.2104629>
- Kamal, S.S. (2019). Research paradigm and the philosophical foundations of a qualitative study. *PEOPLE: International Journal of Social Sciences*, 4(3), 1386-1394. <https://doi.org/10.20319/pijss.2019.43.13861394>
- Kannan, V. & Khuri, N. (2018). *Creating digital collages inspired by English texts*. 2018 Thirteenth International Conference on Digital Information Management (ICDIM), Berlin (pp. 228-233). <https://doi.org/10.1109/ICDIM.2018.8847012>
- Keegan, D. (1996). *Foundations of Distance Education* (3rd ed.). Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315004822>
- Keiler, L. S., Diotti, R., Hudon, K., & Ransom, J.C. (2020). The role of feedback in teacher mentoring: how coaches, peers, and students affect teacher change. *Mentoring & Tutoring: Partnership in Learning*, 28(2), 126-155. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13611267.2020.1749345>
- Kistan, P. (2019). *Exploring novice teacher educators' (NTEs) experiences of relational learning in a private higher education institution (HEI)* [Masters thesis, University of KwaZulu-Natal]. University of KwaZulu-Natal Research Space.

- <https://researchspace.ukzn.ac.za/server/api/core/bitstreams/d7cf4d93-a10a-47e1-bf7a-8af3466017bb/content>
- Kivunja, C., & Kuyini, A. (2017). Understanding and applying research paradigms in educational contexts. *International Journal of Higher Education*, 6(5), 26-41. <https://doi.org/10.5430/ijhe.v6n5p26>
- Korthagen, F. (2017). Inconvenient truths about teacher learning: Towards professional development 3.0. *Teachers and Teaching*, 23(4), 387-405. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13540602.2016.1211523>
- Koubek, E. & Wasta, S. (2022). Preservice teachers' experiences on becoming culturally responsive educators: an action research case study. *Journal on Efficiency and Responsibility in Education and Science*, 16(1), 12-25. <http://dx.doi.org/10.7160/eriesj.2023.160102>
- Kraft, M.A. & Papay, J.P. (2014). Can professional environments in schools promote teacher development? Explaining heterogeneity in returns to teaching experience. *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis*, 36(4), 476-500. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/43773479>
- Kumar, R. (2019). *Research methodology: a step-by-step guide for beginners* (5th ed.). SAGE Publications Ltd.
- Kyriacou, C. (2018) *Essential Teaching Skills* (5th ed.). Oxford University Press.
- Lee, H. (2020). *Affirmative Action in Malaysia and South Africa: Preference for Parity*. Routledge.
- Leeder, T.M. (2022). Behaviorism, Skinner, and operant conditioning: considerations for sport coaching practice. *Strategies*, 35(3), 27-32. <https://doi.org/10.1080/08924562.2022.2052776>
- Lekhetho, M. (2022). Postgraduate students' perceptions of support services rendered by a distance learning institution. *International Journal of Higher Education*, 11(7). 24-36. <https://doi.org/10.5430/ijhe.v11n7p24>

- Levy, D.C. (2018). Global private higher education: an empirical profile of its size and geographic shape. *Higher Education*, 76, 701-715. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10734-018-0233-6>
- Li, P.B., Sani, B.B., & Azmin, N.A. (2021). Identifying mentor teachers' roles and perceptions in pre-service teachers' teaching practicum: the use of a mentoring model. *International Journal of Education and Practice*, 9(2), 365-378. <https://doi.org/10.18488/journal.61.2021.92.365.378>
- Llego, M.A. (2022, September 17). *Redefining the role of the teachers: It's a multifaceted profession*. TeacherPH. <https://www.teacherph.com/teacher-multifaceted-profession/>
- Lofthouse, R., & Thomas, U. (2017). Concerning collaboration: teachers' perspectives on working in partnerships to develop teaching practices. *Professional Development in Education*, 43(1), 36-56. <https://doi.org/10.1080/19415257.2015.1053570>
- Lofthouse, R.M. (2018). Re-imagining mentoring as a dynamic hub in the transformation of initial teacher education: The role of mentors and teacher educators. *International Journal of Mentoring and Coaching in Education*, 7(3), 248-260. <https://doi.org/10.1108/IJMCE-04-2017-0033>
- Loukomies, A., Petersen, N., Ramsaroop, S., Henning, E., & Lavonen, J. (2021). Student teachers' situational engagement during teaching practice in Finland and South Africa. *The Teacher Educator*, 57(3), 255-279. <https://doi.org/10.1080/08878730.2021.1991539>
- MacBlain, S. (2021). *Learning theories for early years practice*. Sage Publications.
- Makar, K., Ali, M., & Fry, K. (2018). Narrative and inquiry as a basis for a design framework to reconnect mathematics curriculum with students. *International Journal of Educational Research*, 92, 188-198. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijer.2018.09.021>
- MANCOSA. (2023, February 5). *Online courses*. MANCOSA. <https://www.mancosa.co.za/online-courses/>
- Manik, S., Sembiring, M., Padang, I., & Manurung, L. (2022). Theory of Bandura's social learning in the process of teaching at SMA Methodist Berastagi Kabupaten Karo. *Jurnal*

Visi Pengabdian Kepada Masyarakat, 3(2), 85-96.

<https://doi.org/10.51622/pengabdian.v3i2.729>

Manning, C., & Hobson, A.J. (2017). Judgemental and developmental mentoring in further education initial teacher education in England: mentor and mentee perspectives. *Research in Post-Compulsory Education*, 22(4), 574-595.

<https://doi.org/10.1080/13596748.2017.181377>

Maphalala, M. (2013). Understanding the role of mentor teachers during Teaching Practice session. *International Journal of Educational Sciences*, 5(2), 123-130.

<https://doi.org/10.1080/09751122.2013.11890069>

Matta, C. (2022). Philosophical paradigms in qualitative research methods education: what is their pedagogical role? *Scandinavian Journal of Educational Research*, 66(6), 1049-1062.

<https://doi.org/10.1080/00313831.2021.1958372>

Maunula, M., Maunumäki, M., Marôco, J., & Harju-Luukkainen, H. (2023). Developing students well-being and engagement in higher education during COVID-19 – a case study of web-based learning. *Sustainability*, 15(4), 1-9. <https://doi.org/10.3390/su15043838>

McElwee, C.B., Regan, K., Hudson-Baker, P., & Weiss, M.P. (2018). Preservice special education teachers' perceptions: the influence of university coursework, context, and relationships, during the clinical teaching experience. *Teacher Educators' Journal*, 11, 91-104.

McGraw, A., & Davis, R. (2017). Mentoring for pre-service teachers and the use of inquiry-oriented feedback. *International Journal of Mentoring and Coaching in Education*, 6(1), 50-63.

<https://doi.org/10.1108/IJMCE-03-2016-0023>

McLeod, S. (2023a, May 18). *Albert Bandura's social learning*. Simply Psychology.

<https://www.simplypsychology.org/bandura.html>

McLeod, S. (2023b, May 19). *Operant conditioning: what it is, how it works, and examples*.

Simply Psychology. <https://www.simplypsychology.org/operant-conditioning.html>

- McMillan-Chabot, J. (2024). Conducting collage elicitation research online: what happens when we remove the scissors and glue? *Qualitative Research Journal*, 1-11.
<https://doi.org/10.1108/QRJ-10-2023-0154>
- McNiff, S. (2019). Philosophical and practical foundations of artistic inquiry. In P. Leavy (Ed.), *Handbook of arts-based research* (pp. 22-36). The Guildford Press.
- Meierdirk, C. (2017). Reflections of the student teachers. *Reflective Practice*, 18(1), 23-41.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/14623943.2016.1230054>
- Mena, J., Hennissen, P., & Loughran, J. (2017). Developing pre-service teachers' professional knowledge of teaching: the influence of mentoring. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 66, 47-59. <https://doi.org/10.1016/J.TATE.2017.03.024>
- Merket, M. (2022). An analysis of mentor and mentee roles in a pre-service teacher education program: A Norwegian perspective on the future mentor role. *Mentoring & Tutoring: Partnership in Learning*, 30(5), 524-550.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/13611267.2022.2127261>
- Mertova, P., & Webster, L. (2019). *Using narrative inquiry as a research method: An introduction to critical event narrative analysis in research, teaching and professional practice* (2nd ed.). Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780429424533>
- Mishra, S., Sahoo, S., & Pandey, S. (2021). Research trends in online distance learning during the COVID-19 pandemic. *Distance Education*, 42(4), 494-519.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/01587919.2021.1986373>
- Mokoena, S. (2017). Student teachers' experiences of teaching practice at open and distance learning institution in South Africa. *Turkish Online Journal of Distance Education*, 18(2), 122-133. <https://doi.org/10.17718/tojde.306564>
- Moore, J. (1999). The basic principles of behaviorism. In B.A. Thyer (Ed.), *The Philosophical Legacy of Behaviorism* (pp. 41-68). Kluwer Academic Publishers.
- Moore, J. (2011). Behaviorism. *The Psychological Record*, 61, 449-464.
<https://doi.org/10.1007/BF03395771>

- Moosa, M., & Rembach, L. (2018). Voices from the classroom: pre-service teachers' interactions with supervising teachers. *Perspectives in Education*, 36(1), 1-13.
<https://doi.org/10.38140/pie.v36i1.3580>
- Moosa, M., & Rembach, L. (2020). Encounters with mentor teachers: first-year students' experiences on teaching practice. *Mentoring & Tutoring: Partnership in Learning*, 28(5), 536-555. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13611267.2020.1859326>
- Moulding, L.R., Stewart, P.W., & Dunmeyer, M.L. (2014). Pre-service teachers' sense of efficacy: Relationship to academic ability, student teaching placement characteristics, and mentor support. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 41, 60-66.
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tate.2014.03.007>
- Mukeredzi, T.G (2017). Mentoring in a cohort model of practicum: mentors and preservice teachers' experiences in a rural South African school. *Sage Open*, 7(2).
<https://doi.org/10.1177/2158244017709863>
- Mukeredzi, T.G., Mthiyane, N., & Bertram, C. (2015). Becoming professionally qualified: the school-based mentoring experiences of part-time PGCE students. *South African Journal of Education*, 35(2), 1-9. <http://dx.doi.org/10.15700/saje.v35n2a1057>
- Mullen, C., & Klimaitis, C. (2021). Defining mentoring: a literature review of issues, types, and applications. *Annals of the New York Academy of Sciences*, 1483(1).
<https://doi.org/10.1111/NYAS.14176>
- Muyengwa, B. (2018). *The context and practice of school-based mentoring of pre-service teachers in Zimbabwe* [Doctoral dissertation, University of the Free State].
- Muyengwa, B., & Jita, T. (2020). Improvements in mentoring of pre-service teachers: experiences of field placement. *Journal of Studies in Social Sciences and Humanities*, 6(1), 1-9.
- Nahmad-Williams, L., & Taylor, C.A. (2015). Experimenting with dialogic mentoring: a new model. *International Journal of Mentoring and Coaching in Education*, 6(1), 184-199.
<https://doi.org/10.1108/IJMCE-04-2015-0013>

- Nanda, V. (2023, April 23). *Difference between social learning theory and operant conditioning*. Tutorialspoint. <https://www.tutorialspoint.com/difference-between-social-cognitive-theory-and-social-learning-theory>
- Nesje, K., & Lejonberg, E. (2021). Tools for the school-based mentoring of pre-service teachers: A scoping review. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 111(3), 1-13. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tate.2021.103609>
- Nevid, J. (2021). *Essentials of psychology: concepts and applications*. (6th ed.). CENGAGE.
- Nguyen, M., & Parr, G. (2018). Mentoring practices and relationships during the EAL practicum in Australia: contrasting narratives. In: A. Fitzgerald, G. Parr, & J. Williams (Eds.), *Re-imagining professional experience in initial teacher education* (pp. 87-105). Springer. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-13-0815-4_6
- Nickerson, C. (2024, February 2). *Albert Bandura's social cognitive theory*. Simply Psychology. <https://www.simplypsychology.org/social-cognitive-theory.html>
- Niklasson, L. (2018). Mentors in initial teacher education e initiatives for professional development. *Journal of Arts and Humanities*, 7(8), 11-22. <https://doi.org/10.18533/journal.v7i8.1431>
- Noui, R. (2020). Higher education between massification and quality. *Higher Education Evaluation and Development*, 14(2), 93-103. <https://doi.org/10.1108/HEED-04-2020-0008>
- OECD. (2018). *Education at a Glance 2018: OECD Indicators*. OECD Publishing. <https://doi.org/10.1787/eag-2018-en>
- Ó Gallchóir, C., O'Flaherty, J., & Hinchion, C. (2019). My cooperating teacher and I: how pre-service teachers story mentorship during School Placement. *Journal of Education for Teaching*, 45(4), 373–388. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02607476.2019.1639258>
- O'Leary, M. (2020). *Classroom observation: a guide to the effective observation of teaching and learning*. Routledge.

- Orland-Barak, L., & Wang, J. (2021). Teacher mentoring in service of preservice teachers' learning to teach: Conceptual bases, characteristics, and challenges for teacher education reform. *Journal of Teacher Education*, 72(1), 86-99.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/0022487119894230>
- Paddock, R. (2021, June 4). The unreasonable job description of teachers: A systemic problem few people talk about. *News24*. <https://www.news24.com/life/archive/opinion-the-unreasonable-job-description-of-teachers-a-systemic-problem-few-people-talk-about-20210604>
- Parker, A.K., Zenkov, K., & Glaser, H. (2021). Preparing school-based teacher educators: mentor teachers' perceptions of mentoring and mentor training. *Peabody Journal of Education*, 96(1), 65-75. <https://doi.org/10.1080/0161956X.2021.1877027>
- Patil, A., Maholtra, N.K., & Maity, M. (2022). Observational learning: influence of regulatory focus, knowledge, and summarized observable recommendations on consumer decision outcomes in an online environment. *International Journal of Consumer Studies*, 46(4), 1428-1450. <https://doi.org/10.1111/ijcs.12769>
- Pavao, M.S. (2018). Creating conditions for strong mentoring. *Northwest Journal of Teacher Education*, 13(2), 1-12. <https://pdxscholar.library.pdx.edu/nwjte/vol13/iss2/4>
- Peiser, G. (2020). Mentoring students on professional courses in higher education in the workplace: new opportunities and challenges. In C. Woolhouse & L.J. Nicholson (Eds.), *Mentoring in higher education: Case studies of peer learning and pedagogical development* (pp. 95-114). Palgrave Macmillan. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-46890-3_7
- Pillay, G.M.R. (2015). *Exploring mentor learning through the practice of mentoring student teachers during school-based teaching practice* [Masters thesis, University of KwaZulu-Natal]. University of KwaZulu-Natal Research Space.
<https://researchspace.ukzn.ac.za/items/8c82a04e-2a75-4913-903c-374a8eff4de4>
- Pillay, P. (2020). Massification at universities of higher learning in South Africa. *Gender & Behaviour*, 18(1), 14784-14799.

- Podolsky, A., Kini, T., & Darling-Hammond, L. (2019). Does teaching experience increase teacher effectiveness? A review of US research. *Journal of Professional Capital and Community*, 4(4), 286-308. <https://doi.org/10.1108/JPCC-12-2018-0032>
- Rakes, L., Powell, R.L., Blevins, B., & Giordano, V. (2022). Navigating the roles of the school-based teacher educator: mentor teachers' and teacher candidates' perceptions. *The Educational Forum*, 1-17. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00131725.2022.2053019>
- Rauduvaitė, A., Lasauskienė, J., & Barkauskaitė, M. (2015). Experience in teaching practice of pre-service teachers: analysis of written reflections. *Procedia – Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 191, 1048-1053. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.sbspro.2015.04.526>
- Richelle, M. (2016). *B.F. Skinner: a reappraisal*. Routledge Press.
<https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315628646>
- Ronfeldt, M. (2012). Where should student teachers learn to teach? Effects of field placement school characteristics on teacher retention and effectiveness. *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis*, 34(1), 3-26. <https://doi.org/10.3102/0162373711420865>
- Ronfeldt, M. (2015). Field placement schools and instructional effectiveness. *Journal of Teacher Education*, 66(4), 304-320. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0022487115592463>
- Rughoobur-Seetah, S. (2019). Factors affecting students' choices of tertiary institutions in small island developing economics. *Quality in Higher Education*, 25(2), 117-132.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/13538322.2019.1635303>
- Rumjaun, A. & Narod, F. (2020). Social learning theory-Albert Bandura. In B. Akpan & T.J. Kennedy (Eds.), *Science education in theory and practice* (pp. 85-99). Springer Texts in Education. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-43620-9_7
- Rupenthal, M., & Furuness, S. (2020). A recursive loop in teacher socialization: Extending and improving teacher education curriculum. *Association of Independent Liberal Arts Colleges for Teacher Education*, 17, 49-66.
- Sabzalieva, E., Gallegos, D., Yerovi, C., Chacón, E., Mutize, T., Morales, D., & Cuadros, J.A. (2022). The right to higher education: A social justice perspective. *UNESCO*, 1-61.

https://www.iesalc.unesco.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/05/IESALC_RIGHT-TO-HIGHER-EDUCATION_ENG-1.pdf

- Samuel, M. (2010). Searching for a “pedagogy of hope”: teacher education and the social sciences. *Perspectives in Education*, 28(1), 5-15.
- Sawalhi, R., & Chaaban, Y. (2021). Mentor teachers’ and student teachers’ perspectives toward teacher leadership. *Mentoring & Tutoring: Partnership in Learning*, 29(1), 70-88.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/13611267.2021.1899586>
- Schunk, D., & DiBenedetto, M. (2020). Motivation and social cognitive theory. *Contemporary Educational Psychology*, 60, 1-10. <https://doi.org/10.1016/J.CEDPSYCH.2019.101832>
- Schurink, W.J., Jordaan, W.J. & Schurink, E.M. (2021). Narrative inquiry in qualitative research. In C.B. Fouché, H. Strydom & W.J.H. Roestenberg (Eds.), *Research at grass roots: for the social sciences and human services professions* (5th ed., ----). Van Schaik Publishers.
- Sezgin, F., Sönmez, E., & Naillioğlu Kaymak, M. (2020). Mentoring-based learning culture at schools: Learning from school administrator mentoring. *Research in Educational Administration & Leadership*, 5(3), 786-838. <https://doi.org/10.30828/real/2020.3.6>
- Shavit, P., & Moshe, A. (2019). The contribution of reflective thinking to the professional development of pre-service teacher. *Reflective Practice*, 20(4), 548-561.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/14623943.2019.1642190>
- Simonson, M., & Berg, G.A. (2024, July 4). Distance learning. In *Encyclopedia Britannica*.
<https://www.britannica.com/topic/distance-learning>
- Sokhulu, L.H. (2018). *Exploring pre-service teachers’ experiences of mentoring during teaching practice* [Masters thesis, University of KwaZulu-Natal]. University of KwaZulu-Natal Research Space. <https://researchspace.ukzn.ac.za/items/e4a7a06f-a64f-4022-8e07-6dc8413b8bb8>
- South Africa Private Higher Education Group Boosted by Growth in Student Numbers. (2022, August 30). *BusinessTech*. <https://businesstech.co.za/news/lifestyle/620945/south-africa-private-higher-education-group-boosted-by-growth-in-student-numbers/>

- STADIO. (2023, February 5). *Distance learning*. STADIO. <https://stadio.ac.za/distance-learning>
- Suphasri, P., & Chinokul, S. (2021). Reflective practice in teacher education: issues, challenges, and considerations. *PASAA: Journal of Language Teaching and Learning in Thailand*, 62, 236-264.
- Sweeney, T.A. & Nielsen, B. (2018). Using a developmental assessment rubric to revitalise stakeholder conversations in professional experience. In J. Kriewaldt, A. Ambrosetti, D. Rorrison & R. Capeness (Eds.), *Educating future teachers: innovative perspectives in professional experience* (pp. 137-156). Springer. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-10-5484-6_9
- Tankou epse Nukunah, C.N., Bezuidenhout, A., & Furtak, A. (2019). The contribution of a private higher education institution to the South African higher education landscape. *South African Journal of Higher Education*, 33(1), 283-300. <https://dx.doi.org/10.20853/33-1-2689>
- Tatto, M.T. & Menter, I. (2019). *Knowledge, policy, and practice in teacher education: a cross-national study*. Bloomsbury Publishing.
- Taylor, N. (2023). Teacher quality: The preparation, and utilization of teachers in sub-Saharan Africa. In I. Menter (Ed.), *The Palgrave handbook of teacher education research* (pp. 51-73). Springer Nature. <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-16193-3>
- Templeton, N.R., Abdelrahman, N., & Donop, J. (2023). Editorial overview: mentoring to support professional space. *Mentoring & Tutoring: Partnership in Learning*, 31(3), 307-311. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13611267.2023.2203981>
- Tian, L., Wu, Y., & Liu, N.C. (2019). World-class universities and the common good. *International Higher Education*, 95, 14-16. <https://doi.org/10.6017/ihe.2018.95.10722>
- Tiainen, O., Korkeamäki, R.L., & Dreher, M.J. (2018). Becoming reflective practitioners: a case study of three beginning pre-service teachers. *Scandinavian Journal of Educational Research*, 62(4), 586-600. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00313831.2016.1258673>

- Tindowen, D.J., Bangi, J., & Parallag Jr, C. (2019). Pre-service teachers' evaluation on their student internship program. *Internal Journal of Learning, Teaching and Educational Research*, 18(10), 279-291. <https://doi.org/10.26803/ijlter.18.10.18>
- Tjønneland, E.N. (2017). Crisis at South Africa's universities - what are the implications for future cooperation with Norway? *CMI Brief*, 16(3), 1-4. <http://hdl.handle.net/11250/2475331>
- Tonna, M.A., Bjerkholt, E., & Holland, E. (2017). Teacher mentoring and the reflective practitioner approach. *International Journal of Mentoring and Coaching in Education*, 6(3), 210-227. <https://doi.org/10.1108/IJMCE-04-2017-0032>
- Tyrer, C. (2023). Untangling the complexity of mentoring feedback practices in post-compulsory initial teacher education in the UK. *Journal of Further and Higher Education*, 47(1), 31-44. <https://doi.org/10.1080/0309877X.2022.2088271>
- Ulland, H. (2024). *Mentor training curriculum for mentor programs within K-12 public school systems*. [Masters thesis, Minnesota State University Moorhead]. RED: a Repository of Digital Collections: Dissertations, theses, and projects. <https://red.mnstate.edu/thesis/963>
- UNISA. (2020). *Rising to the virtual challenge: DHET report 2020*. <https://www.unisa.ac.za/sites/corporate/default/News-&-Media/Publications/Annual-reports#>
- van Ginkel, G., Verloop, N., & Denessen, E. (2016). Why mentor? Linking mentor teachers' motivations to their mentoring conceptions. *Teachers and Teaching: theory and practice*, 22(1), 101-116. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/13540602.2015.1023031>
- van Hai, T. (2023). Developing classroom management skills for pre-service primary education students through pedagogical training in Vietnam. *International Research Journal of Management, IT and Social Sciences*, 10(4), 279-287. <https://doi.org/10.21744/irjmis.v10n4.2360>
- van Schalkwyk, F.B., van Lill, M.H., Cloete, N., & Bailey, T.G. (2022). Transformation impossible: Policy, evidence and change in South African higher education. *Higher Education*, 83, 613-630. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10734-021-00687-7>

- Walinga, J. (2014). Stress and coping. In C. Stangor & J. Walinga (Eds.), *Introduction to psychology* (1st Canadian edition, pp. 746-754). BCcampus.
<https://opentextbc.ca/introductiontopsychology>
- Warikoo, N., & Allen, U. (2020). A solution to multiple problems: the origins of affirmative action in higher education around the world. *Studies in Higher Education*, 45(12), 2398-2412. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03075079.2019.1612352>
- Watts, M.W. (1975). BF Skinner and the technological control of social behavior. *American Political Science Review*, 69(1), 214-227. <https://doi.org/10.2307/1957902>
- Wexler, L.J. (2019). Working together within a system: educative mentoring and novice teacher learning. *Mentoring and Tutoring: Partnership in Learning*, 27(1), 44-67.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/13611267.2019.1583406>
- Wexler, L.J. (2020). 'I would be a completely different teacher if i had been with a different mentor': ways in which educative mentoring matters as novices learn to teacher. *Professional Development in Education*, 46(2), 211-288.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/19415257.2019.1573375>
- Williams, L., & Sembiante, S.F. (2022). Experiential learning in U.S. undergraduate teacher preparation programs: a review of the literature. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 112, 1-13. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tate.2022.103630>
- Wilson, A., & Huynh, M. (2020). Mentor-mentee relationships as anchors for pre service teachers' coping on professional placement. *International Journal of Mentoring and Coaching in Education*, 46(3), 279-291.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/1359866X.2018.1436689>
- Young, A., Cavanagh, M., & Moloney, R. (2018). Building a whole school approach to professional experience: collaboration and community. *Asia-Pacific Journal of Teacher Education*, 46(3), 279-291. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1359866X.2018.1436689>

Appendices

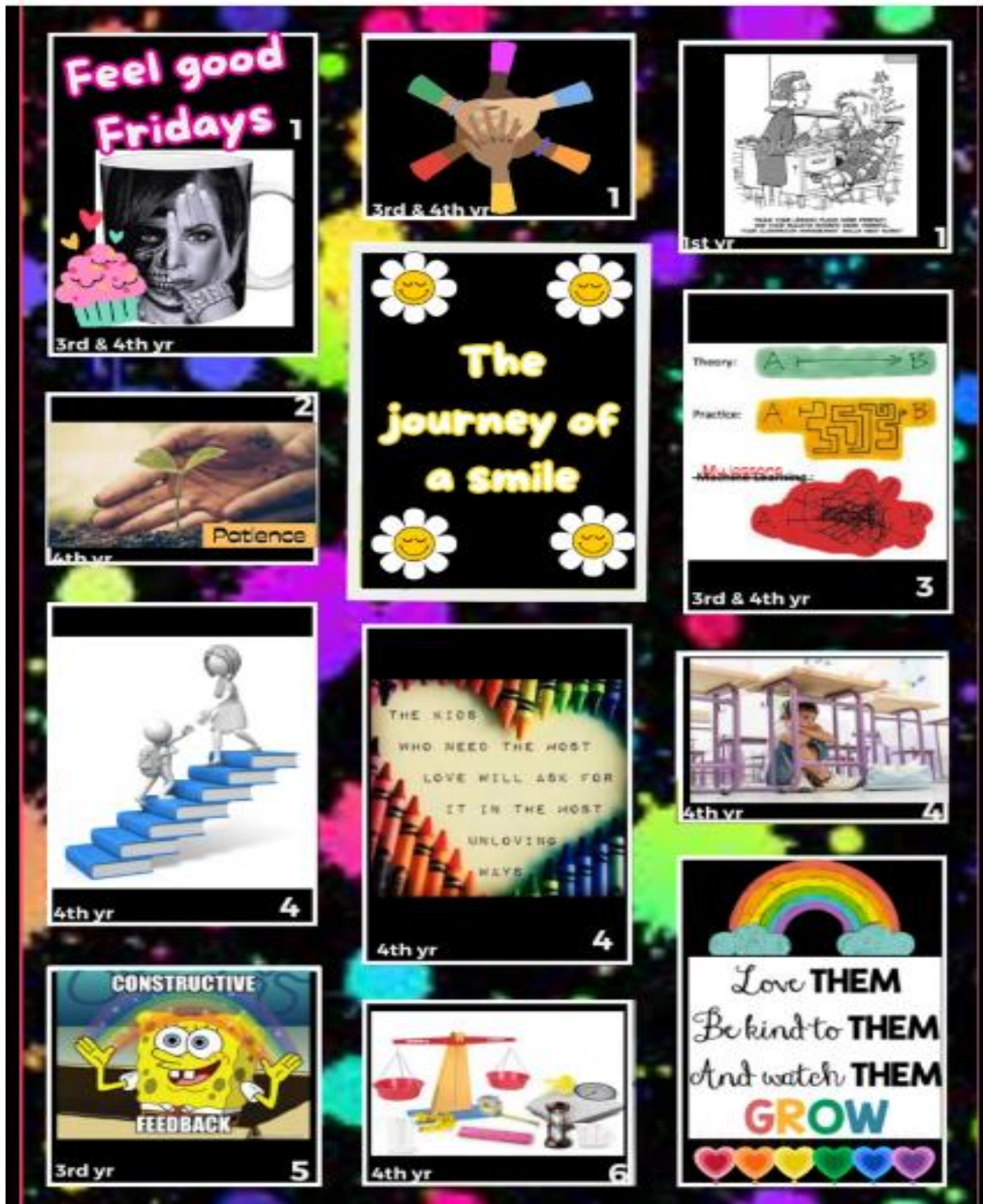
Appendix A: Crescente's digital collage



Appendix B: Docendo's digital collage



Appendix C: Doctrina's digital collage



Appendix E: Praemium's digital collage

