

**UNIVERSITY OF KWA-ZULU NATAL**

**THE PROFESSIONAL KNOWLEDGE BASE  
AND PRACTICES OF SCHOOL-BASED MENTORS:  
A STUDY OF TWO SCHOOLS IN  
PIETERMARITZBURG.**

**This dissertation is submitted in partial fulfilment of the  
academic requirements for the Degree of Master of Education,  
University of Kwa-Zulu- Natal Pietermaritzburg.**

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**2012**

## DECLARATION

I, VASANTHA PILLAY, declare that the work presented in this document is my own. References to work by other people have been duly acknowledged.

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_

Student

I declare that this work has been submitted with my approval.

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_

Supervisor

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## **ABSTRACT**

This study examines the knowledge-base of mentors in two South African schools. Working within an interpretivist paradigm this study gained an in-depth understanding of the knowledge, strategies and the sources of mentoring knowledge the mentor teachers draw on to inform their mentoring practices. Data was collected using questionnaires and semi-structured interviews from school-based mentors. The study seeks to construct an understanding of the mentors professional knowledge base in relation to Shulman's (1985) model of teacher knowledge and Jones's (2006) model of mentoring knowledge.

The study provides a rich, holistic perspective of the mentoring knowledge mentor teachers say informs and underpins their mentorship practices. Firstly, the findings of this study suggest that the majority of mentors draw on their professional practice and personal experience as teachers when enacting their mentoring roles. A central message conveyed is that mentors must have a deep knowledge of subject matter, curriculum issues and teaching strategies to mentor effectively. Secondly, the findings suggest that mentor teachers draw from their personal values and interpersonal skills to inform their practices. Since the mentors works with adult learners careful nurturing of another's personal and professional growth in a collaborative and reciprocal partnership based on trust, respect, equality, encouragement is key to the cultivation of healthy mentoring relationships.

These findings also suggest that it is important that the mentors' practices are effective, consistent and underpinned by a knowledge base that can serve as a point of reference when training mentor teachers. In order to ensure this, it is necessary to provide mentors access to adequate formalized training programmes that will equip them with a sound knowledge base for mentoring. Mentor teachers also need to be provided with conditions and resources within their schools that allow them to work collaboratively with each other to construct and extend their knowledge base as mentors.

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# **CHAPTER ONE**

## **INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY**

### **1.1. INTRODUCTION**

The aim of the study was to explore the professional knowledge base that underpins and informs the practices of school-based mentors working with trainees and newly qualified educators. More specifically the study investigated what skills, knowledge and strategies school-based mentors draw on when supporting the professional and personal growth of their mentees.

Increasingly in many countries such as the United States, the United Kingdom, Israel, China and Norway school-based mentoring is viewed as a potential mode of professional development, as an avenue for improving practice, as a strategy for retaining teachers and as a catalyst for social change in schools (Chi-kin, & Feng, 2007, Wang, 2001). Chi-kin et al.(2007) maintain that since beginning teachers in China encounter a ‘reality shock’ as they transfer from relatively sheltered pre-service teacher education programmes to novel situations where they have to be personally accountable for their professional work, the implementation of mentoring support helps them adapt to the school workplace.

Some of the most critical elements of teaching are only learned in the workplace when mentor teachers assist beginning teachers to build their teaching capacities. Lieberman and Mace (2008) argue that Teachers’ professional development should be refocused on the building of learning communities. It is this understanding, along with some important shifts toward studying teachers’ practice, that have helped focus teachers’ professional development on the building of learning communities. It is this turn that they think should be a big part of the approach to supporting professional development. They believe that educational departments can support professional learning communities by providing teachers with continuous blocks of time devoted to a variety of ways for teachers to teach teachers the strategies that have been

successful with their own students, using technology to illustrate good teaching, and building networks of teacher communities where teacher leaders can provide such professional development with their colleagues. In a study conducted by Henze, Driel and Verloop (2009) teachers stated that their professional development was due to their collaboration with colleagues with regards to subject content matters and teaching methods.

In this regard the mentor has a key role to play in ensuring that the many positive effects achieved during the time of study and preparation for the teaching profession are not nullified with the commencement of teaching. Mentors are experienced colleagues who are formally given the responsibility for helping beginning teachers (mentees). Their work ranges from providing information about conducting orientation arrangements, observing lessons, giving feedback, engaging in discussion groups, providing liaison with other staff and external personnel, to performing assessments and evaluations (Bolam, 1995). Day (cited in Chi-kin Lee, 2007) contends that mentoring is often seen as structured personal support for learning because mentors assist mentees to fulfil their own potential as well as to develop self-reliance and accountability.

Thus, if mentors are to play a role in the professional training and development of teachers it is important that their practices are effective, consistent and underpinned by a knowledge base that can serve as a point of reference. However, in South Africa although the Norms and Standards for Education (Department of Education, 2000) states that a competent teacher should engage in a citizen and pastoral role, which implies that every teacher should take on the responsibility for mentoring students and colleagues, mentoring support seems to be erratic and poor. Unfortunately, in South Africa, the majority of trainee and novice educators do not receive the same mentoring support as do mentees from abroad. Only some trainee students (Post Graduate Certificate in Education and Bachelor of Education) who undertake their teaching practice at school sites enjoy the benefits associated with mentoring support. Novice educators are marginalised as their “managers” (Heads of Departments) fulfil a variety of other core functions related to their roles, leaving

them with limited time to offer pastoral care to individuals who enter the profession. However to regulate mentoring support, the Department of Education has indicated its intentions to create “teaching laboratories” (Integrated Strategic Planning Framework for Teacher Education and Development in South Africa, 2011). These laboratories are Teaching Schools (TSs) and Professional Practice Schools (PPSs) where students will be placed for the actual practical components of their programmes.

I feel that in order to enhance the quality of mentoring support in South Africa it is also important that mentors be accorded the same status as that accorded to mentors internationally. Currently mentors are not formally trained for the enactment of mentorship roles and they are called upon to volunteer their services. Most often mentors offer only short-term support to help new teachers survive their first year in the job by offering emotional support. Although this goal is important it does not fully explore the potential benefits of powerful induction programmes. Keeping new teachers in the teaching profession is not the same as helping them become good teachers. To accomplish the latter the first years of teaching must be treated as a phase in learning to teach and surround new teachers with a professional culture that supports teacher learning. However, to successfully achieve this goal demands that mentors be empowered and capacitated with the knowledge, skills and expertise to effectively enact mentorship roles. When preparing individuals for the teaching profession it is also important that the needs of student teachers should be addressed. The emphasis with most teacher training programmes which happens at universities or colleges is on sharing theoretical knowledge for teaching. To enhance the quality of teacher education programmes there is a need for schools to be used as sites for the preparation of students in the practical components of teaching. Strengthening partnerships between universities and schools where schools are used as sites of teacher learning would contribute to quality preparation of students for the teaching profession.

## **1.2. BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY: THE IMPORTANCE OF MENTORING IN TEACHER EDUCATION**

In countries such as the United States, Great Britain and Norway large sums of money, time and effort are invested by governments to establish mentoring programmes at the level of the school. Some of the reasons underpinning these actions are briefly discussed below.

Since the early 1980s, policymakers and educational leaders in the US have pinned high hopes on mentoring as a vehicle for reforming teaching and teacher education (Feiman-Nemser, 1996). For example, Little (cited in Feiman-Nemser, 1996) suggested that concern about the rate of attrition during the first 3 years of teaching influenced policymakers to provide on-site support and assistance to novices during their first year of teaching. Proposals for the redesign of teacher preparation called for teacher candidates to work closely with experienced teachers on internship sites and restructured school settings such as professional development schools. Experienced teachers would serve as mentors and models, to help novices learn new pedagogies and to socialise them to new professional norms.

Feiman-Nemser (2001) states that in the United States experienced teachers play a key role in assisting novices' entries into schools. In this regard, Orland (2001) also argued that there was a strong momentum to pursue the idea of teachers as teacher educators. This implied moving more teacher education into school settings and assigning school teachers important roles such as teacher educators, supervisors and mentors in these settings. The idea of choosing expert teachers to function as mentors is also prevalent in the Israeli educational context (Orland-Barak et al., 2005). There the Ministry of Education and Culture appoints good teachers in positions as national mentors to provide continuing support to teachers in specific curricular and instructional areas.

Edwards and Protheroe (2003) state that in addressing the learning needs of student teachers appropriate weight must be given to the role of mentors as mediators of responsive pedagogy as a body of cultural and professional knowledge. Mentoring

needs to move beyond the provision of feedback after observation to include modelling interpretation of learners' needs and well-matched responses and enhancing interpretations of learners needs made by the student teachers.

The perception that mentoring can be used as a strategy for creating learning organisations is also endorsed by policy makers in the educational field in South Africa. Pilot school-based mentoring programmes involving student teachers, university tutors and mentor teachers have been instituted to strengthen partnerships between universities and schools (Robinson, 2001). Studies undertaken in South Africa reveal that the appointment of school-based mentors is a welcome relief to inexperienced educators since mentors assist them to negotiate the changes and hurdles they encounter in schools. For example, Probyn and van der Mescht (2001) found that the placement of student teachers in schools to gain insight into practical teaching skills was welcomed by all and the student teachers in particular gained much by way of learning to be critically reflexive in a non-threatening environment. In yet another study Robinson (2001) in South Africa found that establishing partnerships between the Faculty of Education at the University of the Western Cape and schools, for the mentoring of pre-service teachers by in-service teachers, formed a potentially powerful form of teacher development.

In South Africa efforts are being made to formalise mentoring support programmes through the development of national policies and frameworks that attempt to regulate mentoring in schools. According to the Norms and Standards for Educators one of the roles and responsibilities specified for a competent teacher is that he or she should be a mentor to student teachers, novice teachers and colleagues (Department of Education, 2000). An added dimension stipulated by the Education Labour Relation Council (ELRC) and Resolution Council (the Department of Education, 2003) focuses on career paths of teachers, namely the "Teaching and Learning Career Path" and the "Management Career Path" for school teachers. The career path of Teaching and Learning recognises collegial support and creates salary and grade progressions in promotion posts. More specifically, the job descriptions for a senior and a master teacher indicate that one of the core functions that they have to perform is to mentor and coach novice educators.

Mentoring is also viewed by the Department of Education as an effective process that can contribute to the professional growth of educators. According to the Integrated Quality Management System used for teacher appraisal and development, Performance Standard 9 : Personnel, - staff training and mentoring programmes have to be developed, implemented and evaluated. Reference is made to ‘collaborative mentoring practices’ to raise the performance levels of educators (Collective Agreement, 2003, p.27).

In an attempt to strengthen the teaching practice/school experience component of teacher education programmes, the Department of Basic Education and the Department of Higher Education and Training recently outlined intentions to strengthen their partnerships by creating “teaching laboratories” (Integrated Strategic Planning Framework for Teacher Education and Development in South Africa, 2011). This would require the development of Teaching Schools (TSs) and Professional Practice Schools (PPSs) as sites where students will be placed for the actual practical components of their programmes. Within these institutions student teachers can engage in learning-from-practice, such as observing best practice, participating in micro-teaching exercises and subject methodology courses. The document states that staff at the TSs will be developed as mentors for student teachers and will be able to teach methodology courses within their areas of specialisation. Teachers at PPSs will mentor initial teachers in training, and ensure that they receive appropriate support and guidance during their practice teaching periods.

Taking cognisance of the fact that the Department of Education in South Africa sees mentors as playing a significant role in the arena of education, the preparation of teachers for mentoring roles is important. Unfortunately, although policy frameworks in education in South Africa reflects the importance attached to effective mentorship programmes there is an absence of fit between policy and practice when it comes to the enactment of mentorship roles in schools. Most mentors that enact mentorship roles have not received any formal training to prepare them adequately for these roles. Furthermore, the diversity in training settings as well as the mentors’ backgrounds raise questions in relation to the mentoring practice and the knowledge

base that underpins it. To assure success for mentoring programs teachers must be nurtured, assisted, educated and prepared for the important and critical role of the mentor teacher.

### **1.3. PURPOSE OF THE STUDY**

The literature on mentoring indicates that while there is vast knowledge about the roles and responsibilities of a mentor, strategies for mentoring, and the mentoring relationship, there is scant evidence of the codification of mentors' knowledge. There is little evidence of research undertaken into the professional knowledge base that mentors draw on when assisting student and newly qualified educators in their professional training and development.

The purpose of this study is to investigate the professional knowledge base which informs school-based mentor practices when working with student and newly qualified educators. By identifying areas of high usage and aspects of knowledge which are considered important to the enactment of the mentorship role, policy could be drawn up for mentor training and development programmes and to specify the job descriptions of school-based mentors.

The key questions framing this study are:

1. What mentoring knowledge do mentor teachers say informs and underpins their mentorship practices?
2. What strategies do mentor teachers use in enacting their mentorship roles?
3. Where and how do mentor teachers acquire their professional mentoring knowledge?

#### **1.4. RATIONALE FOR THE STUDY**

My interest in the topic of mentorship is two-fold. Firstly, as a staff management team member I developed an interest in mentorship from the perspective of leading a department. As manager of a team of educators I am tasked with training, and supporting and guiding trainees and newly qualified educators as prescribed under the roles and responsibilities of a departmental head in the Norms and Standards for Educators (Department of Education, 2000). I am faced with many challenges in enacting the mentorship role as I have had no formal instruction, preparation, or professional development opportunities to carry out the responsibilities of a mentor. I feel that the supervisory role of heads of departments is undervalued in South Africa because effective mentoring requires time and professional development training. Thus my motivation in undertaking this study can be partially traced back to my curiosity about whether the knowledge base I draw on to inform my mentoring practices is generally employed by good mentors to inform their mentoring practices when assisting their mentees.

My skills, knowledge and expertise surrounding effective mentoring practices have developed out of my engagement with literature on the topic of mentoring, my personal experiences in enacting the mentoring role and my experiences as a trainee and a novice educator. My motivation in undertaking this study is driven by my need to develop insight into the professional knowledge base that informs the practices of school-based mentors. The research will enable me to reflect on my own mentoring practices and to determine to what extent my mentorship practices require adjustment so that I can make an effective contributions towards developing my staff to ensure that a strong culture of teaching and learning is upheld at all times. All mentoring, teaching and learning contexts are unique, and valuable lessons can be learned.

Secondly, I hope that the findings of the research will contribute towards the development of a policy framework that can be used to facilitate appropriately structured mentor training programmes. Sound mentor training will enable mentors to adequately fulfil the many and varied roles and tasks of mentoring and also contribute to the continuing professional development of the mentees. Further



motivation for conducting the research stems from my belief that it is important for mentors to be offered the same support and attention in the process of their training as they offer trainees and newly qualified educators. Therefore I feel this research is worth doing as I hope to fill gaps on mentorship in South Africa with the primary intention of improving mentorship practices within the schooling context. My further intention in conducting this study is to make School Management Teams aware of the value of mentor training and mentoring.

## **1.5. STRUCTURE OF THIS DISSERTATION**

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

Chapter One provides a background to the study, the purpose of the study, rationale for the study and the structure of the dissertation.

Chapter Two begins with a literature review that outlines both the international and South African literature on mentoring. The literature review focuses on the conceptualisation of mentoring, a knowledge base for mentoring and the functions and roles of a mentor. This is followed by an examination of the phases of the mentoring relationship, approaches and strategies of mentoring and a discussion of the benefits of mentoring relationships to mentors. The chapter ends with the conceptual framework used to analyse the data presented in Chapter Five. Shulman's (1985) model of teacher knowledge which identifies the different types of knowledge a competent teacher draws on for effective teaching, and the model of mentoring knowledge required for effective mentoring proposed by Jones and Straker (2006) have been used to interpret the data. These models are relevant to the three research questions regarding what knowledge base, strategies and sources of knowledge for mentoring mentor teachers draw on to inform their mentoring practices.

Chapter Three presents the research methodology and design of the study. The chapter discusses the location of the study within the interpretivist paradigm, the main data collection methods viz. questionnaires and semi-structured interviews, the procedures followed for data analysis and interpretation, the ethical considerations observed, and the limitations of the study.

Chapter Four focuses on the presentation of the qualitative data derived from transcripts which were subjected to content analysis to identify units of analysis that depict common themes across the data. This was undertaken to obtain a vivid understanding of the participants' knowledge base that informs their practices as school-based mentors. The research findings were also used to profile the mentors within the two schools with respect to similarities and differences in their mentoring experiences and practices.

Chapter Five, the final chapter, presents a discussion of the data which allowed for the three key questions of this study to be answered. It also provides recommendations flowing from the study together with concluding comments.

## **1.6. CONCLUSION**

Having introduced this dissertation in terms of the background to the study, purpose of the study, rationale for the study and the structure of the dissertation, the next chapter provides a review of the relevant literature for the study.

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW AND CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK**

#### **2.1. INTRODUCTION**

This chapter of the study consists of two main focus areas. The first section presents a review of the relevant literature on the topic of mentoring. Since the literature in this field is vast, the review has been restricted to key aspects that include discussions on the conceptualisation of mentoring, a knowledge base for mentoring, the support functions of mentoring, the phases of mentoring, models of mentoring, the benefits of mentoring relationships to mentees and mentors. This is undertaken in relation to the studies conducted on the topic.

In the second section of the chapter the conceptual framework used to analyse the data collected is presented. This framework consists of Shulman's (1985) model of teacher knowledge and Jones et al.'s (2006) adaptation of Shulman's model of teacher knowledge into a model of mentor knowledge.

#### **2.2. MENTORING**

##### **2.2.1. Towards a conceptualisation of mentoring**

The roots of the word mentor can be traced back to Greek literature and the tales of Odysseus (Monaghan and Lunt, 1992). Before leaving for the siege of Troy, Odysseus appointed his old friend Mentor to act as a counsellor, advisor, friend, guide, tutor and surrogate father to his son for ten years. Mentor was old and wise, and took care of his son's education, helping him to mature, to learn courage,

prudence, honesty and a commitment to serving others (Wood, 1997). Thus, the word “mentor” was born and the origins point to a mentor as a sort of foster parent that nurtures the growth of an individual taken under his/her wings in a warm and supportive relationship.

The traditional view of mentoring is informed by the origins of the word mentor in which the mentor is considered to be someone older, wiser and more experienced who assists or helps an inexperienced younger individual towards his or her professional growth in a trusting and loving relationship (Clutterbuck, cited in Gardiner, 1996). The mentoring relationship is hierarchical as it is conceived as a one-way flow of knowledge, experience and wisdom from the mentor to a less experienced, younger mentee. The relationship is characterised by the mentor as the expert who accepts personal responsibility for the significant developmental growth of another individual. Within the relationship the mentee occupies a subordinate and dependent position and his/her overall development is determined by what can be learnt about a particular subject from the older person.

Mentoring is used in diverse occupational fields. In education it usually involves a new teacher or a student teacher learning the ropes of the profession under the guidance and supervision of a more experienced person. In the traditional view a student teacher relationship that is inherently unequal prevails in which the mentee exercises no control over what is done to him by the mentor within the workplace environment. For example, from an organisational or management context, Kram (1985) also maintains that mentoring is about an older, more experienced adult helping, supporting and counselling a younger individual to learn “*to navigate in the adult world and the world of work*” to accomplish important tasks. From the field of psychology, Levinson (1978) states:

*The mentor is ordinarily several years older, a person of great experience and seniority in the world the young man is entering. This person acts as a teacher, sponsor, counsellor, developer of skills and intellect, host, guide, exemplar and one who supports and facilitates the realisation of the young man's dreams.*

Recent literature shows that there has been a shift from the traditional to a more contemporary view of mentoring. In modern times mentoring is seen as a productive

interpersonal process of learning rather than as a role imposed from the outside in which the mentee exercises no power over what happens to him/her. In contrast to the traditional perspective, mentors today are expected to be open and flexible to learning from their often wiser, more junior mentees although they are the more senior and experienced individuals. Thus mentoring moves beyond age and embodies the simple idea of one person with experience and expertise passing on what he or she has learned to someone with less experience about a specific field. The mentoring relationship is based on equality as both the mentor and mentee are willing to learn from one another as they engage in collaborative partnerships and mutually share knowledge. For example, Faure (2006) advocates the following contemporary view:

*"Mentoring is a supportive learning relationship between a caring individual who shares knowledge, experience and wisdom with another individual who is ready and willing to benefit from this exchange, to enrich their professional journey".*

Awaya, McEwan, Heyler, Linsky, Lum, & Wakukawa (2003) emphasise that mentoring is a collaborative partnership between two individuals based on care and friendship, and one in which both parties enjoy equal status. Importantly, an understanding exists amongst the individuals that they can mutually benefit from their joint interactions thus facilitating learning and change for both parties over a period of time. The findings of a study undertaken by Shank (2005) in the USA also illustrate that teachers who formed part of a collaborative inquiry group at a high school changed their teaching practices as a result of intellectually engaging with one another. The group itself, with its norms of open questioning and doubt, trust, collegiality, and a shared purpose, created a collaborative space of mentoring that was dynamic and reciprocal.

I draw on the definition of Clutterbuck and Ragins (cited in Gardiner, 1996) to inform my understanding of the concept of mentoring:

*A relationship that is mutually beneficial to a mentor and a mentee as they work collaboratively with one another over a period of time. This relationship encourages learning and change for both the mentor*

*and the mentee, albeit learning of different sorts in their relationship of mutual trust and respect.*

The establishment of a collaborative partnership based on care, trust and respect in which no one holds power over the other is important to the success of mentoring partnerships. Here, the mentor and the mentee are equal partners and the relationship is part of a process of growth. Each benefits from the experience and the expertise they individually bring to the mentoring context.

### **2.2.2. A professional knowledge base for mentoring**

#### **2.2.2.1. Rationale for a construction of a professional knowledge base for mentoring**

A review of the literature reveals that while there is a vast body of information on teacher knowledge, this alone is not sufficient for working with mentees. Researchers feel it is necessary to construct a knowledge base or framework that mentors can access to advance their mentoring (Feiman-Nemser, cited in Beutel, & Spooner-Lane, 2009, Orland-Barak, 2001). For example, Beutel et al. state that while beginning teachers can be assisted to build their teaching capacities more quickly by experienced teachers, the presence of a mentor alone is not sufficient. The success of mentoring is reliant on the skills and knowledge of the mentors who enact the mentorship role, rather than their experience which accumulates with age. Feiman-Nemser (cited in Beutel) state to mentor effectively, teachers need to know how to break down complex teaching practices and behaviours into simple components understandable to a beginner.

In yet another study conducted by Gardiner (2009) in the United States on how urban education could be reformed through teacher preparation and development, mentors indicated that while they knew how to advance their teaching, they did not have access to a knowledge and experiential base to advance their mentoring. Despite the coaching, training, ongoing meetings, and newly developed handbook, mentors

viewed their mentoring development as too narrowly conceived. Dealing with interpersonal issues proved challenging especially when mentors were expected to give negative evaluations and handle issues that dealt with tardiness and interpersonal issues. It is therefore important to understand and develop insight into what knowledge teachers use when working with mentees.

I believe that the need to investigate the knowledge base mentors draw on to inform their practices when working with mentees is especially important in South Africa in view of the limited work undertaken in the field of mentoring. The insight gained into this aspect of mentoring would be valuable in enhancing the quality of mentoring support that is offered to mentees where schools are used as sites of training. In addition, I am hopeful that the information gathered from undertaking this study can be used by the universities in South Africa to improve the scope of mentoring programmes offered to trainee students.

#### 2.2.2.2. Developing a professional knowledge base for mentoring

Jones et al. (2006) state that while good teachers know what knowledge and skills are required to advance their teaching, there is scant evidence of what knowledge, skills and expertise good mentors require to advance their mentoring. In the absence of a model of mentoring knowledge, the possibility exists that mentors enact their roles very differently from each other and that in the process the quality of support rendered to mentees could be uneven. With this in mind, research conducted on a knowledge base that researchers have identified as important to informing the practices of mentors when enacting the mentorship role is outlined in this section.

The findings of a study conducted in the United Kingdom by Jones et al. (2006) with mentors involved in initial teacher training programmes indicate that with respect to the areas of knowledge that informed the mentors' work, the vast majority stated that they referred to policy when evaluating the performance of teachers, viz. the statutory training and induction framework. This framework focuses on the roles and responsibilities of a teacher. In addition, almost all mentors indicated that their professional practice and experience as teachers, and to some extent, their collaboration with colleagues provided the main source of knowledge, skills and expertise used in their work with mentees. The extent to which mentors are

dependent on their own personal experiences to enact mentoring roles is also emphasised in a study undertaken by Gardiner (2009). When questioned about how they learnt to mentor, mentors at a teacher academy unanimously said that they were left to their own devices. And since they relied on their interpersonal skills to “read” what they should be doing with the mentees, the situation was problematic. They were forced to use a trial and error approach to acquire knowledge about how they ought to enact mentorship roles.

On the issue of what knowledge informs their work with mentees, mentors in the study undertaken by Jones’s et al. (2006) believed that knowledge about the less tangible aspects of mentoring as well as interpersonal skills were also central components to enactment of the mentoring role. They identified building and maintaining a trusting relationship with the mentees as pivotal to informing the practices of good mentors. The findings also revealed that mentors require a different set of skills when working with adults compared to learners because the dynamics of the interpersonal relationships are different. The results further indicated that although the mentors were confident about sharing their expertise, skills and knowledge related to the practicalities of teaching, several mentors were uneasy about handling the pastoral and affective dimensions of the mentoring process.

Zemke et al. (cited in Ganser, 1996) also propose that prospective mentors’ expertise in pedagogy can be supplemented with information about working with adults since beginning teachers are adults whose developmental stages and needs as learners differ from those of children. Gardiner (2009) further maintains that knowledge about the pastoral and affective dimension constitutes an essential element in the mentoring process. In investigating the challenges which mentors experienced Gardiner (2009) reported that they regularly encountered situations which they did not know how to negotiate, particularly at the interpersonal level. The mentors found that managing another adult was really hard in terms of timeliness, professionalism and preparedness, especially dealing with sensitive, sometimes interpersonal issues. This indicates that further investigation into a knowledge base for adult education is required as the skills and expertise needed for working with adult learners are different to those needed for the classroom situation.



Based on the findings in their study in the United Kingdom, Jones et al. (2006) found that good mentors use strategies that address the specific needs of mentees and encourage them to realise their potential. The strategies mentors employed to convey mentor knowledge, skills and expertise were not arbitrarily and haphazardly selected but selected in response to the needs of the mentees and their stages of development. The mentors mainly chose strategies that facilitated learning through establishing collaborative partnerships and which encouraged the mentees and the mentors to reflect on their practices to bring about professional and personal growth.

Orland (2001) maintains that quality mentoring requires mentors to acquire knowledge as to exactly when they should extend assistance to mentees and when they should give of themselves in order to be entirely with the mentees. Since mentees differ with respect to their personalities, skills and expertise, mentors are expected to be knowledgeable about what mentoring knowledge, skills and expertise they should use to develop the mentees' positive traits. This illustrates the importance mentors attach to being attentive to the particularities and diversities of the mentoring context and becoming aware that *not everything is for everybody* (Orland, 2001).

A review of the literature on mentoring in South Africa reveals that thus far no study has been conducted on the knowledge base that teacher mentors use when supporting trainee and novice educators. It is important that all teacher mentors have access to a model of mentoring knowledge when enacting this key leadership role. This would be useful in ensuring that there is consistency in "good" practice across all schools within the country and will also contribute to better quality mentoring programmes being instituted at the different schools.

### **2.2.3. Mentor support functions**

Kram (1985) summarises mentoring functions into two broad categories viz. career functions and psychosocial functions. Career functions are those aspects of a relationship that enhance learning the ropes and preparing for advancement in an

organisation through coaching, offering protection and exposing the mentee to work-related tasks. Psychosocial functions are those aspects of a relationship that enhance a sense of competence, clarity of identity, and effectiveness in a professional role. While career functions serve primarily to aid advancement up the hierarchy of an organisation, psychosocial functions affect each individual on a personal level by building self-worth inside and outside the organisation. Psychosocial functions include role-modelling, counselling, friendship and acceptance, and confirmation.

#### 2.2.3.1. Professional development support functions

Whilst Kram (1983) has categorised learning the ropes of the job as a career support function I have chosen to refer to this function as a professional development support function. Professional development functions are aligned to the roles that competent educators are expected to perform within the school environment. These include supporting mentees to fulfil their roles as learning mediators; interpreting and designing learning programmes; and being a leader, administrator, manager; scholar, researcher, assessor, and lifelong learner. Together these roles constitute a picture of the knowledge, skills and values that are the hallmark of a competent and professional educator in South Africa (Norms and Standards for Educators, 2000). A core responsibility of mentors is to identify the strengths and weaknesses of a teacher in performing the roles outlined and in determining what kind of support and guidance they would need to be successful.

When student and novice teachers enter the profession for the first time they have their own conceptions of teaching and learning. One of the tasks of mentors is to assist them to negotiate the contradictions between their own conceptions of teaching and learning prior to entering the profession and the development of a professional identity based on first-hand experiences in the classroom (Britznman, 1991, cited in Fairbanks, Freedman & Kahn, 2000). Veenman (1984) states that the role of mentors is to assist beginning teachers to acquire professional knowledge and expertise that deal with aspects such as disciplining and motivating students; dealing with individual differences between students; assessing students' work, and relating to the students' parents. In this case, the role of the mentor is to empower the mentees with knowledge, skills and strategies for effective teaching. Gold (1996) also asserts that

the other roles of mentors are to assist beginning teachers to understand the structure of subject matter and how to transform subject matter into pedagogical content knowledge, and how to use a variety of instructional methods and materials to teach the content and think reflectively and critically about their own practices.

Awaya et al. (2003) found in a formal programme in Professional Development schools at a university in Hawaai that mentors who helped to pilot students through the maze of paperwork, processes and other details of the day-to-day work of teachers, found that sharing practical knowledge in this way is a matter of professional dialogue. They provided input through private conversations, evening phone calls, feedback sessions and journals and increasingly via email. When the students were confronted with dilemmas and concerns, the mentors discussed the pros and cons of proceeding in different directions. The mentors did not find solutions to problems but directed the student teachers to finding ways out of dilemmas by informing of them of ways in which they could reframe issues so that they could be solved. The mentors acted as guides in directing the mentees in their search for practical knowledge to see new paths for solving problems and to take responsibility for their decisions.

The findings from interview data obtained from a study with secondary PGCE students in two university-based 'partnership' courses and two 'school-centered' courses in the United Kingdom indicated that the students were appreciative of receiving advice and ideas about teaching from their teachers/mentors (Hobson, Ashby, Malderez & Tomlinson, 2002). Since mentors are often fellow teachers and able to relate to student teachers' experiences or challenges in the workplace, they were able to understand the student teachers' concerns and how to make them feel comfortable enough to share their fears and problems. The students valued the practical advice that the mentors shared with them on how to control classes, plan lessons, and get information over in different ways.

In a project with experienced teachers who displayed excellence in teaching and mentoring their students in the United States, Fairbanks et.al. (2000) found that sharing direct advice and instruction with regard to how mentees balance teaching and administrative duties was an important way in which the mentors assisted new

teachers. To cope with the copious volume of tasks, a veteran teacher suggested that her mentee concentrate on creating a comfortable work pattern in handling matters related to preparation, photocopying, students, and calling parents. If things did not work out, the mentee was encouraged to try something else. In this case the mentor found that offering straightforward and direct advice that the mentee could either accept or reject was useful for coping with the demands of the profession.

Fairbanks et al. (2000) from the United States also found that mentor teachers in the project provided models of interpersonal interactions for the student teachers. By observing their mentor teachers in and out of the classrooms, the mentees learned about the complexity of teacher interactions with students. They learnt about ways in which they could deal with disruptive students and it prompted the realisation that performing the roles of an educator involves a process of on-going revision and review with respect to what they are supposed to know and do.

In South Africa, Moreeng , van Wyk , Alexander ,and Milondza (2011) report that at the University of the Free State, a mentorship programme, in collaboration with selected schools for PGCE student teachers, was implemented to increase the duration of work-based learning as a requirement for proper teacher training. PGCE students were assigned a trained, specialist mentor teacher, who, in collaboration with the respective student teachers had to oversee and engage in the day-to-day activities of the school. The activities included facilitation of lesson planning and presentation, design of different assessment activities, execution of administrative duties and active involving extra mural activities.

#### 2.2.3.2. Psycho-social support functions

In this study psycho-social functions deal with the ways in which the mentors emotionally support their mentees. I have isolated the socialisation of the mentees into the work environment as a key psychosocial support function that mentor teachers have to perform.

Researchers believe that effective mentoring requires mentors to focus on making the novice's entry into teaching easy (Achinstein and Athanases, 2005, Little, cited in Feiman-Nemser, 2001). It is important that mentees are accepted by members of

their school communities. The level of emotional support they receive plays a significant role in determining the existence and continuance of the relationship with their mentors as well as their stay in the profession.

The findings of a study, in which Maynard (2000) examined student teacher's perceptions of 'good' practice in mentoring highlights the significance of the affective. This means that the mentees valued the emotional support that was provided by their mentors. For example, the students attached a great deal of importance to being made to feel welcome into the school 'community of practice' and the 'broader community' of the teaching profession. The students revealed that being allowed into the school staff room enabled them to gain insights into the rituals, jargon and routines of the school community thus facilitating their acceptance as legitimate members of the community. McIntyre and Hagger (1992) also found that many mentor teachers helped student teachers by introducing them to the school environment. The mentors felt it was important that student teachers develop close ties with staff members as it encourages mentees to see themselves as part of the environment. Alienation and isolation makes adjustment to the profession problematic.

Findings in the project conducted by Fairbanks et al. (2000) in the United States indicate that the mentors undertook many different activities to help the mentees make the transition to professional life. Many of the mentor teachers welcomed their student teachers into their classrooms to the extent of providing them with their own furniture and storage space. Some mentors introduced the student teachers to the principal and other staff members, or took them on tours of the schools to encourage familiarity with the locations and facilities. The mentors felt it was important that the mentees develop relationships with faculty and staff members as it encouraged them to see themselves as part of the faculty.

Loftstrom and Eisenschmidt (2009) in a study in Europe that explored novice teachers' perspectives on relationships with mentors and experiences of mentoring during their induction year, reported that the mentees appreciated their mentors efforts in facilitating socialisation into the school community. They valued the mentors introductions and talking about the newcomers in a positive tone in

discussions with colleagues. The sharing of contextual knowledge, such as rules and school-specific practices, were other important forms of support received from the mentors.

In studies conducted in South Africa with B.Ed and PGCE students from different teacher educational institutions, the majority stated that teaching practice was the best part of the teacher training programme. The mentees indicated that they learnt more from their mentee teachers (during teaching practice) than from their teacher education degrees (Robinson, Vergani & Sayed, 2003, Samuel and Pillay, 2003, Reddy, 2003).

#### **2.2.4. Characteristics of effective mentoring relationships**

A review of the literature indicates that researchers believe there are various key characteristics and conditions that nurture effective mentor-mentee relationships (Borko,1986, Dever et al., 2000; Chi-kin Lee et.al.,2007, Galvez-Hjornevik ,1986). They argue that when mentors and mentees are matched by giving due consideration to factors such as age, sex, gender, compatible ideologies, similar personalities, common grades being taught, and assigning common free times, the mentoring partnerships are more likely to be successful.

Ryan (cited in Zimpher & Rieger, 1988) asserts that a mentor should be an experienced older teacher who is willing to act as a guide and confidant through the first year of teaching but believes that mentors who are closer in age to new teachers may have greater empathy for what is happening to the novice. More recently, Smith (cited in Chi-kin Lee et al. 2007) reported that the closeness in age helps to contribute to collegial and friendly relationships. Dever et al. (2000) state that an age difference of less than 6 years enable the mentors and mentees to function as friends or collaborative co-workers. A greater age difference can create a parent-child relationship characterised by parental behaviours on the part of the older and dependency on the part of the younger person. This is not an ideal relationship as it

could result in an unequal mentoring partnership in which the mentor exercises power over the mentee.

Similar debates exist about the gender of the mentee in relation to the mentors. Kram (1986) suggests that gender influences the relationship such that a male paired with a female is the least effective dyad. Carter and Francis (2001) from Australia also suggest that having the same gender as the beginning teachers is a critical element in effective mentoring. Chi-kin Lee et.al. (2007) found in China that the sexes of the mentees and the mentors might have an impact on the topic of conversation and even the relationship itself.

The qualities and characteristics that mentors possess are other important dimensions which affect mentoring relationships. Kwo (1994) believes that learning how to teach, and learning about teaching greatly relies on the empathy, close professional understanding and common language between the mentor and the mentee. Unlike teaching which depends primarily on individuals possessing certain skills and strategies, successful mentoring is based on maintaining a certain student-teacher relationship. Bennett and Dunne (1997) compare the components of a successful mentoring relationship to a successful marriage: trust, respect, communication, co-operation and understanding are essential ingredients. Matching mentors and mentees on these characteristics enables the mentors with an understanding of the unique needs of the mentees and the mentees with a comfortable sense of camaraderie.

Gardiner (2008) maintains that other key components to creating healthy mentoring relationships relate to mentors' demonstrations of warmth, genuineness and empathy which are rooted in friendship when working with the mentees. Demonstrations of warmth by mentors are important as they may act as forms of reassurance or acceptance of the mentees' actions, and nurtures the self-esteem of the mentees. Awaya et al. (2003) found in a study in the United States that mentors indicated in order to promote strong mentor-mentee relationships, it was important they adopt supportive rather than supervisory roles. The mentors achieved success by offering moral support in numerous ways. They shared some of their own stumbling blocks which were a source of encouragement to students who were struggling and made an

effort to emphasise the successes of the mentees' daily work since the latter have a tendency to focus on their own faults.

In contrast to these findings Robinson et al. (2003) found in their study with student teachers from different teacher education institutions in South Africa, that while the majority of students valued their practical teaching experiences, some students felt that the teaching practice was the 'worst part of the programme'. Some of their negative experiences included their mentors' lack of mentoring support, fear amongst their mentors to share their expertise and the fact that their mentors did not welcome them or prepare for them. (Robinson et al., 2003) This lack of support made the mentees' teaching practice difficult and unpleasant.

Galvez-Hjornevik (1986) also suggests that another consideration is the importance of compatible ideologies between mentors and mentees. Compatible ideologies mean the pair not only share conceptions of teaching and learning but also believe that support and assistance are essential for instructional support. This is important since the absence of a shared understanding of the value of mentoring would negatively impact on the objectives of the mentoring process and dysfunction can occur in the relationship. Scandura (1998) asserts that dysfunction occurs in relationships when one or both of the parties' needs are not being met or one or both parties is suffering distress as a result of being in the relationship. Based on a review of the literature, Scandura states that certain characteristics of mentors and protégés may contribute to the emergence of dysfunction in mentoring relationships. For example, personality characteristics such as dominance or submissiveness may result in tyrannical behaviour. Also, demographic characteristics such as age, sex or race may result in dysfunctional power struggles due to diversity issues in the relationship.

For example, in a study conducted at a school in Norway, Sudli (2006) found that elements of power and control surfaced when student teachers were monitored in accordance with the routines of the mentors and the school. Problems arose because student teachers' personal qualifications, ideas and reflections were not considered and written documents were used as a means to evaluate and control the student teachers. Perceptive students discovered that if they managed their mentors by imitating their practises, they would get the good marks therefore they resorted to



dishonest practices to win the favour of their mentors. Thus it appears that the characteristics of mentors and mentees and the structural aspects of the relationships can also contribute to dysfunction.

The success of mentoring relationships also lies in the mentors and the mentees sharing common free time and teaching the same grades. In a university-school based partnership in Europe, Valencic Zuljan, & Vogrinc (2007) found that mentors were concerned that they may not have given trainees as much support as they should, or was expected of them due to limited free time. Hobson (2002), in a school-based training programme in the United Kingdom also found that the mentees felt their mentors did not have or make enough time for them, for example, by not having or regularly postponing weekly meetings. They described these experiences as 'not so valuable'. The researchers believe it is important that mentors' regular loads be reduced to ensure that sufficient time is available for mentoring.

In support of the argument that more time should be allocated for mentoring support Chi-kin Lee et al.(2007) found in a study they undertook with secondary school teachers in China, that their low teaching loads provided them with greater opportunities for mentoring support and mentor-mentee interactions. Sufficient time was available for mentors' observations and mentees' demonstrations. Findings from this study also indicated that when the mentors and the mentees taught the same grade and the same subjects they had more free time to observe each others' lessons. Mentoring support was also enhanced because mentor-mentee interactions were more frequent.

#### **2.2.5. Phases of mentoring**

There is evidence that mentoring relationships progress through phases that build on one another to form a developmental sequence (Cohen, 1995 and Kram, 1983). The phases of the relationship are argued to include the early phase, the cultivation or developmental phase, the separation phase and the redefinition phase. The main characteristics of each phase are briefly outlined below.

Cohen (1995) and Kram (1983) state that the early phase of the mentoring relationship is generally characterised as a period in which the mentors and the mentees get to know each other and build trust. During this phase mentors focus on relationship behaviours that establish the foundations of trust required for personal understanding, non-judgemental acceptance, meaningful dialogue, and relevant self disclosure. Without trust the mentees will discount the worth of the information shared by the mentors and consider it of little direct and personal significance. This phase is also one in which the mentors and the mentees develop expectations of one another and the mentors create a supportive training environment in which there is interaction with the mentees. The mentors make the mentees feel comfortable so that they have no fear of being judged when they seek help. The mentors take the lead and support the mentees by encouraging them to confide the fears, goals and problems they have surrounding the tasks of learning. The mentors and mentees also set goals for the mentoring programme and are explicit about what they hope to achieve. The mentors act as role models to guide the new teachers into practice, or coach them on specific competencies in which they will be assessed. Thereafter, the mentors help the mentees to set priorities and give them direction, for example on how they should keep teacher files or prepare for meetings with parents.

After a safe psychological climate has been created Cohen (1995) and Kram (1983) maintain that the mentoring relationship enters the cultivation or developmental stage. The focus of this second phase is on the mentors gaining an understanding of the mentees unique concerns and goals, and sharing personal and professional information to nurture the growth of the latter. A partnership is built between the mentors and the mentees. There is intense mentoring activity as the mentors enter into discussion, offer advice and share their wisdom so that the mentees' confidence and the self- esteem are built. The mentors and mentees enjoy working together, sharing ideas, analysing and making decisions together. This is achieved through activities such as team-teaching, co-planning, monitoring, providing feedback, encouraging reflective practice, and assessing the mentees' progress. The mentors offer assistance to the mentees so that they will eventually be able to take greater responsibility for their learning.

Phase three, the separation phase of the mentoring relationship is the time when the mentors begin to withdraw from the relationship. The mentees are encouraged to become independent as the mentors reduce their mentoring activity to create opportunities for the mentees to separate from them. Mentors focus on reinforcing skills and attitudes that enhance self-sufficiency and equip mentees to go it alone. To achieve this mentees are encouraged to practise critical and inquiry thinking to gain insight into their strengths and weaknesses and to use their strengths to overcome their weaknesses.

The facilitative dimension of mentoring is evident during the separation stage when mentors help their mentees consider alternative points of view to reach a desired goal. Some ways in which mentors may guide mentees include asking hypothetical questions and presenting multiple viewpoints. Asking mentees "What if....?" questions can, according to Cohen (1995, p12) *"create a simulated reality for the mentees to consider as reference points for projecting into the future. If the mentees' goals seem out of line, or if they (the mentors) are confounded by the mentees' unproductive behaviour, a gentle but clear confrontation may be appropriate."*

According to Awaya et al. (2003) this phase would entail the "mentors sitting on their hands" as they provide mentees with the space to "show their stuff". It is the stage during which the mentees are given the opportunity to work through activities or lessons on their own with minimum guidance and support from their mentors. Mentors understand that the using such an approach involves an element of risk since mentees are likely to make mistakes and experience difficulties as they learn. Despite knowing this they need to have trust in the abilities of the mentees as they spur them on towards building self-confidence through gaining insight into their own strengths and weaknesses.

Awaya et al. (2003) also state that phase three of the mentoring relationship is a difficult one for both mentors and mentees alike. The termination of the relationship and dissolution of the links between mentors and mentees usually manifests as a mild, temporary, grief-like reaction with conflicting emotions. Whilst mentees may be anxious to get on with their lives they are also sad to leave these significant learning environments. In addition they may feel that they are "not ready yet" to end

the relationships. This stage is also difficult for the mentors as they may be unable to free themselves from their bonds in the relationships. The successful ending of this phase lies in recognising this ambivalence.

The fourth phase of the mentoring relationship, namely the redefinition phase is one in which both mentors and mentees recognise that a shift in developmental tasks has occurred and that the mentorship process is no longer needed or desired. Kram (1983) observes that the final stage is one in which mentors and mentees develop a peer-like friendship rather than parting ways. Both individuals achieve peer status and continue to have some contact on an informal basis in order to continue the mutual support created earlier in the relationship. Cohen (1995), on the other hand believes that there is an understanding between mentors and mentees that a mentoring relationship is not a long-term friendship, and the separation may be viewed as a natural ending to a relationship that was always about increasing the independence of the mentee.

#### **2.2.6. Models of mentoring**

Many models have been proposed to explain how mentors enact the mentorship role. Although the literature covers a wide variety of models, only a select few will be reviewed. These are the apprenticeship model, the competency based model, the reflective practitioner model and the co-inquirer model (Brookes and Sikes, 1997, Maynard & Furlong, cited in McIntyre, Hagger & Wilkin, 1994).

##### **2.2.6.1. The apprenticeship model**

In this model Maynard et al. (cited in McIntyre et al., 1994) state that the mentor is viewed as a skilled craftsperson while the new teacher is viewed as an apprentice. In the early stages of training, novice teachers are afforded opportunities to work alongside experienced practitioners, to 'learn to see' how they can reduce the complexities of teaching. The mentors model best practices for the classroom situation and guide new teachers into the practice. The mentees acquire 'recipes' that work for experienced teachers and interpreters of the classroom situation which

they later reproduce in their own classrooms under the watchful eyes of mentors who take on the role of instructors or training officers. This can be a positive strategy for new teachers starting out. Mentees are given opportunities to copy, imitate and observe the practices of their experienced mentors by working alongside them as they jointly plan lessons and assessments together and team-teach. Whilst mentees are likely to benefit from these activities, engaging reflective learning requires more than this.

The relationship between the mentor and the new teacher contains an imbalance of power. In terms of this model “in-experienced” mentees are expected to simply replicate the practices of “experienced” mentors after observing the mentors model appropriate classroom practices. The role of the mentors is dominant and that of the mentees subordinate since they simply imitate the teaching styles of the mentors and are afforded no opportunity to be active participants on the training site. A master-apprenticeship relationship exists in which it is assumed that mentees have no prior knowledge about teaching and learning and they are simply required to replicate the teaching practices of their mentors to become expert classroom practitioners. An additional problem with this approach is that the individualistic teaching and learning styles of the mentees are not considered and neither is any recognition given to their prior learning. While this situation may be unavoidable, it is hopefully short-lived. The apprenticeship model may have a role in the very early stages of teaching.

#### 2.2.6.2. The competency based model

Maynard et al. (cited in McIntyre et al., 1994) identify another model of mentoring which they call the competency model. They maintain that this model incorporates elements of the apprenticeship model since mentors create opportunities for mentees to learn to teach by providing practical training on a list of pre-defined competences against which the performance of the mentees are later evaluated. The criteria are based on a variety of different aspects of performances that the mentors observe and collect information on. Mentors take on the role of systematic trainers or coaches, observe trainees with pre-defined observation schedules, and provide feedback to the mentees on their skills and expertise.

In advocating the use of the competency based model, Maynard et al. (in McIntyre et al., 1994) point out that mentors should take cognisance of the fact that although their practices are derived from sources of professional knowledge, trainees should not be expected to slavishly imitate these. They argue that while it is expected that trainees ought to imitate some routines during the early stages of training, mentors must ensure that they empower mentees to take control of the teaching process over a period of time. They maintain that this is necessary because once mentees establish routines that work for them, they can stop learning and hit a plateau. Maynard et al. (in McIntyre et al.(1994) suggest that to prevent the occurrence of such a situation mentors need to motivate their mentees to progressively form, modify, and implement their own personal concepts and schemas about teaching and learning. This can be achieved by encouraging mentees to experiment on their own with different teaching styles and strategies to achieve their own vision of teaching. As the mentees gain confidence the assistance rendered by the mentors should be reduced and the trainees be encouraged to work independently.

#### 2.2.6.3. The reflective practitioner model

The reflective model is currently widely advocated in most mentor training programmes and involves mentors helping mentees to become reflective practitioners. For the reflective practitioner, 'learning to teach becomes a tentative, exploratory, context-specific, value-laden activity shaped in and through experience' (Brooks & Sikes, 1997, p. 23). In this model, the ideas of the apprenticeship model and even the competencies model are incorporated into reflective practice. A crucial difference between the two is that while the mentor is seen as some sort of expert, and therefore the relationship of expert and inexperienced contains an imbalance of power, the new teacher is nevertheless able to take responsibility for his/her learning and resultant actions.

The new teacher is assisted in developing the use of reflection as a tool for learning. The mentor creates conditions in which the mentees are encouraged to shift the focus beyond mere routines and rituals of teaching to develop a deep understanding of the learning process and to critically analyse their practices. Through dialogue, the mentor and the new teacher generate new learning and act upon it. The mentees are

encouraged to switch from a focus on their own teaching performances to a focus on the children's learning and to look at ways in which they can make this more effective.

Maynard et al.(in McIntyre et al.(1994) maintain that to facilitate the reflective process mentors need to move from being role- models and instructors to being co-enquirers in supportive and nurturing relationships that provide powerful growth experiences for mentees. Often the ideas mentees bring into the teaching situation may be incoherent, narrow and unrealistic and could impact negatively on their teaching. However, by initiating joint meetings and promoting dialogue, mentors are able to guide mentees towards deciding which practices are practical and acceptable. Through self-reflection mentees identify the underlying principles of their teaching and eventually articulate their own practical working theories.

#### 2.2.6.4. The co-enquirer model

Implicit in the description of the mentor as co-enquirer, is the relationship between equals; it is not a relationship defined by an imbalance of power (Brookes & Sikes, 1997). This is viewed as one of this model's strong points. It requires the experienced teacher, as mentor, to allow the new teacher to take control of his/her learning. The key techniques that enable this to happen are observation and collaborative teaching.

This practice involves the mentoring pair identifying an area for observation. One mentor observes and the other provides an evidence-based response to the observation. This would then be reciprocated. The new teacher is encouraged to reflect on their practice using the observations of the mentor, and both are co-enquirers. An extension of this is collaborative teaching, which many have come to understand as team teaching. In team teaching both parties plan, develop and implement a partnership in teaching. A mentorship of co-enquiry is one that results in creative change in the classroom and as such leads to challenging deep- seated assumptions and values which leads to improved outcomes.

Proponents of the models of mentoring (Brookes and Sikes, 1997, Maynard et al. cited in McIntyre et al., 1994,) seem to suggest that good mentors use different

approaches and strategies when enacting their roles to meet the needs of mentees at different stages of their growth. During the beginning stages of the mentoring relationship, strategies like sharing resources, co-planning and team teaching are widely used to build the self-esteem of the mentees and to make them feel comfortable. The mentees are apprentices who are trained by mentors who have developed expertise over time. The mentoring relationships are hierarchical since mentees copy or imitate the best practices of their mentors. Based on the competency approach to learning, the performances of the mentees are later evaluated against a set of pre-determined criteria to assess what has been learnt.

As the mentoring relationship evolves and the confidence levels of the mentees are boosted, mentors adapt their mentoring strategies. Mentees are encouraged to reflect on their practices to bring about improvements in learners' performances. This is achieved through discussion and feedback. The mentors and mentees become co-inquirers as they jointly evaluate and analyse the mentees performances. The mentoring relationship at this stage is collaborative in nature.

### **2.2.7. Benefits of mentoring**

There is evidence, based predominantly on the accounts of mentors and mentees, that suggests mentoring has several benefits for mentors and mentees (Hawk, 1987, Lopez-Real and Kwan, 2005 and Moor, Hasley, Jones, Martin, Stott, Brown and Harland, 2005). Therefore through the practise of mentoring, mentors can benefit by using or extending heir knowledge base.

#### **2.2.7.1. Benefits to mentees and the teaching profession**

Knowledge about the benefits of mentoring for the mentees would ensure that the mentors utilize strategies that would ensure that they cultivate positive mentoring relationships with the mentees. Furthermore, such knowledge would enable the mentors to know how best they should perform their mentoring functions.



A review of both local and international literature shows that mentoring makes a significant contribution to a reduction in attrition rates and to the professional practices of trainee and novice teachers and the growth of their careers. Hobson (2002) found that mentoring was considered by PGCE students on an Initial Teacher Training programme in the United Kingdom to be beneficial in several ways. Firstly, the students indicated that being observed while teaching and subsequently receiving feedback and constructive criticism from mentors was valuable to their development as teachers. Secondly, the students were appreciative of receiving advice and ideas about practical things such as controlling classes and lesson planning. For other students it was about how information could be shared with students of different ability ranges or what actually worked in terms of discipline. Thirdly, mentees valued mentors who were supportive and reassuring and who spurred them on although they made mistakes.

Bogat and Redner (1985) maintain that a mentor can help a mentee define his or her career aspirations and provide support to reach these goals. Supporting the mentee to develop a sense of competence, identity and work-role effectiveness translates into an outcome that promotes career enhancement and advancement. Bank et al. (2000) also state that the mentoring of new teachers by experienced teachers is a powerful way to foster professional development and increase the prospect that the new teachers will continue in the profession because they are not left to struggle on their own. Mentoring programmes provide structure and support in helping new teachers learn to teach, thereby promoting a high level of instructional skills as well as feelings of efficacy and confidence. This is significant because the way learning occurs during the first years greatly influences how learning will continue in subsequent years (Wildman et al. 1988 cited in Bank et al., 2000).

Based on the success of university-school partnerships in Norway where schools are used as sites for teacher training, the need for similar projects in South Africa has been identified to enhance teacher education. This is corroborated by a growing awareness of the need for a closer link between theory and practice in teacher education which means that the supervision of the teacher trainees is seen as the task of the whole school rather than that of individual mentors or supervisors. The main objective of planned projects is to accomplish research-based development

partnerships between teacher training institutions and in-school teacher training in South Africa to enhance the quality in teacher education.

#### 2.2.7.2. Benefits to mentors

A review of the literature indicates that the mentoring process also has great potential for developing mentors' professional practices, skills and careers (Hawk, 1987, Lopez-Real and Kwan, 2005, Moor et al., 2005). One of the major benefits relates to the positive effect of mentoring on the professional growth of mentors. In a study of hundred and seventy-eight mentor teachers, more than two thirds responded "definitely" to the statement that participation in mentoring programmes "provided positive professional growth for me" (Hawk, 1987). When mentors were asked to elaborate upon the ways they grew professionally from their experiences of assisting the mentees, they stated that it led to improvements in their own classroom teaching skills; they were forced to focus on these because they knew that they would be observed by someone.

In another study of mentor's perceptions of their involvement in a school-university Initial Teaching partnership programme in Hong Kong, Lopez-Real and Kwan (2005) reported that seventy percent of the mentors claimed they benefited professionally from mentoring. They reported they learnt from reflection or critical reflection about their own practice, as well as acquired new and improved teaching styles and strategies. Being mentors forced them to reflect on their own beliefs about teaching, students, learning, and teaching as a career. Similarly, Ganser (1996) states in a study with twenty four mentors concerning mentor roles and the benefits of mentoring, that mentoring also provides mentors with opportunities to validate the experience they have gained over the years. The three most valued benefits mentioned by mentors were "reflection and introspection about teaching, learning new ideas, and the satisfaction of helping someone".

Mentoring can, according to Bodoczky and Malderez (1997), also lead to consolidation of mentors' teacher identities, professional status and an increase in self-worth through involvement and enhanced recognition in the professional community. Similarly, in a study conducted in the United States, Moore et al. (2005) identified four broad ways in which mentoring can contribute to the professional

practice of experienced teachers. These are: broadening teachers' views of themselves and the teaching profession, deepening teachers' understanding of teaching and learning, facilitating teachers' extension of their responsibility for supporting the professional development of other colleagues, and cultivating leadership development in some teachers.

Reports from studies undertaken on the benefits of mentoring to experienced teachers as expressed by the teacher-mentors themselves confirm that mentors derive satisfaction and pride from undertaking mentor roles and some talk about mentoring in terms of aiding their career progression. For example in research conducted by Taharally, Gamble and Marsa (1992,p.130) in Canada mentors mentioned "feeling more like professionals, and becoming more open with their intern over time and less anxious about their own work". Mentors' confidence in their own teaching increased and they became more positive about their teaching and the support they rendered to their mentees.

#### **2.2.8. Conclusion of the literature review**

The purpose of the literature review was to present a discussion on the conceptualisation of mentoring, the knowledge base for mentoring, the support functions of mentoring, the phases of mentoring, models of mentoring, and a discussion of the benefits of mentoring relationships to mentees and mentors.

With respect to the conceptualisation of the term mentoring there are two perspectives. The traditional view of mentoring depicts it as a linear relationship in which an experienced individual helps or assists a younger individual. Contrary to this view, contemporary theorists suggest that mentoring is a collaborative, reciprocal and supportive relationship in which mentors and mentees learn from one another. When enacting mentorship roles it is important that mentors acknowledge the diverse needs of their mentees at different stages of the mentoring relationship. To effectively undertake this leadership role mentors are expected to know what kind of support functions to render and what strategies and approaches would be most

effective to guide and support mentees. The two mentoring functions identified link to ways in which mentors contribute to the professional growth of their mentees and emotionally support them. In this regard a review of the literature indicates that good mentors are individuals who are knowledgeable about how best to address the needs of their mentees. This is achieved through a variety of mentoring strategies outlined in various mentoring models. Ideally in the early stages of the relationship mentors would play a more supportive role. The mentors role model good practices that the mentees copy. At later stages of the relationship the mentees are encouraged to become more autonomous.

A review of the literature also suggests that while mentoring in the educational field has been well researched, documented and implemented internationally in countries that include the United States, the United Kingdom, and Europe, more research into mentoring should be conducted in South Africa. Although many aspects of the international literature on mentoring may apply to the local educational context, what is still required is domestic advocacy of mentoring as a key support function to student and novice teachers. I am hopeful that as a result of the intention of the Department of Education to create “teaching laboratories” (Integrated Strategic Planning Framework for Teacher Education and Development in South Africa, 2011) the professional growth of individuals who have a desire to contribute to the field of education, will be properly nurtured.

### **2.3. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK**

I have considered it appropriate to use two conceptual models to develop an understanding of the knowledge base that mentors access when supporting mentees. I use Shulman’s (1985) model of teacher knowledge based on the assumption that mentors are practising teachers. However, this model alone could not help me explain the data on mentoring knowledge, as it related only to knowledge for teaching. I therefore draw on Jones et al.’s (2006) adaptation of Shulman’s model of teacher knowledge into a model of mentor knowledge as a lens to view the knowledge base

mentors use to inform their practices when working with student and newly qualified educators.

### **2.3.1. Categories of teacher knowledge**

Shulman's (1985) categories of teacher knowledge and Grossman's (1990) subsequent adaptation of Shulman's types of teacher knowledge provide useful analytical lenses for this study given that mentors are practising teachers. Shulman argues that teachers require a knowledge base to get to grips with the essential knowledge needed for their professional practices. He identified seven types of knowledge that good and competent teachers possess: content knowledge, curriculum knowledge, pedagogical content knowledge, general pedagogical knowledge, knowledge of students as learners, knowledge of educational contexts, and knowledge of educational ends, purposes and values.

#### **2.3.1.1. Content knowledge**

According to Shulman (1987) content knowledge refers to the organisation of the actual subject matter that is to be learned or taught, in the minds of teachers. It surpasses the facts and concepts that they acquired during training as students and involves an understanding that in becoming teachers they have to acquire new types of subject knowledge. It requires understanding of the structures of the subjects to be taught which include both substantive and syntactic structures (Scwab, 1978 cited in Shulman, 1987). Substantive structures are the variety of ways in which the basic principles of the discipline are organised to incorporate its facts. It includes concepts, principles, theories, and procedures that organise the bodies of the subjects. In contrast, the syntactic structure of a discipline deals with the different forms in which the subject can be organised and the choice of methods that would be most suitable to represent the 'truth' of the subject. The emphasis is on how content expertise is used to generate new explanations, representations or clarifications that goes beyond what is contained in textbooks and what teachers may have acquired during their training as students.

Grossman (1990) also echoes Shulman's (1985) distinction between substantive and syntactic structures in his re-working of Shulman's model of teacher knowledge. He states that the substantive structures of a discipline refer to the various paradigms within a field that affect both how the field is organised and the questions that guide further inquiry. The syntactic structures of a discipline include an understanding of how knowledge claims are evaluated by teachers who engage with the discipline. Teachers' knowledge of the structures of a subject is crucial to how they represent the content and the nature of the subject and what and how they teach (Shulman & Grossman, cited in Grossman, 1990). Carlsen (cited in Grossman, 1990) states that a lack of content knowledge may affect the level of classroom discourse and how teachers critique and use textbooks.

#### 2.3.1.2. Curricular knowledge

Shulman (1985) states that the second category namely curricular knowledge, is represented by the full range of programmes designed for the teaching of particular subjects and topics at a given level. It also deals with the variety of instructional materials available in relation to these programmes, and the set of characteristics that serve as both indications and contra-indications for the use of particular curriculum or programme materials in particular circumstances. The two other dimensions of curricular knowledge that are important for teaching, are aspects he labelled *lateral curriculum knowledge* and *vertical curriculum knowledge*.

Lateral knowledge according to Shulman (1985) deals with the abilities of teachers to relate the content of a given lesson or topic to issues being discussed simultaneously in other classes (in other subject areas). It is about mature teachers knowing that teaching a particular subject and making it understandable to learners entails the integration of topics across classes and subjects. For example, when teaching learners about HIV and AIDS in a Life Sciences lesson, teachers can draw on the knowledge that learners may have acquired during their Geography or Life orientation lessons. Shulman (1985) states that vertical knowledge is the understanding and insight that teachers have about the topics and issues that have been and will be taught in the same subject area during the preceding and later years in school, and the materials that embody them. Therefore while the same content is taught across different

grades, effective teachers use different teaching methodologies to put the material across and will teach the content at different levels of depth to cater for learners of different abilities.

#### 2.3.1.3. Pedagogical content knowledge

Pedagogical content knowledge involves ways of representing particular ideas related to a topic or a subject at a given level that makes them understandable to others (Shulman, 1985). That is to say teachers who already know and understand their subjects in particular ways learn to transform their knowledge into representations that make sense to their students. They may choose to use analogies, illustrations, examples or demonstrations as forms of representation to simplify what is being taught. Decisions about which forms of representation or strategies work best are dependent on the knowledge that the teachers derive from research or from their wisdom of practice on the success rates of the different available strategies. For example, educators teaching a subject like Life Orientation may choose to use role play or case studies for a lesson dealing with interpersonal skills while educators teaching Science may conduct experiments or plan field trips for to enhance understanding of some aspects of the subject. It is only through trial and error that educators would know which strategies are most effective in their presentation of subject matter.

Pedagogical content knowledge also involves teachers knowing that the extent to which the learning of particular topics is easy or difficult depends on the prior conceptions and preconceptions that learners of different ages and backgrounds have about the topics and lessons taught. Even if misconceptions arise with respect to the prior learning experiences of the learners, skilful teachers are knowledgeable about the most suitable strategies that can be used to promote the understanding of their learners. Pedagogical content knowledge refers to the a teacher's ability to bring learning to the level of the children, for example, connecting book facts to real life situations, empowers kids and helps build true knowledge. Stories or anecdotes relating to the topic of study help bridge the gap between school life and life outside the school. Children begin to see that their daily experiences are important and have connections to what they learn in school (Shulman, 1985).

In some respects Grossman's (1990) categorisation of pedagogical content knowledge is similar and dissimilar to that suggested by Shulman (1990). Grossman (1990) states that pedagogical content knowledge also deals with the way in which teachers "psychologise" subject matter for teaching so that it is more accessible to learners. This requires teachers to draw upon both their knowledge of the subject matter to select appropriate topics, and their knowledge of students' prior knowledge and conceptions to formulate appropriate and provocative representations of the content to be learned. Pedagogical content knowledge is composed of knowledge and beliefs of the purposes for teaching a subject at different grade levels and the knowledge of students' understanding, conceptions and misconceptions of particular topics in a subject. It also includes knowledge of instructional strategies and representations for teaching particular topics. In this regard experienced teachers may possess a rich repertoire of instructional strategies that are particularly effective for teaching particular topics.

#### 2.3.1.4. General pedagogical knowledge

General pedagogical knowledge deals with the generic skills that teachers are expected to acquire to help them manage their classrooms and cope with other general demands of the teaching profession. It involves knowledge about the measures that teachers should utilise with their learners to minimise disruption of lessons, reinforce positive behaviour or and ensure fair treatment of all learners. Furthermore, pedagogical knowledge extends beyond the acquisition of skills for classroom practice as it includes other skills that are conducive to teachers meeting the demands of their jobs. This relates to the acquisition of administrative skills and skills that enable them to embrace the culture and politics of their schools (Shulman, 1985)..

#### 2.3.1.5. Knowledge of learners and their characteristics

This refers to the knowledge that teachers possess about the impact of their actions on student learning in the classroom. Studies in general education indicate that expert teachers are characterised as possessing large quantities of complex, tacit knowledge about students. They possess an image of the types of behaviours and disciplining problems that they might face, as well as what students might possess



with respect to background knowledge, experience and skills (Berliner 1986, cited in Mullock, 2003). According to Shulman (1987) when teachers use this type of teacher knowledge, they think their way from the subject matter into the minds and motivations of the learners. They know which student conceptions, misconceptions, expectations, motives, difficulties, or strategies may influence the ways in which they approach, interpret, understand or misunderstand the materials.

#### 2.3.1.6. Knowledge of educational contexts

Shulman (1987) maintains that since the socio-cultural and institutional contexts within which teachers function differ, it is imperative that teachers are familiar with the influence of these differing contextual conditions on teaching and learning. What is acceptable or appropriate in one educational institution may not necessarily be so in another. More specifically, teachers need to know how the workings of the group or classroom, the school governance and financing of the school districts, the character and culture of the communities in which they work, will influence their teaching and learning. Each context differs with respect to institutions with their hierarchies, explicit and implicit systems of rules and roles, government agencies from state through to district and federal levels, and general mechanisms of governance and finance. Therefore since teachers function within a matrix created by these elements, it stands to reason that the principles, policies and facts of their functioning should comprise a major source for their knowledge bases. In this case teachers need to “know the territory” of teaching and have knowledge of the strategies or tools of the trade that should be used to facilitate their teaching efforts (Shulman, 1985)..

Grossman (1990) also believes that good teachers take knowledge of their contexts into account when planning. As has been indicated by Shulman (1987), knowledge of context refers to the understanding that teachers have about how they need to adapt their more general knowledge to specific school settings and individual students. Knowledge of context includes: knowledge of the districts in which teachers work, including the opportunities, expectations and constraints imposed by districts; knowledge of the school setting, including the school “culture”, departmental guidelines, and other contextual factors at the level of the school that

affect instruction; knowledge of specific students and communities; and knowledge of students' backgrounds, families, particular strengths and weaknesses, and interests.

#### 2.3.1.7. Knowledge of educational ends, purposes and values and their philosophical and historical backgrounds

This type of knowledge focuses on teachers' visions of what constitutes good education, or what a well-educated scholar might turn out to be when provided with appropriate opportunities and stimulation (Shulman, 1987). However, Shulman (1987) states that while valuable insights are gained about thought and behaviour by studying learning and development in individuals, teachers are expected to be cautious when applying these principles to groups if it is to prove useful for school teaching.

#### 2.3.2. A model of mentoring knowledge

As much as Shulman's (1985) categories of teacher knowledge are useful in identifying the kinds of knowledge that competent teachers should know, Jones and Straker (2006) argue that knowledge for teaching may not be adequate for the enactment of mentorship roles. Effective mentoring requires a different brand of knowledge to that needed for good teaching. Jones et al. (2006) adapted Shulman's model of teacher knowledge into to a model of mentor knowledge to better understand how mentors' knowledge informs their practices when enacting their roles. Jones et al.'s (2006) adaptation of Shulman's (1985) model of teacher knowledge led to their identification of the categories of content knowledge, pedagogical knowledge, pedagogical content knowledge and context knowledge as important knowledge that inform the practices of mentors. Although the categories are similar they mean slightly different things in this model.

#### 2.3.2.1. Pedagogical knowledge

Jones et al's. (2006) maintain that pedagogical knowledge is concerned with the general principles and concepts involved in teaching with particular focus on the knowledge required to work with adult learners (andragogy). Whilst it focuses on the interpersonal skills of the mentoring relationship, it particularly deals with the ability of mentors to build and maintain trusting relationships with their mentees. Jones et al.(2006) believe that such an approach would be informed by a humanistic perspective of learning which suggests that the learning problems which some individuals experience are the result of the difficulties they experience in adapting to the social and physical environments in which they function (Rogers, cited in Wang ,2007). Thus, it can be inferred that learning occurs when opportunities are created for individual self-esteem and confidence to be developed through processes of support and counselling. Thus a mentor needs to know that to effectively perform a mentoring role he/she has to draw on social skills such as warmth, tact, diplomacy and empathy to cultivate healthy relationships. Mentors have to seek appropriate balances of power since they are interacting with adults not children and there is greater potential for conflict which may arise from perceived differences in gender, culture, race and age.

#### 2.3.2.2. Pedagogical content knowledge

Pedagogical content knowledge refers to the strategies mentors employ when working with trainees and newly qualified teachers to promote effective mentoring (Jones et al., 2006). The strategies employed by mentors to develop mentees' competences include modelling good practices, feedback and discussion, collaborative activities, peer observation and team teaching. This knowledge is about good mentors having a grasp of the most effective approaches and methods they should use at specific stages of their mentees' growth to convey their knowledge, skills and expertise. For example, in the early stages of the mentees' development mentors should know that they need to use apprenticeship based strategies such as co-planning and team teaching to build the mentees' confidence but in the later stages effective mentors use co-inquiry and reflective practice to establish collaborative partnerships.

#### 2.3.2.3. Context knowledge

Jones et al.'s (2006) state that context knowledge is a holistic approach to education linked to the wider social, cultural and political context within which education is embedded. It embraces the extent to which mentors possess and are willing to use knowledge which assists mentees in their understanding of the impact of contextual factors on the process of education, and the ability of the mentors to seek the necessary professional actions to amend these where possible (Tickle, 2000, cited in Jones et al., 2006). Knowledge about how critical reflection should take place amongst mentees to gain understanding of the impact of contextual factors on the education process, is important. By implication this would mean that good mentors should have this kind of understanding and should draw on it when mentoring. This would mean for example, that mentors ought to ensure that their mentees' critical reflection is not only confined to the immediate school contexts within which the mentors operate, but should take into account the social, cultural and political contexts within which education is embedded.

#### 2.3.2.4. Content knowledge

Although Jones et al.'s (2006) model of mentor knowledge is an adaptation of Shulman's (1985) model of teacher knowledge, their description of this category of teacher knowledge differs to the that of Shulman (1985) which was described earlier. Jones et al. (2006) state that content knowledge refers to the sources from which mentors acquire knowledge, skills and expertise to inform their work with trainees and newly qualified teachers. The sources identified include mentors' initial training, professional practice and experience as teachers, collaboration with colleagues, mentor training and development, continuing professional development, INSET programmes, research and networking with schools, universities, and colleges, to fulfil their mentoring roles.

## **2.4. CONCLUSION**

In summary this chapter reviewed the international and local literature on the origins of the concept mentor, different views of mentoring, the knowledge base for mentoring, the support functions fulfilled by mentors and the characteristics for effective mentoring relationships. This was followed by an examination of the phases of mentoring, the approaches used in training mentees and a discussion of the benefits of mentoring support for mentors and mentees. The final section of the chapter set out the conceptual framework used for the analysis of the data in this study.

The next chapter discusses the methodology and research design of this study.

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND DESIGN**

#### **3.1. INTRODUCTION**

This chapter has three main sections and its purpose is to provide a clear and detailed description of the research methodology and design. The first section outlines the research paradigm and sampling procedures. The second section deals with the instruments used for data collection and the procedures followed for data analysis and interpretation. The third section describes issues of ethics, the trustworthiness of the research and the limitations of the study. Literature relevant to the various aspects of methodology and design is used to substantiate and validate the choices made.

The key research questions framing this study were:

1. What mentoring knowledge do mentor teachers say informs and underpins their mentorship practices?
2. What strategies do mentor teachers use in enacting their mentorship roles?
3. Where and how do mentor teachers acquire their professional mentoring knowledge?

In response to the aim and main research questions underpinning this study, questionnaires and semi-structured interviews were conducted to generate data.

### 3.2. THE RESEARCH PARADIGM

Bassey (1999, p.42) defines a paradigm as *“a network of coherent ideas about the nature of the world and of the functions of researchers which are adhered to by a group of researchers, conditions and patterns of their thinking that underpins their research actions”*. Positivist, critical and interpretative paradigms are used by researchers to understand social reality and other phenomena in the world (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2007, Neuman, 2000). Before discussing the interpretative paradigm which was chosen for this study, positivist and critical paradigms are briefly discussed.

The positivist paradigm is premised on the belief that the world is stable, that there are patterns, and that order can be discovered in what is researched (Schumacher and Mcmillan, 1993). The world is conceived as rational, it makes sense, and with patient research it can be understood. To make meaning of the world, positivists analyse quantitative data using the logic of statistical analysis. For the positivists “reality is out there” and it can be explained by factual statements.

The interpretive paradigm focuses on the subjective and is interested in the nature of knowledge that is socially constructed. Henning (2004, p.20) states the foundational assumption of interpretivism is that most *“knowledge is gained, or at least filtered, through social constructions such as language and shared meanings”*. For interpretivists knowledge is constructed from the descriptions of people’s intentions, beliefs, values and reasons, meaning making and self-understanding (Henning, 2004). The basic understanding is that the reality of each person’s experience lies within the individual and each participant is subjectively involved in his or her own experiences.

Given the nature of my study and its focus on what knowledge, skills and strategies mentors draw on when enacting their mentorship roles, this study was located within

the interpretive paradigm. Mentors' personal responses, their views, values and experiences were important in obtaining in-depth understanding of their practices when working with trainees and newly qualified educators. The study also explores how mentors make sense of their roles by articulating what sources of mentoring knowledge and the strategies are utilised to inform mentorship practices.

Researchers within the interpretive paradigm also believe that *"knowledge is comprised of multiple sets of interpretations that are part of the social and cultural context in which it occurs"* (Kim, 2003, p.235). This is yet another reason for the location of this study in the interpretive paradigm. The aim of the study was to explore the professional knowledge base that underpins and informs the practices of school-based mentors working with trainees and newly qualified educators. It was envisaged that the knowledge base which mentors draw on when guiding and supporting trainee and novice educators would differ according to the mentors' interpretations of the needs of their mentees and the influences of the schools and educational contexts in which they teach and enact their mentorship roles. The data reveal multiple realities which would be socially constructed according to the individualistic meanings that the mentors attached to the differing teaching contexts.

Situating the study within the interpretive paradigm was also appropriate because it encouraged the *"use of a variety of data and different sources and analysis methods in order to strive for validity"* (Henning, 2004, p.20). Bassey (1999) states that in order to capture and discover meaning in data a researcher has to be immersed in it. In this study interviews were conducted and questionnaires administered to seek rich explanations about the knowledge base that informed the practices of the school-based mentors. Data in a written form was subjected to content analysis to determine common themes and patterns that characterised the information shared by the mentors. The data was then interpreted according to the meanings assigned to them. Descriptive analysis that emphasised deep, interpretive understanding of social phenomena was produced. For example, the challenges and difficulties that the mentors experienced in their interactions with adult learners (mentees) provides a detailed understanding of the importance the mentors attached to drawing on knowledge about effective mentoring relationships when performing their mentoring roles.



### **3.3. SAMPLING PROCEDURES**

To meet the broad aim of the study the sample consisted of two schools which were selected because they facilitated the inclusion of the population i.e. the participants who fulfilled the sample criteria for inclusion in the study. This section of the chapter gives a brief overview of the research context and the choice of participants.

#### **3.3.1. The research context**

The research setting refers to the place where the data is collected (Brink, 2006, p.64). This section of the chapter describes the two urban schools where the study was conducted, gives reasons for the choice of the two schools and briefly outlines how access to conduct research at the schools was gained. The sampling procedures employed to select the participants for the research study are also detailed.

##### **3.3.1.1. Profiling the two urban schools**

The research study was undertaken in two schools in the urban area of Pietermaritzburg in the Umgungundlovu Education District, KwaZulu–Natal. Although one school is a former “Model C”, public school (School A) and the other is a wealthy independent school (School B), the schools are similar in many respects. Both are situated in affluent suburbs and host well maintained buildings and sporting facilities nestled amongst lush trees and gardens. There is a strong emphasis on the holistic development of the learners and on the achievement of academic excellence. Many co-curricular and extra-curricular activities are offered to cater for the diverse talents of the learners. The learners have access to a vast array of cultural activities such as dance, interact clubs, enviro-care and debating societies. To uphold the culture of teaching and learning, the schools have similar staff establishments that cater for the needs of the learners. The staff complement at each school consists of

one principal, two deputy principals, grade heads, school counsellors, sports coaches and support staff. in order to ensure that the possible highest quality education is offered to the learners.

While the research contexts display similarities in several respects they are also different in some ways although not significantly so. School A has a learner enrolment of more than 600 learners and is an English medium school with IsiZulu taught as the first additional language. School B has a learner enrolment of approximately 600 learners and is a dual medium which offers classes in both English and Afrikaans, with IsiZulu taught as the first additional language.

#### 3.3.1.2. The choice of the schools

The choice of the research context was informed by two sampling strategies. Firstly, purposive sampling was deemed appropriate to access people who have in-depth knowledge about particular issues, by virtue of their particular roles, power, access to networks, expertise or experience (Ball, 1990). The two schools were selected on the basis that the schools have well established mentorship programmes, that the mentors have different teaching and mentoring experiences and access to a variety of resources. I wanted to establish to what extent the knowledge base that informs the practices of the mentors at the schools was similar or dissimilar to one another.

I was aware that both the schools selected had established teacher education partnerships with the University of KwaZulu-Natal insofar as the schools are used as sites for Initial Teacher Training programmes with PGCE students. This networking endeavour provided an ideal opportunity to establish to what extent the mentors (educators) draw on knowledge that they acquired through their involvement in this programme to inform their mentoring practices. This sampling strategy selected also reflects aspects of “theoretical sampling and sampling adequacy” (Morse et al, 2002, p.12) since the research participants have knowledge, experience of and perceptions about the research topic. The teachers who served as mentors were expected to be able to reflect on their practices and hopefully although not necessarily, be able to indicate what knowledge good mentors draw on to ensure that they effectively fulfil their roles and responsibilities. In this situation, purposive sampling is useful to *“understand something about those cases without needing or desiring to generalise*

*to all such cases*” (Patton, 2002, p.242). I understood that the experiences of the mentors and the school settings were different and likely to yield data that would be applicable and relevant to each particular contextual site.

Secondly, a strategy of convenience sampling which “*involves choosing the nearest individuals to serve as respondents*” (Cohen *et al*, 2007, p.113) was used in selecting the two schools. The key advantage of using convenience sampling was that no difficulty would be experienced in accessing the schools since they were within close travelling distance from where I reside and work.

### 3.3.1.3. Gaining access to the two schools

Flicks (cited in Cohen *et al.*, 2007) states that when undertaking research it is important that the researcher does not disturb the system and disrupt routines especially if the research is unlikely to have any real benefit to the institution. To minimise interference to the smooth functionality of the two schools that were selected as the research contexts, I carefully planned how I would contact and secure co-operation from the relevant officials and participants.

I arranged the first session telephonically to address the principals on the purpose of my study at their convenience. In all organisations access to respondents has to be formally communicated as this is indicative of good ethical practice. Letters requesting permission and consent for access to conduct this study at the schools was hand-delivered to the principals at their convenience (Refer to Appendix C). I was warmly received by the principals and briefly outlined the purpose of the research study, my interest in the topic of mentorship and reasons for choosing their schools as research sites. I also informed the principals that should I be granted access to conduct the research study, the participation of the mentor teachers at their schools was voluntary and they were free to withdraw from the study at any time. The access letter detailed the nature and purpose of the study, my identity and association with the University of KwaZulu-Natal, as well as the contact details of my supervisor. Both principals granted me permission to conduct research at their schools.

With the approval of the principals I subsequently met the mentor leaders and the mentors at each school. The initial meeting with the participants was used as a

platform to brief them about the purpose of the study and to request their participation. Information on my identity and association with the University of Kwazulu-Natal as well as the contact details of my supervisor was also given to the participants. On the grounds of sound ethical practice they were informed that their participation was voluntary and that they were at liberty to withdraw from the study at any time. The participants were also informed about the ethical conditions which would be observed while conducting the research. They were made aware of issues of confidentiality and anonymity and were reassured that the research would not harm them in any way. Once they agreed to participate, they were asked to sign a consent form (Refer to Appendices D and E) prior to any research being undertaken.

### **3.3.2. Choice of the participants**

Purposive sampling was used in the choice of participants. Nieuwenhuis (2007) states that purposive sampling is usually applied in qualitative research since participants are selected because of some defining characteristics that make them the holders of the data needed for the study. Two schools with mentor leaders/liaison mentors and mentors who had enacted mentorship roles during the course of their professional careers, were selectively identified. The motivation was that they had many years of mentoring experience to reflect on and it was therefore expected that the data collected should indicate the knowledge bases that they draw on to inform their mentoring practices.

In each school ten educators volunteered to complete the questionnaire. Thereafter, on my behalf, from the sample of ten educators, the mentor leaders at each school “suggested” three educators amongst the ten who would be suitable participants for the follow-up, face-to-face individual semi-structured interviews. The mentor leaders were individuals responsible for taking on the leadership position of co-ordinating mentorship programs at the level of the school. The recommended interviewees were individuals whom the mentor leaders believed had insight into the roles and

responsibilities of mentorship by virtue of their experiences in enacting the roles and who would be willing to be interviewed.

Of the six participants chosen for the interviews, five were females and one was male. The mentors (educators) were from different disciplinary backgrounds and had worked with trainee educators. Mentor 1 (M1), Mentor 2 (M2) and Mentor 3 (M3) formed part of the staff complement in school A whilst Mentor 4 (M4), Mentor 5 (M5) and Mentor 6 (M6) teach at school B. A detailed profile of each mentor is discussed in chapter four.

### **3.4. DATA COLLECTION: METHODS AND PROCEDURES**

In this section the data collection methods and procedures used to capture and understand the ‘subjective reality’ of the participants’ knowledge base that informs their mentoring practices, is presented. My motivation for choosing these data collection instruments as well as the benefits and limitations of each method are also briefly outlined. The primary source of data was the participants, and the data was obtained by means of individual semi-structured interviews. The secondary source of data was a mentoring survey in the form of a questionnaire.

#### **3.4.1. Questionnaires**

The choice of a survey questionnaire was considered appropriate to attain the research objectives as the aim was not to infer cause and effect but to gain insight into the knowledge base that mentors draw on in their practices with trainee and beginner teachers. This method is often used to gather data on the population’s views, values and beliefs. Jankowicz (2002) states that the objective of a survey is to assist the researcher to draw generalised conclusions about the issue under investigation. In this study twenty questionnaires were self-administered by the mentors to elicit their views on the areas of knowledge, skills and expertise they draw on in their work with trainees and novice educators.

The semi-structured questionnaire consisted of close- and open-ended questions. The closed questions were mainly used to elicit data on biographical information about each respondent, some detail about the schools themselves, and the participants' enactment of their mentorship roles. Information gathered on the practices of the mentors focused on the mentoring functions they performed, their sources of knowledge for mentoring and the strategies they employed for effective mentoring (Refer to Appendix F). Whilst the insertion of an 'X' facilitated easy coding of the data for the quantitative sections of the questionnaire, Oppenheim (1992) points out that closed questions can be restrictive. They do not allow respondents to add any remarks, qualifications or explanations to the categories, there is a risk that the categories may not be exhaustive, and there may be bias in them.

To address the limitations presented by closed questions two measures were implemented. Firstly, some open-ended questions were included in the questionnaire to meet the broader purpose of the study. Bailey (1994) believes that open-ended questions are useful when the possible answers are unknown and the questionnaire is exploratory. Open-ended questions enable respondents to give detailed responses and to further elaborate about their own individual views or opinions and/or experiences after responding to the closed questions. Secondly, in-depth interviews were conducted to probe further and obtain clarification on some of the issues raised in the questionnaire. The detailed responses were then used to triangulate the data provided from the six individual interviews and to determine what trends or preferences prevailed at the two schools with respect to the knowledge base that mentors access when supporting student and novice educators.

Riley, Wood, Clark, Wilkie, and Szivas (2000) state that piloting a research instrument makes provision for perfection of the questions prior to distribution, therefore I chose to pilot the questionnaire with three educators at a secondary school. The feedback given by the respondents was useful, amongst other things, for checking the clarity of the questionnaire items, instructions, layout and the time it would take to complete the questionnaire. The piloting exercise also increased the validity, reliability and practicability of the instrument.

Upon the finalisation of the questionnaires I met with the mentors and briefed them on the administration of the questionnaires. Each mentor leader assisted me with handing out consent forms and declaration forms (Refer to Appendix D) to the participants prior to the questionnaires which were self-administered. The educators were given two to three weeks to complete and submit them. The advantage of the respondents completing the questionnaire in my absence was that it would give them more time to complete the questionnaires. However, the downside of this approach was that the respondents would not have had the opportunity to address any queries or uncertainties with me and the possibility existed that respondents may have consulted third parties without my knowledge.

### **3.4.2. Semi-structured interviews**

The primary data gathering technique used in the study was the individual semi-structured interview. A semi-structured interview involves a set of pre-designed questions but leaves room for additional questions, probing, and clarifications to be used during the interview. As succinctly described by Cohen *et al.* (2007, p.355) the interview “*is an open situation that allows for greater freedom and flexibility*”.

Silverman (1993) states that interviews in research are useful for gathering facts, assessing beliefs about facts and identifying feelings and motives. Furthermore, they are especially relevant in evaluating the subjective views of the participants and in informing the researcher about activities beyond his/her immediate experience. In this study the main aim of the interview was to obtain sufficient information and a clear understanding of the knowledge base that mentors draw on in their role of supporting mentees to acquire professional knowledge and experience. The participants had an opportunity to express their views openly and freely and were able to share their experiences of mentoring. The questions were intended to elicit responses in relation to the following areas: mentors reasons for becoming mentors, the knowledge needed to be an effective mentor, the strategies and sources of knowledge draw on in the enactment of mentorship roles (Refer to Appendix E).

To facilitate the interview process and to gather rich data, an interview schedule or guide with a list of open questions to be explored during the interview, was prepared. This schedule ensured good use of the limited interview time, made interviewing the subjects more systematic and comprehensive, and helped to keep the interactions focused. Open-ended questions are defined by Kerlinger (1970) as those that put a minimum of restraint on the answers and their expression. although a frame of reference for respondents' answers is supplied. The advantages of using open-ended questions include their flexibility, the opportunity to probe deeply and to clear up misunderstandings. I was able to elicit detailed information about the knowledge, skills and expertise that school-based mentors draw on when working with their mentees.

In order to collect rich, accurate and relevant data, the interviews were tape recorded because "careful recording and processing of interview records can enhance and encourage participation validation" (Anderson, 2001, p.238). However, while tape recordings are useful in this manner, a drawback of this method of data collection is that it does not capture body language and it could be intimidating for participants.

To minimise disruption to the mentors' day-to-day work, the interviews were conducted during the vacation as requested by the participants. The mentor leaders provided me with details about scheduled times during which I set up the interviews. Some of the participants chose to be interviewed in my home while some of them preferred to be interviewed at school as this was most convenient for them. On meeting with the participants I reminded them they were at liberty to withdraw from the study at any time and that their identities would remain confidential. At the interview stage the participants were not required to complete consent and declaration forms as they had previously declared their intent to participate in the interviews and for these to be recorded. I assured them that only my supervisor would have access to the data, and in a way that did not reveal their identities. Once they were comfortable and I responded to the questions raised, I proceeded with the interviews. Since the interview is a 'social encounter', I attempted to meet some of the 'quality criteria' for an 'ideal' interview as suggested by Kavale (1996). Short questions were posed to facilitate longer responses and I followed up and sought clarity on the meanings of relevant aspects of the answers.



One of the advantages of interviewing is that the researcher and participant meet face-to-face which allows for prompting and encouragement by the researcher. The interview process is not rigid; the participants have time to respond, to add to answers provided, and to change their responses. A disadvantage, on the other hand, is that it is prone to subjectivity and bias on the part of the interviewer who gives an account of his/her interpretation of the data shared by the participants (Cohen, 2007).

### **3.5. DATA ANALYSIS**

To determine what knowledge base underpinned the practices of the mentors at the two schools, qualitative data was extracted from a questionnaire that consisted of open-ended questions, and a semi-structured interview.

As previously stated, survey-style questionnaires were distributed to the mentors in the two schools. Only two questionnaires from the sample of twenty questionnaires that were self-administered were not returned. The questionnaires were scrutinised to identify and reduce errors. The open-ended questions were categorised by hand and used to corroborate the data from the interviews. Once the interviews were completed, the tape recorded data was transformed into narrative text. As suggested by Niewenhuis (2007) a word-for-word transcription was done to help minimise researcher bias.

As the research study is qualitative and interpretative in nature, content analysis was selected to code and classify the original information to make sense of what knowledge, skills and expertise underpins the practises of school-based mentors. Wellington (2000) states that as a procedure content analysis refers to the collation, summarisation, coding and sorting of qualitative data into themes, clusters and categories. Gall, Gall, & Borg, (2005, p.315) call this interpretational analysis because it involves a “*systematic set of procedures to classify the data to ensure that important themes, constructs and patterns emerge*”.

McMillan and Schumacher's (1993) recommendations on the organisation of data was implemented. I read through all the transcripts several times with a view to identifying units of analysis or common themes. The creation of units of analysis was achieved by coding the data. Coding has been defined by Kerlinger (cited in Cohen, 2007, p.480) as the translation of question responses and respondent information to specific categories for the purposes of analysis. Cohen (2007, p.480) expands that *"a code is a word or abbreviation sufficiently close to that which it is describing for the researcher to see at a glance what it means"*. Once the data was coded, categories for analysis were identified. Similar ideas expressed by each mentor were grouped together so that patterns could be identified. The segments were then synthesised by noting the list of themes that emerged. These themes included knowledge for teaching and knowledge about mentoring relationships in response to the critical question relating to the knowledge base that mentors use to inform their practices.

The process of classifying the data into various categories of teacher knowledge was not a simple and straightforward process. When examining the data sets it was difficult to determine which aspects of knowledge for teaching the data sets actually represented. For example, it was difficult to determine whether the data which mentor teachers shared actually represented curricular knowledge or pedagogical content knowledge. According to Shulman's (1985) model of teacher knowledge, curricular knowledge is represented by the full range of programmes designed for the teaching of particular subjects and pedagogical content knowledge involves ways of representing particular ideas related to a topics or subjects at a given level to make them understandable to others. The lack of a succinct distinction between the two types of teacher knowledge was a challenging experience when classifying the data.

The analysis of the data also proved challenging because of different conceptualisations of the categories of teacher knowledge that is used as a lens to interpret the data. For example, although Jones et al. (2006) state that their model of mentoring knowledge is an adaptation of Shulman's (1985) model of teacher knowledge, their conceptualisation of content knowledge is different to Shulman's. According to Shulman (1987) content knowledge refers to the organisation of the actual subject matter that is to be learned or taught, in the minds of teachers.

However, for Jones et al. (2006) content knowledge refers to the sources from which the mentors acquire knowledge, skills and expertise to work with trainees and newly qualified teachers. The sources identified included the mentors initial training, professional practice and experience as teachers, networking, and to some extent collaboration with colleagues. Thus the different approaches that Shulman (1985) and Jones et al. (2006) use to describe content knowledge presented challenges with respect to the categorisation of particular data sets. I had to make a decision as to which version of content knowledge I would use as a lens to gain insight into the knowledge base that the teacher mentors draw on to inform their mentoring practices. I finally settled for Shulman's description as I thought this was closely aligned to the knowledge required for teaching, and since the mentor teachers were practising teachers they were likely to draw on this category of teacher knowledge when enacting their mentorship roles.

### **3.6. ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS**

McMillan and Schumacher (2006) state that a credible research design does not only entail selecting informants and effective research strategies but also involves an adherence to research ethics. Ethical behavior limits the choices that can be made in the pursuit of truth. Cavan (cited in Cohen, 2007) states that ethical practice implies that while truth is good, respect for human dignity is better, even if in extreme cases, respect for human nature leaves one ignorant of human nature.

Cohen et al. (2007) maintain that ethical social science research should be underpinned by the principles of autonomy, non-maleficence and beneficence. This means that the researcher must respect the freedom of the participants to conduct their own lives autonomously without external control, coercion or exploitation through participation in research, avoid harming them in any way, and making the research directly or indirectly beneficial to all participants or "more broadly to other researchers or society at large" (McMillan and Schumacher, 1993). In undertaking

this study I attempted to ensure that the principles of autonomy, non-maleficence and beneficence were met.

The mentors at each school were purposefully approached and supplied with detailed information about the study. The consent letters and declaration forms that they were required to sign confirms the respect that was accorded to their autonomy. The participants were also informed that their participation in the study was voluntary and should they decide to withdraw from the study this could be done at any time. They were informed that to protect them from harm the confidentiality of the data was secure and their identities were protected from the general public by the use of codes rather than names. To further conceal the participants' identities they were not required to record their names on the questionnaires. To sustain ethical behavior on the part of the researcher, the interviews were tape-recorded with the permission of all participants and they were interviewed in places that were convenient to them. The participants were also assured that all information collected in the research process would be stored in a safe place.

With respect to the principle of beneficence, the purpose of this research was not to directly benefit the participants. If the participants benefit either directly or indirectly this outcome would be a by-product of the research. Frankfort-Nachmias and Nachmias (1992) state that the benefits which participants derive from the research they engage in is related to the satisfaction of making a contribution to science and greater personal understanding of the research area under investigation. This study is expected to generate knowledge that will provide insight into what knowledge, skills and expertise mentors draw on when enacting mentorship roles. While the participants could benefit from the research findings, the aim of this study was to benefit directly and more broadly other researchers in the field of education, especially in the area of school-based mentoring, since this is a relatively new area of research in South Africa and in teacher education.

Other ethical considerations although not directly connected to the participants relate to the three different avenues that were pursued to acquire permission to conduct the study. Firstly, formal ethical clearance was obtained from the Faculty Research Committee of the University of KwaZulu-Natal (Refer to Appendix A). Formal

permission from the Department of Education to conduct the research at the schools was obtained prior to any approach being made to the schools. Thirdly, permission to conduct the study at the two schools was also sought from the principals (Refer to Appendix C).

### **3.7. ENSURING RIGOUR IN THE STUDY**

Lacey and Luff (2007) maintain that because there are researchers ‘out there’ who do not favour qualitative analysis as it tends to be anecdotal, the skill of an interpretivist researcher to demonstrate that the data analysis is indeed rigorous, is of paramount importance. In this section the issues of validity, reliability and objectivity that were important in ensuring rigour during the research study, are discussed.

Cohen et al. (2007, p107) maintain that *“internal validity seeks to demonstrate that the explanation of a particular event, issue or set of data which a piece of research provides can actually be sustained by the data.”* In this study I attempted to ensure validity by undertaking several measures. I ensured that the questionnaire and the interview guides focused on content validity which is concerned with how accurately the questions tended to elicit the information in response to the research questions (Refer to Appendix F and Appendix G). To further demonstrate validity in the study I undertook ‘triangulation’ to protect myself against researcher bias. *“Triangulation may be defined as the use of two or more methods of data collection in the study of some aspect of human behaviour”* Cohen (2007, p.141). I did this by cross-checking and corroborating the qualitative data in the self-administered questionnaires with the responses of the interviewees. Content analysis was used to identify codes, categories and themes that were common to the data in the two collection methods. This served as a form of triangulation and I obtained reasonable consistency, though not all the time. I would like to point out that in addition to the triangulated data being used to corroborate the findings from one data source against the other, the data was also

used determine the extent to which the findings from the two sources questioned or contradicted one another.

The trustworthiness of the study was established by due consideration of the issue of reliability. Burns et al. (2005) state that reliability refers to the precision and accuracy of research instruments used. A reliable instrument is one which if used on a similar group of participants in a similar context would yield similar results. One way to enhance reliability of the research instrument in qualitative research is by training and practice. In this study, piloting the questionnaire assisted me in determining whether the questions were correct, clear and understandable although I concede that as a novice researcher I did not regard my research study as totally reliable. The use of both questionnaires and interviews as methods to gather information also assisted with reliability.

To ensure I remained objective in my research approach I fully transcribed all the interviews word for word although this process was very time-consuming. Cohen et al. (2007, p.365) suggest that this is an essential measure when using interview data because there is the potential for massive data loss, distortion and the reduction of complexity if this step is not adhered to. To fairly and accurately represent the multiple 'truths' of the data collected and to address concerns about the qualitative researcher having sole power of interpretation, I made the transcripts of the interview data available to the respondents to verify if they were accurate representations of their opinions and their thoughts. I also telephoned the respondents to obtain clarification of data I was unsure about and to gather any additional information I needed during the analysis process.

To further reduce researcher bias, I attempted to be as objective as possible when I conducted the interviews. I was accurately aware of my own enactment of the mentorship role and my attitude towards the phenomenon, and therefore allowed the mentors to speak freely about their interpretation of what mentoring knowledge bases inform their practices in performing their mentoring roles. To encourage participants to respond openly and honestly, I ensured that I did not utter leading statements and that the participants understood the questions.

### **3.8. LIMITATIONS OF THIS STUDY**

The following limitations have been identified in this study.

Firstly, there is a limitation with respect to the sample used in the study. It was a small scale study that could not be generalised in broader terms as it was informed by a particular context and location. Only two schools in the Pietermaritzburg region were chosen for this study, therefore the findings from this study will not be representative of all schools in Pietermaritzburg. In addition only three mentor teachers from each school were interviewed therefore it cannot be presumed that their views are representative of the views of all mentor teachers at their schools or of those at other schools in Pietermaritzburg. This study at best gives insight to identify constructs but further research will have to be conducted in order to gain further and more representational insight. This is one of the inherent limitations of small scale studies. However I am also mindful that the aim of the research study was to probe deeply to understand an aspect of the field of mentoring in a particular context, rather than wanting to make general claims about all schools in south Africa.

Secondly, for a large part of my career I have enacted the role of a mentor. While the depth of my understanding of the mentoring field which I have gained is useful, I also acknowledge that my experiences may have affected my research interpretations. As such I needed to reflect on the research process and to assess how far, and in what way, my interpretations of the data were affected by my experiences. There was no easy way out of this dilemma. All I could do was acknowledge the problem and be reflexive throughout the research process.

### **3.9. CONCLUSION**

This chapter outlined the research methodology and design of the study. In this chapter the research paradigm and a brief description of the context of the study were discussed. The study is an interpretive, qualitative study that seeks to investigate the

knowledge base that informs the practices of school-based mentors. I designed and considered the use of questionnaires and semi-structured interviews as the sources of data. Finally in this chapter the method of data analysis, issues of ethics, trustworthiness of the research and limitations of the study were examined.

The next chapter focuses on the presentation of the data.



## **CHAPTER FOUR**

### **DATA PRESENTATION**

#### **4.1. INTRODUCTION**

This chapter focuses on the presentation of the qualitative data for this study which was gathered through survey questionnaires and semi-structured interviews. The purpose of the study was to investigate the kinds of knowledge that mentors draw on when working with trainee and novice teachers. The original data contained in the transcripts was subjected to content analysis to identify units of analysis that depicted common themes across the data. I used the procedures of coding and classification to obtain themes that accurately portray the views of the participants. In addition I have selected direct excerpts from the interview data to illustrate the emerging categories and themes, and to illustrate a particular understanding or perception of the participants relating to the knowledge base for mentoring that informs the practices of the school-based mentors.

I start by firstly presenting the profiles of all six mentors who were interviewed in the study. My intention is to paint a picture of their uniqueness and their similarities with respect to their years of service in the educational field and more specifically the length of period they have been enacting mentorship roles. I also probed to discover their views about their experiences in the mentoring programmes implemented at the level of their schools.

I then discuss the themes identified by all the participants in relation to the three main research questions below:

1. What mentoring knowledge do mentor teachers say informs and underpins their mentorship practices?
2. What strategies do mentor teachers use in enacting their mentorship roles?
3. Where and how do mentor teachers acquire their professional mentoring knowledge?

## 4.2. PROFILING THE SCHOOL-BASED MENTORS

### 4.2.1. Mentor One (M1)

M1 is a female educator who has been teaching Arts and Culture and Dramatic Arts at an ex Model C school. She has been in the teaching fraternity for eighteen years and has recently enrolled for a Masters degree in Education. M1 lives a stone's throw away from me but was keen that the interview be conducted at my home. She indicated that her little children who were on school holidays would not allow us to conduct the interview without interrupting us. She arrived promptly as per our scheduled appointment and after some "teacher talk" we began an intense but insightful interview which lasted for over an hour.

M1's own experiences as a teacher motivated her to assume the position of mentor leader at her school for the past seven years. She revealed that when she was appointed to her current school she felt that although she was a seasoned teacher, she would have benefited from being properly inducted and orientated into the school context. This is evident from the following sentiments which she shared:

*I found that when I went to my new school there were a lot of things I could have benefited from having had a mentor take me through the procedures. So it is with that kind of experience that I had, I thought that I would make a difference to new members of staff that were coming in.*

M1 is extremely passionate about mentoring trainee and newly qualified teachers and therefore expressed her dismay and discontent about the lack of proper mentoring support systems for mentees. She firmly believes that mentoring programmes should be formalised at all schools, especially since mentoring is widely implemented in other career fields to improve practice and support beginners entering different professions. She said:

*I require training but I doubt I shall receive it here in South Africa because mentoring is not recognised as being important in the teaching fraternity. It happens in other career paths, for example lawyers have to be articled clerks before they are admitted into the profession. Doctors are being mentored before they are up-graded, they cannot simply move on. That does not happen for teachers as it is not a formalised procedure for us.*

#### **4.2.2. Mentor Two (M2)**

My meeting with M2 took place at her school after negotiating a time slot that was convenient for her. Her school is one of the most sought after public schools in Pietermaritzburg. The school is widely acclaimed for its excellence in providing a holistic education for the girls who attend from Grades 8 to 12. Upon meeting with M2, I was immediately struck by her warm and friendly disposition. She escorted me to her counselling room that provided a relaxed atmosphere where I felt very much at ease to begin the interview.

She has had interesting and varied career experiences. She has been in the fortunate position to make a contribution to both the private and public sectors. She attained a Masters Degree in Educational Psychology and her qualification in counselling equipped her to open her own private practice and also to serve as the counsellor at her current school. She revealed that she has contributed to the field of education over the past 30 years largely in the capacity of counsellor although she has also been teaching Life Orientation. She volunteered that her position as a counsellor meant that she has served as a mentor her entire career, but in a more formal role over the last eight years.

It was evident from my interview with her she was passionate about making a meaningful contribution to education. Our meeting took place at the point of her imminent departure from the profession. She expressed mixed emotions at this juncture of her life and appeared sad that her career was drawing to a close but was also eagerly looking forward to her retirement. From her reminiscences about her role as a mentor, it was evident that she enjoyed the position although she did not volunteer to be a mentor but was approached by the liaison mentor to assist with this process. In her words: *“We would like to support education in any way we can and helping in the training of teachers is one of those ways, so some of us were approached, and we became mentors”*.

#### **4.2.3. Mentor Three (M3)**

M3 is a female educator who teaches Economic Management Sciences and Accounting in the same school as M1 and M2. She has served the profession for 23 years both as part-time and full-time educator. She has been a mentor for five years and has supervised and guided seven trainee educators. M3 did not volunteer to mentor university students but was requested to assist with the mentoring programme by the mentor leader at her school. She took on the position largely out of interest and subsequently has been called upon to help whenever the need arose. She admitted during the interview that while she enjoyed being a mentor there were both challenges and rewards associated with enacting the role.

The interview which lasted for about an hour took place at my home at her request, during the July vacation. At the onset of the interview she indicated that she was apprehensive about whether the information she would be sharing would be accurate as she felt her mentoring experience of five years was inadequate. I allayed her fears by indicating that there were no right or wrong answers to any of the questions that would be asked. In addition I informed her that she was at liberty to withdraw from the study if she wanted to and that a transcript of the interview would be forwarded to her to give her the opportunity to rectify any distorted perceptions of her responses. Sharing this information eased her plight and she then settled in easily to be interviewed. At the end of the interview over a refreshing cup of tea and some delicious snacks she expressed surprise that she had so much to share on the topic of mentoring.

#### **4.2.4. Mentor Four (M4)**

Situated in the green-belt of Pietermaritzburg is the site of the school where M4 teaches. The all girls school which caters for Grade RR through to Grade 12 has breath-taking views. Girls who enrol at the school are attracted to it from throughout the country as the school provides boarding facilities. The school offers a broad

holistic curriculum that provides opportunities for every girl to discover and develop their own talents. The girls are encouraged to believe in themselves and value their own abilities.

M4 is a female educator who has been involved in education for 30 years in a secondary school. She currently teaches Geography at the FET phase and has lectured Geography to part-time PGCE students who attend the local university. She also has a total of sixteen years experience as a mentor at the University of KwaZulu-Natal and at her current school. She is the mentor leader at the school and is responsible for the placement of trainee teachers who are assigned to the school as a result of the school's partnership with the university. She expressed the sentiment that she enjoys her role as a mentor as it afforded her the opportunity to share her knowledge and to guide and support young people who enter the profession for the first time.

Once M4 had committed to assisting me with my research study she was unwavering in her support although she faced overwhelming demands at the private institution where she taught. She followed through on her promises and she set up appointments with the other mentor participants for interviews. In addition, she eagerly consented to my meeting her at the school to conduct the interview despite her being on holiday.

#### **4.2.5. Mentor Five (M5)**

My meeting with M5 took place on the same morning when I conducted the interview with M4 but at a different pre-arranged time at the school. The interview was conducted at the school as M5 felt that this was the most appropriate meeting place for both of us. This arrangement suited me perfectly as it saved me time instead of travelling back and forth between my home and the school site. M5 indicated that she had been teaching for a period of 30 years with her experience being confined to the primary phase level. She has a Masters in Education

qualification. She has found mentoring to be a highly rewarding experience and has mentored students for approximately 11 years. She stated:

*I think it is also just the love of being an educator and also seeing younger people who are actually keen to maintain or follow the route we have followed. And as I have said earlier also the fact you see some of them really blossom and grow.*

Upon my meeting with M5, it seemed she was a people person and would be ideally suited to performing the role of a mentor. She had an affable nature and throughout our interactions focused on the affective dimensions of mentoring relationship. She came across as a ‘motherly figure’ who was deeply concerned about the welfare of her charges.

*It has made me realise that we must not always run young people down that are still learning and trying to become something. We can't and it irritates me terribly when I hear somebody say "I would hate if so and so is my child's teacher, they can't do this and that." This annoys me intensely because what are these girls here for?*

This quote alerts us to her being aware of the need to support those who are still learning. Mentors are individuals who ought to understand and know that student and newly qualified educators would never have the same breadth of experience as someone who has been in the profession for a relatively long period.

#### **4.2.6. Mentor Six (M6)**

M6 is a male educator who has taught at a secondary school a period of 31 years. He is the head of the Department for Music and his qualifications are a Bachelor of Music (Education) and a Higher Diploma in Education degree. He has mentored students for a duration of six years and was been appointed by the mentor liaison person at the school to guide and support student teachers. He indicated his reasons for becoming a mentor were mundane and related mainly to the context in which he was teaching. Since he taught English to learners at the junior level it was perceived by the management team at the school that mentoring students would not be overwhelming for him in comparison to other teachers responsible for teaching

learners at the senior secondary phase. At the beginning stages of the interview I was led to believe that M6 felt mentoring trainee students caused him some level of inconvenience. On responding to the question as to whether he enjoyed his role as a mentor he responded:

*Parts are enjoyable and parts are not. The fact that you have to suddenly re-think precisely what you are doing at Grade 8 level. It's because you have been doing it for so long, there is a level at which you can operate off the cuff.*

However as the interview proceeded I had to hastily retract my preconception of his mentor characteristics because it was apparent that M6 was passionate about his role and cared deeply for the mentees. He played a supportive role when directing the mentees and was always accessible to them. He said:

*I just try to be as sympathetic as possible and say to them "try whatever you want to." Later I would follow up "Did it work, did it not work partly?"*

This excerpt amongst others which are reflected in the chapter, indicate that M6 is sensitive to the needs of the mentees and indeed does his best to support his mentees in their learning process.

#### **4.3. THE KNOWLEDGE BASE INFORMING MENTOR PRACTICES**

This section deals with an examination of the knowledge base that mentors said informed and underpinned their mentorship practices. Findings from the data revealed that mentors identified two main categories of knowledge that were critical to informing their practices with student and newly qualified educators. These are knowledge related to teaching, and knowledge of mentoring relationships.

##### **4.3.1. Knowledge related to teaching**

An analysis of the data shows that in response to the question on what mentoring knowledge informs and underpins mentorship practices, the majority of the mentors

draw on their knowledge related to teaching. More specifically, the components of knowledge that emerged from the data pertaining to teaching included good subject knowledge and an understanding of curriculum, use of appropriate teaching methods, strategies for classroom management, organisational and administrative skills, issues relating to learner diversity, and orientating mentees to the school context.

#### 4.3.1.1. Good subject knowledge and an understanding of the curriculum

In identifying what mentoring knowledge they use for mentoring, mentors indicated that knowledge about subject matter and the policies that guide the implementation of the curriculum were key to their mentoring roles. For example, M1 stated that good subject knowledge and an understanding of the curriculum is important knowledge for effective mentoring. She said *“I think that you have to have very good subject knowledge. As a mentor there are many instances where I have to build my students’ subject knowledge.”*

Drawing on her experiences as a teacher, M5 pointed out that it was important to possess a sound understanding of subject content knowledge when mentoring novice and newly qualified teachers. She saw herself as an expert in her field and therefore set out to guide and support the mentee by sharing her expertise. She described her role as follows:

*You have to know your subject in order to impart that knowledge to other people, especially with Zulu, it is good to impart that kind of knowledge, be it the students or the children.*

The value that some mentors attached to student and novice educators’ development of insight into subject matter is also evident in M4’s evaluation of the adequacy of the PGCE programme in preparing beginning educators. M4 remarked that there was a disjuncture between the mentees’ training and their knowledge of subject content. Many students lacked content knowledge in specialist subjects making it difficult for mentors to provide feedback, especially to students who were not receptive to being criticised. She said:

*I may be generalising now but it is our biggest area of concern that their content knowledge is very limited, particularly when you are looking at Technology, LO. The kind of students that are coming in*



*doing GET maths only have matric maths, so specialising in some of these areas is difficult as their background is pretty shaky. They are being allowed to offer these as teaching subjects and this makes it difficult for the mentor and that is when they probably do not listen to criticism.*

M4 felt that students without enough knowledge about a particular subject should not be allowed to teach these subjects. The university should take on the responsibility of training the students to teach these subjects.

The emphasis that the mentors placed on effective mentors drawing on subject content knowledge to inform their mentoring practices is reflective of Shulman's (1987) view that in order to teach effectively, teachers must be acquainted with the content knowledge of a subject. This requires an understanding of the structures of the subject which include both substantive and syntactic structures (Scwab, 1978 cited in Shulman, 1987). This indicates that a lack of content knowledge may affect the level of classroom discourse and how teachers critique and use textbooks. Good mentors therefore ought to explain to their mentees how their knowledge of the subject and its organising structures would impact their teaching. Gold (1996) also asserts that the role of mentors is to assist beginning teachers in understanding the structures of subject matter.

Insight into the knowledge base related to teaching also revealed that some mentors felt unpacking what is contained in curriculum policy on assessment practices and lesson planning is critical to the career development and learning of the students' they teach. M1 set up meetings with the mentees to draw their attention to specific aspects of policy that would impact on their planning when assuming the role of a teacher. This is illustrated in the following excerpt:

*I think that you also have to know the curriculum very well, the way in which the curriculum is being unfolded is not done in depth, it is not enough. The initial meetings that you have with the students are very important. You have to say these are the learning outcomes, these are the assessment standards we use.*

This is in line with Shulman's (1987) and Grossman's "curricular knowledge category" in which both theorists maintain that effective teaching requires educators to embody a sound understanding of the "full range of programs designed for the teaching of particular subjects and topics at a given level, and the variety of

instructional materials available in relation to those programs” (Shulman, 1985, p.10). The mentors draw on their knowledge of assessment contained in curriculum policy to ensure the student teachers successfully integrate the learning outcomes and assessment standards.

M3 also revealed that sharing knowledge about assessment was integral to her role as mentor. This is clearly evident in the quotations below which relate to assessment practices. She said *“I think that mentors need to know good assessment strategies.....”* and *“They need to realise that if they are setting an assessment it must be a fair assessment. Often people open the textbook, photocopy something and it may not be directed to the learners in the classroom and one has to actually say ‘Is that fair to the learners?’ ”*. This implies that educators need to act with integrity and be aware that they have to be thorough when setting assessments at all times. She further elaborated that when she sets assessments she ensures they are of a high standard, that her marking procedures follow set guidelines, that the instructions are clear and that the tests cater for different learner ability levels:

*I think that the assessment must have a combination of high, middle and low order questions. This must be made absolutely clear to the mentee. This is often one of the things that people don’t do well. Instructions must be clear and one must mark rigidly according to a model answer.*

M3 elaborated and said when conducting assessments she adheres to specific guidelines regarding the regulations that apply to procedural steps. Assessment practice involves a process during which mentees and learners are expected to conduct themselves professionally and assessments are administered fairly. She abides by the standards set so that the integrity of the assessments is not compromised:

*For example if the exam has started one cannot give extra time to the learners. Rather it is important to acknowledge that perhaps the time allocated has been insufficient and one needs to adjust the mark scheme accordingly.*

In order for mentees to acquire a holistic and realistic perception of what assessment involved in terms of the workload of a teacher, M6 mentor encouraged mentees to be actively involved in the planning and evaluation of the tasks set. As a result of

mentees assuming full responsibility for the assessment task they were able to gain knowledge about the actual roles and responsibilities of a full-time teacher and the challenges one is likely to encounter:

*The one thing that they are often not too keen on is the assessment of the work. Sometimes I think “You set the essay, you now have twenty seven essays to mark and now you have to do that. This is sometimes a bit of a shock to the system for them. This is going to take up quite a bit of their time.*

Thus, by drawing on their experiences of setting assessments in the school context and adopting the role of systematic trainers M3 and M6 encouraged the mentees to develop their skills in assessment through practical training. By making the mentees take on the role of apprentices the mentees gained a comprehensive understanding of assessment practices which is a key component of knowledge required for effective teaching.

The mentors believed that to improve the quality of mentoring the practices of effective mentors are informed by a knowledge base associated with setting high standards for assessment. This entails adherence to proper marking guidelines, clearly defined instructions are in place, questions set cater for the different ability levels of the learners and the assessments are administered fairly. This confirms the view that when advancing the learning of their students good teachers draw on either the category of teacher knowledge referred to as pedagogical knowledge (Shulman, 1987) or pedagogical content knowledge (Grossman, 1992). In this case, mentors need to possess a knowledge base of a repertoire of generic assessment strategies that they draw on when supporting mentees to adequately fulfil the professional role and responsibility of an assessor of learner performance (Norms and Standards, 2000).

#### 4.3.1.2. Knowledge of appropriate teaching methods

From the data I also established that some mentors drew on their knowledge about specific teaching techniques that worked well for them as teachers when enacting the mentorship role. They chose teaching methods that simplified the teaching of the subject content and led to improved learner behaviour.

M2 indicated that when teaching Life Orientation she uses techniques that stimulate discussion and encourages learners to share their life experiences. She took cognisance that a subject like Life Orientation does not have a strong theoretical foundation hence orientating her learners to the subject content requires a different approach compared to other specialist subjects. In addition, she varied her approaches to teaching between whole class discussions to group discussions as the variation in teaching strategies were effective mechanisms to maintain discipline in the classroom. This was important teacher knowledge that M2 shared with her mentees. She articulated:

*You have to try and share all this with the mentees and to encourage them to change activities in a lesson because you are not dealing with a lot of theory as in other subjects. Your approach has to be more personal, open and have plenary discussions. When that gets a bit noisy the class is broken up into groups and each group will discuss a topic and there will be a report back. One has to also use role play and all of the techniques of teaching, these are the practical aspects of teaching.*

The quotation below further illustrates the significance that M2 attached to drawing the attention of the mentees to making wise choices with respect to the teaching methods that are most appropriate to deliver the curriculum. The teacher has a critical role to play in stimulating dialogue and interaction with the learners. She said:

*In LO you can't just say to them "open the book and refer to page 6 and complete exercise twelve" or whatever. You have to be interacting with them. You very much work in front in a subject like LO but in other subjects you may not have to interact at that level.*

M1 a drama teacher also valued sharing knowledge about specific techniques that simplified the teaching of the subject. She explained that teaching drama requires her to have specialist knowledge and that it was not a subject that could be effectively taught by everybody: *"In terms of putting on a production she had to know some of the dramatic techniques. She had to come with that kind of knowledge into the classroom."*

In enacting the mentorship role, M3 also emphasized that good mentors alert mentees to the importance of selecting the most appropriate teaching strategies and resources to represent the subject matter. Good teachers use media and everyday resources appropriately to ensure the learners are engaged in a meaningful way. By implication a resourceful teacher designs the lesson so the best possible teaching resources are used to simplify learning for learners with different learning styles and learning abilities. Sharing knowledge of teaching resources with the mentees was important to how learners would eventually understand the subject material. This is reflected in the following excerpt:

*I told her that she must be selective about the websites that she chooses and that she must put together something that is easier for the learners to understand. In the future she did. She was more discriminating in terms of the resources she used and how she used the board. She learnt that children were very concrete and that this was far too abstract, just walking around dictating notes and large words.*

Likewise, when working with student and novice educators M3 shared knowledge on a variety of teaching strategies to ensure the pace of the lesson is not compromised therefore negatively affecting the delivery of the curriculum. M3 revealed that although she had advised her mentee to vary teaching approaches used the mentee chose not to act on her advice and later discovered through her own difficult experiences the problems that can be encountered if inappropriate strategies are used to represent the subject content:

*I find that group work goes very slowly and that very often the self discovery takes a longer time than if you impart the knowledge. The last student who had free reign with group work herself came back and said "This is taking forever, I think I will have to stop the group work now and do some straight teaching or one-to-one teaching.*

M6 communicated he shares knowledge on innovative and creative strategies uses to promote an understanding of the subject. He believes that utilizing exciting and stimulating teaching strategies ensures the learners remain focused on the lesson. He outlined what he did as a teacher to capture and sustain the interest of the learners and tried to explain his approach to the mentee:

*I have a reasonable amount of experience in play production and I know that I read in a way that keeps them attentive. I am able to modify my voice into different characters. I maybe blowing my own trumpet, but it is just something that I can do. I am lucky enough to be able to do this. It was quite hard to get him to do it and I don't think that I was able to get him to succeed at it. But it may have planted the seed into his mind that when you read a poem, it is not just reading it to the class, you are on a stage and you have to sell it and it takes up quite a bit off effort.*

The knowledge of appropriate teaching methods that the mentors draw upon when working with mentees mirrors Shulman's (1987) identification of pedagogical content knowledge, as a key component of the knowledge base for effective teaching. Pedagogical content knowledge involves ways of representing particular ideas related to a topic or a subject at a given level that makes them understandable to others (Shulman, 1987). That is to say how do teachers who already know and understand their subjects in particular ways learn to transform their knowledge into representations that make sense to their students. They may choose to use analogies, illustrations, examples or demonstrations as forms of representation to simplify what is being taught. Similarly, the teaching approaches the mentors adopted were dependent on the specialist nature of the subjects they taught. Through their wisdom of practice mentors have come to the realization that an understanding of the content of Life Orientation is promoted through a more personal and open approach while teaching Dramatic Arts or English requires educators to be familiar with dramatic skills.

#### 4.3.1.3. Teacher knowledge pertaining to learner needs

When guiding and supporting the career development of their mentees, mentors drew on the insight they gained into the needs of learners on account of teaching them. Owing to their experiences of teaching they understand and know children learn and think differently therefore when planning, good teachers address and accommodate the needs of the learners.

On the issue of diversity some mentors highlighted that as teachers they were selective that the subject content and strategies are appropriate to the abilities of the learners in the different grades. For example, M2 pointed out "*I also explain to them that they have to vary things between the classes, example a bright class or weaker*

*class, will deal with the exact same topic in a very different way*". M1 expressed a similar view when she said *"Are they doing anything to weed out the weaker learner? What is it that they are doing to extend the dynamic child that is enthusiastic and interested?"* In drawing on her knowledge of teaching, M1 suggests that good teachers plan extension activities for the high achieving learners so their need to be constantly challenged to achieve at a higher level is met. Similarly, M6 stated that since children think at either a concrete or abstract level she takes this into account when planning lessons:

*Quite often I will say "That is suitable for grade 9 or 10". They have difficulty in pitching it in terms of where a grade 8 learner is. Some of them are so concrete, they need to know what skills they will have to use. They will need to know how they are going to assess those skills. How are they going to explain to the children what they want them to do (M6, p.4).*

Whilst Shulman (1987) suggests that competent teachers utilize knowledge of learners and their characteristics to select strategies that enable them to think their way from the subject matter into the minds and the motivations of the learners, the mentors have revealed that they also draw on their knowledge of the diversity that exists amongst learners with respect to their abilities when planning for classrooms. As mentors they are mindful to vary their approach when teaching particular topics or assessing competence amongst learners with differing ability levels. Since learners have different learning styles and multiple intelligences the mentors planned lessons and assessment in different ways to accommodate the diverse needs of the learners.

The mentors also draw on Shulman's (1987) category of curricular knowledge for teaching, more specifically the mentors' access to vertical knowledge. The category of vertical knowledge is about good teachers realizing that while certain topics and issues are taught within the same subject area during the preceding and later years there exists a need for them to use materials and approaches that make it understandable for learners at a particular level of maturity. Lessons should not be pitched at levels that are beyond the grasp of the learners.

#### 4.3.1.4. Knowledge of effective classroom management, organisational and administrative skills

From the data it emerged that the generic knowledge mentors shared with mentees pertaining to teaching differed according to the following categories: classroom management, organisational and administrative skills. However, it is worth noting that what amounted to good practice in each category ensured that the culture of teaching and learning is upheld while simultaneously ensuring that the mentees needs are not compromised.

Several mentors revealed that good mentors also offer guidance to beginning teachers on appropriate disciplinary skills or techniques that lead to better classroom control. For example, M3 described how she used her personal experiences to illustrate how she is able to discipline learners in a firm but fair manner. She explained

*We have found out that when you have children in a hall and if they are told not to talk they will not stop talking, therefore they are told before they go into the hall. You establish control, you establish discipline and it is easier to maintain. Once you have lost discipline it is quite difficult to regain it. So think that the things that we have learnt about general child management from experience we can then impart that to the mentees.*

M6 also shared his thoughts on how he is able to communicate the subject content to his learners while maintaining discipline. This indicates his resourcefulness in multi-tasking and keeping his pulse on the dynamics of the classroom:

*Often it is very simple things like you always look here and you never look here, you have kids sitting here who may try and get up to other things because you are not including them.*

Although M6 used strategies to maintain discipline, he pointed out that not all disturbances in the classroom are necessarily harmful. As a teacher M6 used his discretionary abilities to determine when the misbehaviour displayed by some learners warranted his intervention: *“Or if sometimes there is a little bit of a disruption they think that everything is falling apart. There is some disruption at times and if you just ignore it goes away. There is going to be disruption at some*



*point but you just learn to judge what needs your response and what does not".* Not all interruptions are necessarily disruptive therefore as an educator he has developed a sense of knowing when he needed to overlook certain disruptions to facilitate continuity of the lesson.

Drawing on her experiences of teaching M2 also explained she maintains discipline by employing two measures. Firstly, thorough planning is critical to keeping learners meaningfully occupied: *"By keeping the material relevant, illustrating stuff well and capturing their interest and of course by changing the activities. By changing the activities you improve their concentration and therefore should have no disciplinary problems."* Secondly, as an educator she establishes herself as the authority figure in the classroom so that learners take her seriously. This is possible to achieve whilst according respect to the learners and refraining from resorting to emotional or physical abuse.

*So what I encourage them to do is to expect manners, I will wait until the class is quiet and I will say to them "I am waiting," and if they are still noisy "I am still waiting", until the class begins to get embarrassed and the other kids will help me with the discipline by saying "Shush, Shush."*

The interview data also revealed that mentors considered it important to share practical knowledge related to teaching that would assist the mentees cope with paperwork and other details of the day-to-day work of teachers. Some mentors showed the mentees how to structure a worksheet or compile a teaching file and where to access a photocopier. M6 stated that *"it can be simple mundane things like how do you prepare a worksheet"* and M1 indicated *"I show them how I keep my own teaching file. The one that contains all my lesson plans....., my resources and my tests and assessments"*.

Based on her own personal experiences of teaching M1 also shared knowledge on how the mentees could effectively plan for the day and the week and compile a teacher file: *"They need to know how to keep a little day book. Because of the number of classes that I teach I have picked up the idea of a day book which is similar to a forecast.* M1 also said that the mentoring knowledge that informs her work with her mentees also pertains to the administrative tasks she undertakes as a teacher *"I show them how you would keep a mark book because they will be expected*

*to keep records. And then as much as they need to keep a teacher practical file I show them how I keep my own teaching file.”* In addition she stated *“I take them through simple things like knowing how to mark a register. These kinds of things are not covered in PGCE.”*

Fairbanks et al. (2000) have pinpointed that sharing direct advice and instruction with regard to how mentees balance teaching and administrative duties, their studies and facets of their personal lives were issues considered pertinent by mentors. Mentees who are not properly supervised with undertaking administrative tasks are overwhelmed with the great demands placed on them. Mentors play critical roles in assisting the mentees to cope with the copious volume of administrative tasks by educating them on how they ought to prioritize tasks that require completion. In enacting the mentoring role the mentors draw on Shulman’s (1987) pedagogical knowledge category of teacher knowledge to inform their practices. Generic administrative skills such as structuring a worksheet, compiling a teacher file and marking a register which the mentors acquired during their teaching practice were shared with the mentees so they would be able to fulfil the demands of teaching.

In summary the data presented indicates that during the enactment of the mentorship role the mentors largely draw on their teaching knowledge, skills and expertise when supporting the professional development of the mentees. The findings suggest that the mentors extensively draw on different categories of teacher knowledge when supporting their mentees. Pedagogical content knowledge, curricular knowledge, pedagogical knowledge and knowledge of learners and their characteristics (Shulman, 1987; Grossman, 1990; Jones, 2006) provide a knowledge base for mentors to advance their work when supporting trainee and newly qualified educators.

#### **4.3.2. An understanding of mentoring relationships**

In addition to the knowledge for teaching, data from this study revealed that most mentors believed to mentor effectively they had to have insight into the affective

dimensions of the mentoring relationships. Teachers who are experts in the classroom and who have knowledge for teaching viz. knowledge of the subject matter, knowledge of the curriculum and knowledge of appropriate teaching approaches etc. may not necessarily be the most suitable individuals for the mentoring role. In providing quality pastoral care the mentors identified aspects such as meeting the emotional needs of the mentees, developing insight into the stages of development of the mentees professional growth and the possession of particular interpersonal skills as key to establishing healthy mentor-mentee relationships.

#### 4.3.2.1. Knowledge of the emotional needs of the mentees

As a result of their interactions with the mentees over a period of time findings indicate that when mentoring student and beginner teachers, mentors drew on their knowledge of which needs of the mentees needed satisfying so bonding between them and the mentees is strengthened. The mentors indicted as astute mentors they identified and acknowledged specific needs of mentees and attended to these in the best possible ways.

Mentors stated that one of the main ingredients for cultivating positive mentoring relationships was to accord the mentees respect and for them in turn to be respected. The quotation below reveals M1 demonstrated her respect for her mentees by choosing to share her views about knowledge related to teaching in a non-challenging and democratic manner. She refrained from persuasively offering guidance to her mentees and made non-compelling suggestions about a way forward so they develop their own understandings of what to do as teachers. *“They will often come and say “I planned it like this but it did not quite go like that”. Then I will say “Did you think about this, maybe you should try that.”*

When it came to enacting the mentorship role, M3 also shared that she respected the mentees as individuals in their own right and is non-judgemental when interacting with them. She understood that she and the mentees differed in terms of their personality characteristics therefore the mentees were likely to approach the classroom dynamics differently. She accommodated the mentees differences and did not insist on the mentees adopting her teaching styles or methods. She understood

that the approach she used for teaching was not the only way to achieve the objectives of the lesson. This is reflected in the excerpt that follows:

*With group work you have to set a slighter shorter time, so that they do not have too much time to sit around and chat. I also do suggest that often they do not walk around too much because they walk past desks and chat. But I do think that this is a kind of personal thing, how much of movement you feel comfortable with.*

Knowledge about another key mentee need that mentors said informed their practices when supporting the mentees dealt with measures they implemented to build the confidence or bolster the self-esteem of their mentees. M3 used the expertise of the mentee in a constructive manner to motivate and to build her up by acknowledging that beginning and trainee educators do bring fresh perspectives and new ideas to the school context that can even be useful to mentors and valuable input for school development. The following quote describes M3's attempt at being both positive and encouraging during her interactions with the mentees:

*You have to remember that you are dealing with a human being who does have feelings and who is sensitive. You have to be careful that you do not destroy their confidence before they even start teaching. You have to build up their confidence so when they have done something good you should tell them "Oh I like that or I thoroughly enjoyed your lesson, I would like a copy of it". They should get to feel that they have done something well.*

The role of mentors positively impacting the self esteem of the mentees was also one that M1 and M3 took seriously. M1 explained how she capitalized on the strengths of the mentees to build them up.

*I think I gave an area to work on that she was confident in. She was a dance specialist, she dances for a dance company. She needed to find a niche and I gave that by allowing her to teach my grade ten class and by saying to her "You are the movement specialist, now you are going to teach these girls to dance and to move, as opposed to just dance in a kind of funny, ad hoc kind of way"*

M3 built the confidence of the mentees by focusing on aspects of their teaching in which they excelled. This is evident when examining what she shared during the interview: *"Oh! I like that or I thoroughly enjoyed your lesson, I would like a copy of it". They should get to feel that they have done something well.*" In an attempt to

build the confidence of the mentees, M3 also devised a strategy where she delayed giving immediate feedback to the mentees. She was fully aware that it takes the mentees time to become confident and autonomous about their teaching abilities therefore in being fair to them she gave them the opportunity to get better at what they did before providing an overall evaluation of the mentees teaching potential.

*I will generally say “I will write up your report later”. I tend to see more lessons over the next few days after making some suggestions. They generally get better and then I often will give them the two or more crits together and then when I put some nasty things in the first one it is toned down because in most cases they implement suggestions in the second and third lessons.*

Emanating from the knowledge of how the context of the school can impact the welfare and the stability of a teacher within the context, the findings showed that mentors ensured that they planned and executed activities that facilitated the orientation and induction of the mentees. This promoted the mentees’ understanding of the culture and the politics of the school and eased their transition into the school context.

A key aspect of knowledge that M1 brought to the attention of the mentees was on conducting themselves in a professional manner so as to fit into the school context. She role model what it meant to conduct oneself in a professional way *“I like to model that kind of thing. For example with a simple thing like dressing I insist that they need to dress appropriately when they are at school. When children perceive you as being organised, neatly dressed, they tend to take you seriously.”* In a sense it appears that M1 considered it important to share knowledge on the code of conduct that governed teacher behaviour at her school with the mentees. When teachers subscribe to the professional code of ethics that exists at a school they are likely to experience the benefits of fitting in more easily into the school context and learners according them deep respect.

Still on the issue of school policy that informs teacher conduct, M5 drew the attention of the mentees to the rules and structures that existed at the school and the need for them to adhere to these. This was essential to preventing mentees from

finding themselves in compromising situations. The following statement was articulated by M5:

*They were in the BE (boarding establishment as boarder mistresses too) and they were coming back to the BE at times (late in the evening) that they were not supposed to. We have specific rules that they have to adhere to and they were given warning upon warning. Since they did not want to heed them they had to suffer the consequences of their actions*

Data also showed that good mentors also draw on their knowledge of what they believe are ideal activities that would socialize the mentees into the school context. M1 initiated the following activities to ensure the mentees were well acquainted with their workplace environments.

*So they get from me a mentee pack which includes a little hymn book because they are meant to be at the school assembly..... They get a little badge which says student educator, it is a badge that all of us wear..... The most important person that I feel they need to meet is the administration secretary who handles things such as class lists, photocopying requests etc.*

The mentoring practices of M5 also suggests effective mentoring demanded that she engaged the mentees in activities that ensured they were made to feel welcome, secure and accepted. In addition their participation in the activities she arranged should facilitate them gaining insight into the ethos and the culture of the school context:

*She comes to staff meetings, she is expected to come to chapel, she participates in co-curricular activities for example she went on a field trip with the isiZulu teacher. She asked and I said "For sure" because that is where you get wonderful experience. For the grade eight orientations, I asked her to follow a class so she went with a class for the first three days at the beginning of the year.*

M2 also purported she emotionally supported the mentees by creating conditions in which they were easily socialized. This is illustrated in the following comment "One checks on them in the staff room and how they are settling into the school. It is not only about your lessons, are they managing to find their way around the school." M2 also articulated that sharing knowledge about the context in which the mentees taught was important to the mentees viewing themselves as members of a community

of teachers: *“To explain the ethos of the school, how the school runs, practical things like that.”*

To effectively enact the mentorship role the mentors highlighted the importance of cultivating positive mentoring relationships. To meet the emotional needs of their mentees the mentors ensured the mentees were informed about the ethos and culture of the school and were properly socialized into the school context. The actions of the mentors demonstrate the mentors when working with adults they draw on knowledge that was different to that required for teaching. This is in line with Jones et al.’s (2006) categorisation of pedagogic knowledge for mentoring that focuses on the interpersonal nature and affective dimensions of the mentoring relationship. The mentors took their pastoral role seriously by implementing measures that promoted the perception amongst the mentees that they enjoy an equal status to all staff members. The mentors achieved this by warmly accepting them into the school community and inviting their participation in school-based various activities.

The evidence presented is similar to the findings of a study, in which Maynard (2000) examined student teacher’s perceptions of ‘good’ practice in mentoring that emphasised the significance of the affective in student teacher’s school-based learning. Students attached a great deal of importance to being made to feel welcome into the school “community of practice” and the ‘broader community of the teaching profession. The students revealed that being allowed into the school staff room enabled them to gain insight into the rituals, jargon and routines of the school community thus facilitating their acceptance as a legitimate member of the school community.

#### 4.3.2.2. Insight into the stages of mentee growth and personality characteristics

Several mentors stated that knowledge about the particular stage of development of the mentees is extremely important to the kind of support they offer the mentees. Since mentees do not develop at the same pace and they have different abilities and personality characteristics the mentors indicated that they used their knowledge about the stages of development of the mentees to strategise on how best to advice, support and guide them.

During the early stages of the relationship M1 supported the mentees by accompanying the students to the classroom. Only under exceptional circumstances when students displayed high levels of confidence she granted them the freedom to work on their own very early upon their arrival. This is what she said she did when working with students of differential ability and confidence levels:

*They never ever go into the classroom without me in the first week. If it is perhaps a strong student then I allow this otherwise we go in together. My last student was highly organised and she arrived with three lesson plans. Because she was so confident I merely introduced her to the class and I allowed her to do a little warm up with the class and that allowed her to get to know the girls a little.*

Similarly, M2 was mindful that the demands of teaching are daunting for the mentees when they enter the profession therefore she draws on her knowledge of the level of readiness of the mentees to decide on what form of support she should render. Early in the mentoring relationship she used measures that gradually built the confidence of the mentees *“I don’t go through all the material they are going to be doing in the whole six weeks or however long they are going to be here. I tend to do a week at a time”*. It seems that she worked in ways where she assessed what she needed to share with the mentees to achieve short term goals rather than providing too much information and unduly alarming them. M2 also recognised that in the early stages of teaching, mentors need to support the emotional well-being of the mentee while spurring them on to achieve particular tasks and skills. This is evident in the viewpoint below:

*Then on the on other hand one has struggling students who really one worries about not being able to cope with at all, but any little bit of development is quite encouraging. This is because they might have been so nervous, that even while they are teaching they refer to you “What should I do now”?*

Whilst acknowledging that mentees are different with respect to their confidence levels, M5 drew on her knowledge that mentees grow professionally at different paces and she supported them towards the realisation of their individual potentials.

*Many mentees have grown in self confidence and are progressing well in their teaching ability. They are well on their way to becoming good*



*teachers. However there are the odd mentees who have grown more slowly still visibly lacking in self confidence but their teaching ability shows improvement. Mentees do not grow at the same pace in the same areas.*

Quality mentoring requires mentors to make accurate diagnosis of the mentees stages of growth and their personality characteristics so they would know how to interject and when to give of themselves in order to be entirely with the mentees. The arguments presented by the mentors appear to indicate that since the mentees differ with respect to their personalities, skills and expertise they would develop at different paces professionally. Mentors draw on knowledge that they would need to support the mentees in different ways to sufficiently address their professional and psycho-social needs.

The focus on the mentors during the early stages is on establishing a professional bond with the mentees through nurturing a supportive learning environment. This is in line with Cohen's (1995) argument that without a showing of trust and empathy by mentors during the early phases of mentoring the mentees will discount the worth of the information shared by the mentors. They will consider it of little direct and personal significance and this would lead to dysfunctional mentoring relations. Whilst Cohen (1995) and Kram (1985) propose that only in the latter phase of the mentoring relationship mentors should reinforce skills and attitudes that enhance self-sufficiency and that equip the mentees to go it alone, mentors draw on their knowledge that mentoring process is not a linear one. Mentors draw on their knowledge that depending upon the individualistic characteristics of the mentees, for example their work ethic, levels of confidence and skills and knowledge for teaching they need not be mentored or coached through the different phases. When mentees appear to be highly competent and confident about their professional roles and responsibilities good mentors draw on their strengths and fast track their exposure to working independently.

#### 4.3.2.3. Knowledge of interpersonal skills, characteristics and qualities of effective mentors

Results from the data revealed that mentors also mentioned a number of social skills they relied on and used for mentoring. In addition, they also emphasized that the enactment of the mentorship role requires mentors with skills and characteristics

such as the ability to trust, listen attentively, provide constructive feedback, and being a non-judgemental, tactful, diplomatic, honest, open, empathetic, challenging, patient and confident individual. The various interpersonal skills, characteristics and qualities the mentors believed that good mentors require to enhance the quality of the relationship are discussed below.

Some mentors indicated that in carrying out their role they had to be secure and confident in their own position and be willing to trust. For example, M1 indicated that one of the ways in which she carries out her role is by establishing trust with the mentees and acknowledging their positive traits so their self confidence is enhanced. *“They need to instil the skill of being self-confident. They need to develop trust. That trust can either make or break a relationship. They need to evaluate and give positive criticism without breaking the teacher. Those skills are very important.”* M6 also believed that he needed to trust the mentees would eventually become more capable at their jobs once they have received the appropriate training and guidance.

*They are going to be fine. It is just about learning how to do it, it is apprenticeship. It does not matter what you learn at the university, nothing is going to help you like actually being in the classroom. When you are in the classroom you are going to discover how you are going to discover how you are going to basically approach the problem. I think that you can give people advise, but ultimately you somehow, have to hand it over to them.*

Similarly, M2 felt that her ability to trust the mentees was also significant to their progressive development *“They also need to be left alone in the classroom without me being there because they need to know how it feels to be the teacher and not have to have somebody watch over or oversee them. Even if it does not work too well or they struggle they need to be exposed to that.”* When mentees underperformed M2 did not overreact because she is aware that learning to teach effectively is a process that unfolds over time. She understands fully that the mentees are at different stage in their professional careers compared to her and they only develop proficiency in their careers with time.

M2 also indicated that her focus on the element of trust in a mentoring relationship extended beyond the faith she placed in the mentees capabilities. To effectively support trainee and novice teachers she displayed self-awareness and self- belief in

her own abilities to enact the mentorship role. This was essential to the creation of a safe and supportive environment in which the mentees growth was nurtured.

*You do need to have people skills, you need to make them feel confident that you know what you are doing even if you are unsure and they need to feel confident in a way that they feel almost protected by you and at the same time you need to encourage them to go and try something out on their own.*

Mentors also revealed that as good mentors they play the role of a ‘counsellor’ to help the mentees cope with sensitive, interpersonal issues. For example, M5 indicated:

*You have to have compassion, you have to have a listening ear when they have a problem. Not necessarily only with the work at school because they are at an age where they have boyfriends etc. You often find that they will come to school with a problem.*

M4 acknowledged the importance of separating the experiences of the mentees from her own when she said “*You need to be able to listen to what the other person is saying and not kind of jump to conclusions. You cannot put your own experiences and your own thoughts across to the student. You have to consider what they are saying and how they can improve*”. When she offered advice she took into account the experiences and the needs of the mentees and she directed the relationship towards goals which were appropriate to the priorities and personal agendas of the mentees and not her own.

M3 also drew on her knowledge of the value of interpersonal skills such as effective listening and establishing rapport when providing positive feedback. The evidence presented in the quotation below reveals what she did in portraying the role of a good mentor:

*That is a difficult one because everyone brings their own personal experience or their own talents to it so it is quite difficult to say that a mentor should have all of this. They should be a good listener and they should be able to relate well to the student and give constructive feedback from the listening of the lessons.*

M3 explained she used the interpersonal skills of tact and diplomacy to reduce dissonance in the mentoring relationship when providing constructive feedback. The

quote below also shows that sometimes mentors are not sure of exactly how they should handle difficult situations.

*I find it very awkward when I have just watched a lesson and I think that this is not particularly good. I find it hard to actually say to the mentee “You did not research that topic properly, I don’t think you understand the topic very well and I don’t think you gave learners sufficient activities to get their attention”. I find saying those things to people very difficult. Maybe I could benefit from being told some tactful ways to approach these situations.*

Patience and tolerance were other interpersonal skills used widely by some mentors to effectively support the mentees. For example, M2 said “*Mentors also need to be patient and aware that these students are not qualified yet and that they need help, and that they are not going to get it all right the first time round*”. Likewise, M3 also mentioned in her interactions with the mentees she accepts them for who they are at a particular moment in time. The provision of on-going guidance and support led to improved performances in their teaching practices.

*Very often you notice that with their lessons in the beginning they either do not have very much subject knowledge and pitching the lesson above their level and there is a lot of talking by the children in the class and a lot of movement. It would appear like poor control and management. What I do notice is if they do their activities in a better way or if their lessons become more meaningful they get the attention of the learners in a better way.*

M1 and M3 drew upon the characteristics and qualities of respect, honesty and sensitivity to inform their elements of the mentoring relationship to effectively mentor the student and novice educators. M3 said “*You do not want to lie because you mislead the person so you are now almost in a situation where I now white-wash something that is not good*” and M1 stated:

*Respect the students’ ideas, give them immediate, truthful feedback. They do not want to hear things that are sugar coated. They want to hear it as it is but at the same time you have to be sensitive to how you give them information. They do not want to only hear the good but many of them want to know how they can do better. This has to be shared with them but in a very sensitive way without cutting them down to size, that kind of thing.*

Challenge, encouragement and support were also used by M1 and M2 to bring about improved performances in the mentees. M1 worked collaboratively with the mentees to help them identify their weaknesses and their strengths. They pursued this direction since it forced the mentees to reflect on their practices and to work towards improving their practices. M1 stated:

*Even if they mess up in the first instance it is not the end all and be all. All of us mess up but you have an opportunity to put it right. Identify what it is that did not work here and let us see how the both of us can put it together because it is this relationship that you are building. I will merely give her some ideas and suggestions and see how she feels about it.*

M2 argued she challenged the mentees so their perceptions about the realities of teaching were not distorted and so they coped with hurdles they were confronted with. She seemed to think that some amount of dissonance was needed to get the mentees to tap into their inner resources to achieve excellence in teaching:

*They also need to be left alone in the classroom without me being there because they need to know how it feels to be the teacher and not have to have somebody watch over or oversee them. Even if it does not work too well or they struggle they need to be exposed to that. Some classes can be very noisy and very robust and sometimes the experiences are not very good but that is reality and that is how it is going to be when they start teaching.*

The views of the mentors reflected above resonates with Jones's et al. (2006) categorization of the principles and concepts involved in working with adult learners into the broad band of pedagogical knowledge. The findings of the study undertaken by Jones's et al. (2006) indicate mentors believed that knowledge about the less tangible aspects of mentoring as well as interpersonal skills were central components to the enacting the mentoring role. Jones et al. (2006) refer to the specific type of knowledge required to work with adults as pedagogical knowledge.

Mentors require a different set of skills when working with adults compared to learners because the dynamics of the interpersonal relationship is primarily based on equality and is not hierarchical. Being diplomatic, having a good understanding of people, building trusting relationships and being empathic are some of the key attributes that mentors identified as being important for positive mentor-mentee interactions.

Similarly, Awaya *et al.* (2003) argue the building of an equal relationship characterised by trust, the sharing of expertise, moral support, and knowing when to help and when to sit back are essential to successful mentoring. Accordingly, mentoring is not something that is done to the mentee by an older and wiser person as is typically represented by a traditional view of mentoring but is a highly personal, collaborative partnership which has to be sensitively managed by the mentors.

Research generated by Gardiner (2009) also confirms knowledge about the pastoral and affective dimension constitutes an essential element in the mentoring process. In investigating the challenges mentors experienced Gardiner (2009) reported that mentors regularly encountered situations which they did not know how to negotiate, particularly at the interpersonal level. The mentors found that managing another adult was really hard in terms of timeliness, professionalism and preparedness, and dealing with sensitive, sometimes interpersonal issues.

A summary of the findings indicates that mentors have a distinct understanding that successful mentoring is based on the recognition that the mentees are adult learners therefore good mentors would use social skills that largely enhance collaborative learning. The mentees professional and personal growth is facilitated when opportunities are created for an individual's self-esteem and confidence to be developed through a process of support and counselling and mentors acknowledge that sound mentoring partnerships are built on fostering equality, respect, trust and empathy.

#### **4.4. STRATEGIES EMPLOYED BY THE MENTORS IN SCHOOL-BASED TRAINING**

When asked to identify the strategies employed to convey their knowledge, skills and expertise to mentees, the findings show that the mentors used strategies that can be broadly classified into three categories: strategies related to modelling good practice (observation of lessons, observation of experienced teachers, sharing resources); collaborative activities (co-planning, team marking, team teaching) and strategies for

reflective practice (constructive feedback, discussion, making suggestions and challenging the mentees' thinking and practice, encouraging the mentees' self-evaluation). The strategies that the mentors used and the underlying reasons for their decisions are explained below.

#### **4.4.1. Modelling good practice**

Several mentors stated they provided mentees with opportunities to observe demonstration lessons as it was a useful strategy for them to learn from experienced teachers. M3 articulated it was effective for building the confidence of the mentees in the early stages of their professional growth *"I usually let them watch me first until they feel comfortable. Often they do not start teaching a lesson on their own"*. Similarly, M2 allowed her mentees, the 'apprentices' to observe her in action to gain valuable insight into the practical knowledge for teaching that she used. She stated:

*Then again when you get into the classroom situation I will allow them to go in and observe me and then explain why I have done something. I have broken them in different groups because..... this is another way to do this ... so that they can think about ...they must now try.*

M5 also shared that affording mentees the opportunity to observe and imitate the practices of others was highly effective for enhancing their expertise and knowledge of teaching. In this situation the mentees were required to be vicarious learners.

*I have also told them that it is very important that they act like a sponge. Look around, be alert, take in as much as possible and soak in what you can. You may not want to copy someone's lesson but there may be aspects that the person has used and that maybe you can use and elaborate on.*

The data further revealed that some mentors shared their teaching resources with the mentees to help them cope with the demands of teaching and to illustrate what good teachers did when planning for teaching. Novice and student educators had access to resource materials such as worksheets, textbooks and lesson plans for personal reference. M2 said:

*I give them some books not to look at but to take away ...uhm. ..there is a lot of material for the different grades in LO that have been provided or bought. I give them copies, learner books for example, so they can go away with material to get background.*

Similarly, M3 indicated that as a good mentor she shared resources with the mentees when they were inducted into the teaching context. She commented “*I have a lot of worksheets on different things and I usually let them photocopy what they want from my file.*” The findings also showed that her role as a resource person went further than sharing one type of instructional method and materials to teach content: “*There are a number of power point presentations that I have actually made on each topic that I teach. I show them these together with the set of notes that has been pre-created.*”

In modelling good practice for mentors the actions of the mentors indicate that the mentors’ knowledge bases consist of elements that inform the traditional perspective of mentoring. This is in line with Kram’s (1985) idea of mentoring involving a one-to-one hierarchical relationship in which a more experienced, wiser and older person shares his/her expertise, knowledge and skills with an inexperienced, younger and competent individual. Here mentors who are in most cases more experienced individuals help, support, and counsel less experienced individuals to learn.

During the early stages of the mentees’ development the mentors appear to use an apprentice model of mentoring. Mentors indicated that since the mentees lack experience in teaching, they believed that the mentees would benefit from imitating good teaching practices which have been acquired over time. The mentees were afforded opportunities to observe demonstration lessons, team teach and share in the mentors teaching resources such as worksheets and power point presentations to facilitate effective teaching. This illustrates that the mentors draw on Shulman (1987)’s pedagogical content knowledge to enact their mentorship roles. That is to say the mentors who already know and understand their subjects in particular ways, show the mentees who are less experienced how they transform their teaching knowledge into different representations that make sense to their learners.



#### 4.4.2. Collaborative mentoring practices

In addition to modelling what they thought was good practice, mentors indicated that they also used collaboration as a strategy during mentoring. For example, they mentioned that they planned lessons and sometimes taught together with their mentees. To enhance expertise in lesson planning and assessment, mentors guided and assisted the mentees in developing their individual competences by planning for teaching together. During co-planning activities the mentors and mentees shared ideas about teaching. M1 jointly planned a lesson in which she and the mentee planned together, conducted research and learnt together:

*We made these lanterns out of little brown paper bags but the designs had to appear on that. We both decided that was what we were going to do and we also decided on how we were going to assess this. So we decided that just assessing a finished bag was not enough.*

M3 also used co-planning as a strategy to develop the competences of beginning and novice teachers on assessment practices. Her mentee was given practical training on how to plan and mark an assessment task according to a pre-defined set of criteria: *“I do like to see any tests that they set and provide input. The last student was very good. She set them on her own and then she gave them to me to have a look at and then I made some suggestions.”* Mentees were also coached through the entire process of handling assessment to ensure these tasks were not compromised *“I helped her with the answers and showed her where to put the ticks. At the end of the day it was a fifty-fifty effort”. She had started the test and I finished it off. We marked it together. She marked the objective aspects and I marked the subjective aspects which were a bit out of her depth and which were related more to the curriculum.”*

Team teaching proved to be another useful strategy for some mentors in sharing their craft knowledge with mentees within the community of practice. Almost all the mentors employed team teaching to ease the induction of the mentees into the classrooms and to build their confidence. For example, M2 stated:

*We do team teaching where they are broken in gently. I teach the first half and they will do the second half of the lesson and then they grow and are given the opportunity to take the whole lesson.*

Similarly, M4 played a supportive role by working collaboratively with the mentees and coached them on a number of aspects relating to teaching: *“I have always had co-operative teaching and I always encourage them to participate in a lesson with me. If I have had a student with me for over a year I get them to help with the marking, to help with the prep and you just watch their confidence grow.”* M3 also used team teaching as an opportunity to encourage reflective practice: *“We often team teach so that while I am teaching they observe me and they are given some time to give some input into a particular topic.”*

Mentors also acknowledged that in their engagement with the mentees they had to seek appropriate balances of power. While an unequal power relation exists during the early stages of the relationship the mentors considered it necessary that after some time they start to work collaboratively with the mentees. The mentors tried to establish equal relationships by allowing their mentees to contribute to lesson planning as well as teaching. This in a way shows how mentors chose to build the mentees' confidence while providing support at the same time.

To further support the professional growth of the student and novice educators the mentors entered into discussions, provided explanations, made suggestions and gave feedback to enhance reflective practice. For example, M1 provided immediate and appropriate feedback to the mentees as she believed that the information shared would be most beneficial if they could instantly associate the suggestions made to the lessons observed. She shared her perceptions of the lesson with the mentees by providing direct, constructive feedback and making suggestions on how to improve their teaching practices. She said:

*I pinpoint suggestions for them, I write it down and I make sure that we have a period where we meet. I give them almost immediate feedback on what it is that I have observed of them and on those [are the] things that I would like them to try.*

Some mentors revealed that it was important to arrange either formal or informal meetings with the mentees to discuss ideas on subject teaching, overall student

learning conditions as well as work related to the role of class teachers. Discussions were initiated to inform the mentees about their teaching practices and to encourage the mentees to deconstruct their own lessons by providing opportunities for genuine and constructive dialogue. M6 used a formal approach to initiate a joint exploration of the perceived strengths and weaknesses of the mentees' teaching. M6 said *"We sit in my office and we have a little deconstruction chat immediately afterwards. How did you think it went, and she will respond."* While M6 focused on providing verbal feedback to the mentee, M2 encouraged mentees to critically reflect on their practices by providing verbal and written evaluation of their own teaching performances.

*After the lesson we will have verbal feedback where the mentee will explain how the lesson felt. I will provide verbal feedback that is followed by written feedback using the forms for observation provided by UKZN.*

Like M6, M2 adopted a formal approach *"Mentors need to be prepared to sit down and to discuss the classes, discuss disciplinary techniques, discuss the content of the lessons and not assume that the students will know what they are going to be doing without being told."* On the other hand, M5 indicated that she found informal meetings to be highly productive in influencing introverted mentees to share their experiences: *"Often it is easier for the shy mentee to open up to me in a less formal situation so that is why I do it in a less formal way rather than sitting one-on-one because one-on-one is scary and daunting."*

To facilitate the professional growth of the mentees, skilful mentors draw on their knowledge of different strategies for mentoring to ensure that the positive traits of the mentees surface at specific stages of their development. This confirms Jones's (2006) argument that mentors require a sound understanding of pedagogical content knowledge. Pedagogical content knowledge refers to strategies such as modelling good practice and implementing collaborative activities (feedback, supervision and discussion) that mentors employ to develop the mentees' competences.

Findings from this study reveal a variety of strategies that mentors use with their student teachers. For example, mentors draw on their knowledge that modelling good practice is an effective form of intervention during the beginning stages of the mentoring relationship when a master-apprenticeship relationship prevails. This

appears to be based on the notion that the mentees grow in confidence by copying aspects of teacher knowledge that the mentors have become experts at over time. When mentees grow in confidence or show high levels of confidence, mentors indicated that they encourage them to work independently. This illustrates the importance mentors attach to the particularities and diversity of the mentoring context and being aware that “*not everything is for everybody*” (Orland, 2001). It also indicates the mentors’ need to draw on their knowledge that since mentees differ in their stages of growth and development which requires mentors to use appropriate strategies to attend to individual needs.

These findings suggest that the mentors are aware that mentees who are less self-assured about their teacher knowledge, require greater levels of intervention until they develop sound footings to venture on their own. When the mentees display signs that their self-confidence has been bolstered, the mentors encouraged them to engage in reflective practice to further promote their professional development. During these formal and informal discussions the mentees are motivated to either self-evaluate their teaching practices, or the mentors assume supervisory roles and make suggestions about ways in which the mentees can improve their teaching abilities. The position adopted by the mentors is similar to the argument presented by Maynard et al. (in McIntyre et al., 1994), that to facilitate the reflective process mentors need to move from being role-models or instructors to being co-enquirers in supportive and nurturing relationships. There is a shift in power relations from mentors being considered experts in the initial stages to an understanding that mentees can also make valuable contributions. There is thus a need to strive for equality in the relationship.

#### **4.5 THE ACQUISITION OF KNOWLEDGE FOR MENTORING**

This section presents data on sources of mentors’ mentoring knowledge i.e. where mentors say they acquired the knowledge they use when mentoring. Almost all the mentors expressed the unanimous belief that their experience, training as mentors

and to some extent, collaboration with other mentors provided the main sources of knowledge, skills and expertise used in their work with trainees and newly qualified teachers.

#### **4.5.1. Personal experience**

The findings of the study show that several mentors largely draw on their experiences as mentors to inform their mentoring practices. M2 pointed to the major significance which her experiences with mentees played in her enactment of the mentoring role: *“Not in terms of studying or even reading up, it has just been one’s experience, in terms of sharing that with students and then you began to learn oneself what students needed.”* She also stated, *“Otherwise I have built up my own experience of mentoring by doing it over six years. I feel more confident now, I feel more in control about how could assist.”*

Similarly, M3 stated that one of the most significant ways she developed insight into what she did as a mentor had been derived from her enactment of the mentoring role. This is poignantly represented in her recollection of the following incident.

*I think most of my knowledge comes from my experience. For example, I had a student who did not know her subject content very well and I felt incredibly bad about it. The class did not take to well to her. I thought that I needed to leave her to the class on her own. After a while when I got back there were a whole lot of horrible notes written by my students on the table complaining about how awful her teaching was. She was in tears, I was actually quite shocked at that and since then I make sure that the learners are given a pep talk before the students come in.*

On the other hand whilst M2, M3 and M6 indicated that they draw from their personal experiences as mentors to gain knowledge about the work mentors perform, M1 indicated that her personal experience as a mentor was an invaluable source of information that determined how she enacted her mentorship role. She shared the following information:

*I think that comes from my experience of being a mentor, nobody taught me how to be a mentor. I was involved in a pilot programme that was being run, where they were looking at the kind of value of partnerships between schools and universities. The focus there was on the mentor. I did not even realise that was what my role was.*

Interestingly, while most mentors alluded to gaining insight into mentoring practices through their experience as mentors, M3 stated that the recollection of her experiences as a student teacher had a profound influence on her current practices with the mentees. She stated *“The mentor should also look back and say that when I did my teaching practice what was it that I hated about my practice and make sure that you don’t do that to the person who is teaching under you.”* As a result of her negative experience as a student teacher she is sensitive to treating the mentees with respect and fairness *“For example I know that when I was doing my teaching practice I was teaching under a very young girl who would say ‘I am off shopping, please take over the class’. With hindsight I realise that she was not supposed to do that but it makes me aware of the fact that I should not do that to my mentees.”* Thus, M3’s own experiences as a trainee teacher informed her practice with mentees.

In her capacity as liaison mentor, M1 drew upon the experiences of the mentees themselves to help her refine the mentoring programme. She mentioned *“For example, my student said to me ‘I did not know where the photocopying room was, I did not know where the library was.’ It was using what they had experienced in a negative way that I devised this programme (orientation programme) and each time I up-date it a little bit.”*

#### **4.5.2. Collaboration with colleagues**

The data revealed that mentors acquired knowledge about their mentoring functions and roles within communities of practice by sharing their knowledge and expertise. The mentors acquired knowledge for mentoring by networking with mentors inside and outside the school. This was evident from the response of M3 who expressed

her appreciation for the support rendered by the liaison mentor at her school. She had this to say about the mentor leader: *“She has been very supportive in the background. She makes it much easier for us to work with the students rather than giving us some knowledge.”*

It was also clear that M1 gained deeply from her interaction with other mentors at her school. She used the information the mentors shared with her to refine the mentoring programme at her school and to enhance her support for the mentees. M1 said the following in this regard: *“I draw from the other mentors in terms of the assessment of the students and how best I could improve what we have done. This is a bit of a difficult question, but in terms of knowledge I definitely draw this from them as well.”* M1 also focused on the benefits she derived from collaborating with other mentors about the assessment of student educators. M1’s approach to mentoring seems to indicate that there is a need to move away from conceiving mentoring as a one-to-one relationship to having a pool of mentors. Mentors are able to draw on the strengths and expertise of one another to optimally support the mentees. She stated:

*I think that I also draw on areas of knowledge from other mentors that I work with. Often when we are not sure about students we have a little discussion about the students before we decide on whether they pass or fail, distinction or supplementary whatever.*

Unlike the mentors at school A, the mentors at school B were in the fortunate position of being able to meet and network with mentors in an institution other than their own. This is evident in the following statement made by M4 in which she articulated that she gained knowledge by consulting with mentors outside her school: *“We have quarterly meetings where we meet with other mentors and we share ideas and concerns. It is important to have this professional body.”*

#### **4.5.3. Mentor training programmes and courses**

The responses obtained on the areas of knowledge acquisition for mentoring also showed that the mentors valued networking with the local university. Although the

mentors were experienced, committed and passionate educators, the support offered by the university was an extremely valuable source of information in preparing them for the enactment of their mentorship roles. It was an excellent source of information, especially during the initial stages when partnerships between schools and the university with regards to mentoring programmes, were conceived. In the absence of any form of formal training in enacting the mentorship role M2 appreciated the efforts of the university in preparing them for the role:

*There we are fortunate that UKZN sends us a lot of material with which the students come every year and I am now very au fait with. Initially, it was very, very useful when they started that because they sent a whole booklet of practice.*

M3 also echoed similar sentiments about the value of the training she received to mentor students: *“Some of that has been from the lecturer at the university who shared some very practical things.”* Thus it appears although both mentors may be experienced teachers, the information disseminated by the university was critical to preparing them for their mentoring roles.

Mentors also acquired knowledge for mentoring by studying or attending mentor training courses. M3 mentioned *“I did a mentor and an assessment course that I did a few years ago and you also learn.”* M1 also participated in an overseas mentor training programme and was pleased that although she did not receive extensive formal training in mentoring other than studying a module on mentoring in the Bachelor of Education Honours programme, her mentoring practices compared favourably with what was on offer in the Norwegian programme.

*That is where our project was run. I went on a study tour of the Norwegian campuses and there I really saw how liaison mentors operate. What I can say is that I was very pleased to find that although I had not had any formal training nobody had told me what to do. I was not doing anything different or rather they were not doing anything different to what I was doing. That made me feel empowered because I was on track and this is a kind of formalised thing that they were doing.*

The findings are largely similar to the findings of a study conducted in the United Kingdom by Jones et al. (2006) with respect to the areas of knowledge which inform mentors' work. The vast majority of mentors draw on their personal experiences to



inform their practices when working with student teachers and novices. Furthermore, almost all mentors expressed the belief that their experience, training as mentors, and to some extent, collaboration with other mentors, provided the main sources of knowledge, skills and expertise used in their work with trainees and newly qualified teachers.

#### **4.6. THE BENEFITS AND CHALLENGES ASSOCIATED WITH SCHOOL BASED TRAINING**

In this study, it emerged across the data sets that the mentors experienced several benefits and challenges associated with the enactment of their mentorship roles.

##### **4.6.1. Benefits associated with the enactment of the mentorship role**

The data shows that although the mentors expressed different opinions about exactly how they benefited from their experiences of being mentors, most indicated that there were secondary and unanticipated benefits to guiding mentees. These benefits included: learning new skills for teaching, encouraging re-engagement with the profession and adding value to the teaching profession.

Despite their own vast experiences in the teaching profession, some mentors stated that they learnt new skills for teaching from the mentees. On providing an account of how her experiences as a mentor benefited her, M1 sang the praises of an exceptional student and stressed that she was receptive to learning from her mentees. This particular trainee student actually inspired her to believe in herself and to cultivate latent abilities that were subsequently used to the benefit of her learners.

*I am not a movement specialist, I actually direct. Movement is not my strength. My student last year brought with her this whole aspect that I needed to develop in myself as a drama teacher. She has actually opened my eyes to movement not being something that one has to be a specialist in.*

*She has taught me that I can do it if I made the effort to think about it a bit differently and that is one of the things that I have learnt from her.*

The relationship between M1 and this particular mentee was so special that it has blossomed into a collegial friendship. They have remained in contact with one another and have embraced one another's strengths to enhance their professional development. This bond is reflected in the excerpt below.

*My experience with Janet (not her real name), that relationship started of as a mentor-mentee relationship but I think now I could say we are colleagues. She is in a different area but I think she can draw from me and I can draw from her. That is the kind of symbiotic relationship that we have. The kind of thing that she does now I can draw on in terms of production.*

M3 was also vocal in her appraisal of the capabilities of her mentees. The mentees complemented her role as a mentor by adding value to how they planned lessons together.

*I can learn a lot from them, a lot of them are more creative than what I am. I am a bit of the left-brain Maths-science kind of person that tends to work very sequentially. I have seen some of the students come in with some very creative lessons and I would think "Well, maybe I should take a copy of that lesson". I can learn from the way in which they approach the subject.*

Similar sentiments were articulated by M5 who benefited from her interaction with the mentees who had a lot to offer for improved teaching practice despite the general perception that they lack experience and expertise. In the excerpt below she describes the value of her mentees:

*Once a student did a lesson on "A garden" and the way she approached it and the way she did it, I thought that this was another way of doing it too. It is not only about my way and my way only. One has to give them the benefit of the doubt sometimes too. One should not just think that they are fools, they are educated people and we need to remember they are able to do things, they are capable and we need to take that into consideration.*

M2 also revealed her admiration for the fresh approaches to teaching that students brought with them to the teaching context. Her delight is evident when she said to her mentee: *"Oh, that is a clever thing to do, it really captures their attention"..*

An additional benefit for some mentors of opening up their own classrooms and practice for observation and reflection was that it had a positive effect on their own professional development. In negotiating their roles and responsibilities they were forced to examine their own commitments to teaching and to re-engage with the profession. M3 stated that because she was observed by someone else it forced her to think deeply about what she was doing as a teacher: *"I try to set a higher standard knowing that you have an audience and this is beneficial in the long-term. It also allows me to think about things that I should not be doing in teaching."* Similarly, M2 expressed that her interaction with the mentees prompted her to re-examine her approach to teaching *"You know that you are going to get all the information across but the way the younger teachers have illustrated it, they take a lot of trouble, tape music etc."* She was obliged to set high standards that matched those portrayed by the mentees *"These remind you of things to do, to be the best that you can be. Some are better than others but the best enthuse you."*

While it is generally believed that the mentoring is a uni-directional relationship in which the mentees are the main benefactors, mentors in this study indicated that they also gained from their professional engagement with the mentees. Some of the benefits that accrued to the mentors included learning new skills for teaching, encouraging re-engagement with the profession and adding value to the teaching profession. These findings are similar to those in a study in which Lopez-Real and Kwan (2005) state that mentors reported mentoring was beneficial to them as they learnt through critical reflection of their own practice and exposure to new and improved teaching styles and strategies. Similarly, Ganser(1996) claims mentoring provides mentors with opportunities to validate the experience that they have gained over years. The three most valued benefits mentioned by the mentors were reflection and introspection about teaching, learning new ideas, and the satisfaction of helping someone develop professionally.

Additional findings from what the mentors shared during the interviews illustrated that they derived satisfaction and pride from undertaking mentor roles. For some mentors their professional status and identities were enhanced as a result of the key roles they played in promoting excellence in teaching. M4 described how joyful and

proud she was about making a contribution to the professional growth of her mentees:

*I think it is also just the love of being an educator and also seeing younger people who are actually keen to maintain or follow the route we have followed. And as I have said earlier, also the fact you see some of them really blossom and grow.*

M2 was also pleased with the lasting impact her interactions with the mentees had on their career progressions. She said “*You have kind of contributed to education which is a field I have chosen to go into. You have left a little of your own experience behind by passing it on to your students.*” In the same breath she added: “*It is a privilege because you get to pass things on. I feel that in terms of all things that I have learnt over the years, maybe I will be able to impart a little something of that.*”

Contrary to the belief that mentoring primarily boosts the self-esteem and confidence of only the mentees, mentors also indicated that they derived great satisfaction from enacting the role of supporting the professional development of other colleagues and cultivating leadership development in some teachers. The satisfaction the mentors derived echoes the findings of Taharally et al.’s.(1992) study in which mentors indicated that their interaction with the mentees made them feel more like professionals, and becoming more open with their interns over time made them less anxious about their own work.

The benefits that the mentors enjoyed from enacting mentorship role illustrate that there is a need to change perceptions that mentoring is an activity which purely advantages mentees. Increasingly empirical evidence (Hawk, 1987, Lopez-Real and Kwan, 2005 and Moor, 2005) refutes this claim as mentors have been shown to also derive a host of benefits from their joint partnerships with mentees. Good mentors are open to learning from mentees who despite being younger and less experienced may have valuable teacher knowledge to share.

#### **4.6.2. Challenges experienced by the school-based mentors**

While mentors indicated that there were benefits attached to mentoring, they also indicated that they experienced some challenges. The problems that mentors

encountered related to the following difficulties: lack of time to meet with the mentees, providing feedback, enacting the role of assessors and appointing suitable school based mentors.

The statements below highlight the significance that some mentors attached to opening up dialogue with student and novice educators although the schools at which they taught did not allocate additional time for mentoring. Despite encountering these challenges, mentors made time for their mentees and held regular meetings with them even though it may have been at personal ‘inconvenience’ to them. M2 stated: *“I would like to spend a little more time with the mentees going over the lesson. Often time is such a problem. Often one needs a whole lesson after the lesson to go through what they have done. You have to give up your lunch times. If the day is full one has to make time at the end of the day.”*

Similar commitment and dedication to fulfilling the role of mentor was expressed by M3 below:

*Mentoring is an incredibly hard job. Very often what usually takes one hour becomes three hours. Very often it is an hour or two preparing the lessons, an hour or two watching them and another half hour writing the report. I don't find that ever having a student is like that, you having a gap, while the student is working. I think if that is happening you are probably not a good mentor.*

Yet another challenge faced by the mentors in enacting their mentorship roles related to the difficulties they experienced in providing feedback to the mentees. Some mentors grappled with critiquing the mentees’ performances as it made them feel awkward. M5 revealed the dilemma she faced as a mentor in fulfilling the dual roles of assessor and mentor:

*The only thing I do battle with is telling them that “You need to shine up”. For example, with the girl I mentioned above who was not pulling her weight, it is hard to say this to her but it is part of life and she needs to be told this to help her.*

Likewise, M3 also experienced great difficulty in having to provide feedback to the mentees. She indicated that since she was diffident about her role as assessor she needed training to enact the mentoring role.

*The area I am short on is possibly being able to give them feedback in an objective and critical way with some of their teaching in the beginning. This is not an area I feel very good about. I think that I don't think that I should say that, because I might hurt your feelings. I feel insecure about saying that. I feel that I might benefit from some more assertive strategies of saying to them, "That this is not a good lesson."*

A major challenge that M1 experienced during the initial stages of enacting the role of liaison mentor at the school related to the reluctance amongst staff members to take on mentorship roles. She had to resort to using unscrupulous measures to entice educators to take novice and trainee educators under their wings. M1 shared the following:

*There are definitely challenges in being a liaison mentor. People are definitely not open to wanting to have students. This is one of the things that I had to change. It started off bribing them with chocolates, eventually I said that this stuff is important and I have to stop and the teachers will have to do it.*

M1 was also deeply disturbed that while it is generally accepted that mentoring has great significance for student and novice educators, the Department of Education does not consider it important enough to formalise mentoring programmes at the level of the schools. Her dismay and concern about this matter is evident:

*We need to be given time to do the job properly. We are not even interested in incentives because I think just by working with students and learning from them is a wealth of experience and a reward anyway. Somebody however needs to formalise this whole thing and it needs to be done really quickly*

M1 also lamented that although she was confident about most aspects perhaps there was some likelihood that she could benefit from some type of formal training.

*I, at the moment cannot identify the skills I may be lacking in because I have not been to a formal mentoring programme so I would be able to identify these areas. I am working from the point of view of being a teacher number one, and from the point of my own experience to see what I would have liked to have happened for me and which I try to put right for somebody else. I would like to be a part of a really solid programme where I am told that these are the kinds of things that you need to work on.*

The main challenges are linked to the lack of time to provide mentees with insightful and constructive feedback and the difficulties experienced in communicating with

adult learners. Playing the dual role of advisor and assessor was especially hard. Several mentors also experienced difficulties in handling situations that involved negative criticism.

#### **4.7. CONCLUSION**

The main findings in this study indicate that school-based mentors primarily draw on their knowledge for teaching and knowledge about mentoring relationships when working with trainee students and novice teachers. It was clear from the data presented that since all the mentor teachers are practising teachers they draw extensively on key aspects of their knowledge for teaching. These elements include knowledge about subject matter being taught in the curriculum, the use of appropriate teaching methodologies and resources, the acquisition of a repertoire of organisational and administrative skills, acknowledging issues related to learner diversity, and the school context when planning lessons or assessment tasks.

All the mentor teachers also draw on their knowledge of mentoring relationships to ensure that healthy mentor-mentee relationships are established. The mentor teachers understand that when working with adult learners they are expected to draw on a different set of interpersonal skills to that which would inform their practices with learners. The ability of mentors to be diplomatic, honest, tactful, empathic and non-judgemental is essential interpersonal skills that good mentors should possess to establish trusting mentoring relationships. The mentors also indicated that effective mentors draw on the knowledge that since the emotional needs of mentees differ, at different phases of the mentoring relationship effective mentors should be aware that the appropriate support is rendered to their mentees.

The data in this chapter also illustrates that when guiding and supporting their mentees the mentors draw on knowledge that good mentors use a variety of strategies. In the early phases of the mentoring relationship the mentors primarily draw on a variety of apprenticeship, coaching and collaborative strategies that facilitate learning with the mentees copying or imitating the good teaching practices

of their mentors. Some of these strategies include observations of lessons, co-planning, team teaching and sharing resources. In the latter phases of the mentoring relationship the mentors draw on knowledge that it is essential to use strategies that encourage the mentees to work independently and to facilitate learning through reflective practice. Good mentors nurture the professional growth of their mentees through formal or informal meetings during which they engage in discussions or offer feedback on the mentees' performances.

With respect to the sources from which mentors acquire their knowledge, skills and expertise to enact mentorship roles, all mentors revealed that the knowledge they draw on is mainly derived from their personal experiences. The mentors indicated that their experiences as trainee teachers, teachers, and mentor teachers provide sources of knowledge on how they should work with their mentees. To some extent the mentors also draw on knowledge that they have acquired from working collaboratively with colleagues inside and outside their schools.

The final section of this chapter outlines the benefits and challenges that the mentors experienced when enacting mentorship roles. The benefits included learning new skills for teaching, encouraging re-engagement with the profession and adding value to the teaching profession. The main difficulties that they face when performing mentoring roles and responsibilities include the lack of time to meet with their mentees, providing feedback, enacting the roles of assessors and appointing suitable school-based mentors.

I attempted throughout this chapter to link the findings in the study to the literature review and the conceptual framework that this study is based.



## **CHAPTER FIVE**

### **DISCUSSION, RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSION**

#### **5.1. INTRODUCTION**

The focus of my research was to investigate the professional knowledge base that the mentor teachers at two urban schools draw on when supporting trainee students and novice educators. This chapter presents a discussion of the qualitative data which was obtained from semi-structured interviews and questionnaires conducted with the school-based mentors. The findings which emerged in Chapter Four are discussed and linked to the literature review and to the conceptual framework outlined in Chapter Two. Recommendations and suggestions for future research together with concluding remarks end this chapter.

The key research questions framing this study are:

1. What mentoring knowledge do mentor teachers say informs and underpins their mentorship practices?
2. What strategies do mentor teachers use when enacting their mentorship roles?
3. Where and how do mentor teachers acquire their professional mentoring knowledge?

In this study findings across the data indicate that in relation to the three main research questions, mentors draw on their teaching knowledge, their understanding of mentoring relationships, a repertoire of mentoring strategies, and various other sources of mentoring knowledge to effectively assist and guide student teachers and newly qualified educators. A discussion of the main findings of the study is reflected below.

## **5.2. MAIN FINDINGS OF THE STUDY**

The discussion below outlines the main findings of the study which examines the knowledge base that mentors draw on to inform their mentoring practices, the strategies they use to enact their mentorship roles, the sources of knowledge for mentoring and the benefits and challenges associated with the enactment of these roles.

### **5.2.1. Knowledge, skills and expertise of school-based mentors**

Findings from the data revealed that mentors identified two main categories of knowledge that were critical to informing their practices with student and newly qualified educators. This knowledge related to teaching and knowledge of mentoring relationships that constitute the knowledge base of the mentors is discussed below.

#### **5.2.1.1. Mentoring is about having knowledge for teaching**

Findings from this study suggest that the majority of mentors draw on the knowledge for teaching which they have acquired through their personal experiences in fulfilling the roles of teachers to inform their mentoring practices. Since mentor teachers are seasoned practitioners with more than twenty years of experience the “teachers” in the mentors were evident. They drew on several aspects of their teaching knowledge to improve the professional competence of their mentees and emphasised that it was necessary for all mentees to develop their own repertoire of categories of teacher knowledge while being mentored. These are content knowledge, pedagogical content knowledge, general pedagogical knowledge, curricular knowledge etc. The aspects of knowledge for teaching that the mentors highlighted include subject specific knowledge, knowledge of the curriculum, effective teaching techniques to represent the subject matter and generic teaching skills (assessment, planning,

classroom management etc), knowledge of learners' diverse needs, and knowledge of the teaching context.

Several mentors emphasised that to effectively guide and assist mentees good mentors discuss and share information about the content of a subject. This is similar to the category of teacher knowledge identified as "content knowledge" Shulman (1987) and "subject matter knowledge" (Grossman, 1990). Shulman (1985) and Grossman (1990) state that this category of teacher knowledge refers to the insights that teachers have gained into the content of a subject area as well as substantive and syntactic structures of the subject. To assist mentees develop greater insights and better understanding of subject matter, mentors shared teaching resources with them such as worksheets and textbooks. The mentors also encouraged reflective practice by meeting with mentees for feedback and discussion sessions on their teaching performances.

Mentors also indicated that they draw on "pedagogical content knowledge" (Grossman, 1990) to inform their mentoring practices. This means that they believed that it was important that mentees use appropriate teaching methods and resources to ensure that subject matter is represented in ways that are easily understood by their learners. The mentors shared the view that it was necessary to use appropriate teaching methods to represent the specialist nature of the subjects being taught. In addition they pointed out that it was important to acquire this type of teacher knowledge to ensure that issues of diversity amongst learners can be considered when planning. These include consideration of learners' prior knowledge, ability levels, learning styles and their enthusiasm for learning - and selecting appropriate methods and resource materials for teaching. To promote the professional growth of their mentees, the mentors allowed them to have access to their own teaching resources such as worksheets, teacher files and power point presentations. The mentors also afforded the mentees opportunities to learn about techniques for teaching by inviting them into their classrooms in the early stages of the mentoring relationship to observe their teaching practices, to co-plan and team-teach. In this way the mentees were able to copy the best practices that their mentors role-modelled.

Another area of knowledge the mentors draw on is general pedagogical knowledge (Shulman, 1987). This type of teacher knowledge pertains to the skills the mentors utilise to enforce good discipline in their learners, compile accurate records, meet the demands of the job, and promote the general functionality of the school. For example, in this study the mentors demonstrated the different strategies they used to enforce good discipline amongst their learners. These ranged from varying the tones of their voices and using facial gestures to varying the approaches from whole group discussion to individual activities when interacting with learners. To uphold the ethos and cultures of the schools the mentors encouraged their mentees to fully participate in all school activities like sporting and cultural activities and accompanying the learners on excursions.

To promote effective teaching several mentors drew on curricular knowledge (Shulman, 1987, Grossman, 1990). The mentors probed the mentees to design programmes that facilitate the teaching of particular subjects and topics at a given level. More specifically, in this study the mentors attached great importance to the mentees gaining knowledge on assessment practices. The mentors jointly planned and marked assessments to ensure that high standards were maintained. A possible reason for the emphasis on assessment practices is that since the mentors are based at secondary schools they teach to prepare their learners for the matriculation examination. There is a lot of pressure on the educators to prepare their learners to excel academically as the media portrays the matriculation examination as a milestone in learners' schooling careers.

To summarise, the findings appear to suggest that the knowledge for teaching which the mentors draw on to enhance the mentees' teaching practices and their own mentoring practices can be aligned to the roles that the mentors perform. Gold (1996) states that it is the task of mentors to assist beginning teachers to understand the structures of subject matter, to transform subject matter into pedagogical content knowledge, to use a variety of instructional methods and materials to teach content, and to think reflectively and critically about their own practices. Given that mentors draw on different types of knowledge for teaching there is a need to ensure that those who are at the heart of the training and induction processes have a sound understanding about the different types of teacher knowledge. This is necessary to

ensure that the mentors give adequate support and guidance to assist their mentees in the application of the different categories of teacher knowledge to promote effective teaching. The findings seem to indicate that before teachers are selected or appointed to enact mentorship roles it may be necessary to evaluate their competencies on the different types of teacher knowledge. If they lack the appropriate skills, knowledge and expertise to fulfil mentoring roles they would need to be trained.

#### 5.2.1.2. Mentoring involves an understanding of relationships

Another important finding of the study is the importance that the mentors attach to the personal dimensions of the mentoring relationship. In providing quality pastoral care, the mentors draw on knowledge that relates to meeting the emotional needs of the mentees. This is achieved through the use of appropriate interpersonal skills that nurture healthy mentor-mentee relationships, developing insight into the stages of development of the mentees, and supporting their socialisation into the school environment.

This study revealed that mentors draw on their knowledge of core interpersonal skills and qualities such as trustworthiness, being good listeners, non-judgemental, tactful, diplomatic, honest, open, emphatic and patient, to ensure that successful mentoring relationships were established. The mentors also explained that their possession of these qualities is important to creating avenues that enhance the self-esteem and confidence of the mentees. These results are similar to Jones et al.'s (2006) findings in which mentors drew on pedagogical knowledge in the enactment of mentorship roles. Good mentors know that the dynamics of working with adults is different to that of working with children or adolescents in the classroom. While mentor teachers are leaders in the classroom, they realize that healthy mentoring relationships are dependent on mentors and mentees enjoying equal status. Neither individual ought to exercise control over the other; they should work collaboratively to nurture a collegial relationship.

In this study several mentors indicated that healthy mentoring relationships are also based on the mentors according the mentees respect, building their self-confidence, and accepting the mentees for who they were at particular stages of their professional

and personal growth. This is in line with Fletcher's (2000) view that mentors who actively support mentees by encouraging them to share their experiences, knowledge, thoughts and feelings, nurture their self-esteem and contribute to the openness of the learning process. These findings seem to indicate that when implementing mentoring programmes mentors and mentees need to be matched with respect to their personality traits as this feature of the mentoring relationship can have a significant influence on the quality of the relationship. In this respect Bennett (1997) compares the components of a successful mentoring relationship to the ones in a successful marriage: trust, respect, communication, co-operation and understanding. Matching mentors and mentees on these characteristics enables mentors to gain an understanding of the unique needs of their mentees thus facilitating collaborative partnerships.

The mentors also highlighted that effective mentors use interpersonal skills and mentoring strategies that address the diverse characteristics of mentees. Just as mentor teachers use different approaches to address issues of learner diversity, good mentors recognise that mentees develop differently and therefore need to be supported differently. For example, when mentees have the makings of "born teachers" mentors are less likely to micro-manage them compared to individuals who lack confidence and are afraid to be on their own, especially during the early phases of the mentoring relationship. Good mentors "assess" the mentees personalities, learning styles, abilities and stages of growth before deciding what courses of action should be instituted. The views of the mentors in this study mirrors Lindgren's (2005) argument that to be able to work with mentees mentors have to respect the mentees as adults learners, take into account their individual learning styles, and ensure that the strategies employed to support their learning are responsive to their concerns and to their current stage of development.

To properly support the mentees the mentors also indicated that they perform their roles in ways that are conducive to supporting the needs of the mentees at particular phases of their development. The mentors hinted that although mentees in their care may not be very proficient in the classroom one had to understand that there are stages they have to go through before they become expert teachers. The primary role of the mentors is to build them up over a period of time until they are autonomous

and can work on their own. For example, the mentors demonstrated empathy for the mentees during their early stages of growth when they reflected on their own difficult experiences as trainee and novice educators. They were able to put themselves in the shoes of the mentees and therefore postpone evaluations of the mentees' performances until they displayed signs of improvement. The common consensus amongst the mentors is that everyone is different and each situation needs to be judged in accordance with the needs of the individual. The knowledge that the mentors draw on in nurturing mentoring relationships reveals they understand that successful mentoring relationships are based on mentors recognising that the support rendered during different stages of the mentoring relationship would vary. This is in keeping with Cohen's (1996) and Kram's (1985) identification of the individualistic developmental needs of mentees at different stages of their growth and the need for mentors to ensure that they offer appropriate support.

In meeting the emotional needs of the mentees it also emerged from the study that mentors draw on their knowledge of induction and socialisation practices to ensure the mentees fitted into the school environment. Some mentors invited the mentees into the staffroom, introduced them to other staff members, took them on tours of the schools and introduced them to administration staff members. This confirms research findings that effective mentoring requires mentors to focus on making the novice's entry into teaching easy (Little, cited in Feiman-Nemser, 2001; Achinstein et al. 2005). The acceptance of the mentees is important because the level of emotional support they receive is likely to determine the continuance of the mentoring relationship, the bond of friendship with their mentors, and the retention of the mentees in the profession.

An interesting finding of the study is that although one of the major challenges that mentors experienced was lack of sufficient time to enact their mentorship roles, they still believed that sharing knowledge for teaching, nurturing the mentoring relationship and facilitating the socialisation of the mentees into the school context, were key functions they had to perform. Confirmation of the claim that mentors are faced with challenges linked to time constraints, is evident in a study in which Hobson (2002) in the United States in a school-based training programme also found that the mentees complained of mentors not having or making time for them, e.g. by

not having meetings or regularly postponing weekly meetings. They found these school-based experiences ‘not so valuable’. In South Africa in most public schools, the educators who volunteer their support to mentor students and novice educators generally carry high teaching loads and use personal time to fulfil their mentoring roles and responsibilities. The prevalence of such a situation is likely to impact the quality of care and support given to mentees.

### **5.2.2. Mentors use different strategies when doing mentoring work**

The findings of this study indicate that the variety of strategies the mentors draw on are not randomly selected but carefully chosen and introduced at particular stages of the development of the mentees to address specific needs. The strategies the mentors draw on to convey their knowledge, skills and expertise to the mentees in this study are similar to the findings in Jones et al.’s (2006) study. The mentors draw on pedagogical content knowledge which consists of a combination of strategies associated with apprenticeship or collegial approaches to mentoring to inform their practices.

During the early phases of the mentoring relationship the mentors revealed themselves as ‘typical’ teachers’. They used a repertoire of apprenticeship and coaching strategies since the mentees lacked experience and the mentors believed that the mentees could learn from them. The mentors primarily drew on strategies that modelled good practices. Mentors allowed mentees into their classrooms to observe practices which they could later imitate. By working alongside their mentors the mentees gained first-hand knowledge and skills about teaching through gradual participation. In this way the mentees were made to feel comfortable and their self-esteem was gradually bolstered as they acquainted themselves with the roles they had to perform and began to trust their mentors. In addition the mentors shared their teaching resources such as worksheets and teacher files to show the mentees the ropes of the profession. The use of apprenticeship strategies afforded the



mentees opportunities to identify with images of the mentors that they wanted to them to aspire to and they were given the opportunity to decide which aspects of the mentors' routines they wanted to accept or reject while growing professionally. This mirrors the view of Maynard et al. (in McIntyre et al., 1994) that mentees "learn to see" in the early stages of their apprenticeship under the close supervision and guidance of mentors what they need to know before being given the opportunity to teach what they have learnt from observing the mentors.

In this study, findings across the data sets indicate that as the mentoring relationship evolved collaborative strategies were also used extensively by the mentors to establish collegial partnerships. The mentors and the mentees engaged in collaborative activities such as joint planning, team marking and team teaching in which they jointly shared their knowledge, experience and expertise. The mentors and the mentees enjoyed equal status in the partnership and a relationship based on trust and respect was established. The relationship was also characterised by a reciprocal process of sharing in which the mentors were willing to learn from their younger counterparts. The mentors believed that although the mentees lacked experience they brought novel and creative skills to the workplace environment which were worthy of being emulated. These collegial strategies were enacted at later stages of the relationship once the mentees were feeling comfortable.

To foster collegiality, formal and informal meetings (discussion and feedback sessions) were also set up to encourage the mentees to engage in reflective practice. The mentors assisted the mentees to identify their own shortcomings and suggested ways to overcome the challenges they faced. On the other hand, while the mentors stressed the importance of reflective practice, contextual factors which prevailed at the schools prohibited such interactions. The mentors indicated that due to the demands of carrying out their "normal" roles and responsibilities of teachers they rarely had time to adequately support the mentees' professional growth. Since many mentors arranged feedback sessions during their non-teaching periods, lunch-breaks and after school hours, the likelihood prevailed that the mentoring support

and guidance provided would be of a reduced quality owing to the limited time available to enter into intense discussions that support reflective practice. Despite this challenge the findings of this study mirror those in a study conducted by Fairbanks et al.(2000) in the United States in which they found that opportunities for conversation and group activities created a setting in which the mentees and the mentors were able to exchange ideas and share expertise that promoted learning for both parties.

### **5.2.3. Mentors acquire mentoring knowledge from experience**

In the study almost all the mentors expressed the view that their professional practice and experience as teachers, and to some extent, their collaboration, provided the main sources of knowledge, skills and expertise for their work with trainees and newly qualified teachers. The results of the study mirror the findings of the investigation undertaken by Jones et al. (2006) into the professional knowledge base of mentors. Jones et al. (2006) state the mentors' dependency on their own experiences as sources of knowledge raises concerns as to whether they all see their roles in the same way and if the needs of the mentees are actually met. There is a danger that mentors could transmit skills and knowledge that have worked for them without due consideration of the individualistic teaching styles and personalities of the mentees. This lends further support to the argument presented earlier on that for mentoring support to achieve its desired outcomes mentors and mentees ought to be matched on most characteristics to ensure that they are compatible, Although it is not possible in practice to pair mentors and mentees on all characteristics for effective mentoring support, it is an ideal worth investigating and striving for.

Data collected also revealed that several mentors acquired knowledge about their mentoring functions and roles within communities of practice by networking with mentors inside and outside their schools. The findings seem to indicate that in the absence of adequate training opportunities, the mentors were forced to draw on knowledge based on their own experiences as mentors or as student teachers and acquired knowledge through interactions with other individuals who enacted

mentoring roles. The results also show that the mentors felt time ought to be set aside within the school day for mentors to work collaboratively so they could gain expertise from their shared experiences.

Results also indicated that only a few mentors were fortunate to develop their mentoring skills through workshops and training. This could be indicative that mentoring support in initial teacher training development programmes and on-going professional development for novice educators have not yet been designated the importance they deserve. Therein lies the inherent assumption that teaching is an intrinsic process and that teachers learn through their own practices which involve a trial and error approach. This is contrary to the belief of the mentors in the study that they could learn from shared practices with their mentees through the establishment of collaborative partnerships and training opportunities.

#### **5.2.4. Mentors benefit professionally and personally**

An analysis of the data reveals that contrary to commonly held beliefs that mentoring is only beneficial to mentees, the majority of the mentors felt that they benefited professionally and personally through their participation in mentoring trainee and novice educators. The three broad areas through which the mentors benefited professionally are self-reflection, learning from the innovative strategies employed by the mentees, and the satisfaction associated with enacting mentorship roles. Each of these broad areas is briefly discussed below.

The first broad area that has emerged from the data is the mentors' views about the associated benefits of mentoring which were similar to the reports of Lopez-Real and Kwan (2005) in which mentors stated they gained from learning through reflection or critical reflection of their own practices. This is also akin to the study undertaken by Ganser (1996) who found that one of the most valued benefits of mentoring for the mentor is "reflection and introspection about teaching". Mentors in this study indicated that their interactions with mentees prompted them to critically evaluate their own teaching practices. Because many of the mentors perceived themselves to

be in the position of role models and advisors, they felt compelled to examine their own practices. They were also prompted to self-reflect on their pedagogical skills when observing the lessons of their mentees and providing feedback. This led to the mentors analysing the differences between the mentees' performances and their own, which implies that they reflected on their own teaching.

The second benefit associated mentoring student and novice educators was that the mentors felt they benefited from incorporating and adopting new ideas that the mentees brought into the teaching profession, into their daily routines. For example in this study, the mentors benefited from the innovative ways in which mentees did things in the classroom thus opening the mentors' eyes to other possibilities of how they could teach. The mentees displayed strengths in the preparation of excellent teaching aids and creative ways of presenting lessons thus the mentors felt that by copying or imitating the mentees' work they could improve their own teaching practices. In addition, the good teaching practices and skills displayed by the mentees forced mentors to reflect on their own teaching practices and prompted them to re-examine their current practices. This contributed to the re-vitalisation of their professional skills.

The mentors stress on the mentees professional expertise as an important source of professional development for themselves, indicates that they do not have an arrogant view of their positions in relation to the mentees. They do not see themselves as the 'experts' who impart knowledge. On the contrary, the mentors were willing to learn from whatever appropriate sources were available and valued the mentees as equal partners in the learning process. This illustrates the mentors acknowledge that learning comes about through mutual collaboration and sharing of ideas.

Thirdly, mentors in the study also admitted that the supportive role they undertook in advancing the mentees' growth was a source of satisfaction for them and that they were proud to leave behind a legacy in education by promoting excellence in teaching. The benefits of making such positive contributions to the profession indirectly enhanced the mentors' professional images. These findings are similar to those in research conducted by Taharally et al. (1992) who state that the mentors felt being a mentor made them enabled them to develop professionally. Involvement in

mentoring programmes at schools provided positive professional growth for mentors and they enjoyed the increased collaboration associated with mentoring.

The fact that the majority of the mentors indicated the process of mentoring had positive benefits on their own professional development suggests that this may be an intrinsic reward that strengthened their commitment to the process.

#### **5.2.5. Mentors encounter many challenges**

Despite the benefits and the satisfaction of supporting their mentees, mentors also encounter challenges. . Some of the problems encountered were lack of time to meet with mentees, poor understanding of subject knowledge amongst the mentees, the duality associated with the mentoring role and difficulties experienced in appointing school- based mentors.

Most mentors indicated that they found it difficult to meet with their mentees on a regular basis due to the demands of the profession and the lack of structured free time to support the latter. Yet, despite receiving no incentives or financial reward for the provision of mentoring support, many teachers were committed to the enactment of their mentorship roles. They sacrificed personal time during lunch breaks and after-school hours to effectively guide their mentees. Jones et al. (2006) argue it is important that time be set aside for mentor-mentee interactions as this is a prerequisite for critical analysis and reflection of practice.

This finding once again confirms the argument that teacher learning is effective in communal clusters where mentors and mentees are able to jointly deliberate on and collaborate in the practices of expert teachers. Therefore mentors in this study were of the opinion that more time should be assigned in the school programme to facilitate collaborative learning. In the absence of there being sufficient time it is unlikely that mentoring support can be sustained. Jones et.al (2006) purport that the less time mentors have, the more they will rely on existing strategies ‘that work’

from their own professional knowledge base and experience (Martinez 2004, cited in Beutel, 2009), rather than using a problem solving approach to find new solutions.

Some mentors were also concerned about the depth of subject knowledge with which students enter into the classroom. This makes their task of enacting mentorship roles more difficult as they are required to provide much support in developing mentees' subject or content knowledge. The quality of education offered in South African schools seems to be an area of major concern because even media reports suggest that educators who teach mathematics and science- related subjects tend to have too poor a grasp of the subject content for effective teaching of these school-based subjects. Taking into account the multiple roles mentors perform during brief practical teaching sessions with mentees, this is an important area of focus in teacher development.

Findings indicate that some mentors experienced difficulty in working with adults because they did not know how to communicate with the mentees who were on a more equal basis to them than the children with whom they normally interact. The diversity in the mentors' accounts about the interpersonal relationships provokes the question whether training and development programmes should incorporate elements that focus on working with adult learners. The focus should be on the promotion of affective dimensions such as mentor autonomy, empowerment and emancipation instead of the mere transmission of knowledge for teaching. It also raises the question as to whether good teachers necessarily make good mentors as good teachers could lack knowledge about the impact of the affective dimensions of the mentoring role. Therefore before educators are appointed as mentors they may have to be appraised on their suitability to enact pastoral roles.

For some participants maintaining the dual role of assessor and mentor posed an overwhelming challenge. They grappled with providing feedback to the mentees about their negative teaching performances and abilities. Some mentors postponed giving immediate feedback until they felt that their mentees were confident enough to present more polished performances. While it is evident the mentors had the best interest of their mentees at heart, this raises an important question related to the enactment of the mentoring role. Are mentors adequately empowered to fulfil dual

roles of assessor and mentor? Variations in the practices of some mentors could advantage certain students who they take under their wings. Thus the objectives of the mentoring support programmes at different institutions is compromised..

Findings of the study also indicate that the teachers were reluctant to enact mentorship roles. A mentor leader had to resort to “bribery” to entice teachers to perform the responsible role of advancing the development of their colleagues. It is possible that teachers are hesitant to work with trainee and novice teachers because fulfilling their normal duties is already very demanding. Furthermore no incentive in the form of financial remuneration is offered and neither are they granted release time to provide appropriate mentoring support.

### **5.3. AREAS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH STUDIES**

While this study has provided a clearer understanding of the knowledge base that school-based mentors draw on to inform their mentorship practices, the study also highlights the following areas of potential research:

- To conduct an investigation into mentees perceptions of what constitutes good or bad mentoring and what are the challenges they experience when mentored.
- Further research with other schools in South Africa using a larger sample size is needed to confirm what is the professional knowledge base that mentors draw on when enacting the mentorship role. The development of a model of mentoring knowledge in the South African context would provide a better understanding of mentoring and thus to improve mentoring practices.

## 5.4. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR SCHOOL-BASED MENTORING

### SUPPORT

The recommendations suggested to strengthen school-based mentoring support are:

- **Need for formal mentor training programmes.** It will be necessary for the Department of Education and Universities to organise training workshops to equip mentor teachers with the knowledge and skills required to enact mentorship roles. This would also provide valuable opportunities for mentors to evaluate their current mentoring practices. Since the quality of mentoring support is dependent on the mentors' insight and understanding of what constitutes appropriate mentor practices, the actions taken by mentors who are not trained for mentoring roles, could impede the professional growth and development of mentees. Bearing cognisance of the fact that the Department of Education does little in the form of formal mentor development programmes, it is suggested that such programmes should form part of its initiatives into Continuing Professional Teaching Development (CTPD) for schools.
- **There should be seminars or forums or conferences organised for mentors to share knowledge and feedback from their experiences.** In this study the mentors primarily drew on their personal experiences to inform their mentoring practices. However, the creation of collaborative structures where mentors can exchange knowledge, skills and expertise would raise the quality of mentoring support.
- **The needs of mentors must be addressed.** Firstly, it will be necessary for the university authorities and/or the Department of Education to consider providing incentives in the form of offering remuneration to mentor teachers. This would ensure their continued commitment and dedication. Secondly, the efforts of mentor teachers can be given recognition in the form of accumulating points for continued professional development. Thirdly, it is imperative that release time be set aside for mentors to have regular meetings with their mentees and to ensure that they are also able to conduct their



normal teaching responsibilities. The study has highlighted some of the challenges that mentors experienced in the course of supporting their charges as well as fulfilling the roles and responsibilities of teachers.

- **Recognition of schools as sites of learning.** The partnerships between schools and universities need to be extended and strengthened. The expertise of mentor teachers should be used to shape curricula at universities. Currently universities are seen as learning sites where students acquire theoretical knowledge and schools as places to acquire practical training. However, there does not seem to be much contact and interaction between the two. Findings in the study indicate, for example, that mentors were disturbed that PGCE students lacked insight into content knowledge. Issues like these could be raised during meetings between university tutors and school mentors. In this way mentors who are also practising teachers would have a way of contributing positively to teacher education.

## **5.5. CONCLUSION**

In conclusion it is pleasing that teachers who enact mentorship roles appear to be dedicated to supporting the personal and professional growth of student and beginning teachers although they receive no incentives for taking on this key leadership role.

When one reflects on mentoring in South African schools it is disconcerting that such an essential support service is not given the recognition it deserves. Mentoring is not formally catered for at most schools and it largely happens during the year when student teachers undertake their teaching practice for blocks at different schools as per arrangements with academic institutions which offer teacher training. While this arrangement offers the mentees the opportunity to gain some form of practical experience the situation is not ideal. Mentees are disadvantaged and cannot discover their actual teaching potential since they move between schools for different practical teaching blocks. In each new school situation they are assigned to new school-based

mentors. Each mentor has his/her own style of mentoring and this affects how the mentees grow professionally. If mentoring is intended to be of maximum benefit to mentees, mentoring programmes should be formalised at schools so that mentees engage with the same mentors over a prolonged period of time and not different mentors at intermittent periods.

Since mentoring is inextricably linked to teacher education and teacher development, to ensure that all trainee and novice teachers receive the most appropriate and similar qualities of mentoring support, a model of the knowledge base for mentoring that mentors can draw on needs to be developed. This knowledge base can then be used to train mentors so that they can effectively enact mentorship roles. This is especially important in view the New Framework on Teacher Education (NFTED) – MCTE Report (Department of Education, 2005) which presents a model for teacher development that includes a one-year internship within the parameters of the Initial Professional Education of Teachers (IPED) system. The framework also suggests the establishment of a mentor-mentee system to manage Continuing Professional Teaching Development (CTPD) in schools.

Without well trained teachers schools are little more than buildings and equipment. To retain the services of trainee students and newly qualified teachers in the teaching profession it is important that they be properly guided and supported by well trained and knowledgeable mentor teachers who are justly rewarded for their efforts. Should this not happen our teachers who are being prepared for the profession suffer. Ultimately our youth will suffer. And when the youth suffers the future suffers

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## APPENDIX A

13 August 2010

Faculty Research Committee  
Faculty of Education  
Edgewood Campus  
University of KwaZulu-Natal



Dear Dr. N Mthiyane,

### **Consideration of Ethical Clearance for student:**

**Pillay, Vasantha - 902470020**

Your student's ethical clearance application has met with approval in terms of the internal review process of the Faculty of Education.

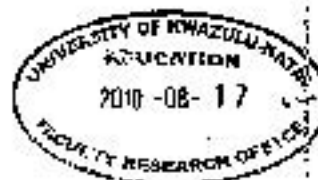
Approval has been obtained from the Faculty Research Committee, and the application will be forwarded for ratification (MPd) or recommended in the case of Ph.D and Staff applications, to the Ethics Sub-Committee of the University of KwaZulu-Natal. All Masters applications approved by Faculty Research Committee may commence with research.

Both you and the student will be advised as to whether ethical clearance has been granted for the research thesis (PhD), once the Ethics Sub-Committee has reviewed the application. An ethical clearance certificate will be issued which you should retain with your records. The student should include the ethical clearance certificate in the final dissertation (appendixes).

Should you have any queries please contact the Faculty Research Officer on (031) 260 3440 or on the email [memela@ukzn.ac.za](mailto:memela@ukzn.ac.za)

Yours faithfully

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "D. Bhana".



\_\_\_\_\_  
Professor D. Bhana  
Acting Deputy Dean Postgraduate Studies and Research

## APPENDIX B



**kzn education**

Department:  
Education  
KWAZULU-NATAL

Enquiries: Sibusiso Alwar

Tel: 033 341 8610

Ref: 2/4/8/32

Vasuntha Pillay  
43 Paradise Drive  
Orient Heights  
Pietermaritzburg  
3201

Dear Ms. Pillay

### PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH IN THE KZNDoe INSTITUTIONS

Your application to conduct research entitled: **The professional knowledge base and practices of school-based mentors**, in the KwaZulu Natal Department of Education Institutions has been approved. The research and interviews will be limited to the following Schools and Institutions:

Regards,

**Dr SZ Mbokazi**

**Acting Head of Department: Education**

11/7/11

Date

...dedicated to service and performance  
beyond the call of duty.

KWAZULU-NATAL DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

POSTAL: Private Bag 29137, Pietermaritzburg, 3200, KwaZulu-Natal, Republic of South Africa

PHYSICAL: Office G 25, 188 Pietermaritz Street, Metropolitan Building, Pietermaritzburg, 3201

TEL: Tel: +27 33 341 8610/11 | Fax: +27 33 341 8612 | email: [sibusiso.alwar@kzndoe.gov.za](mailto:sibusiso.alwar@kzndoe.gov.za)

## APPENDIX C



### Letter for access to School

University of KwaZulu-Natal

Private Bag X01

Scottsville

3209

.....

The Principal

Dear .....

I am currently a Masters in Education Student at the University of KwaZulu-Natal, Pietermaritzburg. I am conducting research on “The knowledge base and practises of school-based mentors : A study of two schools in Pietermaritzburg”. I believe that mentors have a critical role to play in the education and the professional development of trainee and novice educators. I would appreciate your permission to conduct research into mentorship at your school.

The assistance of ten mentors in completing a self-administered questionnaire is kindly requested. An appeal is also made for three mentors to avail themselves for individual interviews. The interviews will be conducted at times and on dates that will suit the participants and the school so these do not impact on the teaching and learning process. I wish to assure you that throughout my research I will ensure that your identity, those of the participants and that of your school is not revealed at any stage. The participants are at liberty to withdraw from my study at any time. Furthermore I assure you that all information collected in the research process will be stored in a safe place.

For further queries or questions, please feel free to contact me on: 033 3874201(W) or 0842064229(C). My supervisor, Dr Nonhlanhla Mthiyane can also be contacted on 033 2606131(W) at the University of KwaZulu-Natal, Pietermaritzburg Campus.

Yours faithfully

\_\_\_\_\_

V.Pillay

Student number: 902470024



### **Principal Declaration**

I \_\_\_\_\_ (please print your full name clearly)

have read the letter requesting access and I understand the contents of this document and the nature of the research project. I am willing for my school to be a research site in the project.

\_\_\_\_\_

Signature of Principal

\_\_\_\_\_

Date



## APPENDIX D



### Participant Consent Form (Questionnaire)

University of KwaZulu-Natal  
Private Bag X01  
Scottsville  
3209

.....

The Participant

Dear .....

I am currently a Masters in Education Student at the University of KwaZulu-Natal, Pietermaritzburg. I am conducting research on “The knowledge base and practises of school-based mentors : A study of two schools in Pietermaritzburg”. I would like you to participate in my research. Please note that the study is not an evaluation of your performance or competence.

The research involves collecting information using a self-administered questionnaire. I wish to assure you that throughout my research I will ensure that your identity is not revealed at any stage and that all information collected in the research process will be stored in a safe place. You are under no obligation or pressure to participate. You will be at liberty to withdraw from my study at any time.

For further queries or questions, please feel free to contact me on: 033 3874201(W) or 0842064229(C). My supervisor, Dr Nonhlanhla Mthiyane can also be contacted on 033 2606131(W) at the University of KwaZulu-Natal, Pietermaritzburg Campus.

Yours sincerely

\_\_\_\_\_

V.Pillay

Student number: 902470024



**Participant Declaration**  
**(Questionnaire)**

University of KwaZulu-Natal

Private Bag X01

Scottsville

3209

.....

I\_\_\_\_\_ (please print your full name  
clearly)

have read the letter requesting my participation and I understand the contents of this  
document and the nature of the research project.

I am willing to participate in the project and understand that I reserve the right to  
withdraw from the project at any time.

\_\_\_\_\_

Signature of Participant

\_\_\_\_\_

Date

## APPENDIX E



### **Participant Consent Form (Questionnaire and Interview)**

University of KwaZulu-Natal

Private Bag X01

Scottsville

3209

The Participant

Dear .....

I am currently a Masters in Education Student at the University of KwaZulu-Natal, Pietermaritzburg. My student number is 902470020. I am conducting research on “The knowledge base and practises of school-based mentors : A study of two schools in Pietermaritzburg”. I would like you to participate in my research. Please note that the study is not an evaluation of your performance or competence.

The research involves collecting information using a self-administered questionnaire and conducting an individual interview. An appeal is also made for you to complete the questionnaire and to avail yourself for the interview. The interview will be for about an hour and it will be arranged on a date and time that will suit you and the school so it does not impact on the teaching and learning process. On your approval, I will record the interview on tapes to assist in the writing of the transcripts as accurately as possible. The written transcripts will be made available to you to read and clarify your views.

I wish to assure you that throughout my research I will ensure that your identity is not revealed at any stage and that all information collected in the research process will be stored in a safe place. You are under no obligation or pressure to participate. You will be at liberty to withdraw from my study at any time.

For further queries or questions, please feel free to contact me on: 033 3874201(W) or 0842064229(C). My supervisor, Dr Nonhlanhla Mthiyane can also be contacted on 033 2606131(W) at the University of KwaZulu-Natal, Pietermaritzburg Campus.

Yours sincerely

---

V.Pillay

Student number: 90247002



**Participant Declaration**  
**(Questionnaire and Interview)**

University of KwaZulu-Natal

Private Bag X01

Scottsville

3209

.....

I\_\_\_\_\_ (please print your full name  
clearly)

have read the letter requesting my participation and I understand the contents of this  
document and the nature of the research project.

I am willing to participate in the project and understand that I reserve the right to  
withdraw from the project at any time.

\_\_\_\_\_

Signature of Participant

\_\_\_\_\_

Date

## **APPENDIX F**

### **QUESTIONNAIRE**

#### **KNOWLEDGE BASE FOR MENTORING QUESTIONNAIRE**

##### **INSTRUCTIONS FOR QUESTIONNAIRE**

- **Use a BLACK or BLUE ink pen. Please do not use a pencil.**
- **In the interests of confidentiality, you are not required to supply your name on the questionnaire.**
- **Please respond to each of the following items by placing a CROSS(X), which correctly reflects your opinion and experiences about your knowledge base and practices as a mentor in your school.**
- **This questionnaire must be answered by an educator who has been involved or is involved in the mentoring programme at the school.**

## **A. BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION**

1. Gender

Male		Female	
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2. Age

18-30		31-40		41-50		51+	
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3. Your formal qualification is:

Below M+3		M+3		M+4		M+5 and above	
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4. Where did you complete your initial teacher training course?

University		Teacher training institution		Correspondence	
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5. Nature of employment

Permanent		Temporary		Seconded	
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6. Years of teaching experience

0-5yrs		6-10yrs		11-15yrs		16+yrs	
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## **B. SCHOOL INFORMATION**

7. Learner Enrolment of your school

1-299		300-599		600+	
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8. Number of educators, including management in your school

2-10		11-19		20-28		29-37		38+	
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9. School Fees

No Fees		R1-500		R501 – R1000		R1001-R5000		R5000+	
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### ***C. MENTORING SURVEY***

#### **C1. Mentoring functions**

C1.1. Have you ever been a mentor in the school?

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C1.2. If you have answered yes to the question above, who did you mentor?

A colleague		A new teacher		A student teacher	
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C1.3. How did you become a mentor?

Appointed by a principal		Requested by a colleague		Volunteered to assist a colleague or student		There was no one else to mentor a student teacher	
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C1.4. For how many years have you been a mentor?

0-3yrs		3-6yrs		7-9yrs		10+yrs	
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C1.5. Did you enjoy being a mentor?

Yes		No	
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C1.6. How effective do you think you were?

Very effective		Effective		Not very effective		Not sure	
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C1.7. How would you rate your understanding of the roles and responsibilities of a mentor?

No understanding		Little understanding		Adequate understanding		Sound understanding	
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- C2. Instruction: Place a CROSS (X) for any roles and responsibilities that you consider most important in enacting your role as a mentor. Please explain each choice.**

<b>Roles and responsibilities</b>	<b>(X)</b>
A. Assessor or evaluator	
B. Coach	
C. Critical friend	
D. Role model	
E. Counsellor	
F. Good listener	
E. Life long learner	

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**C3. Strategies employed by mentors**

**Instruction: Place a CROSS (X) in the column to indicate which of the mentoring strategies listed below are employed by you.**

<b>Mentoring strategies</b>	<b>(X)</b>
A. Modelling good practice	
B. Providing structured input	
C. Constructive feedback and discussion	
D. Peer observation and evaluation	



E. Collaborative activities, e.g. joint planning, team marking etc.	
F. Team teaching	
G. Reference to theory	
H. Observation of experienced teachers	
I. Observation of trainee teacher/newly qualified teacher	
J. Encouraging the mentee's self-evaluation	
K. Setting demanding tasks	
L. Problem solving tasks	
M. Challenging the mentee's thinking and practice	

**C4. Where and how did you learn to be a mentor? How did you acquire your knowledge for mentoring in relation to the areas of knowledge indicated below? Place a CROSS/CROSSES (X) in the column/s below.**

<b>Areas of knowledge</b>	<b>Knowledge of curriculum and learning programmes</b>	<b>Lesson planning, preparation, and presentation</b>	<b>Classroom management</b>	<b>Learner assessment</b>	<b>Human relations and contribution to school development</b>
A. Personal experience of being taught					
B. Experience as a trainee teacher					
C. Professional practice and experience					
D. Roles and responsibilities within the school					
E. Roles and responsibilities outside the school					
F. Continuing professional development					

G. Mentor training/ development					
H. Colleagues/ peers/ professional network					
I. Research/ literature/ educational press					
J. Internet					

### C5. Mentor perceptions of knowledge acquisition

**Instruction: Place a CROSS/CROSSES(X) in the column to indicate where you have acquired your mentoring knowledge.**

Areas of knowledge acquisition	(X)
Initial training	
Practice and experience	
Collaboration and Colleagues	
Mentor/training development	
Continuing Teaching Professional Development	
Theory/research	
Networking	
Workshops	
Other (specify):	

**C6. Mentoring: Open-ended questions**

C6.1. What do you consider important knowledge to share with mentees?

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C6.2. How have you acquired your knowledge for mentoring?

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C6.3. What are the aspects of mentoring you feel confident about? Please discuss.

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C6.4. What are the aspects of mentoring you find challenging and require further development in? Please discuss.

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C6.5. What factors assist you in your work as a mentor? Please elaborate.

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C6.6. What factors restrict you in your work as a mentor? Please elaborate.

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**THANK YOU FOR YOUR TIME AND EFFORT!**

## **APPENDIX G**

### **KNOWLEDGE BASE FOR MENTORING**

#### **SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW**

1. How long have you been teaching?
2. How long have you been a mentor?
3. How did you become a mentor?
4. Do you enjoy being a mentor?
5. What do you think mentors should know? What kinds of skills / values does a mentor need to have?
6. What areas of knowledge are necessary for your work?
7. Where have you acquired your mentoring knowledge?
8. What kinds of things do you do with your mentees? What kind of activities do you engage in with your mentees?
9. How do you communicate your knowledge and expertise to mentees? Do you find it easy to communicate your expertise?
10. How do you monitor development in your mentees? What kinds of changes have you observed in your mentees?
11. What aspects of mentoring are you not confident about? How do you address this?
12. Describe a successful mentoring experience you have had as a mentor.  
What made it successful?
13. What kinds of challenges have you experienced in your mentoring? How did

you deal with it?

14. How do you generally deal with challenging situations in mentoring? Why do you do this?
15. How has mentoring benefited you? What have these benefits been?
16. What aspects of knowledge for mentoring would you like further development in? Why would you like further development in these areas?
17. What in your opinion makes a good mentor?
18. Is there anything else that you would like to share with me about the areas of knowledge you draw on as a mentor?
19. To what extent do the relationships you have established with your mentees been maintained?

**THANK YOU FOR YOUR TIME AND EFFORT!**

