



The Praxis of Mentoring from a Social Learning Perspective: The Case of Practising Trainee Teachers at a Teacher Training College in Midlands Province of Zimbabwe

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ABSTRACT

Teaching Practice (TP) is a major component of any teacher training programme. During this period, the trainee teachers are attached to a mentor at a practising school. The mentoring process facilitates contextual and operational transfer of skills and knowledge between the trainee teacher and the mentor. Applying the Social Learning Theory plays a very important role at this stage. This is often not the case in many mentor-mentee relationships. This study, therefore, aimed at assessing the application of the Social Learning Theory as a form of learning during teaching practice. The study was a descriptive survey which used quantitative and qualitative data gathering techniques to establish how the mentor-mentee relationship modelled social learning theory. Twenty randomly sampled trainee teachers in Gweru district responded to questionnaires to elicit their views on what they learnt during their attachment to a mentor. Five mentors and five trainee teachers were interviewed to explore their views on mentor-mentee transfer of knowledge and skills. The results showed that the existing mentor-mentee scenarios were not ideal. Most of the trainee teachers were given more teaching loads than mentors and were regarded as teaching load relievers by mentor teachers. The study concluded that trainee teachers were not benefiting much from the mentor-mentee relationships. The study recommended that teacher training colleges should staff-develop mentors, incentivise mentors and ensure that trainee teachers were attached to good mentors. This study will help researchers to understand how mentoring relationships facilitate professional growth.

Keywords: Social learning theory, mentor, trainee teacher, mentoring, Teacher education

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INTRODUCTION

Teaching practice is a major component of a teacher training programme. It immerses trainee teachers in classroom teaching so that they can experience learning and teaching realities.¹ Teaching practice allows a smooth transition from being a trainee teacher to a qualified classroom teacher. It provides the authentic contexts within which trainee teachers are exposed to the complexities and richness of the

¹ Kathleen M. Bailey, *Language Teacher Supervision* (Cambridge University Press, 2006), <https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511667329>; David P. Ngidi and Patrick T. Sibaya, "Student Teacher Anxieties Related to Practice Teaching," *South African Journal of Education* 23, no. 1 (2003): 18–22.

realities of being a teacher.² Furthermore, it gives the trainee teacher the opportunity to apply specialised knowledge they would have acquired during lectures. The trainee teacher is attached to a carefully selected and experienced qualified teacher who mentors the trainee teacher and offers formative assessment of the trainee teacher. The trainee teacher should learn from the mentor the teaching and learning process through observing and then imitating what the mentor has done. This mode of learning occurs in a social context and is informed by the Social Learning Theory. The mentor (experienced teacher) demonstrates the practice of teaching and learning to the trainee teacher (mentee).³

The primary purpose of teaching practice is to provide the student teacher with the opportunity to apply the theory of teaching during their *practicum* under the guidance of an experienced teacher (mentor). Mentoring is crucial to quality teacher training.⁴ During teaching practice, the trainee teachers observe, encode and memorise what their mentor does. The expectation is that mentors have a positive influence on the professional development of trainee teachers. Reports from trainee teachers on teaching practice reflected that there was a disjunction between what trainee teachers learn at college and what they learn from mentors in the field. In some cases, it was the mentors who learnt new ideas and skills from them. In other cases, trainee teachers are viewed as personnel deployed to relieve mentors of the workload they have. Trainee teachers' reports reflect that they are just left to work on their own without the assistance of the mentors. This did not resemble the definition of mentoring. This study sought to evaluate how the teaching practice component of teacher training offered a social learning platform in the Zimbabwean teacher training process.

The study is guided by the following questions;

1. What were the mentors' and trainee teachers' views of mentoring as a platform for social learning?
2. What benefits were trainee teachers accruing from mentors during teaching practice?
3. What mentoring attributes did in-school mentors possess?

Mentoring plays an important role in the preparation, induction and early professional development of teachers, but there is a dearth of research on mentoring as an important aspect of teacher training. Investigating mentorship as a form of social learning process is important in order to evaluate the role of mentors in the teacher training programmes. This study generates useful information on the role of mentors in the training of teachers. It puts to light what transpires during mentor-student teacher relationships. The study also aims to inform and enrich the debate on the choice of mentors for trainee teachers by teacher education colleges.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Mentoring

Mentoring is a particular mode of learning in which both the mentor and mentee are actively engaged in a learning process.⁵ It is a process in which the novice (the mentee or protégée), is taught to succeed in a new professional role by a mentor.⁶ It is a pedagogical tool for trainee teachers to integrate theory and practice and plays a key contributory role in training a teacher since it develops both practically applied and theoretically anchored knowledge.⁷ However, the concept of mentoring has been accused

² Edith M Kiggundu and Samuel T Nayimuli, "Teaching Practice: A Make or Break Phase for Student Teachers," *South African Journal of Education* 29, no. 3 (2009).

³ Barry Bozeman and Mary K Feeney, "Toward a Useful Theory of Mentoring: A Conceptual Analysis and Critique," *Administration & Society* 39, no. 6 (2007): 719–39.

⁴ P. Hobson, *The Cradle of Thought* (London: Macmillan, 2002).

⁵ Mark W Smith, *The Official Handbook of the Vast Right-Wing Conspiracy 2008: The Arguments You Need to Defeat the Loony Left This Election Year* (Regnery Publishing, 2007); Gary M Crow, "School Leader Preparation: A Short Review of the Knowledge Base," *NCSL Research Archive*, 2001, 9–25.

⁶ Marilu Goodyear, "Mentoring: A Learning Collaboration," *Educause Quarterly* 29, no. 4 (2006): 52.

⁷ Kerstin Arnesson and Gunilla Albinsson, "Mentorship—a Pedagogical Method for Integration of Theory and Practice in Higher Education," *Nordic Journal of Studies in Educational Policy* 3, no. 3 (2017): 202–17.

of lacking theory.⁸ The only theory which relates to a mentor as a role model for a mentee is Bandura's Social Learning Theory. The theory suggests that social learning is a process of learning from others through behaviour modelling.⁹ This study focused on the application of this theory in teaching practice.

In teacher training, mentoring is viewed as a complex social interaction in which mentors and trainee teachers construct and respond to contextual factors which they encounter.

Tomlinson views mentoring in a teacher training situation as a process of assisting a trainee teacher to learn how to teach in a school-based situation.¹⁰ The trainee teacher acquires not only context-specific knowledge but also develops situation-based skills, which can be transferred to similar future situations in that context. Mentoring facilitates continuous professional and self-development in a work-based learning environment. In the process, the mentor plays an important role as a model in providing the trainee teacher opportunities to learn in a teaching context.

Many people have the conception that it is only the mentee who should learn in a mentoring process. Ragins and Heirdsfield, et al, argue that the mentoring process is mutually beneficial to both the mentor and the mentee.¹¹ Senior employees (mentors) can gain technical expertise by working with younger employees who have a better understanding of new technology. Marcinkus, Kram and Hall further argue that mentors potentially gain professional and personal skills beyond technical learning from a mentoring relationship.¹² Reciprocity is another attribute of mentoring. Astrove argues that mentoring requires social exchange of knowledge and skills.¹³ All participants in a mentoring relationship benefit from mentoring. Kram describes a mentoring relationship as "learning partnership."¹⁴ The mentoring process is not an accreditation or an appraisal system, but benefits all the parties.

Attributes of a good teacher mentor and trainee teacher (mentee)

A good mentor should possess the requisite mentoring attributes in order to facilitate a smooth mentoring process. The mentor must be able to make an objective assessment of the learner's progress, understand the level of progress of the trainee teacher and the difficulties of integrating into new work situations. Grogan et al, argue that the mentor must be committed, open-minded, approachable, available, and flexible and should be a role model for the trainee.¹⁵ Furthermore, the mentor should allow the development of initiative, independence, and facilitate learning in a non-threatening environment. Similarly, the trainee teacher should be willing to learn and participate. She/he should be flexible, adaptable, loyal, well organised and must be able to accept challenge. The trainee teacher should be keen to succeed and earn quickly.

Mentors' Role in Social Learning

When trainee teachers go for teaching practice, their progress and performance become the responsibility of in-school mentors. The mentors become important change agents during their internship period. They provide the greatest influence on the development of trainee teachers. They

⁸ F. Meijers and W. Geurts, "Career Learning in a Changing World: The Role of Emotions," *International Journal for the Advancement of Counseling* 24, no. 3 (2002): 149–67; Philip F. R., *A History of Affirmative Action: 1619-2000* (Jackson: Mississippi University Press , 2001).

⁹ Albert Bandura, "Self-Efficacy: Toward a Unifying Theory of Behavioral Change.," *Psychological Review* 84, no. 2 (1977): 191.

¹⁰ Peter Tomlinson, "Reflective Strategies for School Based Teacher Preparation" (Open University Press Buckingham, 1995).

¹¹ B. R. Ragins, " Relational Mentoring: A Positive Approach to Mentoring at Work," in *The Handbook of Positive Organizational Scholarship*, ed. K. Cameron and G. Spreitzer (New York: Oxford University, 2012), 519–36; Ann M Heirdsfield et al., "Peer Mentoring for First-year Teacher Education Students: The Mentors' Experience," *Mentoring & Tutoring: Partnership in Learning* 16, no. 2 (2008): 109–24.

¹² W. Marcinkus Murphy, "Reverse Mentoring at Work: Fostering Cross-Generational Learning and Developing Millennial Leaders," *Human Resource Management* 51, no. 4 (2012): 549–73; K. E. Kram and D. T. Hall, "Mentoring in a Context of Diversity and Turbulence. In ," in *Managing Diversity: Human Resource Strategies for Transforming the Workplace*, ed. E. E. Kossek and S. A. Lobel (Cambridge, MA: Blackwell Publishers, 1996), 108–36.

¹³ Stacy L Astrove, *What Do Mentors Learn? The Role of Mentor and Protégé Role Behavior and Relationship Quality in Mentor Learning* (The University of Iowa, 2017).

¹⁴ Kram and Hall, "Mentoring in a Context of Diversity and Turbulence. In ."

¹⁵ Paul Grogan, Val Eviner, and Sarah Hobbie, "The Qualities and Impacts of a Great Mentor—and How to Improve Your Own Mentoring," *Bulletin of the Ecological Society of America* 94, no. 2 (2013): 170–76.

model the practice of teaching to trainee teachers.¹⁶ According to trainee teachers learn useful teaching rituals, routines and recipes from the mentors.¹⁷ Teaching skills are learnt effectively through modelling.¹⁸ The mentors also engage the trainee teachers in collaborative teaching which she/he become an insider in the planning and execution of lessons according to her or his model.

In the current teaching practice mentoring environment in Zimbabwe, mentors are part of the teacher training human resource, yet there is no national framework for mentoring and recognition of their work. There is a weak link between the school-based mentors and training institutions. Experience shows that the mentors' roles and responsibilities are poorly defined. They do not have guidelines from training institutions on what they are supposed to do when a trainee teacher is attached to them.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Social Learning Theory

In the context of this study, the social learning theory offers an explanation of the modelling role of the mentor in assisting the trainee teachers learn how to teach. It unpacks the learning that occurs in a social context.¹⁹ The theory is premised on the belief that human behaviour is learnt from the models which are observed. Human beings learn from one another by observing others, then form ideas of how new behaviours are performed. The ideas are later used as a guide for future actions. Edinyang describes social learning as social pedagogy in which there is social change as people learn from each other.²⁰ The theory stresses the dramatic interaction between individuals and the environment during the process of constructing meanings and identity. For a trainee teacher, the environment is the classroom and the school. The mentor and the learners are the individuals with whom the trainees interact in order to construct meanings and identity.

Social learning theory is useful for individual and career development. Four concepts are at the heart of this theory. Firstly, people learn through observation. This involves internal mental processes that are an essential part of learning. However, even if something has to be learnt, it does not mean it will result in a change of behaviour. Bandura and Kolb argue that knowledge, skills and attitudes are acquired through experiential learning.²¹ Individuals gain experience through undertaking an activity. Retention is another of the concepts highlighted by Bandura. This involves remembering what one pays attention to. This includes symbolic coding, mental images, motor rehearsal and cognitive organisation. Reproduction is the third concept peculiar to social learning. It involves reproducing images and physical capabilities which had been observed and retained. The other concept peculiar to the theory is motivation. It entails having a good reason for imitating a model. For a trainee teacher, motivation comes from the need to be a good teacher.

Social learning theory shares the assumption of behaviourists, particularly the belief that the behaviour of an individual is shaped by the environment during observational learning. The theory states that human beings learn from the environment by observing and imitating others. The person whose behaviour is imitated is a model. These models play an important role in influencing behaviour. During observational learning, the learner must pay attention and observe when and what the model is performing. The learner encodes and memorises the behaviour of the models. In relation to teaching practice, it relates to trainee teachers observing and imitating mentors and other members of the school staff who should be their models.

¹⁶ Bozeman and Feeney, "Toward a Useful Theory of Mentoring: A Conceptual Analysis and Critique"; Sasha A Barab and Kenneth E Hay, "Doing Science at the Elbows of Experts: Issues Related to the Science Apprenticeship Camp," *Journal of Research in Science Teaching* 38, no. 1 (2001): 70–102.

¹⁷ Mohamed M Bukari and Ahmed Bawa Kuyini, "Exploring the Role of Mentoring in the Quality of Teacher Training in Ghana," *International Journal of Learning and Development* 5, no. 1 (2015): 46.

¹⁸ Dan Bellm, *The Early Childhood Mentoring Curriculum: Trainer's Guide*. (ERIC, 1997).

¹⁹ Razieh Tadayon Nabavi and Mohammad Sadegh Bijandi, "Bandura's Social Learning Theory & Social Cognitive Learning Theory," *Theory of Developmental Psychology* 1, no. 1 (2012): 1–24.

²⁰ Sunday David Edinyang, "The Significance of Social Learning Theories in the Teaching of Social Studies Education," *International Journal of Sociology and Anthropology Research* 2, no. 1 (2016): 40–45.

²¹ Bandura, "Self-Efficacy: Toward a Unifying Theory of Behavioral Change."; D. A. Kolb, *Experiential Learning: Experience as a Source of Learning and Development* (Prentice Hall, 1994).

The Dynamics of Mentoring Relationships from a Social Learning Theory Context

There is an inextricably intertwined relationship between mentoring and social learning. Social learning entails how behaviour is acquired through modelling and how it is maintained. Mentoring takes place in a special environment (social context) where the mentor and mentee engage in a socialisation process. In the process, the mentor becomes a model and the mentee imitates the model. Bandura views modelling as an observational learning process.²² Ebel argues that there is a reciprocal relationship in the mentoring relationship.²³ Both mentee and mentor influence each other's behaviour. Personalities of both the mentee and mentor influence learning within a social context.

In a school situation, a trainee teacher mentoring programme is based on the following assumptions: the mentor should have adequate competencies to assist the trainee teachers. He or she must have the requisite skills, knowledge and experience to be a good model for the trainee teacher.²⁴ The other assumption is that the mentor is willing to share experiences, knowledge and skills with the trainee teacher. The trainee teacher should be given the opportunity to assume classroom instruction and management duties. The mentor should facilitate interactive discussions and give feedback on the trainee's performance.

METHODOLOGY

This was a longitudinal descriptive survey carried out over a period of eighteen months. Although the primary focus of a descriptive survey is quantitative in nature, this study supplemented questionnaires with interviews in order to produce relevant and accurate information about mentors' and trainees' views of mentoring as a social learning platform.²⁵ Fowler Jr argues that descriptive surveys can include both quantitative and qualitative methods.²⁶ A researcher can use a questionnaire and conduct follow-up interviews for qualitative data, justifying the use of both quantitative data collection and qualitative data generation methods in the study.

A longitudinal study involved repeated observation of the same variables over an extended period.²⁷ The longitudinal study helped to provide new and unique insights into the mentoring process during teaching practice.²⁸ The study was carried out over a period of eight months. The population comprised 120 technical and vocational education trainee teachers from three different intakes who were on teaching practice. Twenty (20) randomly sampled pairs of mentors and trainee teachers from fifteen practising schools in Gweru District participated in the study. The thirty (30) trainee teachers responded to questionnaires to provide data on their experiences and challenges of mentoring as a social learning process. Data was analysed thematically. Fifteen (15) mentors participated in structured interviews to provide data on their experiences with mentoring as a social learning process. Quantitative data was presented in tables, while qualitative data was presented in interview extracts. Informed consent was sought from participants and respondents collection of data.

PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Trainee teachers' views of mentoring

Respondents to the questionnaire had varied views of the mentoring process. The following table reflects students' views of mentoring.

²² Bandura, "Self-Efficacy: Toward a Unifying Theory of Behavioral Change."

²³ Robert Ebel, "Well-Integrated, Comprehensive Theory of Human Behavior" (JSTOR, 1977).

²⁴ Meijers and Geurts, "Career Learning in a Changing World: The Role of Emotions."

²⁵ John W Creswell and J David Creswell, *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches* (Sage publications, 2017).

²⁶ Floyd J Fowler Jr, *Survey Research Methods* (Sage publications, 2013).

²⁷ W.R. Shadish, T.D. Cook, and D. T. Campbell, *Experimental and Quasi-Experimental Designs for Generalized Causal Inference*, 2nd ed. (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 2002).

²⁸ C. Bovill et al., "Addressing Potential Challenges in Co-Creating Learning and Teaching: Overcoming Resistance, Navigating Institutional Norms and Ensuring Inclusivity in Student-Staff Partnerships," *Higher Education* 71, no. 2 (February 14, 2016): 195–208, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10734-015-9896-4>.

Table One: Trainee Teachers' Views of Mentoring N=20

	Yes	No
Mentoring offers a platform for social learning	(40%)	(60%)
There are more gains than losses from the mentoring process	(60%)	(40%)
Both the mentor and mentee learn during the mentoring process	(35%)	(65%)

Majority of the interviewed trainee teachers indicated that they did not benefit much from mentoring. In most cases, the mentors were keen to learn new trends emerging from teaching. Two respondents stated:

“The mentors confessed that they were trained long ago, and they have to learn new teaching methods and teacher records from us. My mentor had no knowledge of using technological tools. I had to assist her with the use of computers.

“Another challenge we have is that there is a difference between what we are taught at college and what we observe from our mentors. There is a non-systematic use of lesson plans and an irregular use of lesson structure. Their schemes of work are different from ours. They do not plan daily, and most of them do not use media in every lesson.”

Noteworthy from the remarks was the fact that there was a disjunction between what trainee teachers learn at college and what they observe from mentors. There was conflict on what the mentors knew and what the student teachers were taught at college. Some of the skills and knowledge that were upheld by mentors were outdated. Instead of learning from the attached mentors, it was the student teachers' modelling which was imitated by the mentor.

The meaning and purpose of mentoring lose value if this is what is transpiring in the practicing schools where trainee teachers are attached. If mentees portrayed that they were more informed than the mentor, trust, which is the central property of the mentoring relationship, diminishes. Mentors will play no role in assisting the trainee teachers. Zagumny argues that, from a social learning perspective, a mentor should be a tool for change, but this was not the case.²⁹ If there is nothing which the mentor can model for the mentee, the trainee teacher may not have faith in the mentor, and their relationship becomes sour.

Some trainee-teachers accused mentors of taking the role of a supervisor rather than that of a mentor, as indicated by the following remark:

They do more of assessing our work than assisting me. The mentor is keen to supervise my work and impose her ideas. Their focus is on meeting their standards.

The remark demonstrated that some mentors were not sure of their expected roles. The relationship between the mentor and trainee teacher was that of a supervisor and a supervisee. Supervision instils fear and is judgmental. Chimhenga and Mpfu argue that mentoring should not be judgmental.³⁰ It should build a trusting and friendly relationship. Teacher mentors should help trainee teachers learn how to teach.

Teacher mentors' views of mentoring as a social learning process

All the interviewed in-school mentors indicated that mentoring is a learning process in which they shoulder the responsibility of helping trainee teachers to learn how to teach. They, however, cited some challenges in their mentoring duties. Many new subjects were being introduced in the teacher training programmes. They had to learn from the trainee teachers about the new learning areas.

“I was trained twenty-five years ago, and many things have changed. The trainee is using ICTs as teaching and learning tools, which were never used during our training time.”

²⁹ Matthew J Zagumny, “Mentoring as a Tool for Change: A Social Learning Perspective,” *Organization Development Journal* 11, no. 3 (1993): 43–48.

³⁰ J Mpfu and Sylod Chimhenga, “The Importance of Mentoring: Findings from Students Doing Post Graduate Diploma in Education at Zimbabwe Open University, Bulawayo Region,” *IOSR Journal of Research & Method in Education* 6, no. 3 (2016): 27–31.

“Sometimes we just leave them to do what they learnt at college rather than teaching them what we know. In fact, we have more to learn from them than they learning from us.”

The remarks suggested that most mentors were not up-to-date with current trends in teacher training. They might be behind in terms of new teaching pedagogies, content and skills. Arguing from a technological theory, Galor argues that there is a race between education and technological change.³¹ The changes in technology demand professionals to update their knowledge and skills so that they can adapt to the changes brought by technology.

Ragins argues that in a mentoring process, the mentor learns also from the mentoring experiences.³² Many people have the conception that it is only the mentee who should learn in a mentoring process. Senior employees can gain technical expertise by working with younger employees who have a better understanding of new technology.³³ Kram further argues that mentors potentially gain professional and personal skills beyond technical learning from a mentoring relationship.³⁴

Mentors have other responsibilities which make them unable to diligently carry out the mentoring duties. Mentoring, like in coaching, one needs to be on the spot; listening, modelling, discussing and analysing the trainee teachers’ practice. Most of them cannot meet this requirement because at times they undertake some errands outside the class.

Observation also showed that allocation of trainee teachers was mostly done to school heads, the deputy heads and heads of departments and senior teachers. While justification for this allocation could be based on more experience, one could argue that it was a way of assisting them because they had a lot of responsibilities. This was confirmed by trainee teachers who gave the following remarks;

“We are left in the classroom without anyone to consult. They feel we are relief teachers.”

“My mentor is the head of the department, and she spends most of the time doing administrative duties. Most of the time, I am alone with the class.”

The remarks indicated that trainee teachers were viewed as relief teachers. They were attached to teachers with posts of responsibilities so that they could teach the classes while they undertook other responsibilities.

Furthermore, some mentors viewed mentoring as a special responsibility which they are assigned to, but they are not paid for it. It is a complex, multifaceted duty that requires the undertaking of multiple roles.³⁵ They see it as an extra-special duty. Mentors need special skills to enable them to carry out mentoring roles effectively. The mentors bemoaned the lack of specific mentoring skills as indicated by the following remarks:

“Mentoring was not part of the learning content during our training. As a result, I do what I deem appropriate ways of assisting the trainee teachers.”

Notable from the remarks was the fact that the buddy system of mentoring was taking place in schools. This is a mentoring system in which a mentor with no mentoring skills is paired with a trainee teacher.³⁶ Jones argues that a mentor should demonstrate specific mentoring skills in order to enable learning and change to take place.³⁷ The skills are important in bringing satisfying change in the lives of both the mentor and mentee.

³¹ O. Galor, *Unified Growth Theory* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2011).

³² Ragins, “Relational Mentoring: A Positive Approach to Mentoring at Work.”

³³ Marcinkus Murphy, “Reverse Mentoring at Work: Fostering Cross-Generational Learning and Developing Millennial Leaders”; Michael Harvey and M Ronald Buckley, “Assessing the ‘conventional Wisdoms’ of Management for the 21st Century Organization,” *Organizational Dynamics* 30, no. 4 (2002): 368.

³⁴ Kathy E Kram, *Mentoring at Work: Developmental Relationships in Organizational Life*. (University Press of America, 1988).

³⁵ D.N. Balaam and M. Veseth, *Introduction to International Political Economy*, 4th ed. (New Jersey: Pearson and Prentice Hall, 2008).

³⁶ E. Moir, “Sustained Mentoring of Teachers by the New Teacher Centre,” 2006, http://www.nesinc.com/PDFs/2006_16Moir.pdf.

³⁷ Linda Phillips-Jones, *Skills for Successful Mentoring: Competencies of Outstanding Mentors and Mentees* (CCC/The Mentoring Group, 2003).

Trainee teachers' views of their mentors

Table Two: Trainee teachers' opinions about their mentors, N=30

Attribute	Yes	No
Mentors were always available to assist	60%	40%
They were good role models	60%	40%
They were committed	40%	60%
Made an objective assessment of progress	50%	50%
Made a co-evaluation of their work	30%	70%
Helped to integrate them into the teaching environment	70%	30%
They were flexible	40%	60%
Allowed the development of creativity and independence	40%	60%

Majority of the trainee teachers (60%) indicated that mentors were always available to assist. As a result, they could get assistance when needed. Availability is a very important attribute which must be possessed by a mentor. Grogan et al argue that a mentor is a pedagogue, which literally means someone who walks along with the student to his/her place of learning.³⁸ Availability of mentors meant that the trainee always had a model to learn from. Likewise, 60% of the trainee teachers confirmed that their mentors were good models. Perhaps these were the mentors who were always available. The forty (40%) responses on unavailability and non-commitment of some mentors could be indicative of the fact that some are not receiving adequate mentoring. It could also mean that mentor-mentee relationships are not being valued in some schools.

Majority of the students felt that their mentors were committed, as indicated by the following interviewed trainee teachers;

1. *They made sure that we carried out our routine as per expectations in order to ensure the production of high-quality work.*
2. *My mentor always wanted to see what I prepared for learners before I delivered a lesson.*
3. *She taught by example.*

Noteworthy from the remarks was the fact that most mentors were committed and they wanted to ensure that high-quality work was produced by assisting their mentees. Some mentors worked hard to ensure that high quality standard of work is produced by their learners. As a result, they did their best to ensure that they took trainee teachers on board whenever they are when they are preparing for lessons.

Seventy (70%) of the trainee teachers indicated that they were helped to integrate into the teaching environment. Most mentors did not want trainee teachers to spoil their usual working routines or undo the good standards they had set for their classes. As a result, they took time to carefully give appropriate orientation to the trainee teachers they are attached to.

The findings show that there were knowledge gaps among the trainee teachers, mentors and lecturers. There was no common understanding of what was expected during the mentoring process. From the study, most mentors were not clear about what was expected of them by the lecturers. Lack of coordination between two key players (lecturers and school-based mentors) during teaching practice could affect students' performance during the social learning process. There was no meaningful connection between the college tutors and mentors except when the tutors came for assessment, which is often done hurriedly. The mismatch between what the mentor expected and the college expectations confused teacher trainees, particularly regarding new trends in teaching.

There is a need to have lengthy discussions between in-school mentors and college lecturers in order to establish a common understanding of how trainee teachers should be assisted. Teacher training colleges should recognise in-school mentors as part of training officers who play a very important role in imparting practical teaching skills to trainee teachers during the greater part of their training. There

³⁸ Grogan, Eviner, and Hobbie, "The Qualities and Impacts of a Great Mentor—and How to Improve Your Own Mentoring."

is a need for coordinated effort between the mentors and lecturers in order to improve the quality of mentorship in schools.³⁹ The role of the mentors should never be underrated or underestimated. There is a need for colleges to train mentors and constantly update them on new trends in teaching.

RECOMMENDATION

The study makes the following recommendations;

1. A mentor is an important person in the training of a student teacher. He/she is an influential person in the trainee's journey to becoming a qualified teacher. There is therefore a need for in-service workshops for mentors so as to equip them with current trends, teaching skills and approaches to enable them to be good models for trainee teachers.
2. In-school mentors as part of training human resources for teacher training colleges should be constantly staff developed so that they have a common understanding of what is expected of a trainee teacher. There is a need for teacher training colleges to re-examine the role of in-school mentors in the teacher training programmes. Teacher training colleges need to identify good mentors to whom they attach trainee teachers.
3. There is a need to have a module on mentoring in the teacher training course so that teacher trainees get to know what is expected of them and their mentors during the mentoring process.

CONCLUSION

This study has assessed the application of the Social Learning Theory as a form of learning during teaching practice in the Midlands Province of Zimbabwe. Mentoring can only offer a good social learning platform for trainee teachers if the mentor knows what is expected. Due to changing trends in teaching and the introduction of technologies in teaching, the expected outcomes of mentoring are not fully met. The supposed mentors are being mentored by the supposed mentees. A number of mentoring issues need to be addressed in order to enhance social learning to ensure that beneficial social learning takes place. Mentors need to be upskilled and updated in order to facilitate effective social learning to place during the mentoring process. Lecturers, trainee teachers and in-school mentors should share a similar understanding of mentoring. This will ensure that the mentor-mentee relationship yields the expected results.

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