



# Strengthening mentorship relationships in Accounting Education: Student–teacher and mentor perspectives from the O.R. Tambo Coastal District, Eastern Cape

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## ABSTRACT

This article examined the factors influencing mentor–mentee relationships in teacher education programmes, focusing on accounting student-teachers and mentors in selected schools within the Eastern Cape Province of South Africa. The study was anchored in the Interpretivist paradigm, drawing on social learning theory and relationship-building theory to explore how meaning is constructed through interpersonal interactions during the practicum. A qualitative research approach and phenomenological research design were used to gain deep insight into the lived experiences of the participants. Purposive sampling was used to select five accounting mentor teachers and five accounting student-teachers. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews and analysed using thematic analysis. The findings reveal that communication and feedback, support and guidance, lesson planning and time management, classroom management and content knowledge significantly shape the mentoring relationship. The study underscores the need for strengthened university-school partnerships, structured mentor training, and improved support systems to foster effective mentoring environments. Recommendations are provided to improve mentoring practices and to better equip student-teachers for successful integration into the teaching profession, particularly within resource-constrained rural contexts.

**Keywords:** Teaching Practicum, Professional Development, Teacher Education, Accounting Education, Mentoring.

## INTRODUCTION

Mentorship has increasingly become an integral component of teacher education programmes worldwide, as it provides student-teachers with structured guidance, professional modelling, and emotional support during school-based training.<sup>1</sup> In Gobingca and Siko's view, in many educational systems, effective mentor–mentee relationships are considered essential to preparing competent,

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<sup>1</sup> Hassan Soodmand Afshar and Mojtaba Farahani, "Inhibitors to EFL Teachers' Reflective Teaching and EFL Learners' Reflective Thinking and the Role of Teaching Experience and Academic Degree in Reflection Perception," *Reflective Practice* 19, no. 1 (January 2, 2018): 46–67, <https://doi.org/10.1080/14623943.2017.1351353>; Asma Mansour Almusharraf, "Student Teachers' Development of Reflective Practice Concerning Teaching Philosophy and Peer Observations," *Arab World English Journal (AWEJ)* Volume 11 (2020).

confident, and well-socialised teachers who are capable of navigating complex classroom realities.<sup>2</sup> Within South Africa, Ngwenya and Hlophe and Ndou argued that the mentoring process has gained prominence in policy frameworks that emphasise practical training, workplace-based learning, and collaborative school–university partnerships.<sup>3</sup> Through these partnerships, workplace mentors are expected to guide student-teachers in developing subject knowledge, classroom management skills, professional ethics, and effective teaching strategies.

Deng and Orakcı emphasise that mentorship is critical in accounting education due to the subject's technical, conceptual, and ethical demands, yet research on factors influencing accounting mentor–mentee relationships in rural South African contexts remains limited.<sup>4</sup> Effective mentorship enables accounting student-teachers to strengthen their instructional practices, improve content delivery, and receive constructive feedback that supports their professional growth, while positive mentor–mentee relationships contribute to improved classroom environments and learner academic achievement.<sup>5</sup>

Despite the acknowledged importance of mentorship in teacher education, research on the factors influencing the professional relationships between accounting student-teachers and workplace mentors is limited. Existing studies have largely focused on mentorship in general teacher education, with insufficient attention paid to the contextual challenges, communication barriers, professional expectations, and support systems that shape mentor–mentee relationships in accounting education. This gap in the literature underscores the need for further investigation into strategies to strengthen these professional relationships and enhance student-teachers' teaching practice experiences.

This study explores factors influencing the professional relationship between accounting student-teachers and workplace mentors and aims to identify strategies that can strengthen mentorship practices in selected schools within the O.R. Tambo Coastal District. The study employed a qualitative research approach located within the interpretivist paradigm, using a phenomenological research design, and data were generated through semi-structured interviews, while thematic analysis will be used to analyse and interpret the findings. The study seeks to contribute to improving mentoring practices in accounting education and to enhance collaboration between schools and teacher education institutions.

This study reviewed relevant literature and identified a theoretical framework that underpinned. Presentation and discussion of findings are organised according to themes that emerged from the data analysis. These themes were developed in alignment with the research questions and the responses of the participants. These themes include: lack of communication and feedback; support and guidance; lesson planning and time management; and classroom management and content knowledge.

## LITERATURE

The mentoring relationship has challenges, as mentors are expected to coach accounting student-teachers through the subtleties of teaching accounting and assist them in transforming theoretical knowledge into useful classroom abilities.

<sup>2</sup> Berington Zanoxolo Gobingca and Esetu Siko, "Examining Teachers' Perspectives on the Factors Affecting Their Relationship with Student-Teachers during Teaching Practice Sessions: A Case of Schools in the Eastern Cape Province, South Africa," *E-Journal of Humanities, Arts and Social Sciences (EHASS)* 5, no. 7 (2024): 1275–92.

<sup>3</sup> Jabulisile Ngwenya and Nombuso Hlophe, "Strategies Used to Teach Grade 11 Financial Accounting in One District in South Africa," *PONTE International Journal of Science and Research* 77, no. 7 (2021); Muhali Ndou, "The Perceptions of Principals on The Phasing Out of Accounting in Secondary Schools in Limpopo Province South Africa," *Indonesian Accounting Research Journal* 4, no. 1 (2023): 90–100.

<sup>4</sup> Zongyi Deng, "Pedagogical Content Knowledge Reconciled: Bringing Curriculum Thinking into the Conversation on Teachers' Content Knowledge," *Teaching and Teacher Education* 72 (2018): 155–64; Şenol Orakcı, "Teachers' Reflection and Level of Reflective Thinking on the Different Dimensions of Their Teaching Practice," *International Journal of Modern Education Studies* 5, no. 1 (2021): 118–39.

<sup>5</sup> H. Raza, M Furqan, and R N Ilham, "The Effect of Accounting Study Club and Online-Based Mentoring on Student Academic Achievement with Motivation as an Intervening Variable: An Analysis of Accounting Student Behavior during the COVID-19 Pandemic," *Journal of Positive School Psychology* 6, no. 8 (2022): 3554–69; Wendy Nuis, Mien Segers, and Simon Beusaert, "Conceptualizing Mentoring in Higher Education: A Systematic Literature Review," *Educational Research Review* 41 (2023): 100565.

## Challenges faced by accounting student-teachers

Accounting student-teachers demonstrate limited knowledge of pedagogical content, which constrains their ability to teach accounting concepts effectively, adapt content to diverse learners, and manage classroom contexts.<sup>6</sup> As Heikkinen et al. propounded, given the abstract and dense nature of accounting, specialised pedagogical strategies are required to make content accessible; however, many student-teachers lack this expertise, resulting in lessons that are less engaging and difficult for learners to understand.<sup>7</sup> Additionally, challenges related to classroom management and lesson planning further hinder student-teachers' ability to create positive and productive learning environments.<sup>8</sup>

Although mentors are expected to provide guidance, feedback, and support during teaching practice, there is a shortage of mentors with specialised knowledge in accounting education.<sup>9</sup> This limits student-teachers' access to meaningful feedback on teaching methods, lesson delivery, and classroom management, leading to feelings of isolation and reduced motivation.<sup>10</sup> Moreover, mentors often face heavy workloads, lack mentoring experience, or are reluctant to mentor student-teachers.<sup>11</sup> Concerns have also been raised about mentor selection based on availability rather than expertise, coupled with inadequate supervision from assigned supervisors, which further undermines student-teachers' motivation and professional growth.<sup>12</sup>

Carnegie et al. added that mentors are often selected based on availability rather than their suitability for mentorship, and these mentors may be knowledgeable in accounting but may not possess the teaching expertise or mentoring skills necessary to support student-teachers.<sup>13</sup> Aldabbus mentioned that choosing mentors solely based on their availability risks placing student-teachers in the hands of individuals who may not fully support their professional development.<sup>14</sup> In agreement, Grudnoff, Haigh and Mackisack highlighted that this misalignment further widens the gap between the student-teacher's expectations and the realities of teaching, contributing to confusion and uncertainty, and that the lack of formal mentorship training for mentors is a significant barrier.<sup>15</sup>

Through the reviewed literature on the challenges faced by accounting student-teachers during their teaching practicum, the researcher discovered more about the gap between accounting student-teachers' ideal of the teaching profession and the reality they encountered during their first training period. The above literature advocates that the student-teachers' expectations when going for their teaching practices clashed with the realities of teaching, as they mentioned a lack of support from their mentors and that they were allocated mentors based on availability and not by knowledge or expertise. The next section will look at the challenges that mentors face in the mentoring process.

## Challenges faced by mentors

Some scholars have presented a convincing argument that the time commitment required for effective mentorship is one of the most significant challenges facing mentors in their relationships with

<sup>6</sup> Ingrid Koni and Edgar Krull, "Differences in Novice and Experienced Teachers' Perceptions of Planning Activities in Terms of Primary Instructional Tasks," *Teacher Development* 22, no. 4 (2018): 464–80.

<sup>7</sup> Hannu L T Heikkinen, Knut-Rune Olsen, and Eva M Bjerkhot, "Understanding Mentoring within an Ecosystem of Practices," 2020.

<sup>8</sup> Deng, "Pedagogical Content Knowledge Reconceived: Bringing Curriculum Thinking into the Conversation on Teachers' Content Knowledge."

<sup>9</sup> Linda Darling-Hammond et al., *Preparing Teachers for Deeper Learning* (Harvard Education Press Cambridge, MA, 2019).

<sup>10</sup> Miri Ben-Amram and Nitza Davidovitch, "Novice Teachers and Mentor Teachers: From a Traditional Model to a Holistic Mentoring Model in the Postmodern Era," *Education Sciences* 14, no. 2 (January 30, 2024): 143, <https://doi.org/10.3390/educsci14020143>.

<sup>11</sup> Ruth Cross et al., "'Feeling Part of a Network of Learning in Health Promotion': An Evaluation of a Postgraduate Peer-Mentoring Scheme in Ghana," *Innovations in Education and Teaching International* 57, no. 2 (2020): 175–85.

<sup>12</sup> Somin Kim, "Technological, Pedagogical, and Content Knowledge (TPACK) and Beliefs of Preservice Secondary Mathematics Teachers: Examining the Relationships," *EURASIA Journal of Mathematics, Science and Technology Education* 14, no. 10 (July 11, 2018), <https://doi.org/10.29333/ejmste/93179>; Garry Carnegie, Lee Parker, and Eva Tsahuridu, "It's 2020: What Is Accounting Today?," *Australian Accounting Review* 31, no. 1 (2021): 65–73; Faisal Alanezi et al., "Factors Influencing Students' Choice of Accounting as a Major: Further Evidence from Kuwait," *Global Review of Accounting and Finance* 7, no. 1 (2016): 165–77.

<sup>13</sup> Carnegie, Parker, and Tsahuridu, "It's 2020: What Is Accounting Today?"

<sup>14</sup> Shaban Aldabbus, "Challenges Encountered by Student Teachers in Practicing Teaching," *British Journal of Education* 8, no. 7 (2020): 1–8.

<sup>15</sup> Lexie Grudnoff, Mavis Haigh, and Vivienne Mackisack, "Re-Envisaging and Reinvigorating School–University Practicum Partnerships," *Asia-Pacific Journal of Teacher Education* 45, no. 2 (March 15, 2017): 180–93, <https://doi.org/10.1080/1359866X.2016.1201043>.

accounting student-teachers.<sup>16</sup> In the study by Kuhn et al., mentors report feeling overwhelmed by the additional task of mentoring, as large class sizes, administrative responsibilities, and lesson planning make it difficult for them to find time to observe student-teachers in the classroom or to provide detailed feedback.<sup>17</sup> This time constraint can undermine the quality of mentorship and leave student-teachers without the necessary guidance.<sup>18</sup>

Dreer notes that, beyond time constraints, mentorship is often undermined by a lack of clear structure and guidelines, leaving mentors uncertain about how to effectively support student-teachers and limiting their ability to provide targeted, subject-specific guidance in accounting.<sup>19</sup> This absence of structure can lead to frustration, missed professional development opportunities, and difficulties in addressing student-teachers' varying levels of preparedness and confidence. Similarly, Anis and Hasan highlight that mentors struggle to balance their dual roles as teachers and mentors, as they are expected not only to model effective teaching and offer subject-specific support but also to provide emotional and professional guidance to student-teachers.<sup>20</sup>

Kim and Alanezi et al. indicate that mentors' heavy workloads and limited mentoring experience often hinder their ability to support student-teachers effectively.<sup>21</sup> As mentoring requires specific skills such as patience, constructive feedback, and the ability to guide novice teachers, the absence of these competencies can limit mentors' effectiveness, leaving accounting student-teachers without adequate guidance and feedback and resulting in gaps in their professional development and readiness.<sup>22</sup>

Carnegie et al. explain that mentors' dual roles often create tension, as they are expected to provide personalised guidance to student-teachers with varying levels of subject knowledge, increasing their workload and demanding greater patience and adaptability.<sup>23</sup> This extended responsibility may require emotional support that goes beyond mentors' professional capacities,<sup>24</sup> particularly when mentors feel unprepared to address such needs due to limited mentoring training.<sup>25</sup> Furthermore, mentors struggle to manage expectations from institutions and teacher education programmes, especially in the absence of formal support, leading to increased stress and feelings of being undervalued in their mentoring role.<sup>26</sup>

From the researcher's point of view, mentors report feeling overwhelmed by mentoring responsibilities, as they struggle to find time to observe and provide feedback to accounting student-teachers. The reviewed literature also outlines that mentors come across student-teachers who still struggle with the subject matter, and they may fail to provide support and guidance that is tailored to meet each student-teacher's needs. The next section will discuss the theories that underpinned this study.

<sup>16</sup> Clara Kuhn et al., "Mentor Teachers' Motivations and Implications for Mentoring Style and Enthusiasm," *Teaching and Teacher Education* 139 (2024): 104441.

<sup>17</sup> Kuhn et al., "Mentor Teachers' Motivations and Implications for Mentoring Style and Enthusiasm."

<sup>18</sup> Eva Susann Becker et al., "Exploring Antecedents of Student Teachers' Emotions during Instructional Experiences: A Situation-specific Analysis," *British Journal of Educational Psychology* 95 (2025): S133–52.

<sup>19</sup> Benjamin Dreer, "The Significance of Mentor–Mentee Relationship Quality for Student Teachers' Well-Being and Flourishing during Practical Field Experiences: A Longitudinal Analysis," *International Journal of Mentoring and Coaching in Education* 10, no. 1 (2021): 101–17.

<sup>20</sup> Muhammad Ibne Anis and Md Mahadhi Hasan, "From Reflection to Practice: A Qualitative Study of Teaching Practicum Experiences," *EDUCASIA: Jurnal Pendidikan, Pengajaran, Dan Pembelajaran* 10, no. 1 (2025): 13–26.

<sup>21</sup> Kim, "Technological, Pedagogical, and Content Knowledge (TPACK) and Beliefs of Preservice Secondary Mathematics Teachers: Examining the Relationships"; Alanezi et al., "Factors Influencing Students' Choice of Accounting as a Major: Further Evidence from Kuwait."

<sup>22</sup> Feni Maharani and Rahmah Fithriani, "Exploring Challenges EFL Pre-Service Teachers Experience in Teaching Practicum: A Transformative Learning Perspective," *Scope: Journal of English Language Teaching* 7, no. 2 (2023): 173–80.

<sup>23</sup> Carnegie, Parker, and Tsahuridu, "It's 2020: What Is Accounting Today?"

<sup>24</sup> Jian Wang and Sotaro Shibayama, "Mentorship and Creativity: Effects of Mentor Creativity and Mentoring Style," *Research Policy* 51, no. 3 (2022): 104451.

<sup>25</sup> Kavita Kapadia Matsko et al., "Host or Teacher of Teaching? Examining Mentors' Tacit Theories of Student Teacher Learning," *Teaching and Teacher Education* 138 (2024): 104410.

<sup>26</sup> Matsko et al., "Host or Teacher of Teaching? Examining Mentors' Tacit Theories of Student Teacher Learning"; T. Petrus, "Community Coaching/Mentoring as a Strategic Asset in Addressing the Negative Impact of Gang Subcultures in a Gang-Affected Community in Gqeberha, Eastern Cape, South Africa," *Open Journal of Social Sciences* 11, no. 10 (2023): 204–21.

## THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

In the interest of this study, the researcher identified two theories: the social learning theory and relationship-building theory that will carry and support this research. According to Varpio et al., a theoretical framework serves as the foundation for research, guiding the study by providing a lens through which the researcher views the topic.<sup>27</sup>

Some scholars caution that social learning theory, developed by Albert Bandura, posits that people learn from one another through observation, imitation, and modelling; it provides a framework for understanding how accounting student-teachers learn from their mentors and how effective mentoring practices can be structured.<sup>28</sup> This theory provided a strong foundation for understanding the student-teacher-mentor relationship, particularly in subject-specific contexts such as accounting. As some scholars observe, through observation, imitation, feedback, and guided practice, student-teachers learn the skills and knowledge they need to become effective teachers in their subject areas.<sup>29</sup> This research suggests that while student-teachers learn by observing, mentors serve as role models, demonstrating effective ways to teach specific content areas, and they not only demonstrate practical skills but also guide the student-teacher through the cognitive processes involved in teaching.

Tett et al. describe relationship-building theory as a theory centred on the development and maintenance of strong interpersonal connections between individuals, particularly in contexts where relationships have a significant influence on outcomes, such as in education.<sup>30</sup> By applying these relationship-building principles, mentors can foster a supportive and effective learning environment for student-teachers. Tett et al. added that the quality of the mentoring relationship can significantly impact the student-teacher's development, confidence, and readiness to enter the teaching profession.<sup>31</sup> In turn, student-teachers who experience positive mentoring relationships are more likely to develop strong, positive relationships with their learners, further extending the impact of relationship-building into their future classrooms.<sup>32</sup>

## METHODOLOGY

This study was conducted in one education district in the Eastern Cape Province. Guided by an interpretivist research paradigm and used a qualitative research approach. The study used a phenomenological design to understand the lived experiences of the participants. Purposive sampling was used to select 5 accounting mentor teachers and 5 accounting student-teachers. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews. The researcher conducted the interviews with 5 mentors, and the duration of the interview was 20 minutes per participant. The data from the interview process were recorded and later transcribed. The researcher used verbatim transcription and captured the exact words spoken by the participants. The study also collected data from 5 accounting student-teachers through interviews; this data was recorded and later transcribed. The researcher used verbatim transcription and captured the exact words spoken by the participants. Data were analysed using thematic analysis.

<sup>27</sup> Lara Varpio et al., "The Distinctions between Theory, Theoretical Framework, and Conceptual Framework," *Academic Medicine* 95, no. 7 (2020): 989–94.

<sup>28</sup> Ronald L Akers and Gary F Jensen, "The Empirical Status of Social Learning Theory of Crime and Deviance: The Past, Present, and Future," *Taking Stock: The Status of Criminological Theory* 15 (2006): 37–76; Anwar Rumjaun and Fawzia Narod, "Social Learning Theory—Albert Bandura," in *Science Education in Theory and Practice: An Introductory Guide to Learning Theory* (Springer, 2025), 65–82.

<sup>29</sup> Szufang Chuang, "The Applications of Constructivist Learning Theory and Social Learning Theory on Adult Continuous Development," *Performance Improvement* 60, no. 3 (2021): 6–14; Varpio et al., "The Distinctions between Theory, Theoretical Framework, and Conceptual Framework"; D Urhahne and L Wijnia, "Theories of Motivation in Education: An Integrative Framework," *Educational Psychology Review* 35, no. 2 (2023): 45.

<sup>30</sup> Robert P Tett, Margaret J Toich, and S Burak Ozkum, "Trait Activation Theory: A Review of the Literature and Applications to Five Lines of Personality Dynamics Research," *Annual Review of Organizational Psychology and Organizational Behavior* 8, no. 1 (2021): 199–233.

<sup>31</sup> Tett, Toich, and Ozkum, "Trait Activation Theory: A Review of the Literature and Applications to Five Lines of Personality Dynamics Research."

<sup>32</sup> Joshua Chukwuere, "Theoretical and Conceptual Framework: A Critical Part of Information Systems Research Process and Writing," 2021; Badrinarayan Shankar Pawar, *Theory Building for Hypothesis Specification in Organizational Studies* (Taylor & Francis, 2024).

According to some scholars, thematic analysis involves carefully reading the transcript notes, assigning relevant codes, and documenting reflections or observations in the margins.<sup>33</sup> The process also includes sorting and organising the data to identify recurring phrases, relationships between variables, and emerging patterns and themes.

The researcher repeatedly listened to the audio recordings and read the transcripts, highlighting key segments and assigning descriptive codes related to mentor–mentee relationships. These codes were then grouped into broader categories and refined into preliminary themes. The themes were reviewed against the full dataset to ensure they accurately reflected participants' experiences, and their names were refined for clarity. Finally, the themes were aligned with the research questions and relevant literature to show how the findings contribute to existing knowledge and address the identified gap.

Permission to conduct this study was granted by the Department of Education in the Eastern Cape, and participants were informed of the study's benefits and anonymity. Informed consent, confidentiality and voluntary participation were discussed in detail.

## PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

The themes were validated through thematic analysis, in which recurring patterns, ideas, and experiences expressed by participants were carefully coded and categorised. To ensure credibility and trustworthiness, the researcher compared responses from accounting student-teachers and mentors to identify commonalities and differences. Member checking was also used, allowing participants to verify whether their views were accurately represented. The use of verbatim quotations further strengthened the authenticity and validity of the themes presented in this study. This section will provide detailed findings on themes aligned with the research objectives and research questions of the study. These findings are supported by existing and relevant literature; themes include: lack of communication and feedback; support and guidance; lesson planning and time management; and classroom management and content knowledge.

### Lack of Communication and Feedback

Lack of communication emerged as one of the challenges that accounting student-teachers complained about regarding their mentors.

An accounting student-teacher responded,

*"I felt like I wasn't sure what my mentor was looking for or what I needed to work on, and there were times when my mentor's teaching style and expectations clashed with my approach, making it difficult to implement the feedback provided."*

According to Henderson, communication drives the mentoring relationship between accounting student-teachers and mentors; it is the foundation of a successful one, in which mentors and mentees must communicate openly and clearly to achieve their goals.<sup>34</sup> From the student-teacher responses, the study revealed a lack of communication that sometimes hinders the effectiveness of the mentoring process. They could not understand what was expected of them, and no guidance or follow-up was provided to tailor their progress or respond positively to feedback.

The following responses are from accounting student-teachers regarding feedback from their mentors. They highlighted the importance of feedback in the mentoring relationship, and these regular meetings to tailor progress also served as a form of providing feedback to accounting student-teachers. A student-teacher had this to say regarding feedback,

*"I wish we had regular check-ins and constructive feedback sessions; this would have helped me grow more confidently as a teacher."*

<sup>33</sup> Mohammed Ibrahim Alhojailan and Mohammed Ibrahim, "Thematic Analysis: A Critical Review of Its Process and Evaluation," *West East Journal of Social Sciences* 1, no. 1 (2012): 39–47; Muhammad Naeem et al., "A Step-by-Step Process of Thematic Analysis to Develop a Conceptual Model in Qualitative Research," *International Journal of Qualitative Methods* 22 (2023): 16094069231205788.

<sup>34</sup> Chet Henderson, "Teacher Mentor Perspectives on the Check and Connect Mentor Program" (University of Pittsburgh, 2024).

Another student-teacher responded,

*“I hardly receive feedback from my mentor, and when we do meet, the feedback is brief and focuses on minor issues without providing actionable advice.”*

Responses from accounting student-teachers regarding feedback from their mentors highlighted the importance of feedback in the mentoring relationship, including both critical and constructive feedback. These regular meetings to tailor progress also served as a form of providing feedback to accounting student-teachers. Grudnoff et al. emphasised the power of feedback in teachers' growth and development. They outlined that feedback allows student-teachers to reflect on their learning process and refine their teaching techniques for future purposes.<sup>35</sup> From the interviews with the accounting student-teachers, the study revealed that their mentors did not provide constructive feedback. Constructive feedback requires timeliness, clarity, and sensitivity, as learners benefit most when feedback is offered promptly and delivered in a supportive manner.<sup>36</sup> They either offered unclear feedback that hindered their growth only when asked, or months would pass without any input, leading to student-teachers' demotivation. They end up having to learn on their own without proper guidance. These findings are supported by Maharani and Fithriani, who state that without feedback, student-teachers may struggle with self-doubt and continue to use ineffective teaching methods, thereby affecting learners' outcomes.<sup>37</sup> Communication and feedback play an essential role in the mentoring relationship.

### Support and Guidance

Support and guidance emerged as one of the factors that affect the relationship between the accounting student-teacher and mentor. Aldabbus highlighted that mentors play a vital role in shaping the experiences and professional growth of student-teachers. Their support and guidance should provide a bridge between theory and practice, helping student-teachers navigate the complexities of real-world classrooms.<sup>38</sup>

A student-teacher said,

*“I was struggling to balance autonomy and guidance. Sometimes I felt like my mentor was too hands-off, and I was left to figure things out independently without sufficient support.”*

Another student-teacher added.

*“I felt micro-managed, which limited my ability to develop my teaching style.”*

Accounting student-teachers reported not receiving the support and guidance they expected from their mentors. They believe their mentors were not entirely involved in the relationship, as they mostly allowed them to lead and guide themselves. Approximately 60% of student-teachers believed their mentors controlled every aspect, rather than trusting them to handle their responsibilities independently and provide guidance when necessary. In comparison, 40% of student-teachers were satisfied with how their mentors handled the relationship. The mentoring relationship requires mentors and student-teachers to collaborate and work hand-in-hand. This may create a misalignment of expectations and gaps in the relationship. Dreer cautioned that the absence of proper support and guidance can make student-teachers feel isolated, overwhelmed, and uncertain about their performance, and this lack of support can also hinder accounting student-teachers' professional identity formation, leading to lower self-efficacy and, in some cases, early departure from the teaching profession altogether.<sup>39</sup>

<sup>35</sup> Grudnoff, Haigh, and Mackisack, “Re-Envisaging and Reinvigorating School–University Practicum Partnerships.”

<sup>36</sup> Dreer, “The Significance of Mentor–Mentee Relationship Quality for Student Teachers' Well-Being and Flourishing during Practical Field Experiences: A Longitudinal Analysis.”

<sup>37</sup> Maharani and Fithriani, “Exploring Challenges EFL Pre-Service Teachers Experience in Teaching Practicum: A Transformative Learning Perspective.”

<sup>38</sup> Aldabbus, “Challenges Encountered by Student Teachers in Practicing Teaching.”

<sup>39</sup> Dreer, “The Significance of Mentor–Mentee Relationship Quality for Student Teachers' Well-Being and Flourishing during Practical Field Experiences: A Longitudinal Analysis.”

A mentor had this to say,

*“I purposely step back and let the student-teacher take the lead; it is the most effective way to nurture independence and boost their self-confidence.”*

Another mentor reported,

*“Sometimes I have to be more hands-on and give clear instructions so the work gets done right and meets the school’s standards.”*

Approximately 50% of mentors indicated that they intentionally allowed student-teachers to take the lead to foster independence and self-confidence. However, 50% of mentors acknowledged that, at times, they were more directive, aiming to ensure that tasks were completed correctly and in line with school requirements. Mentors also highlighted that balancing support with autonomy is challenging, and differing expectations between mentors and student-teachers can lead to perceived gaps in guidance. They recognised the need for more transparent communication to align expectations and ensure a more effective, collaborative mentoring relationship.

### **Lesson planning and time management**

Lesson planning and time management also emerged as factors that affect the relationship between mentors and accounting student-teachers.

A mentor responded,

*“Some student-teachers struggle with creating effective lesson plans, setting clear objectives, and organising their teaching materials.”*

Another mentor noted,

*“Mentors jointly agree that while accounting student-teachers have a grasp of the subject matter, they still struggle with classroom management and lesson planning. They require additional support to develop effective teaching and manage the classroom.”*

From the responses, the study found that accounting student-teachers struggle to create effective lesson plans that prioritise learners’ needs and interests. These lesson plans must be designed to accommodate diverse learners’ learning needs and create supportive, encouraging learning environments. These responses are supported by Kuhn et al., who state that this challenge can lead to learner disengagement in the classroom, which may result in student-teachers wasting time on non-essential activities, making it challenging to tailor learner progress and outcomes.<sup>40</sup> It was also revealed that most accounting student-teachers paid attention only to the lesson plans they would submit to their respective higher institutions. They do not present lessons based on these objective lesson plans. One mentor had this to say regarding time management,

*“Accounting student-teachers often struggle with managing time when allocating their responsibilities appropriately and meeting deadlines.”*

Maharani and Fithriani argue that time management is an essential aspect of the mentoring process, enhancing the relationship's productivity and success.<sup>41</sup> This study found that accounting student-teachers do not manage their time effectively to complete allocated tasks. Social media was raised as one of the challenges that hinders this component; these students often have the perception that “there is always tomorrow” when given a task. Student-teachers would put off tasks until the last minute, leading to stress and decreased quality of work. This may discourage mentors from continuing to provide constructive feedback, knowing that student-teachers do not prioritise their learning progress. This finding aligns with the view of Orakcı that poor time management can lead to decreased

<sup>40</sup> Kuhn et al., “Mentor Teachers’ Motivations and Implications for Mentoring Style and Enthusiasm.”

<sup>41</sup> Maharani and Fithriani, “Exploring Challenges EFL Pre-Service Teachers Experience in Teaching Practicum: A Transformative Learning Perspective.”

productivity, and accounting student-teachers may miss important deadlines and learning opportunities that would advance their knowledge and skills.<sup>42</sup>

Student-teacher responded,

*“Balancing university assignments, classroom duties and a personal life forces us to use every tool we have, including online groups, to stay connected and get support.”*

Student-teachers emphasised that poor time management was not deliberate but rather a reflection of adjusting to real-school pressures while still in training, and argued that they use social media to connect and share with their peers as they simultaneously train, complete university tasks, and prepare portfolios.

### **Classroom management and Content knowledge**

Classroom management and content knowledge emerged as one of the factors that affect the relationship between accounting student-teachers and mentors.

A mentor reported,

*“Student-teachers struggle to maintain learner engagement, handle disruptions and create a positive learning environment.”*

This study found that accounting student-teachers face challenges in classroom management. This is a challenge because if learners see that their teacher does not have clear rules and responsibilities, they can easily disrupt the whole classroom, leading to loss of focus and disinterest in the teacher's lesson. Mentors highlighted that student-teachers these days are young people with a close age gap to the learners they teach; upon realising this, learners tend to provoke them, seeking attention. Learners of this generation do not respect their teachers; they become even worse when they see a young teacher who is new to the environment.

According to Matsko et al., how a teacher manages a classroom has a significant impact on the learner's learning environment and the success of the learning and teaching approaches, especially as student-teachers are still finding their way around the teaching standards and methods.<sup>43</sup> They need assistance from their mentors to manage and engage with their classroom effectively. A disruptive classroom can create anxiety for student-teachers, and they will not be able to see whether their teaching approaches are practical.

Ndou outlined that teaching accounting requires a teacher with in-depth knowledge and understanding of accounting principles, practices, and frameworks.<sup>44</sup> This subject involves financial and managerial accounting, auditing, taxation, and accounting information systems; a teacher must be able to contextualise these concepts into real-world situations for learners to understand them better.

A mentor said,

*“Accounting student-teachers struggle with articulating complex accounting concepts clearly, responding to learner questions, and providing feedback.”*

Another mentor reported,

*“They struggle with applying theoretical concepts to practical teaching situations, making it challenging to develop effective teaching strategies.”*

Another mentor added that.

*“While student-teachers have a strong foundation in accounting, they sometimes struggle with certain topics such as adjusting depreciation, adjustments, and asset disposal accounts as they are still new to teaching.”*

<sup>42</sup> Orakci, “Teachers’ Reflection and Level of Reflective Thinking on the Different Dimensions of Their Teaching Practice.”

<sup>43</sup> Matsko et al., “Host or Teacher of Teaching? Examining Mentors’ Tacit Theories of Student Teacher Learning.”

<sup>44</sup> Ndou, “The Perceptions of Principals on The Phasing Out of Accounting in Secondary Schools in Limpopo Province South Africa.”

Ndou asserts that accounting is a complex subject that requires a firm grasp of mathematical concepts, analytical thinking, and meticulous attention to detail.<sup>45</sup> Anis and Hasan added that accounting requires learners to understand and apply various accounting principles, standards, and methods to accurately record, interpret, and report financial transactions, thereby preparing them to thrive in their professional environments. With these statements in mind, accounting student-teachers need to consider the teaching of these accounting concepts to learners.<sup>46</sup> The study revealed, through the mentor's observations, that these student-teachers face difficulties articulating complex accounting concepts, such as creating ledger accounts and posting to accounting financial statements. Accounting student-teachers need to be trained by their mentors about adjusting, interpreting, and reporting these accounting concepts.

Student-teachers reported unclear expectations and inconsistent feedback from mentors, which slowed their progress. This is consistent with Petrus, who focused on communication as the cornerstone of good mentorship, and Wang and Shibayama, who emphasise feedback as crucial for teacher growth.<sup>47</sup> Kuhn et al. warn that bad feedback causes self-doubt and inefficient teaching techniques.<sup>48</sup> Student-teachers also reported inadequate assistance and supervision. The literature supports this difficulty, as Petrus indicates that mentors are critical in linking theory and practice, while Cross et al. observe that insufficient assistance might leave student-teachers feeling alienated and overwhelmed.<sup>49</sup> Mentorship studies acknowledge the challenge that mentors have in combining autonomy with guidance.

Challenges with lesson planning and time management emerged, with student-teachers struggling to create effective lesson plans and manage deadlines. Orakcı confirms that weak planning affects learner engagement, while Maharani & Fithriani emphasise the importance of time management for productivity and success in mentoring relationships.<sup>50</sup> The study found that accounting student-teachers struggled with classroom management and articulating complex accounting concepts. In agreement, Orakcı assert that classroom management significantly influences learner engagement and teaching effectiveness.<sup>51</sup> In terms of content knowledge, some scholars highlight the demanding nature of accounting concepts and the need for teachers to explain them clearly and accurately, as reflected in mentors' observations.<sup>52</sup>

## RECOMMENDATIONS

The study recommends that SMTs establish regular weekly or bi-weekly meetings between mentors and student-teachers to ensure consistent, constructive feedback. Using structured tools, such as rubrics and reflection journals, can help mentors provide clear, goal-focused guidance. Mentors are also encouraged to adopt a flexible approach that balances support with increasing autonomy, with early assessment of mentoring styles to prevent issues such as micromanagement or neglect. Additionally, the study proposes using standardised lesson planning templates focused on clear objectives, aligned activities, and differentiation. Regular workshops should be offered to strengthen student-teachers' ability to plan learner-centred lessons. Student-teachers should submit lesson plans ahead of time for review and feedback. Finally, the study highlights the need to equip accounting student-teachers with

<sup>45</sup> Ndou, "The Perceptions of Principals on The Phasing Out of Accounting in Secondary Schools in Limpopo Province South Africa."

<sup>46</sup> Anis and Hasan, "From Reflection to Practice: A Qualitative Study of Teaching Practicum Experiences."

<sup>47</sup> Petrus, "Community Coaching/Mentoring as a Strategic Asset in Addressing the Negative Impact of Gang Subcultures in a Gang-Affected Community in Gqeberha, Eastern Cape, South Africa"; Wang and Shibayama, "Mentorship and Creativity: Effects of Mentor Creativity and Mentoring Style."

<sup>48</sup> Kuhn et al., "Mentor Teachers' Motivations and Implications for Mentoring Style and Enthusiasm."

<sup>49</sup> Petrus, "Community Coaching/Mentoring as a Strategic Asset in Addressing the Negative Impact of Gang Subcultures in a Gang-Affected Community in Gqeberha, Eastern Cape, South Africa"; Cross et al., "'Feeling Part of a Network of Learning in Health Promotion': An Evaluation of a Postgraduate Peer-Mentoring Scheme in Ghana."

<sup>50</sup> Orakcı, "Teachers' Reflection and Level of Reflective Thinking on the Different Dimensions of Their Teaching Practice"; Maharani and Fithriani, "Exploring Challenges EFL Pre-Service Teachers Experience in Teaching Practicum: A Transformative Learning Perspective."

<sup>51</sup> Orakcı, "Teachers' Reflection and Level of Reflective Thinking on the Different Dimensions of Their Teaching Practice."

<sup>52</sup> Aldabbus, "Challenges Encountered by Student Teachers in Practicing Teaching"; Anis and Hasan, "From Reflection to Practice: A Qualitative Study of Teaching Practicum Experiences."

strong classroom management strategies and techniques to simplify challenging accounting concepts, such as depreciation, asset disposal, and ledger creation through practical, real-life examples.

## CONCLUSION

The findings indicate that the mentoring relationship between accounting student-teachers and mentors is undermined by poor communication, limited constructive feedback, and inconsistent mentoring practices. As a result, student-teachers experience inadequate support, uncertainty, and restricted opportunities for professional growth, reflecting a lack of structured, intentional, and actively engaged mentoring. The findings show that accounting student-teachers struggle with learner-centred lesson planning, effective time management, classroom management, and clear articulation of accounting concepts. Their focus on assessment-driven lesson plans, poor task management, limited authority in classrooms, and difficulties explaining core accounting processes negatively affect the quality of teaching and learning.

## Limitations

The findings are limited by a small sample drawn from rural schools in the O.R. Tambo Coastal District and the use of qualitative interviews, which may affect generalisation and introduce subjectivity. Despite these limitations, the study contributes valuable insights into mentor–mentee relationships in accounting education, highlighting the importance of strong mentoring bonds for the professional development and retention of novice teachers, as well as for improving learner outcomes through effective content coverage, feedback, and assessment.

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