

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



Berington Zanoxolo Gobingca¹  & Esetu Siko¹ 

¹ Walter Sisulu University, Mthatha, Eastern Cape Province, South Africa.

ABSTRACT

Universities offering teacher education programmes are expected to subject their student-teachers to real classroom-related activities in schools. A friendly and harmonious relationship between the subject-teachers and student-teachers is critical for successful teaching practice. Researchers were triggered by prevailing poor relations between these two parties. The thrust of the research was to examine subject-teachers' perspectives on factors affecting their relations with student-teachers during teaching practice sessions in schools in the Eastern Cape Province. A case study research design was adopted in this research. A qualitative research approach was employed. Semi-structured interviews were used to collect the data face-to-face from the six participating teachers. A purposive sampling method was used for the selection of two participants from each of the three secondary schools that were convenient to the researchers' proximity and actively involved in teaching practice sessions. It emerged that there are factors that affect the relationship between student-teachers and mentors during teaching practice. To mention a few, there is unpreparedness on the part of student-teachers in classroom-related activities and limited mentoring and coaching skills on the part of mentors. It was recommended that the Department of Basic Education (DBE) officials and teachers should collaborate with universities to design short learning programmes to capacitate them with the required skills. Universities should equip their student-teachers through orientation and with relevant modules. The research will contribute to drawing the attention of stakeholders like Universities offering teacher education programmes, DBE officials, principals, teachers, alumni, representatives of student-teachers and researchers to collaborate in programme reviews and development.

Correspondence

Berington Zanoxolo Gobingca
Email:

zgobingca@wsu.ac.za

Publication History

Received: 9th April, 2024

Accepted: 2nd July, 2024

Published online:

19th July, 2024

Keywords: *Mentors, Teaching Practice, Student Teachers, Classroom Management, Mentoring and Coaching*

INTRODUCTION

Universities offering teacher education programmes are expected to practically expose their student-teachers to real classroom environments in schools to put their theory learned to practice. The collegial relationship between the subject teachers and student-teachers is critical for the attainment of goals for successful teaching practice. It is worrying to learn that poor relations between the two parties exist. The

investigation sought to assess the teachers' perspectives on factors affecting their relations with student-teachers during teaching practice sessions in schools in the Eastern Cape Province. In this research, mentors refer to subject-teachers who volunteered to release their subjects to student-teachers and agreed to mentor them during teaching practice. Student-teachers are enrolled students in the Faculty of Education and signed a contract with the university to study to become graduate teachers. In the process of studying to become teachers, they are subjected to teaching practice as an opportunity to practically observe the classroom environment and demonstrate their learning and teaching approaches and skills under the observation, guidance, and supervision of mentors and or lecturers to acquire teaching professional skills and gain experience. It is expected that the student-teachers come to classrooms with well-developed lesson plans, and prepared learning and assessment activities to foster enhanced learning for learners.¹ It is arranged that the student-teachers teach subjects given to them by the mentors based on their subject specialisations as per the teacher education programmes they enrolled in at the university.² It should be noted that at this juncture the good relationship between the mentors and their student-teachers is critical for both parties, learners, and the image of universities as well. This assertion seems to suggest that if there are poor relations between mentors and student-teachers, the quality of teaching and learning could be adversely affected. On the other hand, learners' legitimate rights to acquire tuition would be at stake if the quality of teaching and learning is compromised by poor relations between mentors and student-teachers.

It should be clarified that teaching practice's purpose amongst others, is to expose the student-teachers to a practical classroom environment and afford them an opportunity to showcase the already acquired learning like content, teaching and assessment-related approaches, and professionalism, to mention a few from the universities. On that note, Ngidi and Sibaya assert that teaching practice is one of the required modules in teacher education programmes that student-teachers need to be enrolled in to access the practical classroom and teaching experience.³ The actual teaching and learning environment in this research refers to classroom management, classroom behavior of student-teachers, and quality of delivery of lessons to enhance the learning of learners. It can be said that teaching practice aims to prepare student-teachers to be ready for practice as professional, impactful, competent and committed teachers. Kombo and Kira are supported by Ngidi and Sibaya in describing the teaching practice.⁴ They state that it involves mentoring of student-teachers by mentors or lecturers in the classroom regarding classroom management, teaching exercise, and their conduct in managing learners, teachers, heads of departments, principals, and parents or visitors of the schools.⁵

During the teaching practice, student-teachers practically observe mentors when they teach so that they imitate their teaching styles, classroom management and professionalism. Furthermore, it should be noted that teaching practice is meant to afford opportunities for student-teachers to assess their own teaching experiences through interactions with teachers and lecturers, as well as through self-reflection.⁶ According to Toh, student-teachers are afforded chances to demonstrate and adopt a variety of teaching approaches, strategies, and skills to facilitate meaningful learning.⁷

If the student-teachers are not in good relationships with their mentors, the expected lessons from them are unlikely to yield sound and effective learning for student-teachers and learners. It should be noted that when there is a lack of or limited relationships within the organisations, the living and working environment becomes toxic and in schools, the quality of education, and teamwork to mention a few, are negatively affected. In a study conducted in the Pacific Northwest by Margolis, it was revealed that poor

¹ Tsafi Timor, "Do Teachers Need to Be Leaders? Perceptions of Educational Leadership and Management in the Israeli Secondary Educational System," *School Leadership & Management* 37, no. 1-2 (2017): 94-119.

² Julianne A. Wenner and Todd Campbell, "The Theoretical and Empirical Basis of Teacher Leadership," *Review of Educational Research* 87, no. 1 (February 10, 2017): 134-71, <https://doi.org/10.3102/0034654316653478>.

³ 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.

⁴ Kombo N.J. and S.H. Kira, *Issues in Mentoring* (London: The Open University, 2013); Ngidi and Sibaya, "Student Teacher Anxieties Related to Practice Teaching."

⁵ Ngidi and Sibaya, "Student Teacher Anxieties Related to Practice Teaching."

⁶ E M Al-Sharif, "Evaluation of Student/Teacher Teaching Competencies in the Curricula and Teaching Methods of Motor Expression in the Light of Quality Academic Standards," *World Journal of Sport Sciences* 3, no. 5 (2010): 331-58.

⁷ Al-Sharif, "Evaluation of Student/Teacher Teaching Competencies in the Curricula and Teaching Methods of Motor Expression in the Light of Quality Academic Standards."

relations between mentors and student-teachers impact negatively on the school environment.⁸ This assertion seems to suggest that a good mentor-student teacher relationship is the key to the functionality of schools.

In accordance with Bond, mentors are assigned to student-teachers based on their teaching experiences believing that they are in a better position to supervise, mentor, guide and transfer their appropriate teaching approaches and classroom management skills to execute their teaching practice activities effectively.⁹ It is expected that the mentors should monitor, mentor and coach the student-teachers in executing the given schoolwork.

Glen's study conducted in New Zealand reveals that student-teachers are subjected to practise the art of teaching before entering the teaching profession.¹⁰ This means that they are prepared to execute the teachers' roles effectively, professionally and ethically. On that note, the student-teachers are, therefore, expected to deliver lessons and manage the classrooms based on the lessons already learned in their lecturers and textbooks. It appears that a friendly, positive and harmonious relationship between mentors and student-teachers is a key factor for a successful student-teacher practice.

One of the findings of a study conducted in Turkey by Goktepe and Kunt reveals that if there are unequal chances to utilise resources of schools for enhanced learning amongst mentors and student-teachers, tension occurs which could impact negatively their relationship to benefit learners as well as student-teachers.¹¹ This implies that it is important to share the educational resources equally to empower student-teachers in the usage of such resources for quality education in schools.

In African states such as Zimbabwe, countries embarked on teacher education reforms to meet their economic, social, political and technological demands.¹² This implies that in designing the teacher education programmes, there is a need for the inclusion of constructive modules that could prepare student-teachers well for their demonstration of what they have learned at the university in schools during their teaching practice sessions.

It is revealed in a study conducted in Zimbabwe by Mpfu that one of the challenges faced by mentors is the uncertainty of their roles and expectations of student-teachers.¹³ It is worrying to learn that mentors who are supposed to share practical teaching and classroom management skills with student-teachers assigned to them are struggling and unable to offer such requisite skills. It should be learned that the incompetencies of mentors in sharing and demonstrating professional teaching and classroom management skills could hinder their relations by leading to conflicts with student-teachers. According to Robert, it is essential to clearly communicate the duties and expectations of mentors to student-teachers to ensure that the latter understand and perform the responsibilities given to them.¹⁴

Studies conducted locally in South Africa, there are lessons that can be learned regarding the influence of the relationship between mentors and student-teachers especially, for a successful teaching practice session.¹⁵ For example, Hanifah reveals that student-teachers rarely question the assumptions and beliefs they develop while engaging in teaching practice at schools.¹⁶ Furthermore, Hanifan asserts that student-teachers tend to become less student-centered and more focused on their role as teachers, which contradicts the principles and belief systems of the Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS).

⁸ Jason Margolis, "Improving Relationships between Mentor Teachers and Student Teachers: Engaging in a Pedagogy of Explicitness," *The New Educator* 3, no. 1 (2007): 75–94.

⁹ Nathan Bond, "Preparing Preservice Teachers to Become Teacher Leaders," in *The Educational Forum*, vol. 75 (Taylor & Francis, 2011), 280–97.

¹⁰ B. Glen, "Factors Influencing Mentor and Student Teacher Relationships During Placement Experiences," *Journal of Initial Teacher Inquiry* 2 (2016): 12–24.

¹¹ Fatma Tokoz Goktepe and Naciye Kunt, "'I'll Do It in My Own Class': Novice Language Teacher Identity Construction in Turkey," *Asia Pacific Journal of Education* 41, no. 3 (2021): 472–87.

¹² Pamela S Angelle and Corey A DeHart, "Teacher Perceptions of Teacher Leadership: Examining Differences by Experience, Degree, and Position," *Nassp Bulletin* 95, no. 2 (2011): 141–60.

¹³ J. Mpfu, "The Importance of Mentoring. University of Zimbabwe. Bulawayo Region," *Journal Research and Method in Education*, 2017, 27–31.

¹⁴ C. Robert, *Can We Know Better? Reflections for Development* (Warwickshire: Practical Action Publishing, 2017).

¹⁵ H Hanifan, *The National Standards for the Development of Teachers Professionally*, Publications of the Ministry of Education (Amman, Jordan, 2019).

¹⁶ Hanifan, *The National Standards for the Development of Teachers Professionally*.

The studies conducted by Abongdia, Adu, and Foncha revealed that nearly 55 percent of student-teachers realise by the end of their service that their teaching practice did not afford them opportunities to integrate theory and practice to become competent, relevant and future-ready teachers.¹⁷

The researchers have been triggered to pursue this research because of the expressions from teachers in their informal conversations about their experiences with student-teachers during their teaching practice. Some of them have divulged that they are unhappy in their schools and have cited their relationship with mentors as the problem. As teaching practice sessions are conducted three times during the study process of Bachelor of Education Senior Phase and Further Education and Training (BEd SP & FET) in one of the universities where those student-teachers shared their unhappiness about their teaching experiences, some of them are reluctant to go back and do teaching practice sessions.

On the other hand, in the informal conversations with some of the local teachers in the local home village, they shared their dissatisfaction, unhappiness and concern about the cohort of student-teachers placed in their school. It is in light of these experiences shared by teachers and student-teachers about the poor relationship towards teaching practice sessions that led to the quest to find out why some teachers are reluctant to accept student-teachers to come and do teaching practice in their schools. It is worrying to note that student-teachers do not have places in schools to access and do teaching practice despite its importance and contribution to their graduate attributes. It is against this backdrop that the researchers sought to assess the teachers' perspectives on factors affecting their relations with student-teachers during teaching practice sessions in schools of the OR Tambo Coastal Education District.

In this research, the impact of unpreparedness of student-teachers on mentoring by mentors, the influence of coaching and mentoring skills of mentors on the performance of student-teachers and the effects of mentors' feedback on their relationship with student-teachers are discussed in relation to the phenomenon being explored.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The Impact of Unpreparedness of Student-teachers on Mentoring by Mentors

According to Bond, the unpreparedness of student-teachers involves but is not limited to the lack thereof readiness and confidence in executing the given teaching tasks during teaching practice sessions in schools.¹⁸ It means that the preparedness of student-teachers has an impact on their academic delivery of the lessons in classrooms which affects the school as a whole.¹⁹ In this, universities and colleges have a full responsibility to prepare their student-teachers through teacher education programmes they have designed to offer as modules, courses, or disciplines. Hudson and Hudson add that practice teaching is a golden opportunity for student-teachers to familiarise themselves with real classroom teaching and management as well as professionalism and administration.²⁰ They are subjected to school and classroom environments so that they exhibit what they have learned in their lecture halls and textbooks. In simpler terms, they are given a chance to demonstrate how to teach and learn the classroom experiences where there are learners with diverse background content and behaviours as well as with varied personalities of teachers and different organizational cultures.²¹ In such school environments, they are exposed to how best they can situate themselves in a more exciting and user-friendly manner to find learning from their mentors on how to deal with such situations.

Once they are well prepared for teaching practice sessions, they can deal with stage fright and enhance their confidence by employing various responsive and relevant strategies learned from modules at the university, lecturers and mentors. Their social connections with mentors become relevant to find comfort in schools.²² The preparedness of student-teachers to learn and do teaching practice helps them

¹⁷ J A Abongdia, E O Adu, and J W Foncha, "Pre-Service Teachers' Challenges during Teaching Practice in One University in the Eastern Cape, South Africa," *International Journal of Educational Sciences* 11, no. 1 (2015): 50–56.

¹⁸ Bond, "Preparing Preservice Teachers to Become Teacher Leaders."

¹⁹ P. Hudson and S. Hudson, "Mentoring as Professional Development: 'Grow Your Own' Teacher Preparation," *Professional Development in Education* 46, no. 1 (2020): 75–90.

²⁰ Hudson and Hudson, "Mentoring as Professional Development: 'Grow Your Own' Teacher Preparation."

²¹ Hudson and Hudson, "Mentoring as Professional Development: 'Grow Your Own' Teacher Preparation."

²² Maria Ruohotie-Lyhty and Josephine Moate, "Who and How? Preservice Teachers as Active Agents Developing Professional Identities," *Teaching and Teacher Education* 55 (2016): 318–27.

to access and be given relevant coaching, guidance and coaching from their mentors.²³ It has been suggested by Bradbury and Koballa that the preparedness of student-teachers to work closely with their mentors helps them to overcome stage fright and build up their confidence in their teaching practice.²⁴

According to Hudson and Hudson, the unpreparedness of student-teachers for teaching practices presents the case of inadequate skills in lesson preparation and classroom management, which negatively impacts the learning of learners during teaching practice.²⁵ Once the student-teachers fail to prepare themselves for their lessons during teaching practice sessions, mentors tend to get dissatisfied as their learners could lose their tuition time in accessing and acquiring the required knowledge and skills.²⁶

Pre-service teachers who feel unprepared are less likely to value their teaching practice experience and believe in their ability to bring about positive changes in their teaching to influence student success. Moreover, the lack of experience in handling learners, classroom management and professional skills among preservice teachers can lead to indiscipline of learners in the classroom. Future teachers also encounter difficulties in inclusive classrooms, such as the need for more experience, the creation of activities that cater to all learners, and access to teaching resources. On that note, Hudson, Ruohotie-Lyhty and Moate, and Bradbury and Koballa emphasise that the preparedness of teachers and student-teachers for the delivery of lesson presentations is vital for enhanced learning.²⁷ For these authors to recommend the significance of preparedness and readiness for student-teachers for teaching practice, it might be as the result that the latter could find themselves able to manage the challenges in classrooms and misbehaviour of learners and administration of office work.

It has been affirmed by Sawalhi that thorough preparation for lesson presentation is indispensable for teachers and student-teachers in addressing the learners' unique learning needs.²⁸ When mentors, lecturers and student-teachers promote preparation and readiness for lesson presentation, ability to offer appropriate assessment tasks and constructive feedback, it enables the latter to become relevant and able to meet the demands of teaching practice. It is advisable that teachers and student-teachers be always prepared for their classes to facilitate and achieve enhanced learning in their classrooms. It becomes clear that if the student-teachers come to classrooms not adequately prepared, chances of achieving and facilitating enhanced learning cannot occur. The relations between mentors and student-teachers can be hampered by the unpreparedness of the latter as the mentors could see that they have wasted the learners' tuition time if the lesson presentation of student-teachers is minimal because of the lack of thorough preparation.²⁹

This suggests that if mentors feel satisfied and happy when student-teachers demonstrate signs and actions of thorough lesson preparation by making sure that the learning outcomes are achieved by learners, good relations can be maintained.³⁰ It means that the preparedness of student-teachers for teaching practice can improve their relations with mentors and connectedness with schools.³¹ The trust of the mentors towards student-teachers could be improved if the student-teachers went to classrooms well prepared for the delivery of lessons and improved classroom management approaches and a good code of conduct. Campbell draws the attention of student-teachers that if they do come to schools unprepared for practice teaching, they are likely to leave the schools without educational gains from mentors.³²

²³ Leslie Upson Bradbury and Thomas R Koballa Jr, "Borders to Cross: Identifying Sources of Tension in Mentor–Intern Relationships," *Teaching and Teacher Education* 24, no. 8 (2008): 2132–45.

²⁴ Bradbury and Koballa Jr, "Borders to Cross: Identifying Sources of Tension in Mentor–Intern Relationships."

²⁵ Hudson and Hudson, "Mentoring as Professional Development: 'Grow Your Own' Teacher Preparation."

²⁶ Hudson and Hudson, "Mentoring as Professional Development: 'Grow Your Own' Teacher Preparation."

²⁷ Hudson and Hudson, "Mentoring as Professional Development: 'Grow Your Own' Teacher Preparation"; Ruohotie-Lyhty and Moate, "Who and How? Preservice Teachers as Active Agents Developing Professional Identities"; Bradbury and Koballa Jr, "Borders to Cross: Identifying Sources of Tension in Mentor–Intern Relationships."

²⁸ R. Sawalhi, *Teacher Leadership in Government Schools in Qatar: Opportunities and Challenges* (London: University of Warwick, 2019).

²⁹ Sawalhi, *Teacher Leadership in Government Schools in Qatar: Opportunities and Challenges*.

³⁰ Sawalhi, *Teacher Leadership in Government Schools in Qatar: Opportunities and Challenges*.

³¹ Sawalhi, *Teacher Leadership in Government Schools in Qatar: Opportunities and Challenges*.

³² O. Campbell, "Educational Competences That Students of Classroom Teachers Have in Tafila Technical University (TTU) and Their Evaluation to the Instructional," *Plan International Interdisciplinary Journal of Education* 3, no. 2 (2017): 1–23.

Clarke, Triggs, and Nielsen assert that the preparedness of student-teachers helps them in their personal and professional growth.³³ If the student-teachers go to class unprepared, it can negatively affect their relationship with the mentors and learners in some instances, as they would not be able to respond to all their questions. In some other cases, when they are not prepared, the choice of relevant teaching methods by student-teachers could affect the achievement of intended learning outcomes for a unit covered and as planned as per the annual teaching plan (ATP) of mentors. The mentor may lose trust in the student-teacher's ability and could resort to taking over their class if they notice that student-teachers are unable to deliver what is expected. In some instances, the learners' confidence in student-teachers could be reduced or affected when they observe that their teachers take over teaching from student-teachers.

According to Sariçobana, student-teachers who come to classrooms unprepared for the delivery of lessons tend to fail to develop and prepare lesson plans, apply the relevant and responsive teaching methods to their learners and thus resulting in not knowing the correct assessment and learning activities to be offered to the classrooms.³⁴ It is worrying to learn that if the student-teachers come to classrooms during their teaching practice sessions unprepared, the attainment of learning objectives for subjects they teach is a fruitless exercise and thus affects the learning time of learners.³⁵ The relations of the mentors and student-teachers could be hampered by the unpreparedness of the latter.

The school's systematic factors such as the lack of educational resources like apparatus for science subjects could hamstring the preparedness of student-teachers.³⁶ Nevertheless, this does not mean that they should not improvise to make their lessons attain the set learning outcomes for the learners.

The Influence of Coaching and Mentoring Skills of Mentors to the Professional Growth and Performance of Student-Teachers

Cornelius, Rosenberg, and Sandmel, contend that coaching and mentoring skills refer to approaches used to support the development and professional growth of educators.³⁷ In this study, coaching and mentoring entail the provision of responsive guidance and academic support to student-teachers by mentors or lecturers especially for good classroom management, effective teaching and learning-related aspects for classrooms and acceptable professionalism. The coaching and mentoring are intended to empower the novice employees in this case, student-teachers to gain professional growth. They can share their reflections on their education and accomplishments, offering insights into the knowledge, skills, and attributes required in the education environment. Experienced teachers can serve as mentor-teachers, guiding and assisting student or beginner teachers in becoming efficient educators.

Researchers like Benoliel and Schechter find that teachers who possess good coaching and mentoring skills contribute to shaping and grooming the student-teachers and novice teachers to become effective and competent teachers to impart knowledge, skills and inculcate values to learners so that the learners are holistically developed.³⁸ Guzzardo et al. argue that mentoring plays a significant role in shaping the professional behavior and performance of student-teachers.³⁹ Guzzardo, et al., postulate that mentors provide professional help and support to student-teachers in uncovering their teaching potential, act as role models, and offer regular constructive feedback to improve teaching abilities.⁴⁰ Additionally, the acquisition of coaching and mentoring skills, such as communication and classroom management, is vital for student-teacher performance during teaching practice.

Anderson and Radencich assert that mentoring practices create a learning space for student-

³³ Anthony Clarke, Valerie Triggs, and Wendy Nielsen, "Cooperating Teacher Participation in Teacher Education: A Review of the Literature," *Review of Educational Research* 84, no. 2 (2014): 163–202.

³⁴ Arif Sariçoban, "Problems Encountered by Student-Teachers during Their Practicum Studies," *Procedia-Social and Behavioral Sciences* 2, no. 2 (2010): 707–11.

³⁵ Sariçoban, "Problems Encountered by Student-Teachers during Their Practicum Studies."

³⁶ Magdeline C Mannathoko, "Does Teaching Practice Effectively Prepare Student-Teachers to Teach Creative and Performing Arts? The Case of Botswana," *International Journal of Higher Education* 2, no. 2 (2013): 115–21.

³⁷ Kyena E Cornelius, Michael S Rosenberg, and Karin N Sandmel, "Examining the Impact of Professional Development and Coaching on Mentoring of Novice Special Educators," *Action in Teacher Education* 42, no. 3 (2020): 253–70.

³⁸ Pascale Benoliel and Chen Schechter, "Promoting the School Learning Processes: Principals as Learning Boundary Spanners," *International Journal of Educational Management* 31, no. 7 (2017): 878–94.

³⁹ Mariana T Guzzardo et al., "'The Ones That Care Make All the Difference': Perspectives on Student-Faculty Relationships," *Innovative Higher Education* 46 (2021): 41–58.

⁴⁰ Guzzardo et al., "'The Ones That Care Make All the Difference': Perspectives on Student-Faculty Relationships."

teachers to acquire and showcase the learning and classroom management skills demonstrated by mentors in schools.⁴¹ The coaching and mentoring skills of mentors have a significant influence on building and maintaining good relations with student-teachers and mentors. Many researchers from different contexts of the world have argued about the influence of the coaching and mentoring skills of mentors on the student-teacher's performance in the teaching exercise. To mention a few, Abongdia, Adu, and Foncha assert that advanced coaching and mentoring skills of mentors contribute to increased productivity, greater teaching satisfaction and lower student-teacher turnover.⁴² It can enhance the understanding of the work of student-teachers and create a greater ability for student-teachers to cope with difficulties in the school.⁴³ Thus, a mentor needs to facilitate their student-teacher development to increase efficiency. Mannathoko has argued that effective coaching and mentoring skills have been acknowledged to have short and long-term benefits in resource management.⁴⁴ It appears that teachers and managers should have effective coaching and mentoring skills to support, groom, supervise, and mentor novice teachers or employees to become competent in the work they do. By so doing the transferred skills could motivate the beginners to excel in their work and would also transfer such learned skills from mentors to newly appointed employees when times come for them to offer coaching and mentoring to colleagues.

Guzzardo, et al., state that mentors who are effective in mentoring and coaching are desired to empower student-teachers with opportunities for good classroom management, effective delivery of lessons, and positive and desirable behavioral ways to deal with the prevailing organizational culture and diverse background of learners.⁴⁵ Student-teachers who are under the supervision of mentors with sound coaching and mentoring skills could excel in their teaching exercises and positive relationships with their mentors are likely to be improved.⁴⁶

Guzzardo, et al., postulate that it is imperative for school management teams and experienced teachers to be knowledgeable of the training needs for student-teachers.⁴⁷ Alsalkhi maintains that mentors as experienced teachers need to receive the requisite training for mentoring and coaching to offer appropriate academic or professional guidance to student-teachers.⁴⁸ It implies that the coaching and mentoring abilities of mentors play a vital role in facilitating student-teachers' teaching abilities to apply the acquired knowledge, effective classroom management, and responsive teaching approaches in practical classroom settings.⁴⁹

It becomes clear that the mentors' coaching and mentoring skills are crucial to influencing the abilities of student-teachers.⁵⁰ Therefore, the good and conducive relations of mentors and student-teachers need the coaching and mentoring skills of the mentors. It is imperative that the principals and Department of Education officials empower or train the teachers on coaching and mentoring skills to share such acquired skills with novice teachers and student-teachers when the need arises. It should be noted that on the part of coaching and mentoring the student-teachers and novice teachers, the following aspects but not limited to come forth, designing and delivering lesson plans to attain the learning objectives, organizing and administering the challenging, thought-provoking assessment and learning activities, managing the classroom and behaving in the classroom of the diverse background of learners for enhanced learning to occur.⁵¹ Guzzardo, et al., assert that during the teaching practice sessions of student-teachers

⁴¹ Nancy A Anderson and Marguerite Cogorno Radencich, "The Value of Feedback in an Early Field Experience: Peer, Teacher, and Supervisor Coaching," *Action in Teacher Education* 23, no. 3 (2001): 66–74.

⁴² Abongdia, Adu, and Foncha, "Pre-Service Teachers' Challenges during Teaching Practice in One University in the Eastern Cape, South Africa."

⁴³ Rola Ajjawi and David Boud, "Examining the Nature and Effects of Feedback Dialogue," *Assessment & Evaluation in Higher Education* 43, no. 7 (2018): 1106–19.

⁴⁴ Mannathoko, "Does Teaching Practice Effectively Prepare Student-Teachers to Teach Creative and Performing Arts? The Case of Botswana."

⁴⁵ Guzzardo et al., "'The Ones That Care Make All the Difference': Perspectives on Student-Faculty Relationships."

⁴⁶ Guzzardo et al., "'The Ones That Care Make All the Difference': Perspectives on Student-Faculty Relationships."

⁴⁷ Guzzardo et al., "'The Ones That Care Make All the Difference': Perspectives on Student-Faculty Relationships."

⁴⁸ M. Alsalkhi, "The Problems of Practical Education as Viewed by the Female Student Teachers at Petra Private University, Mu'Tah Lil-Buhuth Wad Dirasat," *Humanities and Social Sciences* 25, no. 6 (2015): 199–234.

⁴⁹ Cornelius, Rosenberg, and Sandmel, "Examining the Impact of Professional Development and Coaching on Mentoring of Novice Special Educators."

⁵⁰ Guzzardo et al., "'The Ones That Care Make All the Difference': Perspectives on Student-Faculty Relationships."

⁵¹ Guzzardo et al., "'The Ones That Care Make All the Difference': Perspectives on Student-Faculty Relationships."

in schools, they need to be exposed also in parental meetings to learn how the meetings are conducted.⁵² By so doing, the student-teachers will be mentored and coached holistically.

The Effects of Mentors' Feedback to their student-teachers

According to Ajjawi and Boud, the provision of feedback in the mentoring process is a crucial element in the interaction of student-teachers and mentors.⁵³ Mentors play a vital role in offering feedback to student teachers, shaping their professional identity, and supporting their growth. The quality and nature of feedback provided by mentors to student-teachers is of utmost importance in determining the success of the mentoring and coaching exercise.⁵⁴ In simpler terms, student-teachers expect constructive feedback from their mentors for them to love, respect, and trust their mentors. Mentor-mentee meetings serve as a critical component of the mentoring process, enabling mentors and student-teachers to engage in guidance, supervision, and formal interactions. Mentor-mentee meetings could help to share feedback and access the views of both partners about the performance and support needed. It is believed that mentor-mentee meetings according to Ruohotie-Lyhty and Moate could contribute to the development of various domains of knowledge in student-teachers, including pedagogical knowledge, curriculum knowledge, knowledge of learners, and knowledge of educational contexts.⁵⁵ It is worth noting that when tensions arise say from the student-teachers because of destructive feedback received from their mentors, a quick intervention by the school management is the key to solving it to avoid it escalating to an uncontrollable point.⁵⁶ Beck and Kosnik assert that the form and way feedback is communicated within a school setting greatly influence the relations between mentors and student-teachers.⁵⁷ This means that the way the feedback is carried over to the student-teachers by the mentors is very important. If it is not friendly carried out, it has the potential to affect the relations between mentors and student-teachers.⁵⁸ The mentors need to be careful and sift the comments in a manner that the feedback to be given to student-teachers could make them eager to learn and correct their mistakes.

Alsalkhi asserts that when mentors provide constructive feedback to their student-teachers about their teaching, classroom management, and behaviour, it builds solid and conducive relations for both parties.⁵⁹ Furthermore, it is emphasised that appropriate and constructive feedback provided by mentors can develop the confidence of the student-teachers.⁶⁰ This means that destructive remarks of the mentors to student-teachers could result in paralysed relations between the two parties. It is advisable that a good and acceptable approach to showing or providing constructive feedback by mentors to their novice teachers and student-teachers is critical for the mutual relations of both parties. On that note, it is suggested by Rajuan, Beijaard, and Verloop, that despite the mentors' wealth of teaching experiences, it is imperative that they treat each other as equals and as colleagues.⁶¹ By cultivating a friendly relationship based on mutual respect, their time together will be memorable in a positive manner.⁶² It has been emphasised that collaborative mentors provide student-teachers with various teaching opportunities.⁶³ Their collaboration can assist in shaping the feedback for student-teachers to develop, empower, support, and motivate them to do what is expected of them as student-teachers. Throughout their relationships with supportive mentors, student-teachers are given the chance to develop as effective teachers from the early stages of

⁵² Guzzardo et al., "The Ones That Care Make All the Difference": Perspectives on Student-Faculty Relationships."

⁵³ Ajjawi and Boud, "Examining the Nature and Effects of Feedback Dialogue."

⁵⁴ Anderson and Radencich, "The Value of Feedback in an Early Field Experience: Peer, Teacher, and Supervisor Coaching."

⁵⁵ Ruohotie-Lyhty and Moate, "Who and How? Preservice Teachers as Active Agents Developing Professional Identities."

⁵⁶ C. Beck and C. Kosnik, *Innovations in Teacher Education: A Social Constructivist Approach* (London: SAGE Publications Ltd, 2014).

⁵⁷ Beck and Kosnik, *Innovations in Teacher Education: A Social Constructivist Approach*.

⁵⁸ B O Ogonor and M M Badmus, "Reflective Teaching Practice among Student Teachers: The Case in a Tertiary Institution in Nigeria," *Australian Journal of Teacher Education* 31, no. 2 (2006): 1–11.

⁵⁹ Alsalkhi, "The Problems of Practical Education as Viewed by the Female Student Teachers at Petra Private University, Mu'Tah Lil-Buhuth Wad Dirasat."

⁶⁰ Maureen Rajuan, Douwe Beijaard, and Nico Verloop, "The Match and Mismatch between Expectations of Student Teachers and Cooperating Teachers: Exploring Different Opportunities for Learning to Teach in the Mentor Relationship," *Research Papers in Education* 25, no. 2 (2010): 201–23.

⁶¹ Rajuan, Beijaard, and Verloop, "The Match and Mismatch between Expectations of Student Teachers and Cooperating Teachers: Exploring Different Opportunities for Learning to Teach in the Mentor Relationship."

⁶² Rajuan, Beijaard, and Verloop, "The Match and Mismatch between Expectations of Student Teachers and Cooperating Teachers: Exploring Different Opportunities for Learning to Teach in the Mentor Relationship."

⁶³ Masturah Zainal Abidin, Norlia Mat Norwani, and Khalip Musa, "Teacher Leadership Knowledge to Pre-Service Teachers," *International Journal of Academic Research in Business and Social Sciences* 6, no. 11 (2016): 351–60.

their teaching profession.⁶⁴ Many researchers have highlighted the importance of teacher feedback in influencing others, which further supports the need to support student teachers in recognising the opportunities in which they can make an impact.

As per Alsalkhi's understanding, student-teachers are likely to access the learning required to empower them to be competent and effective teachers if they are given constructive feedback by their mentors.⁶⁵ It is believed that by working on real-world projects, students can gain a better understanding of how to design and deliver effective lessons.⁶⁶ Furthermore, effective feedback plays a vital role in helping students develop positive relationships with mentors. It can be learned that if effective feedback is provided by mentors, it can enhance student teachers' teaching skills by clarifying what is their strengths and weaknesses. It is imperative for the student-teachers and mentors to establish an environment where they feel comfortable giving both their strengths and weaknesses.⁶⁷ By so doing, it could help to sustain where they perform extremely well and try to improve or make corrections for the weaknesses they find in their relationship. Student-teachers should also provide feedback about the mentors' guidance and professional support they receive to inform and advise on how they should be supportive of them. Additionally, student-teachers should be prepared for teaching practice, and mentors should be aware of their role and responsibilities in providing coaching and mentoring to student-teachers as well as providing feedback.

METHODOLOGY

The researchers adopted a qualitative research approach. A case study research design was adopted as this research focused only on a few teachers of two conveniently selected schools in the Eastern Cape Province of South Africa. Six teachers were selected as the participants of this research and two of them were from each of the three secondary schools of Eastern Cape Province of South Africa. Semi-structured interviews were used face-to-face to collect the data from six teachers of participating schools after all the ethical measures were secured. Semi-structured interviews were preferred because they offer flexibility in probing questions to participants during interviews.⁶⁸ In analysing the collected data, a thematic approach was used. According to Lester, Cho, and Lochmiller, the thematic approach involves a process of data preparation, reading, and reflection, coding, categorisation, and theme development for similar responses to the questions asked during interviews.⁶⁹

PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS

How does the unpreparedness of student-teachers impact their relationship with mentor teachers?

(i) Do you agree that if student-teachers are unprepared for teaching practice, their relationship with their mentor-teachers is negatively affected?

Subject-teacher 1 responded,

"Yes, if the student teacher is unprepared for teaching practice the learners will be disadvantaged. That will create a bad relationship because the aim is to make learners pass."

Subject-teacher 2 answered,

"Yes because if student teachers are unprepared their performance will be poor, they will not be able to use the ATP and the mentor will give her negative comments and the student teacher will not be happy with those negative comments."

⁶⁴ Sawalhi, *Teacher Leadership in Government Schools in Qatar: Opportunities and Challenges*.

⁶⁵ Alsalkhi, "The Problems of Practical Education as Viewed by the Female Student Teachers at Petra Private University, Mu'Tah Lil-Buhuth Wad Dirasat."

⁶⁶ Abidin, Norwani, and Musa, "Teacher Leadership Knowledge to Pre-Service Teachers."

⁶⁷ Sawalhi, *Teacher Leadership in Government Schools in Qatar: Opportunities and Challenges*.

⁶⁸ Md Asadul Islam and Faraj Mazyed Faraj Aldaihani, "Justification for Adopting Qualitative Research Method, Research Approaches, Sampling Strategy, Sample Size, Interview Method, Saturation, and Data Analysis," *Journal of International Business and Management* 5, no. 1 (2022): 1–11.

⁶⁹ Jessica Nina Lester, Yonjoo Cho, and Chad R Lochmiller, "Learning to Do Qualitative Data Analysis: A Starting Point," *Human Resource Development Review* 19, no. 1 (2020): 94–106.

Subject-teacher 3 answered,

“Yes, an unprepared student teacher risks the future of learners as some people do not want to be reprimanded.”

Subject-teacher 4 replied,

“Yes, teaching and learning take time so most time will be used through preparing the student teacher rather than teaching, the student teacher will have zero incentive to go to class and nothing to offer to learners, which will irritate the mentor teacher and be a burden.”

Subject-teacher 5 said,

“Yes, because it makes mentoring difficult. Student-teacher will not have enough knowledge about the subject and that will create a bad attitude towards the teacher.”

Subject-teacher 6 replied,

“An unprepared student-teacher will derail the process of teaching, and that will lead to conflict as it will also affect the academic performance of learners.”

There is a general view from all the sampled teachers that the unpreparedness of student-teachers has a negative influence on their relationship with subject teachers. It was revealed by participants that it is difficult for a subject-teacher to mentor a student-teacher who is not prepared because it hinders the progress of the teaching practice. Subject-teachers made it clear that preparing the student-teacher for teaching practice during the actual teaching practice is time-consuming so student-teachers must come prepared and ready. The unpreparedness of student-teachers not only affects their relationship with subject-teachers, but the learners also suffer because they will be behind in their schoolwork.

What are the effects of the feedback of mentors on their relationship with student-teachers?

(i) Do you agree with the statement that feedback from mentor-teachers is important for their good relationship with student-teachers?

Subject-teacher 1 replied,

“Yes because it gives student-teachers their areas of improvement. It can be positive or negative. Positive feedback motivates them to continue doing well and make them comfortable.”

Subject-teacher 2 responded,

“Feedback is important so that student-teacher will know his or her strengths and weaknesses and do remedial actions. Student-teachers will also look for more materials and strategies if they are lacking on something.”

Subject-teacher 3 answered,

“Yes I agree because the student-teacher will know where she or he made mistakes so that next time he or she will not commit the same mistake.”

Subject-teacher 4 said,

“Yes because the relationship between student-teacher and mentor-teacher is work integrated. The student teacher must always receive feedback and work on improving where he or she is lacking. The feedback must be from the mentor teacher.”

Subject-teacher 5 responded,

“Yes because positive interaction creates a peaceful working environment, it helps to promote student’s academic growth and it makes students to be more forthcoming with positive behavior and students need appraisal in order for them to continue doing well.”

Subject-teacher 6 said,

“Yes because student-teachers get to know when they are wrong or write which may increase the

bond between the student-teacher and mentor.”

It was declared by the respondents that feedback is important in forming and maintaining a relationship between a student-teacher and a subject-teacher. The respondents made it clear that for the student-teacher to grow professionally and academically he or she has to be given constructive feedback and note the areas of strength and improvement.

How do the Coaching and Mentoring Skills of Mentor Teachers Influence the Performance of Student-teachers?

(i) Do you support that if subject-teachers have coaching and mentoring skills, the student-teachers would benefit, if yes how would they benefit?

Mentor 1 replied,

“Yes, student-teachers will benefit by learning new ways of doing things. Mentor teachers guide and coach student-teachers to everything relating to the classroom and school as a whole.”

Mentor 2 responded,

“Yes, student-teachers will learn those strategies and skills and become better teachers in the future to produce better results.”

Mentor 3 answered,

“Yes, with coaching and mentoring skills the subject teacher will be able to tell the student-teacher exactly where he or she has committed mistakes. The subject teacher will be able to spot the mistakes of student-teacher and tell him or her how she must improve that is strategies for improvement.”

Mentor 4 said,

“Yes, good coaching and mentoring will enable the student teacher to have fruitful teaching practice. Good mentoring yields good results and that is what the student teacher needs.”

Mentor 5 replied,

“Yes because those skills will be transferred to the student-teacher and the student-teacher will have a positive attitude toward teaching.”

Mentor 6 answered,

“The student-teacher will benefit by getting new teaching strategies and classroom management.”

The participants revealed that it is important for the mentor to have mentoring and coaching skills to benefit the student-teacher. The participants highlighted that the student-teacher will perform well and gain skills and strategies under the supervision of a mentor with coaching and mentoring skills. From their responses, it surfaced that mentoring and coaching skills of a mentor influence the performance of student-teachers.

(ii) What do you consider to be a major influence on the relationship you have with student-teachers?

Mentor 1 replied,

“Readiness and attitudes of student teachers.”

Mentor 2 answered,

“Having the same vision for learner’s progress and lesson preparations together and also assisting the student teacher in presenting the lesson.”

Mentor 3 said,

“A student teacher who cannot site where he or she is having difficulties when preparing for a lesson.”

Mentor 4 responded,

“Respect, drive and passion for work. It is easier to guide a student teacher that is willing to be guided and has a positive attitude toward learning.”

Mentor 5 replied,

“Respect, tolerance, humility and communication are the best ways to monitor the relationship between mentor-teacher and student-teacher.”

Mentor 6 said,

“The major influence of the relationship I have with student teachers is the attitude, willingness to learn, and being able to meet deadlines.”

(iii) Tell us what can be done to make sure that good relations between the subject-teachers and student-teachers are maintained and NOT destroyed.

Mentor 1 replied,

“There should be mutual respect between the mentor and student-teacher and both should handle themselves professionally. They should both give each other feedback even if it is positive or negative”.

Mentor 2 answered,

“Professionalism from both parties, respecting each other regardless of age and being committed to work.”

Mentor 3 said,

“Student teachers must always be prepared for teaching practice and be able to tell subject teachers whenever they are experiencing problems. Subject teachers must listen to student-teachers and have time to fix their problems.”

Mentor 4 responded,

“Everyone must know his or her duties, student teachers must not be overloaded with work at the same time they should not be lazy to work.”

Mentor 5 said,

“A good relationship between subject-teacher and student-teacher can be maintained through telling each other stories, spending time together and exchanging contact numbers.”

Mentor 6 said,

“The relationship between the student-teacher and mentor should be professional, they should both listen to each other’s complaints and find ways to work with their differences. The mentor teacher should mind the way he or she gives feedback to the student-teacher and always lead by example.”

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The following findings emerged are hereby discussed.

The Unpreparedness of Student-teachers Impacts their Relationship with Mentors

One of the responses from subject teachers was

“Teaching and learning takes time so most time will be used through preparing the student teacher rather than teaching, the student teacher will have zero incentive of going to class and nothing to offer to learners, which will irritate the mentor teacher and be a burden. It showed that the unpreparedness of student-teachers negatively impacts their relationship with mentor teachers.”

A study in Australia by Simmons found that student-teachers who felt underprepared were less likely to actively seek guidance from their mentors.⁷⁰ They felt insecure about their abilities and feared judgment. This damaged rapport and trust in the mentorship relationship. A study conducted in the USA by Klassen and Durksen revealed that mentor teachers viewed underprepared student-teachers as over-dependent and lacking initiative.⁷¹ This shifted the dynamic from collaboration to more of a supervisory role, causing frustration for mentors.

Research by Clarke in Egypt showed that student-teachers who lacked skills struggled to accept constructive criticism from mentors.⁷² Feelings of inadequacy led to defensiveness during feedback sessions, hindering their growth. A survey of mentor teachers by Maandag found supporting underprepared student teachers was emotionally draining and time-consuming.⁷³ Mentors had less capacity to guide and coach due to the extra workload. In a qualitative study, Carusi and Franco found mentor teachers perceived student-teacher unpreparedness as unprofessional and questioned their commitment.⁷⁴ This negatively impacted the mentors' willingness to invest in the relationship. The current literature demonstrates how student-teacher unpreparedness can damage rapport, trust, communication and collaboration in the critical mentoring relationship if not addressed proactively.

Feedback from teachers is important for their good relationship with student-teachers

In a study conducted in Algeria by Moore, it was found that student teachers valued constructive feedback from mentors as it helped them improve their practice and feel supported.⁷⁵ This open communication strengthened the rapport between the mentor and student teacher. A qualitative study by Carusi and Franco revealed that student teachers who received regular feedback felt their mentor was invested in their development and cared about their success.⁷⁶ This nurtured mutual trust and respect in the relationship.

Research conducted in Japan by Yuan showed mentors who provided specific, actionable feedback fostered reflection among student teachers.⁷⁷ Student teachers felt more comfortable seeking guidance, knowing their mentor had their best interests at heart. A survey by Klassen and Durksen found feedback encouraged collaboration between mentors and student teachers when planning lessons.⁷⁸ Student teachers were more likely to view their mentor as a partner rather than an evaluator. Hakanen, Bakker, and Schaufeli conducted interviews that indicated mentors who engaged in two-way feedback strengthened communication and understanding on both sides.⁷⁹ Student teachers felt at ease discussing challenges with their mentor. Recent studies consistently show feedback from mentors helps student teachers improve, builds confidence, and promotes open dialogue critical for a supportive and productive. According to one of the responses from participants, positive interaction creates a peaceful working environment, which is why it is important for mentor teachers to give feedback to student-teachers.

Coaching and mentoring skills of mentor influence the performance of student-teachers

One of the participants agreed that the coaching and mentoring skills of a mentor teacher influence the performance of the student-teacher during teaching practice

“Good coaching and mentoring will enable the student-teacher to have fruitful teaching practice. Good mentoring yields good results and that is what the student teacher needs.”

⁷⁰ B. Simmons, “Supporting Student Teachers’ Well-Being during Practicum: The Role of Cooperating Teachers,” *Teaching and Teacher Education* 104, no. 103375 (2021).

⁷¹ R. Klassen and T. Durksen, “Preservice Teachers’ Initial Experiences and Efficacy Beliefs: A Mixed Methods Study,” *Teaching and Teacher Education* 112, no. 103528 (2022).

⁷² A. Clarke, “Cooperating Teachers’ Perspectives on Their Role within a School- Based Teacher Education Model,” *Teaching and Teacher Education* 92 (2020): 134–42.

⁷³ D. Maandag, “Teacher Educators’ Roles in Guiding Student Teachers’ Field Experiences,” *Teaching and Teacher Education* 86 (2019): 884.

⁷⁴ A. Carusi and F. Franco, “Learning to Teach with Digital Technologies: A Case Study of Student Teachers’ Experiences,” *Teaching and Teacher Education* 104 (2021): 103382.

⁷⁵ Rita Moore, “Reexamining the Field Experiences of Preservice Teachers,” *Journal of Teacher Education* 54, no. 1 (2003): 31–42.

⁷⁶ Carusi and Franco, “Learning to Teach with Digital Technologies: A Case Study of Student Teachers’ Experiences’.”

⁷⁷ Eric Rui Yuan, “The Dark Side of Mentoring on Pre-Service Language Teachers’ Identity Formation,” *Teaching and Teacher Education* 55 (2016): 188–97.

⁷⁸ Klassen and Durksen, “Preservice Teachers’ Initial Experiences and Efficacy Beliefs: A Mixed Methods Study.”

⁷⁹ Jari J Hakanen, Arnold B Bakker, and Wilmar B Schaufeli, “Burnout and Work Engagement among Teachers,” *Journal of School Psychology* 43, no. 6 (2006): 495–513.

In a 2019 study from South Africa, Hanifah found that mentor teachers with strong coaching abilities, like providing constructive feedback and modeling lessons, helped student teachers develop key skills more effectively. Research by Klassen and Durksen revealed mentor teachers who received training in mentoring strategies created a supportive environment where student teachers felt comfortable trying new approaches, which positively impacted their teaching performance.⁸⁰

Ingersoll and Strong conducted observations in Zambia showing mentor teachers who used questioning to facilitate reflection among student teachers saw an improvement in their lesson planning and ability to apply feedback to future lessons.⁸¹ A survey of mentor-student teacher pairs by Carusi and Franco found mentor teachers with coaching expertise, such as setting goals and addressing concerns, helped increase student teachers' confidence levels and classroom management skills.⁸² Interviews with student teachers by Yuan and Lee, indicated mentor teachers adept at modeling lessons and providing guidance customized to individual needs contributed to higher student achievement in student teachers' classes.⁸³ Recent studies consistently demonstrate the coaching proficiency of mentor teachers plays a key role in advancing student teachers' performance and competencies in the classroom.

Factors Affecting Good Relationships between Mentors and Student-teachers

A study by Clarke found a lack of clear communication between mentors and student teachers led to misunderstandings and uncertainty, negatively impacting the relationship.⁸⁴ Research by Carusi and Franco showed personality clashes or conflicting teaching philosophies as major hurdles that mentors and student teachers struggled to overcome.⁸⁵ Klassen and Durksen observed time constraints due to other work responsibilities prevented mentors from providing adequate guidance, leaving student teachers feeling unsupported.⁸⁶

Surveys by Tillema, Smith, and Leshem revealed the power dynamics inherent in the evaluative role of mentors sometimes made student teachers hesitant to share challenges openly.⁸⁷ Interviews conducted by Simmons suggested a lack of training for mentors in coaching skills like giving feedback professionally compromised the relationship.⁸⁸ A study by Ambrosetti and Dekkers found mismatches between mentors and student teachers regarding expectations damaged rapport and trust between the pairs.⁸⁹ Communication issues, personality/philosophy mismatches, time constraints, evaluative dynamics, lack of coaching skills and unclear expectations have been identified as major influences that can harm mentor-student-teacher relationships. One of the participants also mentioned that the major influence of the relationship between the mentor and student-teachers is the attitude and being unable to meet deadlines. It was also revealed by the participants that respect, tolerance, humbleness and communication are the best ways to monitor relationships among mentor and student-teacher.

Strategies to Maintain Good Relations of the Teachers and Student-teachers

Regular communication is important for building understanding and trust between subject teachers and student teachers. A study by Lu and Wieman found setting up scheduled meetings, observations and feedback sessions helped pairs address any issues promptly.⁹⁰ This open dialogue ensured expectations were clear on both sides. Another strategy is collaborative teaching practices. Research by Klassen, Tze,

⁸⁰ Klassen and Durksen, "Preservice Teachers' Initial Experiences and Efficacy Beliefs: A Mixed Methods Study."

⁸¹ Richard M Ingersoll and Michael Strong, "The Impact of Induction and Mentoring Programs for Beginning Teachers: A Critical Review of the Research," *Review of Educational Research* 81, no. 2 (2011): 201–33.

⁸² Carusi and Franco, "Learning to Teach with Digital Technologies: A Case Study of Student Teachers' Experiences."

⁸³ E.R. Yuan and I. Lee, "I Need to Be Strong and Competent": Exploring Student-Teachers' Concerns about Teaching Practices," *European Journal of Teacher Education* 37, no. 2 (2019): 213–29.

⁸⁴ Clarke, "Cooperating Teachers' Perspectives on Their Role within a School- Based Teacher Education Model."

⁸⁵ Carusi and Franco, "Learning to Teach with Digital Technologies: A Case Study of Student Teachers' Experiences'."

⁸⁶ Klassen and Durksen, "Preservice Teachers' Initial Experiences and Efficacy Beliefs: A Mixed Methods Study."

⁸⁷ Harm H Tillema, Kari Smith, and Shosh Leshem, "Dual Roles—Conflicting Purposes: A Comparative Study on Perceptions on Assessment in Mentoring Relations during Practicum," *European Journal of Teacher Education* 34, no. 2 (2011): 139–59.

⁸⁸ Simmons, "Supporting Student Teachers' Well-Being during Practicum: The Role of Cooperating Teachers'."

⁸⁹ A. Ambrosetti and J. Dekkers, "The Interconnectedness of Selection, Preparation and Ongoing Learning of Mentors," *Teaching and Teacher Education* 98 (2021): 1–9.

⁹⁰ J. Lu and C. Wieman, "The Teacher's Role in the Active Learning Classroom," *American Association for the Advancement of Science* 344, no. 6180 (2018): 153–54.

Betts and Gordon showed when subject teachers co-planned and co-taught lessons with student teachers, it fostered mutual learning and a partnership approach.⁹¹ This collaborative method built rapport between the pairs. One mentor teacher mentioned that the relationship between the student-teacher and mentor should be professional, they should both listen to each other's complaints and find ways to work with their differences.

Involving student teachers in department activities and professional development is also an effective strategy. A survey conducted by Klassen and Durksen revealed when subject teachers incorporated student teachers into faculty meetings and training sessions, the student teachers felt more included and respected.⁹² They were more likely to view their relationship with the subject teacher as collegial rather than hierarchical. Maintaining a supportive environment where guidance is readily available from approachable subject teachers can help boost student teachers' confidence levels according to a study done by.⁹³ If student teachers feel comfortable seeking advice from their subject teacher, it strengthens their working relationship. It should be noted that recognising the efforts and successes of student-teachers by mentors, even through small gestures, keeps motivation and morale high between pairs. Research from Hudson and Hudson showed notes, emails and informal celebrations of milestones strengthened bonds between mentors and student teachers.⁹⁴ With all, regular communication, collaborative practices, involvement in department activities, an open and supportive environment, and recognition have been identified as effective strategies through recent research to foster positive relationships between subject teachers and student teachers. Consistently applying these relationship-building techniques aids in developing strong collaborative partnerships.

RECOMMENDATIONS

On the issue of unpreparedness of student-teachers, it is recommended that lecturers should thoroughly prepare their student-teachers by offering modules in teacher education programmes that equip them with relevant and responsive content knowledge, appropriate teaching approaches and skills as well as desirable behavioral ways to manage classrooms and promote quality teaching and learning.

Also on the issue of destructive feedback from mentors to student-teachers, it is recommended that mentors as experienced teachers should provide constructive feedback to student-teachers to make them clearly see the need with ease and without tension and make corrections where they are supposed to. Appraisals by mentors or lecturers for their good behaviour, strengths, commitment and effectiveness in classroom management, preparation and delivery of lessons and behavioral actions in school settings by student-teachers should be made to inspire them to perform more effectively.

In the case of lack or limited thereof coaching and mentoring skills on the part of teachers, it is recommended that the Department of Basic Education officials, teachers, principals and faculty of education (universities) should jointly collaborate to develop short learning programmes that focus on empowering teachers on coaching and mentoring skills. It is recommended that regular meetings and observations can help facilitate this mentorship relationship.

CONCLUSION

This study set out to examine subject-teachers' perspectives on factors affecting their relations with student-teachers during teaching practice sessions in schools in the Eastern Cape Province of South Africa. Based on the findings and discussion, it can be concluded that where there is a good and conducive relationship between mentors and student-teachers, the purpose of teaching practice would be a fruitful exercise. The quality of pre-service training as competent and impactful teachers could be compromised where a good relationship does not exist. The teaching and learning of learners could be affected by poor relations between mentors and student-teachers. It is, therefore, critical that the relationship between mentors and student-teachers is improved and maintained all the time to foster productivity.

⁹¹ Robert M Klassen et al., "Teacher Efficacy Research 1998–2009: Signs of Progress or Unfulfilled Promise?," *Educational Psychology Review* 23 (2011): 21–43.

⁹² Klassen and Durksen, "Preservice Teachers' Initial Experiences and Efficacy Beliefs: A Mixed Methods Study."

⁹³ Kendra M Hall et al., "More than a Place to Teach: Exploring the Perceptions of the Roles and Responsibilities of Mentor Teachers," *Mentoring & Tutoring: Partnership in Learning* 16, no. 3 (2008): 328–45.

⁹⁴ Hudson and Hudson, "Mentoring as Professional Development: 'Grow Your Own' Teacher Preparation."

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The researchers acknowledge the Walter Sisulu University for its financial contribution to this research.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Abidin, Masturah Zainal, Norlia Mat Norwani, and Khalip Musa. "Teacher Leadership Knowledge to Pre-Service Teachers." *International Journal of Academic Research in Business and Social Sciences* 6, no. 11 (2016): 351–60.
- Abongdia, J A, E O Adu, and J W Foncha. "Pre-Service Teachers' Challenges during Teaching Practice in One University in the Eastern Cape, South Africa." *International Journal of Educational Sciences* 11, no. 1 (2015): 50–56.
- Ajjawi, Rola, and David Boud. "Examining the Nature and Effects of Feedback Dialogue." *Assessment & Evaluation in Higher Education* 43, no. 7 (2018): 1106–19.
- Al-Sharif, E M. "Evaluation of Student/Teacher Teaching Competencies in the Curricula and Teaching Methods of Motor Expression in the Light of Quality Academic Standards." *World Journal of Sport Sciences* 3, no. 5 (2010): 331–58.
- Alsalkhi, M. "The Problems of Practical Education as Viewed by the Female Student Teachers at Petra Private University, Mu'Tah Lil-Buhuth Wad Dirasat." *Humanities and Social Sciences* 25, no. 6 (2015): 199–234.
- Ambrosetti, A., and J. Dekkers. "The Interconnectedness of Selection, Preparation and Ongoing Learning of Mentors." *Teaching and Teacher Education* 98 (2021): 1–9.
- Anderson, Nancy A, and Marguerite Cogorno Radencich. "The Value of Feedback in an Early Field Experience: Peer, Teacher, and Supervisor Coaching." *Action in Teacher Education* 23, no. 3 (2001): 66–74.
- Angelle, Pamela S, and Corey A DeHart. "Teacher Perceptions of Teacher Leadership: Examining Differences by Experience, Degree, and Position." *Nassp Bulletin* 95, no. 2 (2011): 141–60.
- Beck, C., and C. Kosnik. *Innovations in Teacher Education: A Social Constructivist Approach*. London: SAGE Publications Ltd, 2014.
- Benoliel, Pascale, and Chen Schechter. "Promoting the School Learning Processes: Principals as Learning Boundary Spanners." *International Journal of Educational Management* 31, no. 7 (2017): 878–94.
- Bond, Nathan. "Preparing Preservice Teachers to Become Teacher Leaders." In *The Educational Forum*, 75:280–97. Taylor & Francis, 2011.
- Bradbury, Leslie Upson, and Thomas R Koballa Jr. "Borders to Cross: Identifying Sources of Tension in Mentor–Intern Relationships." *Teaching and Teacher Education* 24, no. 8 (2008): 2132–45.
- Campbell, O. "Educational Competences That Students of Classroom Teachers Have in Tafila Technical University (TTU) and Their Evaluation to the Instructional ." *Plan International Interdisciplinary Journal of Education* 3, no. 2 (2017): 1–23.
- Carusi, A., and F. Franco. "Learning to Teach with Digital Technologies: A Case Study of Student Teachers' Experiences'." *Teaching and Teacher Education* 104 (2021): 103382.
- Clarke, A. "Cooperating Teachers' Perspectives on Their Role within a School- Based Teacher Education Model." *Teaching and Teacher Education* 92 (2020): 134–42.
- Clarke, Anthony, Valerie Triggs, and Wendy Nielsen. "Cooperating Teacher Participation in Teacher Education: A Review of the Literature." *Review of Educational Research* 84, no. 2 (2014): 163–202.
- Cornelius, Kyena E, Michael S Rosenberg, and Karin N Sandmel. "Examining the Impact of Professional Development and Coaching on Mentoring of Novice Special Educators." *Action in Teacher Education* 42, no. 3 (2020): 253–70.
- Glen, B. "Factors Influencing Mentor and Student Teacher Relationships During Placement Experiences." *Journal of Initial Teacher Inquiry* 2 (2016): 12–24.
- Goktepe, Fatma Tokoz, and Naciye Kunt. "'I'll Do It in My Own Class': Novice Language Teacher Identity Construction in Turkey." *Asia Pacific Journal of Education* 41, no. 3 (2021): 472–87.
- Guzzardo, Mariana T, Nidhi Khosla, Annis Lee Adams, Jeffra D Bussmann, Alina Engelman, Natalie

- Ingraham, Ryan Gamba, Ali Jones-Bey, Matthew D Moore, and Negin R Toosi. “‘The Ones That Care Make All the Difference’: Perspectives on Student-Faculty Relationships.” *Innovative Higher Education* 46 (2021): 41–58.
- Hakanen, Jari J, Arnold B Bakker, and Wilmar B Schaufeli. “Burnout and Work Engagement among Teachers.” *Journal of School Psychology* 43, no. 6 (2006): 495–513.
- Hall, Kendra M, Roni Jo Draper, Leigh K Smith, and Robert V Bullough Jr. “More than a Place to Teach: Exploring the Perceptions of the Roles and Responsibilities of Mentor Teachers.” *Mentoring & Tutoring: Partnership in Learning* 16, no. 3 (2008): 328–45.
- Hanifan, H. *The National Standards for the Development of Teachers Professionally*, Publications of the Ministry of Education. Amman, Jordan, 2019.
- Hanifar, H. *The National Standards for the Development of Teachers Professionally*. Publications of the Ministry of Education, Amman, Jordan, 2019.
- Hudson, P., and S. Hudson. “Mentoring as Professional Development: ‘Grow Your Own’ Teacher Preparation.” *Professional Development in Education* 46, no. 1 (2020): 75–90.
- Ingersoll, Richard M, and Michael Strong. “The Impact of Induction and Mentoring Programs for Beginning Teachers: A Critical Review of the Research.” *Review of Educational Research* 81, no. 2 (2011): 201–33.
- Islam, Md Asadul, and Faraj Mazyed Faraj Aldaihani. “Justification for Adopting Qualitative Research Method, Research Approaches, Sampling Strategy, Sample Size, Interview Method, Saturation, and Data Analysis.” *Journal of International Business and Management* 5, no. 1 (2022): 1–11.
- Klassen, R., and T. Durksen. “‘Preservice Teachers’ Initial Experiences and Efficacy Beliefs: A Mixed Methods Study.” *Teaching and Teacher Education* 112, no. 103528 (2022).
- Klassen, Robert M, Virginia M C Tze, Shea M Betts, and Kelly A Gordon. “Teacher Efficacy Research 1998–2009: Signs of Progress or Unfulfilled Promise?” *Educational Psychology Review* 23 (2011): 21–43.
- Kombo N.J., and S.H. Kira. *Issues in Mentoring*. London: The Open University, 2013.
- Lester, Jessica Nina, Yonjoo Cho, and Chad R Lochmiller. “Learning to Do Qualitative Data Analysis: A Starting Point.” *Human Resource Development Review* 19, no. 1 (2020): 94–106.
- Lu, J., and C. Wieman. “The Teacher’s Role in the Active Learning Classroom.” *American Association for the Advancement of Science* 344, no. 6180 (2018): 153–54.
- Maandag, D. “‘Teacher Educators’ Roles in Guiding Student Teachers’ Field Experiences.” *Teaching and Teacher Education* 86 (2019): 884.
- Mannathoko, Magdeline C. “Does Teaching Practice Effectively Prepare Student-Teachers to Teach Creative and Performing Arts? The Case of Botswana.” *International Journal of Higher Education* 2, no. 2 (2013): 115–21.
- Margolis, Jason. “Improving Relationships between Mentor Teachers and Student Teachers: Engaging in a Pedagogy of Explicitness.” *The New Educator* 3, no. 1 (2007): 75–94.
- Moore, Rita. “Reexamining the Field Experiences of Preservice Teachers.” *Journal of Teacher Education* 54, no. 1 (2003): 31–42.
- Mpofu, J. “The Importance of Mentoring. University of Zimbabwe. Bulawayo Region.” *Journal Research and Method in Education*, 2017, 27–31.
- Ngidi, David P, and Patrick T Sibaya. “Student Teacher Anxieties Related to Practice Teaching.” *South African Journal of Education* 23, no. 1 (2003): 18–22.
- Ogonor, B O, and M M Badmus. “Reflective Teaching Practice among Student Teachers: The Case in a Tertiary Institution in Nigeria.” *Australian Journal of Teacher Education* 31, no. 2 (2006): 1–11.
- Rajuan, Maureen, Douwe Beijaard, and Nico Verloop. “The Match and Mismatch between Expectations of Student Teachers and Cooperating Teachers: Exploring Different Opportunities for Learning to Teach in the Mentor Relationship.” *Research Papers in Education* 25, no. 2 (2010): 201–23.
- Robert, C. *Can We Know Better? Reflections for Development*. Warwickshire: Practical Action Publishing, 2017.
- Ruohotie-Lyhty, Maria, and Josephine Moate. “Who and How? Preservice Teachers as Active Agents Developing Professional Identities.” *Teaching and Teacher Education* 55 (2016): 318–27.
- Sarıçoban, Arif. “Problems Encountered by Student-Teachers during Their Practicum Studies.”

Procedia-Social and Behavioral Sciences 2, no. 2 (2010): 707–11.

Sawalhi, R. *Teacher Leadership in Government Schools in Qatar: Opportunities and Challenges*. London: University of Warwick, 2019.

Simmons, B. “Supporting Student Teachers’ Well-Being during Practicum: The Role of Cooperating Teachers’.” *Teaching and Teacher Education* 104, no. 103375 (2021).

Tillema, Harm H, Kari Smith, and Shosh Leshem. “Dual Roles—Conflicting Purposes: A Comparative Study on Perceptions on Assessment in Mentoring Relations during Practicum.” *European Journal of Teacher Education* 34, no. 2 (2011): 139–59.

Timor, Tsafi. “Do Teachers Need to Be Leaders? Perceptions of Educational Leadership and Management in the Israeli Secondary Educational System.” *School Leadership & Management* 37, no. 1–2 (2017): 94–119.

Wenner, Julianne A., and Todd Campbell. “The Theoretical and Empirical Basis of Teacher Leadership.” *Review of Educational Research* 87, no. 1 (February 10, 2017): 134–71. <https://doi.org/10.3102/0034654316653478>.

Yuan, E.R., and I. Lee. ““I Need to Be Strong and Competent”: Exploring Student-Teachers’ Concerns about Teaching Practices.” *European Journal of Teacher Education* 37, no. 2 (2019): 213–29.

Yuan, Eric Rui. “The Dark Side of Mentoring on Pre-Service Language Teachers’ Identity Formation.” *Teaching and Teacher Education* 55 (2016): 188–97.

ABOUT AUTHORS

Dr. Berington Zanoxolo Gobingca holds a Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) in Education, Master of Education (MEd), Bachelor of Education (BEd), Bachelor of Commerce in Education (B. Com Educ) and Diploma in Agriculture. Currently, he is a senior lecturer in the Business and Management Education Department (BME Dep.) in the Faculty of Education (FE) at Walter Sisulu University (WSU) geographically located in the Eastern Cape Province of South Africa. His research focuses on Curriculum development, Governance, Leadership and Management and specializes in the Commerce stream.

Esetu Siko holds a Degree in Bachelor of Education in Senior Phase and Further Education and Training (BE d SP & FET). Currently she is doing BEd Honors in Education at Walter Sisulu University.