



ISSN NO. 2320-5407

Journal homepage: <http://www.journalijar.com>

INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL  
OF ADVANCED RESEARCH

## RESEARCH ARTICLE

### FACTORS AFFECTING THE CURRENT MENTORING PRACTICES IN PRIMARY SCHOOLS IN ZIMBABWE: MENTORS AND MENTEES' PERCEPTIONS IN HWANGE DISTRICT

Tichaona Mapolisa<sup>1</sup> and Thembinkosi Tshabalala<sup>2</sup>

1. Associate Professor and National Programme Leader for the Bachelor of Education in Educational Management in the Faculty of Arts and Education at the Zimbabwe Open University.
2. Senior Lecturer and National Programme Leader for the Master of Education in Educational Management in the Faculty of Arts and Education at the Zimbabwe Open University.

#### Manuscript Info

##### Manuscript History:

Received: 12 September 2013  
Final Accepted: 23 September 2013  
Published Online: October 2013

##### Key words:

Mentoring  
Mentor  
Mentee  
Primary school  
Colleges

#### Abstract

Mentoring has been adopted by a number of industries as a good program for manpower training and development including the education sector (Cox, 2005). In the Zimbabwean teacher education system, mentoring has been mandatory. The 2-5-2 primary teacher training model has room for the mentoring course. The 2-5-2 training model stands for two terms in the teacher training college, five terms of teaching practice and finally two years of residential study back at college. It is during the five terms when the student is on teaching practice that they are attached to a qualified and experienced teacher that mentoring takes place. The aim of attaching the student to an experienced teacher is in order that they may (student) receive guidance on various teaching methodologies and general issues pertaining to the teaching/learning process like classroom management, marking, maintenance of class records, discipline, lesson delivery, professional expectations of a teacher, among other things. The qualified teacher who guides the student teacher is referred to as the mentor and the student teacher called the mentee (Sadker and Sadker, 2003). Due to the length of the period spent by student teachers in schools, this study sought to find out if the "mentee" were being fully guided. According to Chakanyuka (2006) mentoring is a developmental partnership through which one person shares knowledge, skills, information and perspectives to foster the personal and professional growth of someone else. Mentoring involves a person of higher rank or expertise, who teaches, counsel, guides and develops a novice in a profession (Alleman, 2002). The research investigated the role played by trained teachers to assist the trainee teachers attached to them in view of the various professional and economic challenges these qualified teachers were facing. The study adopted the descriptive survey design. The target population comprised all primary teachers in Hwange District which has a teacher population of 850 primary school teachers. The sample consisted of one hundred (100) mentors and mentees of which fifty (50) were mentors and the other fifty (50) mentees. Of the sample respondents fifty (50) were female and fifty (50) male. All the information was collected through a questionnaire which had both close-ended and open-ended questions. Descriptive statistical analysis was used to interpret data. The study revealed that mentees gained tremendously from the mentoring process. It also revealed that mentors were not motivated to perform their mentoring duties. The study also found that the mentoring exercise faced numerous challenges relating to lack of accommodation and other resources. The study recommends that the colleges where the mentees were coming from should provide adequate resources for their students; and that mentors should be incentivized one way or the other in order to motivate them to efficiently guide the mentors.

py Right, IJAR, 2013.. All rights reserved.

## **Introduction**

Mentoring is one of the principal strategies employed by teacher training colleges in Zimbabwe, Africa and the entire world (Cox, 2005). This approach to teacher education has not gone without challenges. A number of scholars and researchers argue that mentoring had not achieved most of its laid down objectives, principally being the transportation of novice teachers into wonders (Gabraith and Cohen, 2002). Mentoring therefore denotes a relationship between a more experienced teacher (mentor) and a less experienced person (mentee) where the mentor's chief responsibilities were to guide, instruct, encourage and correct the mentee.

In this kind of set-up, the mentor- mentee relationship was more personal than the traditional teacher-student situation. Sadker and Sadker (2003) asserted that this program was meant to give student teachers exposure to realistic teaching environment as well as promoting their professional and / or personal development. Mentorship as a training approach either in education or other industries had a number of advantages and some of them were that it was flexible and offered the trainee a theoretical insight into the studied area while at the same time allowed him to have a practical feel of the industry through mentorship (Zvobgo, 2000). The program is work focused and allowed the mentors to give particular attention to the unique needs of the individual mentees.

In Zimbabwe however, mentoring is done by teachers who were not equipped with any specific skills by colleges as it is assumed that the pre-service training they received during their training days at college would be enough to arm them with skills to guide the mentees. It is the contention of authorities that generally speaking, Zimbabwean teachers have heavy loads and because of low salaries, lack the motivation to effectively assist the mentees (Chakanyuka, 2006). This study therefore set out to explore how effective the process of mentoring is conducted under these difficult circumstances.

## **Statement of the problem**

Mentoring is not devoid of challenges in educational settings in developing countries like Zimbabwe (Cox, 2005). Many scholars in the field of mentoring (Chakanyuka, 2006; Bubb, 2010; Cox, 2005; Lawrence, 2005; Lindhard, 2008; Maguire, 2010; Wilson, 2009) have hinted on theoretical and practical underpinnings of mentoring in educational situations. The study sought to investigate the factors affecting the current mentoring practices in primary schools in Zimbabwe.

## **Purpose of the study**

The study sought to establish the factors that affected the current mentoring practices in Zimbabwean primary schools in order to explore how effective the process is conducted. The study also sought to come up with a more comprehensive and well structured mentoring process for student teachers.

## **Research questions**

The study was seeking to provide answers to the following research questions.

1. What are the factors that affect the process of mentoring?
2. How do colleges motivate trained teachers (mentors) to effectively assist their mentees?
3. What are the roles of mentors in the mentoring process?
4. What are the problems faced by mentors and mentees during the mentoring process?

## **Significance of the study**

The significance of this study stemmed from the fact that it sought to help mentor teachers and mentees to develop an effective mentoring process. It was also hoped that the research would contribute immensely towards a better understanding of the complex process of mentoring. This is very important in that as stated, the merits of proper mentoring are the improvement of teacher training and ultimately producing a well trained teacher who is likely to

provide proper guidance to pupils. It was also hoped that the study would also contribute to the existing corpus of knowledge on the concept of mentoring which the Ministry of Education Sport, Arts and Culture, Schools and Teachers' Colleges can use to enhance the process of mentoring.

### **Limitations of the study**

In view of the small size of the sample and sub-samples used, the findings of this study therefore will have limited generalisability. It has to be pointed out that attitudes about an issue are essentially subjective and cannot be measured accurately. Moreover, since feelings may vary in intensity, what may be interpreted positively by one individual may be interpreted differently by another. In other words, attitudes have no universally recognized and accepted scales of measurement, and measures that were used in this study cannot be considered to be very accurate.

### **Delimitation of the study**

The study was confined to one district of Zimbabwe which is Hwange in Matabeleland North Province in western Zimbabwe. It was concerned with factors affecting the current mentoring practices in Zimbabwean primary schools. The respondents were mentors and mentees. Heads of schools, Education Officers and Lecturers were outside the scope of this study.

### **Literature Review**

In the education sector mentoring has become a global phenomenon. World over, teacher training institutes have made it a policy that no student teachers graduate without having had a feel of the classroom under the watchful eye of a trained mentor or teacher (Kerry and Mayes, 2008). Maguire (2010) observes that mentoring at its best could be a life-altering relationship that inspired the development of both the mentor and mentee. Cox (2005) states that mentoring could transform novice teachers quite significantly on their professional standing. Mentoring as a method of teacher training involved placing a trainee teacher under the guidance of a trained teacher and this could help the trainee to polish and improve on the presentation of lessons which would make them relatively better teachers.

In Zimbabwe as Zvobgo (2000) observed, the 2-5-2 teacher training approach/model was adopted during the early years of the country's independence (1980s). This model implied that a trainee teacher spent the five terms of his / her studies at a school where she would be attached to or mentored by trained teachers before returning to the college to complete training for the last two terms. The government adopted this model of teacher training in order to alleviate challenges of shortages of teachers in the schools. This model was implemented under the Zimbabwe Integrated National Teacher Education Course (ZINTEC) where three colleges were used. The rest of the teacher training colleges used the conventional method which existed before independence. This model proved successful as currently all primary teacher training colleges have adopted the model (Chakanyuka, 2006).

One of the primary responsibilities of trained teachers in the mentorship of student teachers was to give guidance on immediate challenges faced by the mentee (Lindhard, 2008). However, Bubb (2010) found that in most cases mentors failed to reach out effectively to their mentees because most trainee teachers felt rather bullied and oppressed by the mentors. This is corroborated by findings by White (2000) and Lawrence (2005) who discovered that in most cases, there were cases of asymmetrical power relationships between the mentor and the mentee. They argued that more often trainee teachers felt that their mentors looked down upon them or over used them without giving them due recognition (White 2000, and Lawrence, 2005).

These kinds of hidden tensions between mentors and their protégées could inhibit effective mentoring of student teachers (Lindhard, 2008). For the programme to fully benefit both the mentors and the mentees, there should be marriage of minds and unity of purpose between the players in the mentoring game (Lawrence, 2005). Wilson (2009) also argued that one of the primary pitfalls which made mentoring difficult and almost useless in teacher training was the mentor-mentee personality clashes. Differences in personalities between the mentor and mentee could make learning difficult for the mentee. Bubb (2010) states that the behaviour of mentors had a serious impact on the mentee's learning process. A mentor who exhibited pomposity and arrogance, promoted negative attitudes from student teachers.

With the process of mentoring being such an indispensable phenomenon in teacher training it is very important that senior teachers tasked with the assignment of mentoring trainee teachers should be good role models and competent in their conduct and work ethics (Kran, 2005). Cox (2005) indicated that some of the most important qualities of a good mentor were that he/she was open and honest, inspired trust and offered constructive criticism to mentees. Research also shows that effective mentoring could only be very possible in schools where the mentors were adequately trained (Lawrence 2005). Student teachers could fully benefit from teaching practice when they were guided by mentors who fully understood mentoring (Lawrence, 2005). White (2000) alluded to the fact that mentoring in teacher training could be effective if and only if mentors were adequately prepared for their roles through training and workshops. In a situation where mentors had no knowledge of how to guide student teachers, mentoring could not achieve its primary objectives of transforming novice teachers into excellent professionals (Cox, 2005).

According to Kram (2005) mentors had two main responsibilities in the training of classroom practitioners. The first function was career function in which teachers assisted their mentees to learn the ropes of the trade and prepared them for advancement. The second function was the psychosocial function in which the mentor would help the mentee develop trust, intimacy and interpersonal bonds which would promote personal growth of the individual. Failure by the mentor to perform effectively on anyone of these functions would render the entire process of mentoring irrelevant (Kran, 2005). In every training venture effective communication between the trainer and the trainee was essential. The same effective transmission of values should exist between the training institution and those challenged by the duties of training learners (mentees). Lindhard (2008) states that one factor that tended to militate against effective mentoring of trainee primary school teachers in developing countries was the phenomenon of work overload. In most cases teachers who had mentees were also assigned other responsibilities by their schools, for example being in charge of sports or other equally demanding duties (Lindhard, 2008). This also rendered the mentors to be less effective on their roles of assisting the student teachers. Since mentoring was such an important process in the training of teachers it therefore seemed necessary to investigate how mentors go about carrying out this exercise in Zimbabwean primary schools.

### **Research Methodology**

The study employed the quantitative methodology. Quantitative research was chosen for its ability to enable this study's findings to be generalized to other districts (Blumberg, 2008). The quantitative methodology was also found useful in this study because it enabled the researchers to investigate 100 mentors' and 100 mentees' perceptions of the factors affecting mentoring in selected primary schools of Hwange District of Zimbabwe.

The study settled for the survey research design. The use of survey research design enabled the researchers to gather widespread perceptions of the respondents in regard to the studied phenomenon (Blumberg, 2008). In this study, the researchers were able to collect perceptions of 100 mentors and 100 mentees regarding factors affecting mentoring in selected primary schools of Hwange District in Zimbabwe.

The study's population comprised 850 teachers. Three hundred teachers were mentors who had mentees who were student teachers of United College Education, Joshua Mqabuko College and Mkoba Teachers' College. The study employed simple random sampling and purposive sampling to select 100 mentors because it permitted every mentor to have an equal chance of participating into the study (Kumar, 2008). Every multiple of three was chosen to come up with a sample of 100 mentors. This also automatically applied to the choice of 100 mentees.

The researcher used a questionnaire with a mixed bag of closed-ended questions and two open-ended questions to collect data from the respondents. Closed-ended questions enabled the researchers to collect predetermined respondents' opinions regarding the studied phenomena (Kumar, 2008). Researchers were able to obtain the actual feelings of the respondents regarding factors affecting mentoring in selected primary schools in Hwange District from the respondents' open-ended free responses.

### **Data collection and analysis**

Data were gathered by means of a questionnaire which was largely made up of close-ended questions and a few open-ended questions. The questionnaire was chosen because as Cohen and Manion (2002) observe it has the

ability to reach many respondents who live at widely dispersed addresses and preserves anonymity which encourages greater honesty. However, the questionnaire as Anderson (2011) argues, generally has a low response rate and is inflexible in that it does not allow ideas or comments to be explored in-depth and many questions may remain unanswered. The researchers personally distributed the questionnaire to the schools where the respondents worked. The same method was used to collect the completed questionnaires. Data generated through the questionnaire produced descriptive statistics around the variables under study. These statistics were computed and inferential implications from them derived and recorded.

### Findings and discussion

The study set out to explore the factors affecting the current mentoring primary schools in Zimbabwe. This section is presented in two parts, namely, presentation of data and discussion.

### Presentation of data

**Table 1: Profiles of mentors and mentees (N=100)**

Categories of respondents	Number of questionnaires	Number of questionnaires returned	% of questionnaire returned
Mentors	100	100	100
Mentees	100	100	100
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>

The response rate from both mentors and mentees was very high. The size of the sample from which the results will be based was therefore not affected by the problem of non-returns. Non-returns, according to Phillips and Pugh (2010) introduce a bias in as much as they are likely to differ from respondents in many important ways thereby adversely affecting reliability and validity of the findings.

**Table 2: Composition of sample by gender (N=100)**

Sex	Number of respondents	Percentage
Male	50	50
Female	50	50
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>

Table 2 shows the distribution of respondents by sex. It reveals that there was a gender balance. This gender balance could be explained by the fact that it was deliberately arrived at through purposive sampling.

**Table 3: Composition of mentees by age (N=50)**

Age range	Frequency	Percentage
Below 30 years	15	70
31 – 40 years	35	30
41 – 50 years	0	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>100</b>

From the table 3 above, 70% of the respondents were from the below 30 years age group, 30% were from the 31- 40 years age group, while none belonged to the 41 – 50 years of age. The highest number was from the below 30 years age group. This could be attributed to the fact that mentees are generally younger prospective teachers still at colleges.

**Table 4: Composition of mentors by age (N=50)**

Age range	Frequency	Percentage
Below 30 years	0	0
31 – 40 years	5	10
41 – 50 years	28	56
51 – 60 years	17	34
<b>Total</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>100</b>

Table 4 above shows that none of the mentors fell within the below 30 years age group, 10% of the respondents were from the 31-40 years age-group. Those who were between the ages 41-50 years constituted 56% while 34% represented those from the oldest age. The highest number was from the 41-50 years probably because they were the most senior teachers in the teaching field hence were likely to be given the opportunity to mentor students.

**Table 5: Mentees perceptions on the quality of mentorship from their mentors (N=50)**

Category	Frequency	Percentage
Extremely poor	6	12
Poor	5	10
Fair	9	18
Good	10	20
excellent	20	40
<b>Total</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>100</b>

Table 5 shows that 12% of the respondents rated the mentorship as extremely poor, 10% of the respondents rated it as poor which meant that they considered the mentorship process as a weak link with their practical aspects which they had to acquire in their respective placement schools. Eighteen percent (18%) of the respondents rated the mentorship as a fair process which meant they were indifferent with regard to the mentorship and hence could not consider it as a good or bad process. However, 20% of the respondents rated the mentorship as good and 40% rated as excellent which meant they considered the mentorship as a process achieving its goals of making sure that the mentees acquired the necessary skills and linked the theoretical aspects learnt at college with the practical skills at the placement schools.

The questionnaire had two open-ended questions which bolstered data from the close-ended questions. The first question wanted to find out from both the mentors and mentees what they thought were the roles of mentors during the mentoring process. The majority of both mentors and mentees agreed on what they perceived to be the major roles of mentors. They thought the mentor's role was to give relevant knowledge and skills compatible with current trends in the teaching / learning process. It was the duty of the mentor to assist the mentee to effectively link theory learnt at college to practice at the placement school during the teaching practice. Respondents also pointed out that another important role of mentors was to assess the strengths of the teachers and utilize them to the maximum benefit of children. They also indicated that mentors also assessed the weaknesses of student teachers (mentees) and tried to modify them positively so that they would yield positive benefits for the children being taught.

The second question sought to find out from the respondents what they thought were the major challenges faced by mentors during the mentoring process. Respondents cited shortage of resources in the form of stationery and money for buying teaching and learning materials. They also mentioned personality clashes where the mentor and mentee could not work together harmoniously. Some of the mentees felt that their mentors were sometimes bossy and bully making it difficult to work with them. Mentors revealed that they were not provided with any form of incentive to motivate them to do their mentoring activities.

## Discussion

Information from the study reveals that the majority of the mentees felt that the quality of mentoring they received from their mentors was very good. This shows that mentees have belief in the quality of assistance provided by their mentors. However, 40% of the mentees rated the quality of assistance they received from their mentors as extremely poor, poor or fair. This correlates with findings from Bubb (2010) who found that most mentees felt they did not benefit anything from the mentoring process.

Findings also indicate that respondents thought that the mentor's role was to give relevant knowledge and skills compatible with current trends in the teaching learning process. This tallies very well with observations by Lindhard (2008) who argued that the primary responsibilities of trained teachers in the mentorship of student teachers was to give guidance on immediate challenges that mentees face. Respondents also indicated that mentors should objectively assess strengths and weaknesses of the mentees and improve on them for the benefit of the learners. This corroborates observations made by Richard (2010) who found that the mentor's role was to identify strengths and weaknesses of the mentee and guide them so that they enhance their personal (mentees) development and career growth.

Findings also revealed that mentors and mentees felt that the process of mentoring was not adequately supported with relevant resources for both the mentor and mentee. Mentees indicated that they had challenges accessing adequate teaching / learning materials. Mentors on the other hand indicated that neither the colleges nor their schools motivated them through incentives to effectively undertake the mentoring exercise.

The study also shows that most of the mentees felt that their mentors were in most instances bossy and bully towards them. This correlates with findings from a study carried out by Maguire (2011) in Australia who found that there were in most cases asymmetrical power relations between the mentor and the mentee. The study by Maguire (2011) found that most of the times the trainee teachers felt that their mentors looked down upon them or over used them without giving them due recognition.

## **Conclusion**

The study draws the ensuing conclusions.

- Both theoretical and empirical data in this study converge on the fact that most mentees in Zimbabwe appreciate the role played by the mentors during their teaching practice sessions.
- Mentees generally thought that the mentor's role was to give relevant knowledge and skills compatible with current trends in the teaching learning process.
- Mentees also felt that their mentors should objectively assess strengths and weaknesses and modify them for the benefit of the learners.
- Findings also revealed that both mentors and mentees felt that the process of mentoring was not adequately supported.
- Mentors indicated that both their schools and colleges under whose auspices mentees did not provide them with any form of motivation so that they could effectively perform their duties.
- Findings of the study seem to confirm that Zimbabwean mentors looked down upon their mentees.

## **Recommendations**

In light of the findings of this study, the researcher would like to make some recommendations.

- The process of mentoring has to be maintained as it was yielding fruitful results and also helping the students to a larger extent in acquiring the art and skills of effective teaching.
- Mentors should provide guidance and support to mentees based on their (mentees') unique developmental needs. Mentors should support and encourage mentees to do their work.
- Colleges where mentees come from should provide adequate and relevant stationery to the mentees so that they carry out their teaching practice effectively and efficiently. Part of the fees students pay at college should be channeled towards procurement of teaching / learning materials.
- It is also recommended that colleges needed to liaise with the placement schools so that the student teachers were allocated accommodation.
- Teachers should be inducted before they are engaged as mentors because in most cases most mentors did not possess adequate knowledge and at times the information they shared with mentees was outdated.
- Mentors have to be given some incentives to boost their efficiency and effectiveness. Mentoring was an extra load to mentors, hence there was need for a token of appreciation for the extra work.
- Mentors should avoid over dominating the mentees as they may feel (mentees) bullied. Mentors, therefore should provide adequate direction and help the mentee move towards independence.

## References

- Alleman, T. (2002). *The authentic teacher*. Cambridge: Haward and Doyle Publishing Company.
- Anderson, L. (2011). *Research in Education*. Sydney: Allen Unwin.
- Blumberg, B. (2008). *Business research methods*. London: Routledge.
- Bubb, S. (2010). *The guide for new teachers*. New York: Routledge Falmer.
- Chakanyuka, S. (2006). *Mentoring in education*. Harare: Zimbabwe Open Univesity.
- Cohen, L. and Manion, L. (2002). *Research methods in education*. London: Routledge.
- Cox, B. (2005). *Guide to new teachers*. London: Cogan Page.
- Gabraith, T. and Cohen, S. (2002). *Issues in mentoring*. London: The Open University.
- Kerry, K. and Mayes, A.S. (2008). *Mentoring for independence*. New York: McGrwa Hill.
- Kram, K. (2005). *Mentoring at work*. Chicago: McGraw Hill Companies Inc.
- Lawrence, S. (2005). *An introduction to curriculum research and development*. London: Butler and Tanner Limited.
- Lindhard, N. (2008). *Guidance in the classroom*. Cape Town: Longman.
- Maguire, D. (2011). *Mentoring and tutoring*. Sydney: McGraw Hill Companies.
- Richard, E. (2010). *Roles of the mentor and mentee*. New York: McGraw Hill.
- Sadker and Sadker, K (2003). *Effective classroom control*. Cambridge: John and Robertson.
- White, D. (2000). *Micro teaching in initial teacher training*. Harare: Longman.
- Wilkinson, K. (2009). *Interpersonal communication between mentors and mentees*. California: Wadsworth Publishing Company.
- Zvobgo, R (2000). *Transforming education: The Zimbabwean experience*. Harare: College Press.