Teaching Practice Mentoring of Consumer Science Student Teachers in Eswatini High Schools

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ABSTRACT

The study sought to ascertain the strengths and weaknesses of mentoring as a teaching practice model in the teaching of Consumer Sciences in Eswatini High Schools. The descriptive survey study endeavored into student teachers' experiences of Teaching Practice and cooperating teachers' competences and awareness on their mentoring roles and responsibilities. A sample of thirty (30) participants comprising twenty three (23) student teachers and seven (7) cooperating teachers was selected using the random sampling technique. Close-ended survey questionnaires were used to collect data and analysed using SPSS version 23.0 to compute means, standard deviations, frequencies and percentages. The reliability of the instrument was tested using Cronbach's coefficient alpha which was at 0.725, to assess the internal consistency of the survey questionnaire. The study established that the student teachers received immediate help from the cooperating teachers and had exposure to how the cooperating teachers carried out day to day teaching activities. However, cooperating teachers lacked knowledge of what was expected of them by the training institution in mentoring the student teachers. The study recommends strategies for improving effectiveness of mentoring to include workshops for cooperating teachers in order to enlighten them on their mentoring roles and responsibilities.

Key Words : Mentoring, Mentor, Mentee, Teaching practice, Cooperating teacher

INTRODUCTION

Teacher training is the process of education and skill development that teacher trainees undergo as part of their formal teacher education process (Mamba, 2012). Gujar (2012) describes teacher training as a process of equipping teachers with knowledge, attitudes, behaviours and skills required in effectively performing tasks in both the classroom and school as a whole. This process is conducted through theoretical courses, practicum and seminars. The traditional viewpoint on teaching considers classroom practice to stand out as being the most significant element of professional training to the student teacher because of its vividness and emotional associations (Collier, 2014).

Over the past decades, teacher education has been critically reviewed by numerous researchers and educators in an attempt to rethink the model of teacher training and adapt it to the requirements of a constantly changing world. Teaching practice (TP) mentoring became the current professional development approach in educational institutions (Bhebhe, Runhare & Monobe, 2015). However, this cannot be enhanced from a vacuum but through different forms of guidance and supervision from the college and schools where the students are practicing from. It is a significant approach employed in the training of Consumer Science student teachers in Eswatini. TP is the period at which students put into practice the teaching skills that they learnt from college (Mpofu & Hove, 2016). Teaching Practice involves the practical use of teaching methods, teaching strategies,

teaching principles, teaching techniques and practical training and practice of different activities of daily school life (Black & Halliwell, 2002). Therefore, performance during teaching practice provides some basis for predicting the future success of the student teacher.

There have also been various studies in the field of Consumer Sciences, which have helped the conceptual understanding of the process and led to the mentoring design for better teacher training. Mentoring is defined as a professional relationship in which an experienced person (mentor) assists another (mentee) in developing special skills and knowledge in a real teaching and learning environment that will enhance professional and personal growth of the student (Hudson, 2016). According to Mpofu and Hove (2016), teacher training colleges and universities hold the leading role of teaching theory exposition, which is subsequently ceded to the field for Teaching Practice. In education, mentoring is a complex and multi-dimensional process of guiding, teaching, influencing and supporting a beginning or new teacher. It is generally accepted that a mentor teacher leads, guides and advises another teacher more junior in experience in a work situation characterized by mutual trust and belief. Typically, mentoring programmes, pair novice teachers with more experienced teachers who can ably explain school policies, regulations and procedures; share methods, materials and other resources; help solve problems in teaching and learning; provide personal and professional support; and guide the growth of the new teacher through reflection, collaboration, and shared inquiry (Nemser & Parker, 2012). The process includes modelling because the mentor must be able to model the messages and suggestions being taught to the student teacher (Gay, 2014).

In Eswatini, a single student teacher is attached to a cooperating teacher for a period of one semester. The student is assigned classes to teach, from the cooperating teacher's workload. Cooperating teachers are expected to enhance student teachers' proficiency in the job training. Mentor teachers are recognized for their practical knowledge of the teaching profession, which complements the theoretical knowledge that the student teacher has acquired from the university. Mentors should be well informed, dedicated, exemplary, eloquent, reliable and open minded people in that specific field of study. Accordingly, the mentor must possess ideals and expertise of the teaching profession, which are shared with the new teacher (Sosibo, 2013).

However, studies carried out elsewhere established gaps associated with the practice, such as lack of knowledge of what the colleges or universities expected from mentor teachers (Mukeredzi & Manwa, 2019). Therefore, this study sought to explore the performance of mentoring Consumer Science Education student teachers in Eswatini high schools with the intention of reinforcing the strengths and suggesting possible ways of dealing with the shortfalls of the practice.

METHODOLOGY

The research design of the study:
This study employed a quantitative research approach using a descriptive survey research design.

Sample and sampling technique:
The purposive sampling technique was used to select the whole census of (23) final year Consumer Science Education students and (7) teachers who were cooperating teachers around Manzini region where most students were attached. Smith (2016) states that in using purposive sampling the researcher will be trying to get respondents who are directly involved and can give the most relevant data.

Research instruments:
A questionnaire with close-ended questions was used to collect data. The questionnaire was formulated from literature that addressed the objectives of the study. The researchers distributed the questionnaires which were self-administered by the respondents. To test for reliability of the questionnaire, pilot testing was done with the Agricultural Education students who had just completed their teaching practice at the same time with the Consumer Science Education students to avoid contaminating the target population. Cronbach's Alpha was used to establish internal consistency coefficient which was calculated at 0.725, thus, the study was considered reliable.

Data analysis:
The statistical package for social sciences (SPSS) version 23.0 was used to analyse the data.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Demographic characteristics:
The demographic characteristics included age,

gender, region of placement for TP, subjects taught during TP, gender of cooperating teacher, availability of resources and religion. Table 1 shows the demographics of the respondents.

The percentages of males also reflect that there are fewer males than females who enrolled in Consumer Science Education programme at (13%) and (87%) respectively, hence, the reason why they were fewer males to females who participated in the study. The results also indicate that there is a high percentage of student teachers who range between 23-25 years of age (65.3%), followed by range between 26-28 years of age at (21.7%), while the range of 20-22 years of age were at (8.7%), and lastly range between 29-31 years of age (4.3%).

The findings show that, student teachers who taught Consumer Science and FN were (43%) and had the highest percentage compared to those who taught Consumer Science and FF (34.8%) and those that taught FN and FF (21. 7%). Most student teachers had a challenge of insufficient funds in the schools (91.3%) which affected their TP, while (8.7%) had available resources in their attached schools.

Student teachers' experiences:

The results reveal that student teachers were faced with lesson planning problems since they could not get assistance from their cooperating teachers as the mean is (2.04) meaning the cooperating teachers were not familiar with the UNESWA lesson plan format. The results show that cooperating teachers did not have confidence with student teachers' performance as the mean is (2.00). The results also indicate that student teachers were not taken as relief teachers. They did not have a work overload from the cooperating teacher with a mean of (2.26). Students agreed that the semester was adequate for graining proper experience. School stuff was also supportive with a mean of (3.00), and cooperating teacher

Table 1 : Demographic characteristics of subjects (n=23)		
Characteristics	Frequencies	Percentages (%)
Age range (years)		
20-22	2	8.7
23-25	15	65.3
26-28	5	21.7
29-31	1	4.3
	23	100
Gender		
Male	3	13.0
Female	20	87.0
	23	100
Region of TP		
Manzini	7	30.4
Hhohlo	4	17.4
Lubombo	5	21.7
Shiswlweni	7	30.4
	23	100
Subjects taught		
Consumer Science & Fashion and Fabrics	8	34.8
Fashion & Fabrics and Food & Nutrition	5	21.7
Consumer Science and Food & Nutrition	10	44.5
	23	100
Availability of resources		
Available	2	8.7
Insufficient	21	91.3
	23	100
Gender of cooperating teacher		
Male	2	8.7
Female	21	91.3
	23	100

was always available with a mean of (2.65). The overall mean for student teachers experience on mentoring was 2.37 which show that students experience was not a very good one for the majority of the student teachers (Table 2).

Mentor competences and awareness towards mentoring roles and responsibilities:

The findings pertaining cooperating teachers' competences towards mentoring roles and responsibilities are summarized in Table 3. The overall mean of cooperating teachers competences was (2.71) with the highest mean being (3.00) and the lowest mean (1.86). The results also show that cooperating teachers were not role models of student teachers with a mean of (1.86). It also shows that cooperating teachers did not help student teachers with their lesson plans with a mean of (2.30)

Cooperating teacher awareness of mentoring roles and responsibilities:

The result presented in the tables below shows cooperating teachers awareness in executing their mentoring roles and responsibilities.

Table 2 : Student teachers' experience during TP(n=23)		
Item	Mean	SD
1. Cooperating teacher knowledge about lesson plan	2.04	1.06
2. Did your students fully participate in class	2.78	0.52
3. Did your cooperating teacher assist you in overall exercise	2.04	0.97
4. Did your cooperating teacher provide helpful feedback after class observation	1.91	0.99
5. Were there relevant teaching aids in the department of consumer science	2.47	0.79
6. Student teacher taken as relief teachers-work overload from cooperating teacher	2.26	0.61
7. Cooperating teacher had confidence towards you as student teacher	2.00	0.79
8. Was the semester adequate for gaining proper experience at TP	3.13	0.34
9. Was the school faced with financial and material shortage which affected your TP	3.43	0.89
10. Student teachers experience on mentoring (overall)	2.37	0.22

Table 3 : Cooperating teacher competences towards mentoring roles and responsibilities(n=23)		
Item	Mean	SD
1. Always available and accessible	2.62	0.93
2. Gave me freedom to try things	2.73	0.44
3. Supported decisions I made	2.69	0.55
4. Helped me to plan lessons and activities	2.30	0.82
5. Routinely observe me when teaching	2.52	0.73
6. Provided constructive feedback to me	2.56	0.50
7. Provided a variety of experiences for me	2.56	0.50
8. Assisted me when needed	2.56	0.50
9. Treated me as a fellow professional	2.69	0.47
10. Anticipated needs for me as a student teacher	2.60	0.58
11. Provided clear expectations to me	2.60	0.49
12. Shared resources with me as a student teacher	2.86	0.34
13. Provided frequent evaluations for me	2.52	0.51
14. Checked my lesson plans before every lesson	2.43	0.72
15. Evaluated my progress and experiences	2.52	0.51
16. Demonstrated effective teaching techniques	2.65	0.57
17. Involved me as part of the school staff	3.00	0.30
18. Clarified my responsibilities as a student teacher	2.43	0.58
19. Was a positive role model to me	1.86	0.75
20. Willingly shared working space.	2.73	0.44
21. Cooperating teacher's competence in carrying responsibility of mentoring (overall)	2.71	0.37

Table 4 shows results of cooperating teachers' awareness on mentoring roles and responsibilities of seven teachers in the Manzini region. Frequency and percentage were used to analyse the results of this table.

Cooperating teachers' awareness on mentoring roles and responsibilities results showed that, 71.4% of cooperating teachers indicated that they were not knowledgeable about UNESWA lesson plan format and 28.6 % was knowledgeable about UNESWA lesson plan format, 57.1 % indicated that they did discuss aims and outline curriculum to student teachers while 42.9% did not discuss aims and outline curriculum student teachers. All seven teachers, 100% agreed to have shared skills and experience to student teachers and modelled effective teaching. 100% cooperating teachers also agreed to have been able to use appropriate teaching strategies and teaching aids.

Table 5 also shows summarized results of cooperating teachers' awareness on their mentoring roles and responsibilities analysed using mean and standard deviation. The cooperating teachers' awareness on mentoring roles and responsibilities was also analysed using mean and standard deviation. The overall mean was (1.66) meaning that cooperating teachers were slightly aware of their mentoring roles and responsibilities. The highest mean was (1.95) of cooperating teachers being informed on classroom management, followed by (1.91) of teachers being able to use appropriate teaching strategies and teaching aids, and having the lowest mean of (1.13) meaning cooperating teachers were not aware that they should discuss content knowledge and questioning technique for student teacher.

The overall standard deviation being (0.19) means that the means were not deviated from each other in the mentoring roles and responsibilities given.

Table 4 : Cooperating teachers' awareness on mentoring roles and responsibilities (n=7)				
Item	Frequency		Percentage (%)	
	Yes	No	Yes	No
1. Are you familiar with UNESWA lesson plan format and lesson presentation	5	2	71.4	28.6
2. Are you able to use appropriate teaching strategies and teaching aids	-	7	-	100
3. Do you discuss aims and outline curriculum to student teacher	3	4	42.9	57.1
4. Are you informed on classroom management	-	7	-	100
5. Do you discuss content knowledge and questioning techniques for student teacher	4	3	57.1	42.9
6. Do you review lesson plans for student teacher	4	3	57.1	42.9
7. Do you provide feedback on teaching (theory or practical lesson) when student teacher is done teaching	5	2	71.4	28.6
8. Do you discuss assessment and evaluation for student teacher	5	2	71.4	28.3
9. Do you share skills and experience to student teacher	-	7	-	100
10. Do you Model effective teaching	-	7	-	100
11. Do you discuss problem solving and articulate expectations for student teacher	3	4	42.9	57.1

Table 5 : Cooperating teachers' awareness on mentoring roles and responsibilities(n=7)		
Item	Mean	SD
1. Are you familiar with UNESWA lesson plan format and lesson presentation	1.43	0.50
2. Are you able to use appropriate teaching strategies and teaching aids	1.91	0.28
3. Do you discuss aims and outline curriculum to student teacher	1.43	0.51
4. Are you informed on classroom management	1.95	0.21
5. Do you discuss content knowledge and questioning techniques for student teacher	1.13	0.34
6. Do you review lesson plans for student teacher	1.43	0.51
7. Do you provide feedback on teaching (theory or practical lesson) when student teacher is done teaching	1.82	0.38
8. Do you discuss assessment and evaluation for student teacher	1.17	0.38
9. Do you share skills and experience to student teacher	1.87	0.34
10. Do you Model effective teaching	1.82	0.38
11. Do you discuss problem solving and articulate expectations for student teacher	1.30	0.47
12. Cooperating teachers' awareness on mentoring roles and responsibilities. (overall)	1.66	0.19

Table 6 : Possible strategies for effective mentoring (n=23)		
Item	Mean	SD
1. Students should be strictly attached to full time qualified teachers	5.9130	0.28
2. There is need for workshops for cooperating teachers to enlighten them on how to assist student teachers	5.87	0.34
3. Cooperating teachers should provide specific and concrete feedback to student teachers	5.5	0.51
4. Cooperating teachers must be motivated to assist student teachers at all times	5.5	0.59
5. School heads/deputies should supervise progress of cooperating teacher and student	5.17	0.716
6. Student teachers should also be allocated cooperating teacher's assistant within the consumer science department	2.82	1.07
7. Possible strategies for effective mentoring(overall)	5.14	0.32

Possible strategies for effective mentoring :

The Table 6 summarizes the results of possible strategies which can improve mentoring to be more effective. The overall mean of the possible strategies is (5.14) meaning that student teachers agree that strategies could be effective for mentoring. Students should be strictly attached to full time teachers has the highest mean of (5.91) which means that student teachers strongly agree about this strategy.

Workshops for cooperating teachers to enlighten them on how to assist student teacher has the second highest mean of (5.87), and the lowest mean (2.82) being student teachers should be allocated cooperating teachers assistants within the consumer science department and that means student teachers slightly disagree that this could be an effective strategy in mentoring. The standard deviation is small being (0.32), means that the overall mean was not deviated from the means of the possible strategies given.

Discussion:
Demographic characteristics :

Demographic characteristics included age of the student teachers, gender, region of TP, subjects taught during TP, availability of teaching aids, gender of cooperating teacher and religion.

Age:

The results show that most of the students range between the 23 and 25 years of age which has the highest percentage of student teachers and this means that most teachers finished high school within the expected age of 18 years or 19 years of age.

Gender:

The results show that there are more females than males who enrolled for Consumer Science Education.

The statistics show that the enrolment for males in Consumer Science Education level 4 who participated is 13 % and Females were 87%. Hlatjwayo (2017) found that although most educational leaders subscribe to the philosophy of equal opportunity for all, different educational provisions have traditionally existed in the pre-vocational areas for boys and girls in the majority of new sector schools, thus the enrolment of males to females who are to teach consumer sciences in the school will differ as historically Consumer Science is seen as a girls' subject. The problem of gender inequality in Consumer Sciences is not only a national concern but that of the whole world at large. Thus the misconception of Consumer Sciences as a woman's subject/course, as evidence of this gender gap is that the gender starts at home.

The home provides the child with first experience, these include the models with which the child can identify, the parents provides a range of materials for home play, there are also value system which are basic to special roles. The children quickly learn that the roles of men in the family are different from the role of women (Tshuma & Ndebele, 2015).

Region of TP:

Eswatini has four regions namely Manzini, Shiselweni, Lubombo and Hhohho region. The participants of the study were attached to all the four regions having the highest number of student teachers was Manzini and Shiselweni region with 7 student teachers in each region which resulted to Shiselweni and Manzini region having the same percentage. Lubombo region had 5 student teachers which was second and lastly was Hhohho region which had 4 student teachers which had the smallest number of the whole total number of student teachers.

Subjects taught during TP:

Subjects taught by student teachers differed and most

taught Consumer Science at junior level and Food and Nutrition at senior level in which a total of 10 student teachers taught these subjects, which resulted in 43% being the highest number. Those who taught Consumer Science and Fashion and Fabrics were 8 which was 34.8% and lastly were those who taught Food and Nutrition and fashion and fabrics who were 5, being 21.7% of the total number of student teachers. Zwane (1993) established that teachers have problems when teaching Fashion and Fabrics is that there is insufficient coverage of some techniques like drafting at the university, which is one reason student teachers might not choose to teach the subject compared to Food and Nutrition since they feel less competent. From the study many of the student teachers did Food and Nutrition in their high school days so it was easy for them to choose a subject they had learnt than Fashion and Fabrics they had not learn in high school. Hlatjwayo (2017) also found that the differential role of boys and girls constitute a serious problem to Fashion and Fabrics studies as it affects the male students from undertaking the course as males may think of this subject as female based subject. This subject involves practises like sewing so boys may think of it as a female course and may not be interested in enrolling in it. This is the reason why make student teachers are small compared to female student teachers.

Availability of teaching aids:

Results showed that 2 students were attached in schools where the resources were available which is (8. 7%). According to Bhebhe, Runhare and Monobe, 92015/ students placed in affluent schools articulated satisfaction with infrastructure, facilities and new technologies available to them. Students' believed that evaluators dealt inequitably with different school contexts and that the availability or lack of resources impacted profoundly on their teaching performance. Zwane (1993) found that when considering problems of teachers in classroom management, a major problem encountered by teachers was in sharing of classrooms with other classes.

Gender of cooperating teacher:

Majority of the student teachers cooperating teachers were females (21) which was 91.3% while those who were male cooperating teachers were (2) which was 8.7%. Dlamini (2012) points out that only female teachers were teaching Clothing and Textile in the 1990s which is now known as Fashion and Fabrics under

Consumer Sciences. Hlatjwayo (2017) found out that at the secondary level, it is very noticeable that male teachers predominate in certain subject areas, e.g. technical subjects, while female teachers predominate in the traditional academic areas. This encourages the image of particular subjects as masculine or feminine domains. She further stated that some teachers use gender stereotypes in the classroom for instructional purposes to control student behaviour.

Student teachers experience on mentoring:

The overall mean of student teachers experience during teaching practice was 2.37, which means that the overall experience was not a good one for the student teachers. The results show that cooperating teachers were not knowledgeable about UNESWA lesson plan format, Mpofu and Hove (2016) also found out that mentors want student teachers to plan in a way different from what they have been taught at college. Student teachers revealed that mentors had lesson plans in their minds. These results are consistent with those of Paker (2015) who also established that, mentors mostly do not have a written lesson plan. This means that cooperating teachers get to know their lesson plan format and tend to ignore learning UNESWA lesson plan format because they believe student teachers are going to use the one they know once we get employed by Government.

Adequate practical showed that student teachers had enough practical time, meaning that they could finish practicals in the allocated times but this is contrary to Dlamini (2014), whose findings were that practical subjects were found to be more time consuming and disturbed other subjects that followed after. The results also showed that students did fully participate in the classroom and this is supported by that when a student teacher is doing their TP students have the mentality that they are going to pass. According to Kerry (2000), students prefer subjects that are taught by teachers who are enthusiastic, well spoken, knowledgeable, caring, and helpful as opposed to instructors who are dry, inflexible, and unclear so if instructors are inflexible and clear, they are much likely to learn. Student teachers are said to have these above qualities as perceived by students in the schools.

Student teachers pointed out that their cooperating teachers did not assist in overall exercise and did not provide helpful feedback after class observations. This goes in line with student teachers need to be observed

more than two or three times and need to get detailed and constructive feedback to improve themselves professionally (Paker, 2015). The results of this study reveal that student teachers believed that they would improve in their teaching if they had been observed more and get feedback related that would help them in the process.

The study also portrayed that there were no relevant teaching aids and this is concurred by Moyo and Mumbengegwi (2008) as students did not having adequate money to buy teaching materials. Shortage of resources and materials consequently results in teaching large groups of students at the same time.

The study established that some mentors overloaded student teachers, while others did not have confidence in the student teachers and consequently they would not leave their classes in the student teachers' care. Others would not let student teachers teach at any time because they felt that student teachers were delaying and wasting learners' valuable time and they had to finish the syllabus before the end of the year. This resulted in the student teachers getting discouraged and experiencing feelings of inadequacy and loss of confidence in their ability to teach, (Akbar, 2013). However, the results from this study showed that student teachers were not taken as relief teachers. Student teachers disagreed that cooperating teachers had confidence towards them. Smith (2016) argued that time was the major factor for the successful implementation of mentoring and from the study student teachers agreed that the semester was adequate for gaining proper experience and this is supported by Mamba (2012) who found that teachers agreed that they gained adequate skills during teaching practice. The study also revealed that the schools were faced with financial and material shortage which affected their performance. Mukeredzi and Manwa (2019) state that student teachers echoed that some mentors exhibited unprofessional conduct and engaged in unprofessional acts like absenting themselves from duty, reporting late or sending pupils on personal errands even during lessons. Mpofu and Hove (2016) also found that it was evident that most students were used as relief teachers especially those attached to heads and deputy heads as they were more often occupied with administrative matters. However, other staff members showed support towards student teachers. The study also found that the student teachers slightly agreed that the cooperating teachers were always available. In one particular instance a student teacher

was left to take over a class without a mentor after the mentor went for vacation leave. This means that some mentors are not always available especially if mentor is on maternity leave or is part of the school administration like being the Principal or Deputy Head teacher.

Cooperating teachers' competences towards mentoring roles and responsibilities:

The finding of the study showed that cooperating teachers were always available and accessible. Student teachers agreed that cooperating teachers gave them freedom to try things and supported decisions they made. Bird and Hudson (2015) in their study found out that respondents did not get any support from the school based mentors, which is different from what the current study found.

The results found in this study indicated that the student teachers disagreed that their cooperating teachers helped them to plan lessons and activities and that they did not check lesson plans before every lesson, this is supported by Mpofu (2016) that some students had hard times with their mentors who were lazy and never demonstrated to them how to conduct lessons. Smith (2016) found that the mentor is not only a role model for teaching and learning but provides the mentee with constructive developmental feedback and from the study student teachers also slightly agreed that their cooperating teachers observed them and that they provided constructive feedback to them. Teaching involves many experiences, and student teachers are required to get involved in all aspects of the school (Black &Halliwell, 2002). Student teachers in the results of the study agreed that their cooperating teachers provided a variety of experiences for them and that they treated them as fellow professionals and involved them as part of the school staff. The majority of student teachers echoed this thought as they said they were not invited for staff meetings so they never knew what took place in the meetings.

Student teachers would like to be involved and attend those meetings because they believe that we can give some valuable input. The results also showed that cooperating teachers did share resources with student teachers and willing shared working space. They also provided suggestions for discipline when control problems arose and that they demonstrated effective teaching techniques to student teachers. Student teachers did not agree that cooperating teachers were their role models while according to Kristin, Sayeski and Paulsen (2018)

teachers are expected to be positive role models for their students, both inside and outside the classroom. Student teachers further agreed that cooperating teachers did not clarify their responsibilities.

The purpose of attaching students to mentors is so that they may coach the students and groom them. However, student teachers from the study said that their cooperating teachers did not clarify or provide clear expectations' from them. The overall study showed that cooperating teachers were competent in carrying out their responsibilities though some of their responsibilities and roles were not carried out efficiently.

Cooperating teachers' awareness on their roles and responsibilities of mentoring:

Cooperating teachers agreed that they were not familiar with the UNESWA lesson plan format. Mpofu and Hove (2016) argue that it is irrational to expect a teacher to commit to a role that has not been clearly defined. All cooperating teachers who participated in the study were able to use appropriate teaching strategies and teaching aids and were informed on classroom management. Since teachers admitted to not being familiar with UNESWA lesson plan format it became difficult for them to review student teachers lesson plan. Cooperating teachers also did not discuss evaluation and assessment for student teachers.

Students who had good mentors were well developed and performed quite well as cooperating teachers did share skills and experience to student teachers. Cooperating teachers were aware of the role of modelling effective teaching for student teachers to acquire the different style of teaching. A subject teacher plays a critical role in taming student choices as they take the role of guiding and supporting to improve teaching and learning.

Possible strategies for effective mentoring:

The study found that students should be strictly attached to full time qualified teachers so that mentoring would be beneficiary for student teacher. Mukeredzi and Manwa (2019) suggest that before and during each teaching practice session there should be thorough public relations groundwork undertaken by the institution in order to maintain good relations between the student teachers and all relevant role players. One respondent in Mpofu (2016) echoed that *"Students are very helpful especially for some of us who are always busy with administration duties"*. This shows the need for workshopping cooperating teachers on the importance of mentoring students teachers.

Studies on mentoring carried out in some provinces of Zimbabwe so far, established that some teachers were not aware of what the colleges expected from them as mentor teachers and as a result had challenges in effectively executing their TP mentoring roles (Maphosa & Ndamba, 2012). Thus the study found that there is need for workshops for cooperating teachers to enlighten them on how to assist student teachers, and Smith (2016) also stated that lack of formal policy on mentoring prevented process from being formally implemented at the schools.

Cooperating teachers should provide concrete and specific feedback to student teachers after a lesson, be it practical or theory lesson. Paker (2015) found that some cooperating teachers in his study have emphasized that they have been observed only once or twice. They believe that they would have improved their teaching more if they had been observed more because after each observation they got feedback related to their teaching and in this process they have become aware their strengths and weaknesses. Thus providing feedback is one of the effective strategies of mentoring.

Cooperating teachers must also be motivated to assist student teachers at all time so that their performance improves. Student teachers greed that it could be effective that school heads and deputies should supervise progress of cooperating teachers. Student teachers disagreed that teachers be allocated cooperating teachers assistant within the Consumer Science department.

Conclusion:

The study established that student teachers received adequate teaching practice as the semester period was long enough for them to gain knowledge and skills. However, many of them had a bad experience since the schools they carried out their TP had material and financial shortages that affected their practice. The study found that a number of cooperating teachers were not aware of their mentoring roles and responsibilities which made it difficult for them to execute their duties effectively and this was one major weakness of mentoring and one possible strategy suggested to improve mentoring was employing workshops for mentors so they are aware of their roles and responsibilities. It can be concluded from these results that student teachers had positive and

negative experiences from teaching practice which among the positive ones were empowered of their occupation and the negative ones hindered with their full potential growth. It is also worth noting that cooperating teachers' competence and awareness on mentoring can bring about best outcomes for student teachers as they would be exposed to all there is to learn while if cooperating teacher is not competence student teacher is likely to benefit nothing or very little skills and knowledge from mentoring.

Recommendations from the study:

Peer support should be encouraged during teaching practice. This means that teachers must be encouraged to work harmoniously with the students in giving advice, general assistance and mentoring. This will possibly inspire the student teachers as it eliminates the fear of the teaching practice environment by encouraging the culture of collegiality and togetherness. This will hopefully improve the attitudes of the student teachers, based on their experiences of teaching practice

Cooperating teachers should be workshopped by the University supervisors on how to execute their roles and responsibilities. Student teachers should invite their University supervisors if they experience any difficulties so they can explain to cooperating teachers of how they should assist student teacher so that they learn as expected.

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