Mentor and Mentee Conceptions on Mentor Roles and Qualities: A Case Study of Masvingo Teacher Training Colleges

By

[1]R.Ngara and [2]R.Ngwarai
[1]Department of Education, Zimbabwe Open University, Masvingo Region
[2]Department of Disability Studies & Special Needs Education
Zimbabwe Open University, Masvingo Region

Abstract

Mentoring has been increasingly recognized as a key strategy in professional training and development in education. In teacher training, mentoring may be regarded as a relationship and a process whose aim and purpose is to induct student teachers into the community of practice of teaching. It is a process in which professional support is given by and within school. The mentor role was that of an elder, trusted loyal friend, responsible for the growth and development of the protégé, whose characteristics were integrity, wisdom and personal involvement. However the notion of mentoring is not clear as it seems, considering how it is performed and there are challenges affecting mentoring. In Zimbabwe, in teacher education, mentoring is one of the Teaching Practice training strategies which is largely employed by schools in conjunction with teacher training colleges. A survey was conducted in Masvingo urban to determine mentor and mentee conceptions on mentor roles and mentor qualities in mentoring student teachers from two teachers' training colleges in Masvingo .The study established that there were some differences in the way roles and qualities of mentors were conceived by student teachers and the mentors but the key roles of an effective mentor were conceived as a guide and a helper in purely teaching matters. Opinions were divided on the assessor role of mentors but being highly knowledgeable about teaching children in the primary school, warm and being trustworthy were most commonly identified traits of effective mentors. The study recommended that workshops be run conjointly by training colleges and appointed school mentors so that mentors and colleges speak the same voice on mentor roles and qualities.

Keywords: *mentoring, mentor, mentee*

1. Introduction

For many years, in the history of teacher education, the training of teachers was the responsibility of teacher training institutions and the responsible ministry (Chakanyuka et al 2006). The major responsibility of schools was to provide vacancies for trainee teachers for specified periods of time. This practice was put in place with the understanding that student teachers had learnt the relevant theory at their training institutions. Nonetheless in the late seventies, trained teachers started to be involved in the supervision of student teachers who were on teaching practice. However at this juncture, practising teachers assumed a role which was not clearly defined and hazy in nature and degree (Chakanyuka et al 2006). Resultantly, there was some inconsistency and misunderstanding for both practising teacher and student teacher (McIntyre and Haggar 1994).

In the late eighties authorities like Wilkin (1990) quoted in McIntyre and Haggar (1994) were of the opinion that theory acquired at college or universities was not only unhelpful but also dangerously misleading. So there was some strong advocacy for trainee teacher learning to take place under the care of practising teachers who were experienced. The general understanding was that experienced practising teachers know the reality and situations in schools and should be treated as partners in teacher training (Chakanyuka et al 2006: 16). There are several benefits that are derived from mentoring. Mentoring has become a central strategy because it embraces a philosophy about people and how important they are to educational programmes and teaching practice in particular (Mukeredzi and Ndamba 2005). Mentoring promotes professional growth. Not only are student teachers empowered by the mentoring process but mentors also feel renewed through collaboration and advocacy for collegiality (Chakanyuka et al 2006 :18). This study was conducted in Masvingo urban to determine mentor and mentee conceptions on mentor roles and mentor qualities in mentoring student teachers from two teachers training colleges in Masvingo .

2.   Background to the study

When Zimbabwe attained political independence, there was massive expansion in education as the government adopted an education for all policy. This development led to the introduction of the Zimbabwe Integrated National Teacher Education Course (ZINTEC) in some of the Zimbabwe teacher training colleges. In this mode of training, after the first 16- week residential course which was intended to equip students with basic teaching skills, students were deployed in the schools for up to three and half years. During this period, students were given distance education materials, vocational courses, seminars and written assignments to beef up trainee teachers' content in Theory of Education and primary school curriculum teaching subjects. However at this stage, the place of mentoring was not clearly defined to the trainee teachers and qualified teachers.

Since 1995, however, all teacher training colleges are under the associateship status with the University of Zimbabwe and the Department of Teacher Education is directly responsible for this association. Initially, student teachers were attached to qualified teachers following a 3-3-3 model. However, currently there is the 2-5-2 model which entails more time for student teachers to be under the guidance of mentors.

Thus, in Zimbabwe, teacher training embraces the notion of school-based practical teaching as a way to practically introduce the trainee teacher to the teaching profession. Mentors are key helpers in this regard but for mentors to mentor student teachers effectively they need certain skills and characteristics but some of the mentors may not have requisite skills and qualities and may not even have knowledge of such. In addition, roles of mentors are not always clear cut and there maybe challenges faced by mentors in mentoring student teachers. It was against this background that this study was conducted.

Statement of the Problem
It seems the notion of mentoring is not clear, considering how it is performed and there are challenges affecting mentoring. The searching question in the minds of the researchers was, 'What skills and roles are critical to effective mentoring in teacher training?'

Research Questions
The study was guided by the following questions:
- What are the personal mentor qualities required for successful professional mentoring of trainee teachers?
- What are the critical roles mentors should perform in mentoring student teachers on teaching practice?
- What challenges do mentors face in mentoring teacher trainees that could affect their work?
- What improvements are needed in trying to make mentoring of student teachers more effective?

Significance of the study
It was hoped that mentors could use the study as a platform to reflect on their practices and that mentoring-linked challenges could be addressed through efforts at schools where student teachers are attached for teaching practice and efforts of teacher training colleges. It was also hoped that insights gained through the study might stimulate further study.

3. Research Methodology

Design
The qualitative design was employed to conduct the study. The study sought to establish mentor and mentee conceptions on mentor roles and qualities in mentoring student teachers. Babbie (1997) is of the view that surveys are appropriate where perceptions and views of subjects of a research are sought. The study was a case of mentees and mentors at some Masvingo urban primary schools.

Sample
All the primary schools in Masvingo city where student teachers from two selected teacher training colleges (one government and another run by a church organisation) were on Teaching Practice made up part of the population as well as all mentors of these student teachers. Only three schools were chosen by convenience sampling. The schools easily accessible to the researchers were sampled for participation. All in all ten pairs of mentors and mentees were sampled for completion of questionnaire again by convenience sampling. Pairs of mentors and mentees which easily presented themselves were taken for participation. In choosing the participants, there was deliberate effort to make sure that there was a mentee representing each of the two selected teacher training colleges in Masvingo. Only five pairs of mentors and mentees were chosen for interviewing i.e. one pair from each sampled school. All in all thirty participants took part in the study.

Instruments
The researchers used questionnaires which were self administered. The questionnaire had a section with statements on some probable qualities and roles of mentors of student teachers on teaching practice and mentors and mentees were requested to indicate the degree to which they agreed or disagreed with each of the statements, making their choices on Strongly Agree, Agree, Neutral and Disagree and Strongly Disagree continuum. In addition, a structured interview schedule was also used to obtain mentee and mentor opinions on qualities and roles of effective mentors. The use of the questionnaire and interviews enhanced methodology triangulation and some of the demerits of the questionnaire, such as being not able to probe responses, were minimised through the use of interviews.

Data Presentation and Analysis
Data were presented qualitatively using thick descriptions. Some tables and figures were used to aid researchers to present data. Data were organised according to research questions in the mind of the researchers.

Limitations
Since the study was just a case study of Masvingo urban schools and teacher training colleges, findings cannot be generalised to other schools and other colleges elsewhere although the picture maybe a replica of what obtains in the minds of mentees and mentors operating elsewhere in teacher education.
Theoretical Framework
The concept of mentoring has its roots in the Greek Mythology in the writings of Homer in Odyssey. When Odyssey King of Ithaca went to fight the Trojan War, he left the care of his household to his old and trusted friend "Mentor". Mentor acted as a teacher and care-giver to Telemachos, Odyssey's son, (Shea 1997 cited in Rawlings 2002).

Mentoring can be defined as a developmental relationship in which a more experienced or a more knowledgeable person is paired with a less experienced or knowledgeable person to help him or her to develop professional expertise (www.slidesharenet.com).

Mentoring concerns with the building of a dynamic relationship in which the personal characteristics, philosophies and priorities of the individual members interact to influence, in turn, the nature, direction and duration of the resulting eventual relationship, (Cooper and Palmer 2000; 39).

Using ideas from the above given definitions, mentoring can be viewed as a human relationship where one person (the mentor) invests energy, time and personal know-how by offering help, guidance, advice and support to assist the other person (mentee) to acquire skills and knowledge relevant to their career or professional development.

Purpose of Mentoring
Mentoring serves quite a number of purposes of which some of the key ones are; skills enhancement through advancing the personal and educational growth of mentee and bridging the gap between theory and practice. Formal training is complemented by knowledge and the hands –on- experience of competent practitioner. Cultivating right attitudes, nurturing the mentee in self-sufficiency and facilitating the mentee in becoming a colleague are other purposes of mentoring in teacher education.

Mentees can benefit in a variety of ways through mentoring. Gaining professional identity as s/he is socialised to the organisation, gaining professional and personal development, new networks and some knowledge to become future mentors are some ways by which mentees can benefit,(Shea and Gordon 1997 and Marten-Cooper et al 2000).

Some of the benefits which mentors can derive from mentoring include gaining personal satisfaction from enriching mentee's experience through leadership development, enhancing skills such as coaching and provision of feedback, gaining exposure to new and different thinking styles, new networks, knowledge and perspectives, and adaptability within the organisation, (Brown M.E and Marten-Cooper et al 2000 and Chakanyuka et al 2006).

Some Models of Mentoring

The Apprenticeship Model
In this model, the mentee is expected to work alongside the mentor and emulate the experienced practitioner/s. The mentee's practices are under guidance and are supervised, (Furlang and Maynard 1995).This is the stage at which the mentee's task is to fit into the school and classroom routines,(Calderhead 1987 in Chakanyuka et al 2006).

The Competency Model
In this model, learning to teach involves practical training on a list of pre-defined competencies, involving coaching on agreed behaviours, (Furlang and Maynard 1995 and Chakanyuka et al 2006).

The Reflective Model
This model involves support from the mentor, achieving basic competencies and achieving on teaching and a shift in focus to children's learning. It involves meaningful reflection on procedures or activities for the purposes of identifying of flaws or weaknesses, strengths and trying to offer explanations for success or otherwise. Reflection is meant to help chart the way forward after some activity.
While these models have each a distinctive characteristic, in practice they compliment each other. According to Chakanyuka et al (2006),the features largely depend on the stage at which a trainee teacher

is during teaching practice and knowledge of these models in mentoring trainee teachers is important in determining the sort of assistance and support student teachers should get from their mentors.

Some Mentoring Processes

Beginning teaching is a critical activity in the mentoring of trainee teachers. In this activity, mentee's professional knowledge develops through copying the established routines and teaching strategies of their mentors. The mentee is learning to become some authority figure and seeks to copy ways of effectively managing the class and didactic environment. In this process the mentor is expected to influence the mentee by setting a good example. The mentee can communicate his/her experiences and challenges as mentor. Next is the activity of mentee observation and collaborative teaching. This is a key activity as mentee can learn through observation and also some practical teaching helps the mentee to put into practice theories that relate to teaching. Supervised teaching is the other activity in mentoring. When mentees teach they need supervision and if properly conducted supervised teaching promotes reflection and proper action. This process involves observation, systematic observation and feedback, (http:hrapps.fsu.edu/mentor). It involves provision of direction of resources, suggesting ways of advancing mentee's growth and provision of effective feedback.

Roles of a Mentor

Roles of a mentor are many but only a few will be considered. These roles tend to overlap. Being a teacher is probably the commonest role and it is characterised by answering questions and training or coaching in specific skills. This role enhances mentee's skills and intellectual development,(www.slidesharenet.com). This role entails that the mentor must be an expert, if the mentee is to benefit from the performance of this role by the mentor. The mentor shares with mentee information on unwritten rules of success in the profession.

The role of the mentor-counsellor is to help the person they are working with to make a sense of the world around them in their own terms. A good counsellor is able to identify the points at which decisions they made in the past affected their current or future and then share their knowledge with mentee, (www.londonnet.ac.uk|rtp). The mentor ought to be exemplary in all processes of mentoring, Allen (2002). The role model should ensure that their protégé emulates the very best characteristics for positive change or development. This should be handled with caution because this is the role that is most likely to result in dependency on the mentee.One of the roles of the mentor is helping the mentee to establish necessary contacts and networks with key individuals' and groups within an organisation. As a networker, the mentor's task is also to direct mentee to appropriate individuals to give them support on specific issues, (Marten-Cooper and Palmer 2000).An effective mentor empowers the student teacher.The mentor should let mentee know that they are valuable and valued so that they can feel safe, liked and respected. This way a mentee can feel connected with others. When a mentor empowers their mentee, they are not just influencing the mentee but also other people and peers. It is important for mentor to serve as an advocate for mentee whenever opportunity presents itself. In this regard it is also important to expand the mentee's network of contacts. This way a mentor naturally becomes a motivator to the mentee, (http: www.leadershipnow.com leading blog/2009/05).A mentor is a friend of the student teacher.Mentee and mentor will most certainly become friends, may be lifetime friends because they share much of their journey together, both learning along the way (www.southernct.edu/departments/i/s). As a friend, a mentor would naturally stand by their mentees in critical situations, provide growth experiences, offer wise counsel, and encourage winning behaviour, (Shea and Gordon 1997).

According to, (https://hrapps.fsu.edu/mentor/mentoring_guidelines.pdf) Michael Zey says, roles of a mentor are not necessarily used on the same day or in the same relationship but are dependent upon needs of the mentee, as well as the mentor's own preferred style or skill.

Roles of a mentee

While a mentee receives mentoring s/he also has some roles to preform which may influence the way a mentor performs her/his roles. Mentee roles cited below may be mentor roles also. One of the roles of a mentee is being a development planner. A wise mentee maintains a mentoring plan and works with mentor to set up goals developmental activities and timeframes. A mentee is also a teacher and should look for opportunity to give back information to their mentor, share any information that they think might be valuable such as goal getting, management of time/resources and resolving conflicts, (Mentoring Training Manual, Lincoln Public School). As one is striving to develop skills necessary, a mentee is a continuous learner in a mentoring relationship.

Attributes of Mentors

According to Mary E. Brown, (http:www.soputhernct.edu/departments/i/s and Chakanyuka et al 2006) there are several attributes of a good mentor.A good mentor is open-minded – accepting mentee as they are and remaining objective, understanding, co-operating, approachable and open. An effective mentor has mutual respect and trust, good interpersonal and communication skills, and has openness to learning.(http://interships.about.com/od/networking/afin).

Some characteristics which any mentor needs to avoid include; being rigid or a blocker, a dumper and a criticiser (Heirs and Farrell 1986).

Some Hindrances to Mentoring

Disabling traits of individuals, lack of time to achieve optimum mentor supervision, problems of role conflict and of a mentor, lack of preparation of the mentor to perform the role are some of major hindrances to mentoring,(Heirs and Farrell 1986).

The conceptual framework considered in this section was viewed as related to the study which hinged on the aspects of roles and good qualities of a mentor as perceived by mentors and mentees in teacher training and this conceptual framework also helped in informing the researchers about issues linked to the study.

3. Literature Review

Several studies have been conducted on mentoring. In their study, Hagger, Burn and McIntyre (1993), found out that one of the critical roles of a mentor is being a role model as student teachers gain in a vast of ways as they observe the mentor. They established that trainee teachers learn how to monitor and assess pupils' learning and progress; they acquire some idea of the standard of teaching expected of them, among other benefits, as they observe experienced teachers. A study conducted by Moran and Dallat (1995) referred to by Chakanyuka et al (2006) established that mentors were unwilling to assess teacher trainees because the role of assessor appeared to contradict the supporting role of the mentor. In her study, Chakanyuka (2003) found out that mentors did not give honest assessments as they felt that in doing so they would destroy the mentee's confidence. Ndamba and Mukeredzi (2005) in their study established that the student teacher viewed mentoring as effective as the mentor was available to give on spot guidance, support and supervision unlike university lecturers who were often in a hurry either to go back or to visit another student at some other school.While findings of these researchers are related to the objectives of the study,the studies did not focus on conceptions of mentors and mentee perceptions of mentor roles and qualities per se as is the purpose of this current study.

4. Data Presentation

Questionnaire data

Responses to the questionnaire were summarised in Table.1

Mentor and Mentee Conceptions on Mentor Roles and Qualities: A Case Study of Masvingo Teacher Training Colleges

Table.1 Mentor and mentee responses to statements in the questionnaire

Opinion	Agree (N)	%	Neutral (N)	%	Disagree (N)	%
1.A mentor is a teacher to the mentee	18	90	0	0	2	10
2.S/he is a guide to the mentee	20	100	0	0	0	0
3.S/he is a coach to mentee	18	90	2	10	0	0
4.S/he is a counsellor to the mentee	20	100	0	0	0	0
5.S/he is an adviser to mentee	20	100	0	0	0	0
6.S/he is a role model to the mentee	18	90	0	0	2	10
7.A mentor is a friend to the mentee	14	70	1	5	5	25
8.S/he is a networker for the mentee	14	70	6	30	0	0
9.S/he is a resource facilitator to mentee	14	70	3	15	3	15
10.A mentor is an assessor of the mentee	10	50	1	5	9	45
11.A good mentor seeks to empower the student teacher	20	100	0	0	0	0
12.S/he gives constant, meaningful feedback to the student teacher	19	95	0	0	1	5
13.An effective mentor mutually respects mentee	17	85	3	15	0	0
14.S/he shares mutually information with mentee	15	75	4	20	*	
15.S/he is approachable	20	100	0	0	0	0
16.S/he is open to learning	20	100	0	0	0	0
17.S/he communicates constantly and clearly with mentee	20	100	0	0	0	0
18.S/he is a good listener to mentee	20	100	0	0	0	0
19.S/he encourages mentee`s self directed reflection	17	85	2	10	1	5
20.Stands by mentee in critical situations	17	85	3	15	0	0
21.S/he confronts negative behaviour by mentee	15	75	4	20	1	5
22.Is knowledgeable of the teaching profession	20	100	0	0	0	0
23.Is not rigid or a blocker	17	85	3	15	0	0
24.Is trusted	18	90	2	10	0	0
25.Is ethical	18	90	2	10	0	0
26.S/he focuses on needs of mentee	16	80	2	10	*	

There was 100% return rate of questionnaires and 100% responses to all questionnaires except questions 14 and 26 which were not answered by one participant in each case. According to table 1, all the twenty participants viewed roles of a guide, counsellor and adviser as being critical in the work of a mentor of a student teacher who is on Teaching Practice. 95% of the participants were in agreement with the opinion that being a giver of constant and meaningful feedback to the mentee was one of the critical roles of a mentor. 18 out of the twenty participants (90%), were of the opinion that performing the role of teacher, coach and being role model was key in the work of the mentor of a student teacher. Opinions were rather mixed on whether a mentor should be a friend to the mentee, networker for mentee, resource facilitator to mentee and assessor of the mentee. Only ten (50%) were the view that a mentor is an assessor to the student.

All the participants (100%), were of the view that effective mentors were having attributes such as being approachable, open to learning, communicating constantly and clearly with mentee. They also pointed out qualities such as being a good listener to mentee, knowledgeable of the teaching profession and seeking to empower the student teacher.18 out of 20 participants viewed the following attributes as critical to the mentoring role of mentors in teacher training. A good mentor should be trusted and ethical.

However, the other two did not view being trusted and ethical as important qualities of mentors of student teachers.17 out of 20 participants felt that effective mentors should have mutual respect for mentee. They should stands by mentee in critical situations. They should not be rigid or a blocker. Fifteen (15) out of the twenty participants (75%) were in agreement with the opinions that they should confront negative behaviour by mentee. They should be in a position to share mutually information with mentee.

Interview Data
Interview questions were meant to gather participants' view points on desirable and undesirable qualities of mentors of student teachers and participants' opinions on roles that should be performed and not performed by mentors.

Q1.In your opinions, which are the two most critical roles mentors, should perform in mentoring student teachers on teaching practice? Why?

Table.2 Participants' views on most critical roles to be performed by mentor

Stated role	Frequency
Monitor of student teacher's progress	**5**
Advisor of trainee teacher	4
Provider of suitable feedback	2
Assessor of student teacher	3
Coach of student teacher	3
A constant learner	2
Empowering student with knowledge and resources	1

Fig.1 Participants' views on most critical roles to be performed by mentor
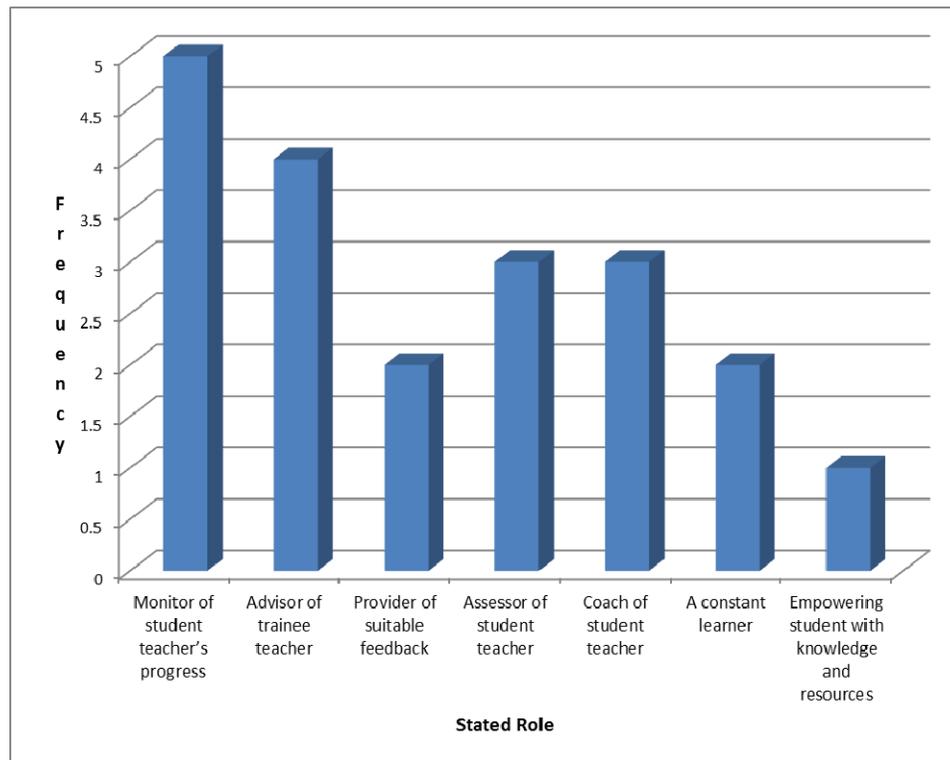
The mentor role most frequently stated is that of being a monitor of student teacher, followed by the roles of an advisor, assessor and coach respectively. Empowering student with knowledge and resources was stated only once. Participants were further requested to give reasons for their opinions. For instance, according to one respondent, to help a student teacher develop critical skills in teaching constant monitoring of the activities and progress of the student teacher in all aspects including planning, teaching and marking of pupils' work is an important role of the mentor. In their responses, most participants made reference to mentors' experience that would help them coach students and provide suitable feedback to the trainee teachers.

Q.2.In your view, which roles should not be performed by a mentor? What are the reasons for your opinion?

Responses by interviewees to the question were as is represented in table 3 and fig.2.

Table.3 Participants' views on roles not to be performed by mentor

Role not to be performed	Frequency
Not to be friends with mentee	3
A restrictor of student teacher activities	2
A teacher of student teacher as regards lesson planning and scheming	4
An abandoner of most duties	4
Having intimate relationship with student teacher	3
A critic of student teacher	3
Spoon feeding mentee	1

Fig.2 Participants' views on roles not to be performed by mentor

469
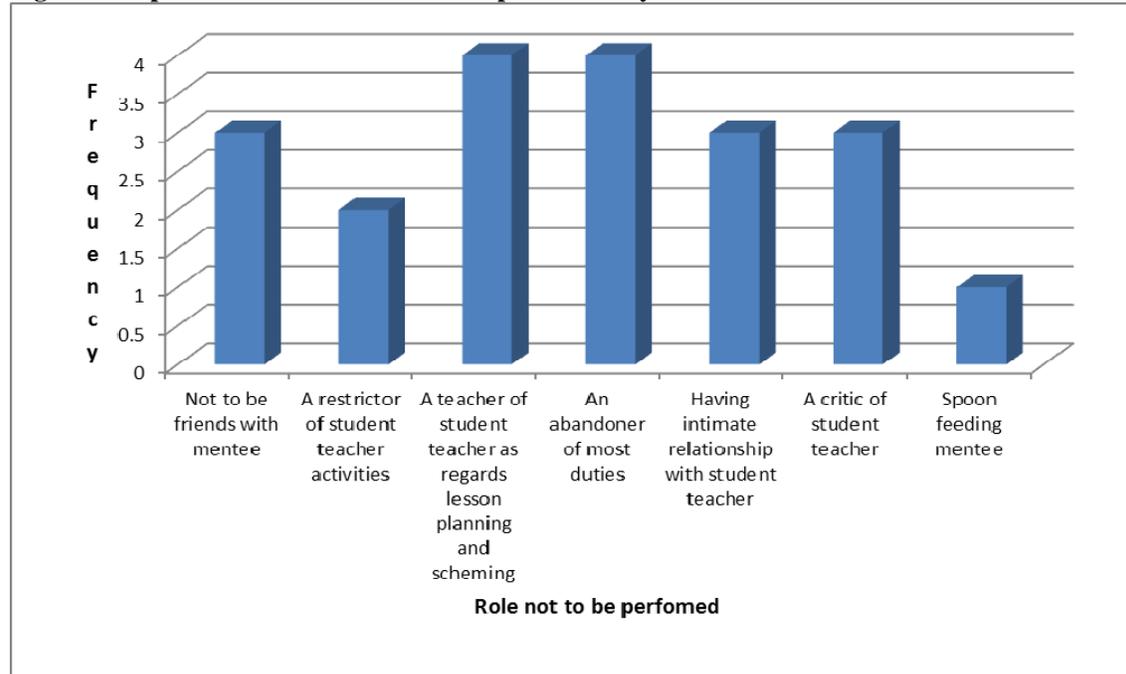
The role which was cited most which participants viewed as undesirable was teaching student teacher how to scheme and to plan for a lesson. The least cited role was being a restrictor of student teacher activities. Reasons were given for each response and they were considered under the discussion on findings.

Q.3 State any two characteristics desirable in a mentor. Why do you think these are important?
Some of the stated desirable characteristics were being a good listener, humble, honest, hardworking, flexible, approachable, open, knowledgeable and preparedness.

Q.4 In your opinion which are the two most undesirable characteristics of a mentor of a student teacher? Give reasons for your response.
The undesirable characteristics cited by participants included the following: failure to trust mentee, being disrespectful to mentee, uncooperative, unapproachable, uncommunicative, being rigid, inattentive to student teacher's problems, being rude and not knowledgeable of teaching profession.

Q.4 What challenges do you sometimes face in mentoring student teachers or being a mentee?

The following challenges were stated by mentors:
- Confronting negative behaviour of a mentee
- Being looked down by mentee
- Lack of preparation of the mentor to perform the role
- Mentoring a lazy and uncooperative mentee and mentee who has no interest in the teaching profession
- Mentoring a student from a college whose requirements change from lecturer to lecturer
- Lack of training college's guidelines on proper assessment of trainees
- Insubordination displayed by mentee - some full of I know it all attitude.
  Only two mentees responded to the question and stated the following:
- Being a mentee to a mentor who discourages mentee' self- directed reflection
- A mentor who over-supervises student and does not effectively empower the student
- Role conflict with mentor

5. Discussion

What are the critical roles mentors should perform in mentoring students on Teaching Practice?
Responses to the questionnaire indicated that all twenty (100%) of the participants were of the mind that being a guide, counsellor, adviser and empowering the mentee were critical roles of a mentor of trainee teachers. These views support ideas by www.londonnet.ac.uk and Marten – Cooper and Palmer (2000) who view these roles as critical to the work of a mentor. These views link quite clearly with principles of models of mentoring and the three stages through which mentee go through,namely,fitting in, survival and exploring, (Calderhead 1987 in Chakanyuka et al 2006). Without proper guidance, counselling and mentor networking, the learning of the mentee about nitty gritties of the teaching profession would be difficult. In line with views expressed in the questionnaire, in the interview five participants regarded the role of a mentor as that of monitoring mentee`s progress and being a coach to the mentee and these contribute to empowering the students. The role of being a constant giver of feedback was viewed by 95% of the participants who completed the questionnaire as critical. In the interview, two participants cited being a provider of feedback as one of the key roles of a mentor. Two of the interviewees` responses explained the critical role of feedback in teaching and also in teacher training. According to them, feedback would help the mentee to be aware of the areas of achievement and areas needing improvement. 90% of the participants who filled out the questionnaire considered of those who filled out the questionnaire were of the opinion that being a role model was another important role of mentors of student teachers, while 80% were of the opinion that focusing on the mentee needs was a critical role of a mentor. 75% regarded confronting negative behaviour by mentees as critical in mentoring student

teachers. However the other 25% of those who filled out the questionnaire were of a different opinion. Differences in opinion could be attributed to strategies employed in confronting undesirable behaviour or the likely consequences of such moves. 85 % were of the opinion that encouraging mentee`s self directed reflection, and standing by mentee in critical situations were other roles of mentors. These opinions link well with views by 70% of the participants who were of the opinion that being a friend and networker for mentee and resource facilitator were important roles of the mentor. Somehow, views were a bit divided here, maybe those whose opinion that being friend was one of the roles of a mentor may hold views similar to Shea and Gordon (1997) who say that as a friend, a mentor would naturally stand by their mentee in situations of trouble and provide growth experiences and offer wise counsel and encourage becoming behaviour. 30% of those who completed the questionnaire were of the view that a mentor should not be a friend of the mentee and the same view was held by three participants in the interview who said that a mentor should not be friends with mentee and should not have intimate relationship with mentee. According to the words of one participant, "It is health for mentor to maintain some reasonable distance between them and mentee, as the mentee is a student to the mentor." 50% of the participants who completed the questionnaire expressed the opinion that being an assessor of the mentee is one of the roles of a mentor and this opinion was expressed by three participants in the interview. Many differences in opinions on this role could be attributed to notions of assessment held by participants, especially the assessment involving scoring and grading of student teacher.These diverse views are linked to the study by Chakanyuka (2003)that some mentors did not give honest assessments as they felt that they would destroy mentees' self –esteem if they gave them failing marks. In the interview, participants were asked to state some roles which mentors should not perform and among them were: spoon feeding mentee, being a teacher of student teachers as regards lesson planning and scheming and being a restrictor of the mentee`s activities. Maybe some participants felt that basic principles of planning should be thoroughly covered at college and the tutor should just help students to develop in the area of planning. Another mentor role which was pointed out by two interviewees is that of being a constant learner. According to one participant, learning is ever an on going activity and so in mentoring, mentors should learn continuously about mentoring and learn from students. This general view is also in support with Morten – Cooper and Palmer (2000) who view being a constant learner as one of the roles of mentor.

What are personal mentor qualities for successful professional mentoring of trainee teachers?

In the response to the questionnaire 100% of the participants expressed the mind that an effective mentor should be approachable, open to learning, communicating effectively, a good listener, flexible and knowledgeable of the teaching profession. 90% felt that a mentor is trusted, ethical and focus on needs of mentee. These attributes were also stated by interviewees as necessary in a mentor and in addition to these those who were interviewed were of the opinion that being humble and honest and hard working were critical mentor attributes. Just to get further clarification, those interviewed were asked to state some undesirable attributes in a mentor and the bulk gave opposites of the above stated such as being uncommunicative, insensitivity to mentee needs and being untactful. Some elaborations were sought on some views. Some two participants felt it was unbecoming for mentor to correct mentee in the presence of children / pupils. Most of the mentor attributes perceived as important are in line with Mary, E. Brown`s ideas assessed from http: www.southernct.edu/departments/i/s.

What challenges do mentors face in mentoring student teachers?

According to participants who were interviewed, there were some challenges faced by mentors. This question was answered by the five mentors only. Two out of five were expressed the opinion that some mentees would have no knowledge on principles of planning, some mentees are not cooperative and that some mentees are lazy. Four of the mentors felt that mentoring a student from a college whose requirements change from time to time, and lack of training college's guidelines on proper assessment on trainees were some of the challenges mentors faced. Some of these perceived problems by the participants seem to support views by Heirs and Farrell (1986) who say hindrances to mentoring hinge on problems of role conflict and lack of preparation of the mentor to perform roles. In Zimbabwe, however

some of these challenges could be attributed to the economic hardships the country was facing during the time the study was conducted.

6. Conclusions

The roles of an effective mentor were viewed as many and among those viewed as critical were being a counsellor, guide, adviser, role model, empowering the mentee and provider of constant feedback. There were however mixed opinions on whether a mentor should be an assessor of student (assigning scores on performance), a friend to the mentee and a networker for mentee. Among the most acknowledged attributes of a mentor were: being knowledgeable of the teaching profession and teaching in the primary school, having wisdom, being warm, approachable and ethical .Some undesirable attributes of mentors were also stated and some of them were being unknowledgeable of the profession, uncommunicative and unapproachable.   Challenges facing mentors and mentees in the processes of mentoring and being mentored were: disabling traits of individual, lack of time to achieve optimum mentor supervision, problems of role conflict and lack of preparation of the mentor to perform the role.

7. Recommendations

The researchers recommend the following:
* Running of workshops conjointly by training colleges and appointed school mentors so that mentors and colleges speak the same voice on mentor roles and qualities,
* Shedding of more light to student teachers as regards their status and behaviour towards mentors and
* Conducting of similar surveys on a wider scale.

References

Allen,S.L (2002). 'Mentoring-The essential connection,' *AORN Journal* 75 (3) 440-446.

Babbie, E.A. (1997). The Practices of Social Research.New York :NY.Wadsworth

Chakanyuka, S, C. (2002). (Unpublished D Phil Thesis) Mentoring Preservice Primary Teacher Training Students of Masvingo Teachers' College, Zimbabwe, A Case Study: Falner, University of Sussex.

Chakanyuka, S, Nyuke, L.S.T and Mukeredzi, T.G (2006).Mentoring in Education (Bachelor of Education ECD). Zimbabwe Open University. Harare .

Jones, M, Nettelton, P and Smith L (2005).The mentoring chameleon –a critical analysis of mentors' and mentees' perceptions of the mentoring role in professional education and training programmes for teachers, nurses, midwives and doctors, accessed 03/01/2011 from www.leeds.ac.uk/educol/documents/143672.htm

McIntyre, D and Haggar, N (1994). An introduction to Primary Mentoring, London :Richwood Books.

Morth-Cooper, A and Palmer, A (2000). Mentoring Preceptor ship and Clinical Supervision:A guide to Professional Support Roles in Clinical Practice 2nd. Ed.Great Britian.Oxford.The Aldern Press.

Mukeredzi, T.G and Ndamba, G.T. (2005). Post Graduate Diploma in Education (PGDE) Students Perceptions Towards Mentoring A Case of Two Regional Centres of Zimbabwe Open Distance Learning. *International Journal of Open and Distance Learning* (2) 19-25.

Rawlings,M (2002). "What is mentoring ?". Briefing paper June 2002.

Shea, J and Gordon, F (1997). Mentoring. Rev. ed Menlo Park CA: Crisp Puplicatons in www.hr.emary.edu/eu/employeestoolkit/.../history.htm/-caces

Salis, A (2004). The Role of Mentoring in Teacher Quality and Retention. IDRA Newsletter, June-July, http://www.idra.org/Newslttr/2004/JuneAdelahtm#Art 4 accessed 15/02/2011

Websites

http://internships.about.com/od/networking/a fin.Top 10 Qualities of a Good mentor.Penny Loretto accessed 01/01/2011

http:/www.southernct.edu/departments/i/s Mentoring/CoachingGide by Mary E. Brown. accessed 02/02/2011

https.hrapps.fsu.edu/mentor.Diverse Leadership Mentoring program accessed 20/03/2011.

https://hrapps.fsu.edu/mentor/mentoring_guideines.pdfprofesssional expertise.Michael Zey,The Mentor Connection accessed 21/04/2011

http://www.londonmet.ac.uk/rtp/roles/the mentor-rolehome.cfm.accessed 04/03/2011.

http://www.laedrshipnow.com/leadingblog/2009/05/the_four_roles_of_mentoring.htm/04/03/2011.

www.slideshore.net/narticle.The many tutor roles accessed 27/05/2011.

www.canterbury.ac.uk/education/tf....Furlong,J accessed 27/05/2011.

www.docstoc.com/docs/./bm-nurse-mentor-info.pack22March2010-Heirs and Farrell[1986]Mentor Information Pack by Casilda Cannon accessed 22/04/2011