MENTORING IN PRE-SERVICE TEACHER EDUCATION: THE CASE OF A DEVELOPING COUNTRY, KENYA

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The subject of teacher mentoring has attracted worldwide attention in recent times. This paper presents an account of a pre-service teacher-mentoring project undertaken in Kenya through a partnership of Kenyatta University, Kenya and Syracuse University, USA. The purpose of the study was to understand the effectiveness of the collaborative mentoring model on pre-service teacher training. The implementation of the project employed an evaluative survey design evaluating the mentoring process. Findings from the study indicated that the collaborative mentoring has the capacity to enhance teacher development at the pre-service level. However, there is no policy at the university or national level to guide the implementation of mentoring in teacher education. The paper recommends the establishment of a policy on teacher mentoring in pre-service teacher education at university and national levels. Such a policy could address aspects such as the roles of each participant in the mentoring process.

Introduction

Teachers are central to national development. They are an important resource in the teaching/learning process and their training and utilization therefore requires critical consideration. The government programmes for teacher education aim at providing qualified teachers and are, therefore, central to ensuring the provision of quality education. The objectives of teacher education programmes aim at developing communication skills, professional attitudes and values that equip teachers with the knowledge and ability to identify and develop the educational needs of the child (Task Force on Education, 2012). The teaching process demands designing and implementing deliberate plans to achieve intended objectives. To do so one has to consciously and carefully select appropriate content, resources and instructional strategies that seek to attain the desired outcomes. Such a task can be daunting especially to the novice teachers graduating from colleges and universities and those on training practicum. There is therefore a need to put into place a mechanism for guiding trainees and also inducting novice teachers into the teaching profession. Thus, by definition, such a programme would have to be a mentoring one in which the novice is assisted to settle into the teaching career with relative ease.

The majority of secondary school teachers are trained at public universities and diploma colleges and are required to have specialized in two teaching subjects upon graduation. Currently, the class sizes in universities are too large for lecturers to pay special attention to specific methodology and therefore the quality of the teacher is often compromised. In order to improve the quality of the teachers graduating out of our universities, it is imperative that the secondary school teacher training programme is restructured to enable the trainees acquire sufficient subject mastery and pedagogy.

Mentoring is the establishment of a personal relationship for the purpose of professional instruction and guidance. In education, mentoring programmes are implemented for pre-service teacher induction and continuing teacher development. Mentoring provides mentors with the opportunity to impart their knowledge and experience and reflect on their own journey.
Statement of the Problem

In Kenya, as in other countries throughout the world, there are regular pre-service teacher training programmes that comprise theory and practical components. This practice is faithfully implemented continually without due regard to how the graduates leaving universities and other tertiary educational institutions each year transition into their professional career. For a novice secondary school teacher, this transition can be mired by challenges such as the interpretation of the curriculum, selection and/or designing of instructional resources, planning for teaching, appropriate implementation of teaching plans and evaluation of teaching effectiveness. Such novice teachers need structured guidance to enable them to gain deeper understanding of the functioning of the school and the teaching process. It is our considered view that pre-service teachers should receive induction into the profession during their Teaching Practice (TP) otherwise referred to as Practicum. Such induction can take the form of teacher mentoring which is a necessary process for all teachers preparing to enter into the teaching profession in order to ensure that their practice is firmly anchored on professional ethics and practice. Since there is no officially functional system of inducting pre-service teachers in Kenya, there is need for establishing a firm, official mechanism of anchoring such teachers on sound functional professional base so as to, in turn, ensure acceptable learner development in the institutions that these graduating teachers will be posted to. This is the basic reason for developing a professional pre-service teacher-mentoring programme for Kenya. Many teacher-training institutions in developing countries are beginning to explore other effective ways of teacher professional development. Teacher mentoring programmes, the world over, are increasingly getting perceived as an effective form of development for beginning or training teachers. The significance of mentoring for beginning teachers has been gaining wide recognition in developed countries (Pungur, 2007) but it is still at a slow formative stage in developing countries. However, as attention continues to be focused on teachers as a key factor in educational reform, and on their need for on-going improvement and support, teacher mentoring becomes a viable option in education policy.

Objectives of the Research Project

This paper examines how secondary school pre-service teacher training can be enhanced through a structured mentorship programme. It attempts to respond to the following questions as regards the role of veteran teachers in the provision of quality teacher preparation: What are the different ways in which pre-service teachers are inducted into the teaching profession? What role can the practicing teacher play in inducting the new teacher into the profession? (These questions highlight teachers’ expected roles and missions within the education system). What is the effect of mentoring on student teachers? By analysing 3rd and final year student teachers’ induction into the teaching profession through a mentoring programme, we aimed to understand the effect of mentoring on teacher training.

Teacher Mentoring

In education a mentor is an experienced and a trained teacher who guides a teacher on practicum or a novice on professional matters. It is, therefore, important that a mentor is a teacher with experience and should have gone through some relevant training. Teacher mentoring can be a valuable process in educational reform for beginning teachers. Besides helping others to develop and improve their personal and professional potential, mentoring is a meaningful and useful leadership skill. This is so because to mentor is “to support and encourage people to manage their own learning in order that they may maximize their
potential, develop their skills, improve their performance and become the person they want to be” (Parsloe, 2000).

In addition to managing and motivating people, it is also important in helping young incoming teachers to learn, grow and become more effective in their job. Such a responsibility requires proper training to facilitate reasonable and meaningful delivery of the said service. By establishing teacher mentoring programmes, pre-service teachers could be guided effectively to develop their instructional skills during practicum or teaching practice and novice teachers are given a strong start at the beginning of their careers.

Research identifies various mentoring models and different institutions in different parts of the world have various modes of organizing teaching practicum. These variations have been occasioned by a number of factors such as the economy, research knowledge or preference (Bozeman & Feeney, 2007; Twoli, 2011). These factors have been used by different institutions to come up with models of teaching practice. Two progressive models have been used in the pre-service teaching practice. These are: (a) the Corporate Model which is regarded as the traditional model and (b) the more improved Collaborative Model which uses experienced teachers as mentors (Twoli, 2011).

**The Corporate Model**

The corporate model can be regarded as the basic and traditional model that has been used in many parts of the world. This model is still persistent in developing countries for various reasons. It is economical in its operation and can be managed and sometimes abused by generalists. This model allows students to apply for schools of their choice and are posted as per their requests by a university or college coordinator. Placement of the pre-service teachers is controlled by the needs of the schools. They select the teachers with the subjects where there is a shortage (Figure 1).

**The Collaborative Professional Model**

There are times, indeed when a pre-service teacher is placed in a school where there is no other teacher in the subject area, a situation which makes the pre-service teacher “the head of the department” since he or she will be the only one in the department. There is almost no interaction with the teachers and administration. Even where there is a co-operating teacher who is supposed to guide the pre-service teacher, experience has shown that in some schools, the co-operating teacher simply takes leave and abandons the practicing teacher to go it alone. How is such a teacher going to be guided? When it comes to assessment, the pre-service teachers are assessed directly by lecturers or tutors from the university or college. These assessors arrive and go straight to the classrooms to assess the student teachers. From the classroom, they go away hurriedly, giving very little regard to the school environment.
The Collaborative Mentoring School (CMS) model is rooted in the principles of reflective practice where the student teacher is asked to critically examine their actions and the context of those actions. In order to reflect on their responsibilities and performance, student teachers are required to keep a professional reflective journal. Issues from the journal are discussed with the mentor teacher and the university supervisor. This model is similar to the Inquiry Based Model (Nguyen, 2009) typically used in the United States in which the mentoring process is structured with a triad of participants including the student teacher, the mentor teacher and the university supervisor. “The triad of cooperating teachers, student teachers, and a college supervisor engaged in on-going and purposeful discourse to explore the teacher–learner (expert–novice) reciprocity, school culture and social relations” (p 655). In both the CMS and the inquiry-based models, the roles of each member of the triad are carefully outlined.

The central player in this model is the mentor teacher. A mentor teacher would be an experienced teacher in the school who provides front line advice, support and feedback to the student teacher. Mentors in general use their experience to assist student teachers in developing classroom management skills, gaining familiarity with methodology, use of resources, lesson planning, assessment and reflective practice. It can be summarized that mentors generally provide guidance and model professional behaviour through the development of supportive relationships and also play an evaluator role.

The critical stage in this model is the placement time. Prior planning and even agreement is needed before the posting stage. The training institution needs to have some standing agreement with the school and even at times with the mentors. The training institution will be required to play diplomacy or use some policy to work with schools. At times it may come down to working only with those schools which “match with your policy and have willing experienced teachers to act as mentors.”

One assumption that is often made in the mentoring initiative is that all experienced teachers are competent as mentors. This assumption cannot be taken for granted because effective mentors should have certain qualities as identified by Tilley (2002):

Mentors need to be committed to the educational exercise and to take an interest in the personal and professional development of the mentee. Mentors need to be flexible enough to tolerate and appreciate the uniqueness and individuality of the mentees. (p. 17)
For an effective mentoring relationship to develop it is crucial that the mentor has good interpersonal skills and the ability to listen very attentively, deal with differences of opinion in a non-judgemental manner, ask open-ended questions rather than closed ones, focus on the protégés’ agenda, show flexibility and be creative, and use all the above interpersonal skills for the benefit of the practising teacher.

The co-operating teacher is the one who assigns lessons to the practising teacher, and introduces the practising teacher to the class and to the school requirements and regulations. In addition to all these, the co-operating teacher has the role to act as a link between the practising teacher and the mentor. This is the person who is vast in the content and hence is suited to guide or assist the new teacher. Where possible, and particularly at the start of the exercise, the co-operating teacher has the option to sit in class to ensure that the teacher is ‘doing things right’. The training institution has its representation and role in this model. There is the university coordinator who has the main roles of placement (posting) of pre-service teachers or students in suitable schools. This is often a very delicate task as there has to be a mentor-student teacher link. This can be quite a headache especially if the population requiring placement is large. The university co-ordinator has also another role that is of overall administration; he has to ensure that the mentor process is working well and the right university assessors (supervisors) are in the field to observe and bring feedback for records.

The last person with an important role in the model is the university supervisor. This should be a person established in teacher development. Such a person will observe the student-teacher in class. After observing lessons, he/she would arrange for conferencing with the mentor and the teacher for purposes of giving advice. Usually, this would end in an evaluation process when the supervisor and mentor jointly come up with an agreed grade. In most cases, certain characteristics define a strong student-teacher link and that is why a university supervisor would not just engage in subject-specific support but also content. In sum, the university supervisor’s main task is to open and maintain communication between the parties (Willems, 1986).

![Diagram of School-University Partnership in Collaborative Model Theoretical Framework](image-url)

**Figure 3: School-University Partnership in Collaborative Model Theoretical Framework**
Teacher mentoring is grounded in the reflection theory. The interaction between the mentor and the protégé is based on activities that identified in the reflection theory. Dewey (1933) regarded reflection as problem solving or thinking about solving a problem, which involves action chaining. Thus, according to him, reflection is an active and deliberative cognitive process, which involves reflective thinking and reflective action. Schön (1983, 1987) presents two forms of reflection, that is, reflection-in-action, which he describes as reflection that happens while action (e.g. teaching) is still occurring; and reflection-on-action, which he describes as reflection that occurs after the event. Clearly, Schön’s definition of reflection is intrinsically related to action. According to him, through reflection and action, professionals are bound to make rational judgements about how to modify their actions and find new ways of doing them while in action (reflection-in-action) or after the action has occurred (reflection-on-action).

With regard to teacher education, Zeichner (2009) and Hall (1985) claim that emphasizing reflection too soon in their preparation turns novice teachers off and become difficult to sustain. The assumption is that the neophytes tend to perceive it as a worthless distraction that takes their attention away from mastering the content and teaching skills they are particularly anxious about. However, when reflection is imbedded in the mentoring process, such fears are reduced since the mentor is available to offer direction on the challenges posed by the reflection process. The reflection should be an integral component that is incorporated in all the teaching skills and not be seen as a separate entity, regardless of the students’ level of study as this would enhance their holistic growth and development. In the context of teacher mentoring the reflection process occurs in a sequential set of steps (figure 4). The process is done collaboratively between the mentor teacher and the mentee.

![Figure 4: The Reflection Process](image)

**Methodology**

As part of a partnership project between Kenyatta University and Syracuse University, U.S.A. we undertook to understand the effectiveness of the collaborative mentoring model on pre-service teacher training in a developing country like Kenya. The implementation of the project employed an evaluative survey design involving the training of teacher mentors,
mentoring of selected pre-service teachers and evaluation of the mentoring process. The study focused on the following research questions: What are the different ways in which pre-service teachers are inducted into the teaching profession? What role can the practicing teacher play in inducting the new teacher into the profession? What is the effect of mentoring on student teachers? By analysing 3rd and final year student teachers’ induction into the teaching profession through a mentoring programme, we sought to understand the effect of mentoring on teacher training.

We collected data through questionnaires and classroom observations and interviews. The main instruments used included (a) Classroom Observation Feedback Form that was used mainly by the mentor teachers to observe a TP-student teaching in class. This was followed by a conference between the student teacher and mentor teacher. (b) Mentor Teacher Record Form. This required the mentor to give documented and progressive performance on key skills by TP-students. The main areas emphasized were planning, class-management, instructional skills, integration of resources, evaluation and lastly, professional growth. (c) Student–Teacher Questionnaire. This was meant for TP students being mentored and also non-mentored teachers for purposes of comparison. (d) Questionnaire for mentors which sought to find out their impressions on a number of issues. Such issues included: work load; school contribution and co-operation; mentor – teacher relationship; challenges and benefits of teacher mentoring, and (e) Interview Schedule with the School Principals which to gauge whether the principals appreciated and supported the programme.

Selecting and Training Mentors

The success of the mentoring programme depends on the proper selection and training process. According to Gray and Gray (1985), the selection should emphasize experience, commitment, and time to assist pre-service or novice teachers. Another characteristic which was been emphasized during the selection process for effective mentors was “a willingness to nature another person” (Freedman, 1993). This means that the individuals recruited as mentors should be people-oriented, open-minded, flexible, empathetic and collaborative. One major characteristic which was emphasized in the selection of teachers in this study was ‘experience’ in the field and a period of five years and above was conceived as good enough. Nevertheless other characteristics such as commitment, people-oriented etc. were considered and were used by the school administration in recommending the teachers.

The selection process commenced with the areas or regions. The study had to limit the population to match the resources. With this in mind two regions, four schools and thirteen teachers were selected for the training as seen in Table 1 below. The composition of the teachers was rather skewed with respect to gender. This was partly occasioned by the attempt to match the protégés (TP students) with the mentors. The condition made the gender ratio of male: female to be 4:9.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Regions</th>
<th>Schools</th>
<th>Teachers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Region A</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 – Girls’ school</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 – Boys’ school</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 – Mixed school</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Region B</td>
<td>1 Girls’ school</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>4</strong></td>
<td><strong>13</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The training of mentors was organized and managed by five faculty members of the Department of Educational Communication and Technology. They brainstormed first before this was followed by preparation of the notes and the programme structure.
The teachers were invited to the department for a one-day workshop. The training emphasized the concept of mentoring, relationship skills, effective teaching, models of supervision and coaching, conflict resolution and lesson evaluation. After the workshop, the mentors implemented the mentorship programme in their schools and were monitored and evaluated for one school term, which is usually twelve effective weeks. The main purpose of training teacher mentors was to aid them to have the key knowledge and skills that would be useful in identifying and responding to teaching practice teachers needs that create an atmosphere that is collegial in engaging mentors and practising teachers.
Table 2: Teachers, Gender and Subject Distribution

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Schools</th>
<th>Teachers</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Subjects</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Region A</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Girls’ HS</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Teacher A</td>
<td>F</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Teacher B</td>
<td>F</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Teacher C</td>
<td>F</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Teacher D</td>
<td>F</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Region A</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mixed H.S</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Teacher E</td>
<td>F</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Teacher F</td>
<td>F</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>7</td>
<td>Teacher G</td>
<td>M</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Region A</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boys’ H.S</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>Teacher H</td>
<td>M</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>9</td>
<td>Teacher I</td>
<td>F</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>10</td>
<td>Teacher J</td>
<td>F</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Region B</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Girls’ School</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>Teacher K</td>
<td>F</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>12</td>
<td>Teacher L</td>
<td>M</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>13</td>
<td>Teacher M</td>
<td>M</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Matching Mentors and TP Students

One of the design aspects that needed attention in the teacher mentor programme was the mentor TP-student pairing up. The main consideration in pairing up was the subject combination. Mentors were paired up one-to-one with practising students who had the same subject combinations. This pairing criterion was preferred mainly because it aided mentors to effectively take charge of both the pedagogical and content domains in coaching.

Data Analysis

The main focus of the study was on mentors in the four schools. There were thirteen mentors who trained but later one could not practice mentoring because the TP student got a transfer at the last minute. This explains why the data in this report will be reflecting a total of twelve teachers comprising three males and nine females.

The data analysis emphasized descriptive statistics mainly because of the small size of the information resulting from a small sample. As mentioned earlier, a number of instruments were used to gather the information. These included: Classroom observation form, Mentor record form, Student-teacher questionnaire, Questionnaire for mentors, and an interview schedule with school principals. The data analysis was facilitated by the SPSS programme.

Findings and Discussion

Benefits of the Mentoring Process to Mentees

The main purpose of the mentor programmes is to help beginning teachers make a successful transition into teaching by relying on the expertise of the experienced teachers to provide a clinical, real-word training process. The study was interested in identifying the main benefits of mentoring to TP students. A questionnaire and an interview were used to acquire this information. What were the main benefits? The most common benefit that came out strongly was “the immediate and relevant feedback.” This was valued greatly by TP students. As one student teacher put it:

It was so settling to have somebody to consult any time in case of a problem. It is not like when you only rely on university supervisors who come after a long time............
meanwhile you may continue making same mistakes.

We see that relevant and immediate feedback is fundamental to the process. It was *relevant* because the mentors were in the same subject area and *immediate* because mentors were available for mentees all the time since they were in the same school. Other benefits reported included the following: (a) the TP students appreciated the process of teacher mentoring because it gave them a fast start. They were able to settle a lot faster regarding writing schemes of work, lesson plans, and general orientation to school rules and places. (b) The help and the fast settlement were like a form of acceptance to the school. Consequently it helped them to build confidence in and the motivation towards the profession. This is useful to young and beginning teachers as they are likely to love the profession and stay for a long time. In the long run, the retention rate of teachers can remain high. (c) The protégés were with the mentors for an extended length of time. This gave the practicing teachers ample time to get elaborate and valid guidance. Examples that were given to reinforce this point related to tasks like setting and marking Continuous Assessment Tests CATS; developing instructional resources and participating in co-curricular activities.

**Comparing the Performance of Protégés and Non-protégés**

The idea of comparing some aspects of instruction among mentees and non-mentees was of interest to the study. This was done towards the end of the mentoring exercise, which was at the end of the school term. A questionnaire was used for this purpose. It was administered to all the mentees and the same number of non-mentees in the schools within the same environment. A major aspect in the questionnaire sought to know within how many weeks protégés and non-protégés were able to grasp the structure and interpretation of some instructional instruments or procedures. The results are displayed in table 3. The distribution shows that the mentees got going early. If we take the case of writing a scheme of work, it is observed that six mentees mastered the structure of a scheme of working a week as compared to only four non-mentees. This applies to all other items in the table. This does confirm the general statement that was emphasized by mentees in reference to the major merits of mentoring programme that it gives mentees a fast start.

**Table 3. Time Taken to Grasp the Structure and Perform Some Tasks**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Task</th>
<th>One week</th>
<th>Two weeks</th>
<th>Four weeks</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>M</td>
<td>N M</td>
<td>M</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To write scheme of work</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To write a lesson plan</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To deliver content confidently</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To maintain discipline in class</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To respond to questions from learners</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**M** = Mentees  
**NM** = Non-mentees

The other measure of comparison between mentees and non-mentees was the rate of feedback they gave to their learners. They were asked to indicate (4) for more often, (3) sometimes, (2) rarely, (1) never. The following results were obtained.
Table 4. Rates on modes of feedback

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mode of Feedback</th>
<th>Mentees</th>
<th>Non-mentees</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Questioning</td>
<td>3.88</td>
<td>3.10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CATS</td>
<td>2.40</td>
<td>2.12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assignments</td>
<td>2.50</td>
<td>1.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Practical/Projects</td>
<td>3.12</td>
<td>2.20</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The frequency of the mentees is higher than that of non-mentees, which is an indication that mentees sought or used feedback more frequently, and this could be attributed to the mentoring effects.

Benefits of Mentoring Process to Mentors

Using a questionnaire and an interview, mentors were probed on the benefits of the process. The following main points were given; (a) Mentors were very delighted with the realization of satisfaction to develop as a professional. They could observe a TP-student come up from scratch to a constructive teacher. They felt that this improvement is as a result of their effort and guidance. (b) The other benefit that mentors sounded was the opportunity to be more reflective. As they advised the beginning teachers, they too, had to make sure that were confident in what they were advising. For example, they had to be sure of the content, lesson planning and suitable methodologies. This gave the opportunity to mentors to refresh on all these areas. These refreshed and professional knowledge and skills would then be incorporated in the mentors’ lessons, thus improving their performance as well and adds to professional growth for mentors. (c) The mentors had the opportunity to interact with the university staff, an opportunity that lays ground for academic and professional consultations. Such an opportunity can be used to consult, for example on further education and even references for jobs or promotions.

Challenges Faced by Mentors

Nearly all teacher mentors reported a successful session with the TP students. They however addressed some areas that can loosely be referred to as challenges. One challenge was to do with planning for instruction. One requirement every mentor was to fulfil was to guide the mentees on planning. One of the tasks in the planning stage was to ensure that TP students write lesson plans and schemes of work. This proved a challenge to some mentors for two main reasons. First, some mentors have not been in the habit and rhythm of frequent planning and were apparently not sure of the planning process e.g. writing a lesson plan. They had to ‘refresh’ on lesson planning and for some this took a while. Second, was the fact that while the TP-students were familiar with the Kenyatta University format of lesson planning, some mentors had trained from other universities which used different formats. This meant, learning the Kenyatta university format first before guiding TP-students.

The other challenge that mentors faced was to do with the lack of synchronization of the mentor free timetable time and TP student teaching time. It often happened that when the mentor was teaching, the student teacher was also teaching. The overlap of teaching time for both mentor and the mentee denied them adequate classroom interaction (observation), which is a key task in the mentoring process.

The official supervisors of the TP students were the university staffs, who are often referred to as clinical supervisors. There are times when there were conflicts in advice between the one given by the mentor and that by the clinical supervisor. This does throw the TP-student in confusion. While the practising student teacher might be aware that the mentor is the more effective because he/she is in the subject area, the practicing teacher is also well aware that the clinical supervisor awards the final grade. The design of the study did not officially recognize the mentor’s grade. The mentors and the mentees were basically at the same level in terms of academic level. This made some mentors to feel that they did not have
greater authority over the mentees. In response to this situation, some mentors proposed a form of course that would elevate mentors to a higher level, preferably a master’s course in mentoring and instruction.

**Teacher Mentoring and Workload**

Mentors were asked to indicate how many TP students they were comfortably able to mentor. This question was put to them after going through the mentoring experience at the end of the school term. The response was almost by unanimous, as most of them indicated that were comfortably able to guide two TP students. They qualified by emphasizing that this was only possible if TP-students are in the same school. A number of mentors had justification for this number of two on the grounds that the mentors were involved in managing their lessons in the two subjects and they needed adequate time to guide mentees in such activities as classroom observations and conferencing. The mentors were further asked to indicate how many times they were able to observe mentees teaching in a classroom or a laboratory. The results in Table 5 show a good effort by the mentors. On the average, they were able to observe a TP student five times. Through interview, we were able to gather that the variation in observation was due to the teaching load and also on the overlap of the lessons on the school timetable. The average classroom observation by most teacher training institutions is four.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th># of mentors</th>
<th>Frequencies</th>
<th>Totals</th>
<th>Mean</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>12</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>20</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>18</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>16</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total 12</td>
<td>66</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

If mentors can manage the indicated observations, then all that the university can do is just to “fill in” with one or two clinical observations to complete the TP exercise. This of course does assume that the mentors still do a good job when it comes to full-scale mentor programme.

A part from the observation of lessons in classrooms one of the main tasks, teacher mentors were required to guide or check on other instructional related activities. Such activities included the nature and quality of homework TP students gave to their learners:

1. Checking on the scheme of work
2. Checking and advising on the lesson plans
3. Observing and advising on classroom management issues
4. Monitoring the evaluation strategies including setting for CATs
5. Teacher mentors were asked to indicate the frequencies given to these activities.

The rate or frequencies of attention in one school term was quite reasonable, with an average of just over four. Given that one school term has about ten active weeks, this comes to teacher mentors giving attention at least once every two weeks. This is not a bad rate considering that they are busy with other regular school activities.
Table 6. Some tasks performed by mentors

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Role performed</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Checking and advising on the homework</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advising on syllabus coverage</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Checking on lesson plans</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advising on class management</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Checking on evaluation strategies</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Totals</strong></td>
<td><strong>22</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Mean = 4.4</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

School Administration Support

School administrators have a crucial role to play if the teacher mentor programme is to be successful. This role was greatly realized in the design and progression of this programme. It was realized from the beginning that seeking (a strong) link with the school administration would open way for other activities planned for the teacher mentoring. It is with this understanding that we made it a priority to contact the school administration to seek for permission to train their teachers and use the school for mentoring our teaching practice students. The request was put personally and in a note to school principals by explaining the nature and the benefits likely to accrue from it. It was with a lot of delight that all school administrators welcomed the idea of launching the programme in the schools.

This study received overwhelming support from administration, especially when it came to providing a conducive environment. The programme was announced at the school parade and the teachers involved introduced. The school as a whole was asked to support the programme.

There were a number of issues that the school administration was not immediately ready to facilitate. For example, the school was not ready to reduce the number of lessons for mentor teachers, or to re-arrange the timetable to suit the programme or to participate in supervising the programme. Nevertheless, this did not seriously affect the programme. The provision of a supportive school climate was supreme. Some school administrators were keen to monitor the programme activities and went on to appreciate the benefits. There was this one school where our students were being mentored. There were, however, other TP-students from other institutions who were not on the programme and therefore were not being mentored. They looked left out and felt they were missing something important. This observation lead to the administration to request that, they too, should be included in the programme. Reports indicate that these TP-students from other institutions appreciated the coaching by our mentors.

The Role of the Teacher Mentor in the University Supervision Process

Both the mentors and the mentees reported the need to separate the supervision by mentors and that of the university supervisors. The supervisions were done independently and there was no given time that mentors and university supervisors observed a lesson together. This separation is important considering that the observations serve different purposes. While the mentors focused mainly on teacher development, the university supervisors emphasized the element of assessment. Classroom observation is essential in providing information about a TP-student and mentor or clinical supervisor. The mentor can use this information to provide quality advice while the TP student can use the information to improve in planning and presentation of lessons.

While the mentors focused mainly on teacher development, the university supervisors emphasized the element of assessment. The main goal of mentor supervision should be to
bring improvement in teacher performance (Olivia & Pawlas, 1994) rather than to generate a grade for entry in the university transcript. In a way, we therefore expected the moods on behaviour of the TP-students to be different. To be more relaxed with the mentor than with the university supervisor. The use of clinical supervision techniques can radically change the supervisor-teacher relationship and may result in less stress and anxiety on the TP teacher.

The observation cycle recommended to teacher mentors has three main stages. Phases of clinical supervision used can be re-presented as shown in figure 6 and follows a three steps cycle identified as: (a) Pre-observation conference during which the TP-student and mentor work out the mode of presentation based on the lesson plan, (b) Lesson observation in which the mentor sits in class and follows the lesson, noting down key points for advice and discussion. An observation schedule is used by the mentor to write notes, and (c) Post-observation conferencing, the last phase of the cycle and this is when mentor gives the feedback to the TP-student guided by the notes made during lesson observation. Essentially the feedback focuses on the positive points, weak points and ideas not well articulated in the lesson.

![Figure 6. Phases of Clinical Supervision](image)

Both the TP-students and the mentors had been briefed that the assessment was not for direct grading but can influence the university grade through the skills gained through mentoring experiences. The mentors had free access to university supervisor’s comments and grades. Reflecting on the university supervisor’s comments and grades, one mentor had this to say, “The comments are brief and not guiding, especially in content and instruction”.

This might be due to the fact that a large number of TP students and many of the university supervisors put out for the job are not in the subject area and at times might not be in the school of education. Such supervisors are limited, though it is acknowledged that some have gained some experience through long service in TP-supervision.

Another one said, “There is limited feedback to TP-students. University lecturers are often in a hurry as they race to cover the required number of student observations per day. As a result, they may come in the lesson late or leave early or both”.

According to her, some may not have time for post-conferencing (discussion after the lesson), which is regarded as a major component of supervision.

Yet another one commented, “Grading by university supervisors was on the higher side.” This again could be due to the concept of “giving the benefit of the doubt.” When one is not sure, compensates this by generous awards to induce the other party to satisfaction and
shut out any critical comments or questions. This seemed to give the mentors the inspiration that they can in fact do a good job compared to some university supervisors.

If we were to go by the mentor impressions, it can be said that most of the mentors had high belief or confidence and expectations in their performance. This sort of satisfaction by mentors after the exercise has been associated with the firm training and experiences of mentors (Dilworth & Imig, 1995). This has implications that experienced teachers who go through a suitable training can quickly but steadily acquire skills in teacher development.

**Conclusion and Recommendations**

This report is based on a small-scale research on teacher mentor programme. It involved only a few teachers in schools that were within easy reach, thus ensuring effective monitoring and evaluation. The main purpose of the programme was to determine its effects; especially with respect to mentor helping beginning (TP-Teachers) teachers to acquire the main skills that can make them make entry in the profession with a strong base. The results of the programme show that there are high gains for both the mentor and mentees (TP-Teachers). Mentors reported increased professional revitalization as a result of reflections and interactions with mentees. On the other hand, the beginning teachers (TP-teachers) reported immediate feedback, motivation, less isolation and belief that teaching can be a satisfying profession.

For a successful teacher-mentoring programme, careful planning and design are very important. We found the subject–to-subject design very ideal. This design allowed a mentor to guide a new teacher (TP-teacher) in his or her subject area. This was with the belief that the greatest support to mentees was in the classroom.

Quality teaching is essential if the mission of education is to be fulfilled. Mentoring can play a critical role in improving the professional knowledge and skills that teachers need to instruct and prepare learners for the next generation. The outcome of this study encourages us to emphatically recommend that mentoring can be a viable policy option in education for developing countries especially in Africa. We are aware that teacher mentoring is widely used in developed countries and have posted encouraging gains in teacher development. It is high time developed countries came up with policies that support teacher mentoring programmes. Such programmes can be designed to suit the system of particular system of education and the school environments.

**Recommendation #1**

There is a need to establish an official policy on teacher mentoring in pre-service teacher training curriculum. Such a policy could to address aspects of such as outlining the roles of each participant in the mentoring process, as well as adequate training of teacher mentors and the role of school administrators. It is also recommended that school administrators should have knowledge of any new programmes that concerns teachers and instruction in general. Such awareness will put administrators in a position to plan how best to support the programme (Janas, 1996). A school administrator responsibility with respect to a teacher-mentoring programme can be several. These include:

1. Creation of a supportive school atmosphere.
2. Provision of release time: TP students and their mentors can be given enough time and opportunities to work together on a regular basis and on-going basis.
3. Development of an instructional design (Time-table) that includes a reduced workload.
4. Participation in Programme orientation, and school co-curricular activities.
5. Supervision and evaluation of the professional performance and relationship developed by mentors and teachers.
School administration should have knowledge of the teacher-mentoring programme especially in its formative stage. Both the mentors and beginning teachers need a firm support of school administration right from the principal to the head of department. It is with this realization that the research team wrote to principals to explain about the programme and seek permission and support.

Mentors in particular needed the support of administrators for successful implementation of this programme. As it is often said, giving support is a social phenomenon. Teachers are likely to appreciate support especially if it came from their superiors. Such support can boost their confidence and self-worth.

It is envisaged that the proposed teacher mentoring process can be applicable to many other developing countries.

**Recommendation #2**

The collaborative mentoring model (Pungur, 2007) which assumes the format outlined in figure 2 is recommended since it has the capacity to improve teacher development at the pre-service level. Findings from the study indicated that the collaborative mentoring has the capacity to improve teacher development at the pre-service level.

**References**


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