Chapter 11

Utilization of Reflective Strategies by Mentors in the Student Teacher Mentoring Program (STMP) in a Selected Province in Zimbabwe

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ABSTRACT

In Zimbabwe, teacher training is a joint endeavor between teachers’ colleges and host schools, with the latter relying on mentors in training student teachers during teaching practice (TP). This chapter explores how mentors’ reflective strategies enhance students’ training. It explores how mentors adopt reflective strategies to guide student teachers. Five mentors were interviewed individually while 20 were interviewed in two focus groups. Their views concentrated on key aspects of teaching, namely scheming, lesson planning, delivery, and evaluation. Findings revealed that student teachers lacked clear aims, had poor lesson introductions, superficial lesson evaluation, and unsatisfactory lesson delivery. The study highlighted that mentors reflected on these aspects and assisted the student teachers to do the same. The study recommends that teachers’ colleges should prepare student teachers adequately in scheming, planning, and lesson delivery before TP. More time should be devoted to professional studies by teachers’ colleges before student teachers are deployed on TP.
INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

Mentoring plays a critical role in the training of professionals. According to Eby et al (2001), mentoring is practiced in many countries and across a range of professions such as medicine and industry with the aim of enhancing organizational efficiency. In the context of education, mentoring occurs when student teachers are trained by teachers’ colleges or universities in partnership with schools in settings generally referred to as pre-service programs where student teachers are inducted into the roles of the teaching profession. It also occurs during in-service programs where teachers learn and develop in the interest of staff development.

In Zimbabwe, school-based mentoring was adopted in the training of teachers to replace the long-established Zimbabwe Integrated National Teacher Education Course (ZINTEC) and the conventional four-year program which stipulated that student teachers are allocated a class under the sole responsibility of the School Head or the Deputy School Head playing a mentoring role (Maunganidze, 2015). The school-based mentoring sought to expose students to the art of teaching through linking theory with practice and to develop teachers that have the relevant pedagogical skills. It also sought to prepare student teachers professionally, academically and socially (Maunganidze, 2015).

Educationists such as Ndawi and Peresuh (2005) and Chakanyuka (1998) emphasise the need for professional development and they acknowledge the crucial role that mentoring plays in this endeavor. Other scholars (Mudavanhu & Majoni, 2003; Siyakwazi & Siyakwazi, 1998) greatly support the preparation of teachers through the use of mentoring. Their support demonstrates the relevance of mentoring in the provision of teacher training as a whole. However, if the process of mentoring is to be meaningful and beneficial, the mentors have to be proficient not only with the technicalities of teaching but should be able to reflect on the whole process of teaching and learning. Reflexivity is crucial as it has an influence on the quality of both teaching and mentoring as well as on improvement of the teaching process.

This chapter focuses on the reflective strategies used by mentors at primary school level in the Student Teacher Mentoring Program (STMP) in Zimbabwe, with specific reference to one selected province. The aim is to explore how host teachers adopt reflective strategies to guide student teachers in their training during Teaching Practice (TP). The strategies that are presented herein emanate from an empirical study made up of a sample of twenty-five mentors who were interviewed about the reflective strategies.

In this chapter, the term mentoring is explained and the roles of the mentor given. Thereafter, a brief overview of the mentoring process in Zimbabwe is given. This is done out of the realization that countries adopt different approaches to mentoring. Next is an explanation of what reflective strategies entail in this context. Lastly, reflective strategies that mentors in Zimbabwe employ as they guide the students in their teaching endeavors are outlined before a conclusion which is mainly a summary of key issues raised is given.

Unpacking the Concept of Mentoring

Mentorship originated from the friendship between King Odyssey and his close friend Mentor. Boon (in Young, M. D., Crow, G. M., Murphy, J., & Ogawa, R.T., 2009) says that Mentor was tasked with watching over King Odysseys’ son, Telemachus, while Odysseus was at war with Trojan. Luneta (2011) concurs with the history concerning the term mentor and adds that watching over the son entailed developing him intellectually, emotionally and socially. From the above explanation on the origin of the concept in question, it is apparent that mentoring involves coaching a novice to be an adult.