

Student Teacher Mentors' Perceptions of their Roles during School Based Studies: Possibilities and Challenges

Charity Ausiku⁹, Gilbert Likando¹⁰ & Felistus Mberema¹¹
University of Namibia

Abstract

The study explored the perceptions of student teacher mentors (STMs) in relation to their mentorship roles during school-based studies (SBS). It unpacks possibilities and challenges embedded in the mentoring process. This qualitative study adopted a case study design, employing purposeful sampling in the identification of the study settings and participants. Using purposive sampling, ten STMs from ten primary schools (five rural and five urban) in the Kavango East and West regions of Namibia were selected to participate in the study. Semi-structured questionnaire with open-ended items were employed to solicit information pertaining to student teacher mentors' perceptions of their mentoring roles. Responses were grouped into themes and categories in line with the research objectives. The findings of the study are twofold. First, it revealed that student teacher mentors were inadequately trained, and uncertain about their mentoring roles, apart from providing student teachers workspace. Second, STMs perceived the presence of student teachers in schools as a setback in the timely completion of the Gilbert Likando syllabi requirements, because they considered them too inexperienced to handle their classes. As a result, the study recommends a mentoring model to enhance STMs' understanding of their roles, address challenges

⁹ Charity Ausiku is a Mathematics lecturer in the Department of Early Childhood and Lower Primary Education (EC and LPE) at the University of Namibia, Rundu Campus. Her research interests lie in the pedagogy of mathematics, the experiences of student teachers during teaching practice, student mentorship in schools and contemporary social issues that affect students (or learners). Email: causiku@unam.na

¹⁰ Associate Professor Gilbert Likando holds a PhD in Education. He is currently Assistant Pro-Vice Chancellor at University of Namibia, Rundu Campus. His research interest encompasses: Educational management and leadership; teaching and learning paradigms; literacy and livelihoods, and higher education. Email: glikando@unam.na

¹¹ Felistus Mberema held a PhD in Social Sciences (Social Ethics), she was a lecturer in the Department of Humanities, Languages and Commerce in the Faculty of Education at University of Namibia Rundu Campus. She passed away in 2018 after the completion of the research that culminated in this publication. Her research interests included contemporary social issues, education and ethics, and teaching and learning paradigms.

Correspondence concerning this article should be addressed to Associate Professor Gilbert Likando, Assistant Pro-Vice Chancellor at University of Namibia, Rundu Campus. Email: glikando@unam.na

they experience, and unveil possibilities for STMs' professional development and learning during the mentoring process.

Keywords: *mentoring, mentoring model, school-based studies, student-teacher mentor, student-teacher*

The central focus of this study is on school based mentoring within School-Based Studies (SBS) that student teachers undertake during their four-year undergraduate Bachelor of Education Honours degree (pre-lower and upper primary phase) offered by the University of Namibia (UNAM). As part of the programme, twenty-two weeks is allocated to SBS divided into three phases which entail observation and actual teaching of a prescribed number of lessons (University of Namibia, 2016), at different selected urban and rural schools.

It is expected that during the SBS, student teachers are mentored by Student Teacher Mentors (STMs) in various aspects of teaching including classroom management. The researchers coined the term Student Teacher Mentor (STM) to emphasise that the mentor referred to is a teacher who is responsible for mentoring students at the practising schools during SBS. According to Samkange (2015, p. 1217) the term "mentor" refers to a subject teacher who works with a student teacher for the duration of his/her teaching placement and is also variously known as support teacher (O'Connor, 2005; Tok, 2010; Zulu & Lumadi, 2014) or cooperative teacher (Ferber & Nillas, 2010).

School-based studies occupy a key position in any teacher-training programme. During this process, the practical component of the teaching programme is enhanced as student teachers are accorded the opportunity to apply their theoretical knowledge in real classroom settings. Consequently, the STMs play a very important role in this process (Gujjar, Bushra, Saifullah & Bajwa, 2010; Kiggundu & Nayimuli, 2009). In this context, mentoring also describes the process during which student teachers are supported, guided, and nurtured by more experienced and knowledgeable teachers during SBS (Arshavskaya, 2016; Musingafi & Mafumbate, 2014), or teaching practice (TP). The term TP used interchangeably with SBS, teaching practicum or practicum placement in this study is a fundamental component of any teacher education programme, as this is where professional practical knowledge is acquired and nurtured (Mukeredzi, Mthiyane, & Bertram, 2015, p. 2).

Moreover, as Sethusha (2014, p. 410) notes, SBS plays a key role in the professional development and preparation of initial pre-service teachers. According to Starkey and Rawlins (2011, p. 5) at university, "... students acquire knowledge about the education system; how to teach and regarding subject-specific pedagogical content knowledge." In order to create a well-rounded professional, Leke-ateh, Assan, and Debeila (2013, p. 2810) argue that the theoretical knowledge should be combined

with “action-oriented experiential training practices”. In other words, the combination of theory and practice enables student teachers to acquire an opportunity to enhance actual teaching (Musingafi & Mafumbate, 2014; O'Connor, 2005) under the guidance or mentoring of one or more experienced teachers (Starkey and Rawlins, 2011).

It is generally recognised that a mentor teacher leads, guides and advises another teacher who is junior in experience in a work situation characterized by mutual trust and belief (O'Connor, 2005, p. 2). Good quality mentoring in schools makes a significant contribution to developing the professional skills of novice teachers and ensuring the best quality learning experiences for learners (Yördem & Akyol, 2014). The UNAM SBS manual clearly spells out the roles of the mentor (University of Namibia, 2013). Amongst others, these roles include: assisting student teachers to plan and prepare for lessons (University of Namibia, 2013).

Broadly, SBS also aims at “... promoting collaboration, coordination and cohesiveness among student teachers, university supervisor, and school managers” (Zulu, 2015, p. 26) hence mentoring to nurture this relationship is critical. While the importance of mentoring cannot be overemphasised, STMs have different views regarding their roles (Li, 2009), some of which may be detrimental to the achievement of SBS objectives.

While student teachers are placed under the supervision of STMs for twenty-two weeks during their training (University of Namibia, 2013) little attention is paid to the quality of mentoring received by these student teachers. Pertinently, the perceptions that STMs have regarding their roles during SBS, determine the degree of supervision that they offer to student teachers. This should actually be the starting point in the practical component of the teacher training programme since SBS experiences can “either make or break the student teachers” (Kiggundu & Nayimuli, 2009, p. 348).

Moreover, the University of Namibia expects STMs to help student teachers acquaint themselves with important documents such as the school syllabi, school policies; and co-plan with, and provide feedback to student teachers (University of Namibia, 2013). The extent to which these roles are understood and executed by STMs has the potential to derail or enhance the overall professional development of student teachers. Thus, the study explored the perceptions of STMs in relation to their mentorship roles during SBS. It further underscores the pivotal role that STMs play in the successes or failures of any teacher training programme (Samkange, 2015; Thomas, 2014).

Statement of the Problem

Several studies (Arshavskaya, 2016; Jaspers, Meijer, Prins & Wubbels, 2014; Musingafi & Mafumbate, 2014; Samkange, 2015; Thomas, 2014) have been conducted

on issues related to student teacher mentoring during SBS. In the Namibian context, there has been similar studies conducted by USAID (2006); O'Connor (2005); Zulu and Lumadi (2014); and Zulu (2015). Albeit the available studies on a global and local context though useful, could not provide a solid foundation for this study due to the context and the purpose under which they were carried out. In the absence of any research on the perceptions of STMs on their roles during SBS in the primary schools in Namibia, particularly in the Kavango (East and West) regions, this study undertook an in-depth investigation of the phenomenon.

Research Objectives

The study addressed the three major objectives namely to:

- 1) Determine the STMs' perceptions of their roles during the SBS in primary schools in the Kavango East and West regions;
- 2) Adopt a mentorship model to provide an in-depth understanding of the STMs roles during SBS;
- 3) Make recommendations on how the student-mentor relationship could be improved.

Significance of the Study

The findings of the study are significant in providing guidance to schools, STMs, student teachers, Ministry of Education, Arts and Culture, and the University of Namibia on how the roles of STMs could be conceptualised, and enhanced to improve the mentoring process during SBS.

Theoretical Framework and Literature Review

The researchers situated the theoretical framework of the study under Hobson et al's (2009) model - the Holistic Student-Centred Guidance Model - as cited by Lehtelä and Hoppo (2014, p. 1694). They define mentoring "... as a one-to-one support of a novice or less experienced practitioner (mentee) by a more experienced one (mentor). Within this context the model (Figure. 1) puts a student as focal point in the mentoring process (Lehtelä and Hoppo's (2014, p.1695).

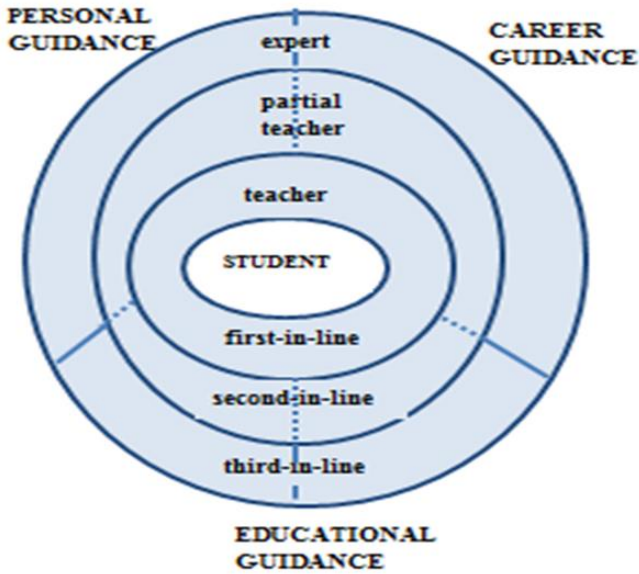


Figure 1: Holistic Student-Centred Guidance Model (Adapted from: Lehtelä and Hoppo, 2014, p. 1695)

The relevance of this model to this study is that it situates the student teacher support within the broader framework of Student-Centred Guidance Model. In defining different roles and inputs of the different actors, the model depicts three areas of student support (Lehtelä and Hoppo, 2014, p. 1695): (1) Personal guidance, which refers to support of the student's personal and social issues, which positively affects the development of the person, (2) Educational guidance, which includes supporting the student in his/her educational choices and supporting the student's progress in his/her studies, and (3) Career guidance, which consists of supporting the student's occupational choices and his/her placement into occupations and work roles.

In the context of student teacher professional growth as a major aspect of SBS, the model clearly indicates that there are various role actors involved in the development support of a student teacher. These roles are depicted as first-line, second-line and third-line (Lehtelä and Hoppo, 2014, p. 1697). In essence, the model shows that each actor at different levels has a role to play in the process of guiding and mentoring a student teacher. Using this model, we realised that functional structures at school levels in the Kavango regions are critical in the mentoring process. Student teacher mentoring particularly at primary school level is challenging compared to secondary schools. At secondary school level, Jaspers et al. (2014, p.107)

argue that mentoring is less challenging because, "...one subject is taught for several classes while in primary education all subjects are taught to one class of pupils." Thus, this may create challenges for STMs to conceptualize their roles at the primary phase.

The model provides clear guidance on how the roles of STMs could be situated and conceptualized in the broader framework to support student teachers when providing the needed personal guidance, career guidance and educational guidance during SBS.

Methodology

This qualitative study adopted a case study design. The case study design was useful in enabling the researchers to focus on an in-depth exploration or understanding of the phenomenon (Creswell, 2012). In the context of this study, STMs' perceptions of their roles enabled researchers to adopt a mentoring model (Holistic Student-Centred Guidance Model) to provide a framework on how STMs could conceptualise their roles during SBS.

Using purposeful sampling ten STMs were selected from ten identified primary schools (five rural and five urban). Demographically the sample included six male and four female respondents who were all teachers at upper primary level (grade 5-7). The respondents' qualifications included one Bachelor of Education, two Basic Education Teachers Diploma (BETD) and Diploma in African Languages (DEAL), three BETD and Advanced Certificate in Education (ECE), three BETD, and one Senior Secondary Certificate with no teaching qualification.

Purposeful sampling was employed due to the nature of the study which was qualitative. This sampling technique enabled the researchers to select "information-rich" respondents in order to carry out an in-depth investigation of the STMs' perceptions of their mentoring roles (Creswell, 2012, p. 206; Suri, 2011, p. 6).

A semi-structured questionnaire with "open-ended" questions was employed to collect data from the respondents. This instrument was administered to all ten selected STMs in schools in the Kavango East and West regions. Data collected through the semi-structured questionnaire was supplemented by the information obtained through the analysis of relevant documents, guided by the research objectives.

Informed-consent was obtained from the respondents, and other ethical considerations were observed, namely ensuring confidentiality of the information, and maintaining anonymity of the respondents' identity by using pseudonyms; for example Respondent 1, 2, or 3.

Results and Discussion

The STMs' perceptions regarding their roles during SBS are discussed in relation to the research questions. The findings revealed that in general the STMs' different interpretations of mentoring had a direct impact on the nature and quality of mentoring they provided to student teachers as well as determining the quality of support rendered and end products.

Whilst most STMs placed emphasis on the general aspects of mentoring, a few STMs referred to observing and demonstrating good lessons as their key roles in the mentoring process. The findings revealed that respondents (STMs, 1; 2; 3; 4; 5; 6; 7; 8; 9; 10) agreed on the roles of mentors as being to:

- Guide and advise student teachers.
- Act as resource persons; coaching students to find own solution.
- Provide induction for the new teachers
- Support professional development of students.
- Serve as an exemplary leader.
- Provide counselling to the students.
- Help students to become good teachers and encourage them to like the profession.
- Observe and demonstrate good lessons to the student teachers.
- Motivate student teachers, assisting them gain confidence in the teaching profession.
- Help student teachers to acquire effective skills in the teaching profession.

Worth noting is that the above descriptions of a mentor's roles were in conformity with those provided in previous literature which point to the role of a mentor as a guide, coach, supporter, advisor, supervisor, counsellor, role model, and tutor amongst others (Badmus, 2006; Cullingford, 2016; Ferber & Nillas, 2010; Lehtelä & Happo, 2014; Ogonor & Li, 2009; Tuli & File, 2009; Tok, 2010), and those stipulated in UNAM's SBS manual which include amongst others assisting student teachers to plan and prepare for lessons (University of Namibia, 2013). The roles also fit in neatly within the three areas of student support as depicted in Lehtelä and Happo's (2014, p.1695) adopted model. What this implies is that the STMs had a general understanding of their roles. Furthermore, from the responses of the STMs we also

deduced that they had general understanding of what was expected from them and the kind of teachers they were expected to produce.

However, analysis of the STMs responses on perceived challenges created a sharp contrast to their general understanding of the mentoring process. STMs excessively complained about the student teachers' lack of teaching experience which clearly demonstrated lack of knowledge and uncertainty about their roles and/or that they were passively involved in the mentoring process. This brings to light the fact that STMs as experienced and knowledgeable teachers never supported, guided, and nurtured student teachers during SBS (Musingafi & Mafumbate, 2014; Arshavskaya, 2016), since they expected student teachers to have teaching experience. In the context of this study, Maphalala's (2013) argument that the STMs conceptions of their roles determine the quality of support they render to student teachers was not confirmed by this study. There seems to be a mismatch between the STMs' perceived roles and their actual roles in school settings.

In contrast to the positive aspect regarding STMs mentoring roles, other respondents (STM, 1; 5; 8) highlighted access to school facilities as a source of the ineffectiveness in rendering their roles:

I consider my role as that of a person who should provide teaching resources/material to the student teacher and assist students to obtain the necessary teaching materials. However, I cannot put this in practice due to lack of resources at the schools [...] we can't make copies for use as teaching materials for ourselves and to assist students. Thus, my perceived role becomes ineffective due to this [STM 1].

In support, STM 8 said:

Many schools lack photocopy machines. Others have the machines but there are no photocopy papers. We can't make copies of teaching aids such as pictures, etc. The serious problem is lack of textbooks which are not enough for our learners and the student teachers as well. Even chalks sometimes are in short supply.

Given the concern raised by STMs regarding the shortage of resources in schools, Samkange (2015, p. 1219) emphasised the need for the "provision of adequate resources to support trainee teachers by highlighting the link between the availability of resources and the extent to which the student teacher would excel during teaching practice. In support Craig, Kraft & du Plessis (1998) put emphasis on adequate books and materials and knowing how to use them as key factors that have positive bearing on the quality of teachers' performance and, consequently, student achievement.

Another concern that emerged as a challenge was, the lack of cooperation between STMs and student teachers. While previous studies (du Plessis, 2013; Gray & Gray, 1985 as cited in Mudzielwana & Maphosa, 2014, p. 402) show that effective mentoring is pivotal to the development of student teachers, this study revealed that this (effective mentoring) can only be achieved if a healthy working relationship is established between the mentor and the student teacher. A key quality for successful mentoring appears to be the mentor/mentee relationship. According to Shea (1992) cited in Samkange (2015, p. 1217-1218) there are four stages of mentoring a relationship: 1) the mentor and the mentee establishing a sound relationship, (2) discussing the expectations and goals, (3) communicating the purpose of mentoring, and (4) closure and redefining the relationship. However, lack of cooperation between STMs and student teachers experienced during SBS suggests that the implementation of these four stages seemed unlikely due to poor mentor-mentee relationships.

When STMs were asked to identify some of the issues that led to poor relationship between them and student teachers the following emerged:

- ☐ Some student teachers are not willing to take advice or guidance; some do not ask for advice at all [STM1].
- ☐ Some student teachers ignore instructions from the mentor teachers and while others are arrogant and defensive.... They don't want to take constructive criticism [STM 4].
- ☐ Student teachers do not want to follow our advice and instructions [...]. They simply ignore guidance [STM6].
- ☐ Student teachers are reluctant and not willing to do what is expected from them and this can affect their performance [STM, 10].
- ☐ Student teachers don't seek for assistance – we don't know if they are introverts or not or perhaps they think they know everything [STM, 8].

In addition, some of the STMs provided justification on why they thought some of the student teachers refused to cooperate with them:

- ☐ They say our advice and teaching styles are old-fashioned that is why they ignore our instructions and assistance [STM, 10].
- ☐ Some of the student teachers think our knowledge is [outdated] ... and they can therefore not trust the advice we give them. They say they cannot take advice from someone with a lower qualification [STM, 4]

- ☐ They regard themselves at another level than us because they are doing a degree and some of us have only Basic Education Teachers Diploma (BETD) [hence] they look down on us. But we have more experience than them and we thought they could learn from us [STM, 6].

The scenarios above underline lack of understanding by student teachers about the mentor-mentee relationship including the role of the mentor during SBS. This gives the impression that student teachers were not properly informed about the mentoring process and/or they were not exposed to adequate training and induction on mentoring.

According to O'Connor (2005, p. 2) it is "...generally recognized that a mentor teacher leads, guides and advises another teacher more junior in experience [...] characterized by mutual trust and belief". However, the findings in this study are contrary to this understanding due to the student teachers' lack of recognition and appreciation of the STMs' roles. Trust is a key aspect or prerequisite for effective mentoring in a mentor-mentee relationship. Thus, disregarding and/or undermining the advice of the STMs because it is "old fashioned," denotes that the student teachers had no confidence in the STMs' ability to provide them with proper content and pedagogical knowledge and this could have had negative repercussions for effective mentoring as Wilhelm (2007, p. 94) postulated:

...approaching the student teacher mentor with disrespect, disregard or disinterest sets an immediate barrier that prevents either party from enjoying the time spent together, and can infringe upon the vast opportunities to grow together and perhaps prevent a lifelong friendship, personal or professional, from forming.

Moreover, the fact that the student teachers regarded themselves 'more knowledgeable' than the STMs 'because they are pursuing a degree' could have been triggered by the reality on the ground in that at most of the schools in the study area, most STMs have either a lower qualification or at the same level with the student teachers. For example, the biographical data on respondents' highest qualifications show that there was only one respondent with a Bachelor of Education honours, eight with a teacher's diploma and one with a grade 12 certificate. Although the issue of unqualified and under-qualified teachers is an area of genuine concern in the Kavango regions; the student teachers need to take advantage of STMs vast teaching experience in order to enhance their practice (Awaya et al., 2003), and to "promote professional readiness" (Mudzielwana & Maphosa, 2014, p. 403). In actual fact mentoring is "a nurturing process in which a more experienced person, serving as a role model provides professional assistance to the student teacher" (Mudzielwana & Maphosa, 2014, p. 402). The implications as Mudzielwana and Maphosa (2014, p. 402) further argue is that mentoring is more than giving advice and passing on experience

instead, it is about encouraging the student teachers and empowering them so that they can become more competent in their practice.

Lack of training for STMs on mentoring also emerged as a challenge. The findings revealed that eight out of ten STMs had not received any training on student mentorship or induction workshops from the school mentors or the University of Namibia (UNAM). Thus, it would be correct to deduce that the STMs' lack of knowledge, lack of understanding, and uncertainty about their roles could result from the lack of training on mentoring. This concurs with the findings of previous studies that suggested that the majority of STMs lack knowledge as they are not well trained (Samkange, 2015; Thorsen, 2016; Yördem & Akyol, 2014). Thus, without adequate training, STMs would not be able to understand what they are required to do, let alone interpret UNAM's SBS manuals that are provided to student teachers.

Training on mentoring for STMs is critical to equip them with skills and knowledge that will enable them to provide effective supervision and guidance to student teachers. According to Hudson (2013, p.2), "... teacher preparation courses need well-informed mentors to work with pre-service teachers in the school context". Essentially, mentor training is meant to "equip the mentors with modern skills in teacher education" (Samkange, 2015, p. 1219) and is supposed to explain "... the teacher education programme, the mentoring programme, benefits and roles of the mentor and provide back-up skills to the mentors" (Furlong & Maynard, as cited in Samkange, 2015, p. 1219). It is contended that mentors who are well trained about mentoring can advance the quality of pre-service teacher education and, simultaneously, advance their own skills (Giebelhaus & Bowman, 2002 as cited in Hudson, 2013). As it has been established (Hudson, 2013), investment in mentors' professional development can help build teaching capacity for both mentors and mentees. Mentoring training must also include amongst others how to deal with student teachers' negative emotions (du Plessis, 2013).

The findings also reveal that some of the STMs that demonstrated misunderstanding of the student mentoring process emphasised that student teachers lacked teaching experience. Some of the sentiments they expressed were: "student-teachers lacked teaching experience" [STM 1]; "student-teachers lack teaching skills. They really don't know how to teach" [STM 4]; "UNAM should teach student-teachers more on methodological approaches. These students don't know how to teach" [STM 5]; "UNAM should send student-teachers who are well prepared, who know how to teach and those with experience" [STM 6]; and "student-teachers should come to SBS with full information and guidance on teaching and learning" [STM 10].

Whilst we agree that student teachers should have basic pedagogical skills, the claim that the "University should ensure that student teachers should possess

teaching experience" seems unrealistic, since student teachers are novice and student teaching is a process (Applegate & Lasley, 1982, as cited in Wilhelm, 2007).

The training of student teachers at the University of Namibia equips students with basic pedagogical skills that should be enhanced during teaching practice/SBS. Tuli and File (2009) argue that there should be a link between coursework/theory and school based practice through practicum, since teaching experience does not occur over night. According to Craig, Kraft, and du Plessis (1998, p. xii) teacher development is a "... process and not an event, which occurs along a continuum of learning". However, during SBS or teaching practice student teachers are provided with an opportunity to gain experience in the real teaching and learning environment (Tirivanhu, 2014), under the guidance or mentorship of one or more experienced teachers (Starkey & Rawlins, 2011). Therefore, SBS is a crucial time when practicing teachers get the opportunity to develop on-the-job student teachers' experience and competences in preparation for full time practice (Marais & Meier, 2004), to assist them put in practice learnt theories (Ogonor & Badmus, 2006) and learn how to become fully-fledged teachers (Wilhelm, 2007).

The STMs in this process play a pivotal role in nurturing the novice teacher in becoming a competent practitioner (Mukeredzi & Mandrona, 2013). As Furlong and Maynard (1995) cited in O' Connor, 2005, p.21 asserted: "... the role of the mentor towards the student teacher in terms of practical experience is that of supporting student teachers to develop an appropriate body of practical professional knowledge and to develop deeper, more complex understandings of it."

This implies that through the process of mentoring student teachers gain exposure to the art of teaching prior to joining the teaching profession (Makura & Zireva, 2013). It is therefore unrealistic to expect student teachers to come with fully-fledged teaching experience during SBS. Thus, the norm that STMs should take up the role of an advisor, a supporter, a tutor, guide and role model (Ferber & Nillas, 2010; Li, 2009) during SBS seemed contrary to the STMs expectations, as one of the STMs remarked: "In the absence of a teacher in the classroom or when a teacher is absent from school on official duties a student teacher should take over the responsibility and help manage the class" [STM, 4]. This sentiment corroborates previous studies that revealed that some student teachers are treated as relief teachers during teaching practice (Mukeredzi & Mandrona, 2013; Samkange, 2015). This shortcoming points to the uncertainty and lack of knowledge regarding STMs' roles and responsibilities as mentors.

Moreover, the findings also revealed the STMs' concerns regarding the complexity of the dual roles they play in performing the duty of both a mentor and teacher simultaneously. They also bemoaned that their roles remain unnoticed, unrewarded, and unacknowledged, as remarked by one of the STMs:

Our responsibilities are difficult and they are many but they are [also] very important but nobody takes notice of this. We have to teach our own learners and guide student teachers at the same time. Why can't they reward us for this additional job? It is really unfair. UNAM or the Ministry of Education and Culture should do something. They can even reduce the number of our teaching periods. They should give us additional salary or even a certificate is enough. [STM, 2].

Other STMs expressed similar sentiments: "Financial support or remuneration for mentors is required" [STM, 7]; "our salary should be increased or there should be an extra income provided to the mentors" [STM, 9]; "a token of appreciation or any kind of recognition or acknowledgement for the mentor roles would serve as encouragement for the mentors" [STM, 1].

These sentiments expressed by the STMs especially on their dual roles substantiate previous research which underscored the challenges experienced by teachers in performing these dual roles (Jaspers, Meijer, Prins, & Wubbels, 2014; Thorsen, 2016). According to Melesse (2013) and Tirivanhu (2016), school-based mentors are demoralised by the lack of recognition for their workload. In providing justification why mentors consider themselves undervalued and why they consider their role as difficult, Cullingford (2016, p. 7) referred to the ambiguous place mentoring occupies in the education system at a variety of levels and argues that due to the ambiguity of the STMs roles, "mentors find what they are doing complex and unrewarding". Cullingford (2016) furthermore, argued that the sense of being undervalued results from the lack of clarity about their job as well as the lack of knowledge as to what they are being measured against. Cullingford (2016, p. 7) elucidates further: "...it is not clear whether they are mediators, facilitators, or assessors, answerable to those who employ them, or therapists, protectors and supporters, answerable to their mentees."

Given the complexity of the mentoring task and the demanding nature of the mentoring roles as evidenced from the findings of this research and that of previous studies, it is worth mentioning that mentor teachers deserve to be rewarded or acknowledged. Similarly, O'Connor (2005), in his study on the role of the teacher as mentor in the partnership model in schools in the Windhoek area in Namibia, proposed incentives for mentor teachers in the form of financial rewards or through the selection of "mentor teacher of the year" (O'Connor, 2005, p. 100). In this connection, Craig, Kraft, and du Plessis (1998, p. xiii) pointed out, "... the sustainability of a teacher development program is strengthened where there is appropriate incentives and rewards." By implication "little or no recognition offered by the university for the school teacher could be one of the justification for 'co-operative teachers' lack of enthusiasm or lack of morale towards supporting teacher education programs" (Melesse, 2013, p. 2220).

However, there is a caveat to direct incentives for STMs, as argued by Cullingford (2016, p. 9) that mentors should not only think about direct benefits from mentoring but they should be reminded that there are immense indirect benefits, described as 'unexpected immeasurable benefits of mentoring'. For example, mentors themselves are learning through the process of observing mentees during teaching practice (Cullingford, 2016). Cullingford (2016, p. 9) furthermore stresses that it is "... those who observe who find themselves imbibing examples of successful and unsuccessful practice". The other benefit is the issue of reciprocal mentoring (Wink & Putney, 2002 as cited in Arshavskaya (2016), which implies that each mentor and mentee can benefit from each other in terms of teacher development as both the mentor and the mentee can contribute to each other's professional expertise (Arshavskaya, 2016).

Conclusion and Recommendations

Having examined the pivotal roles STMs play during SBS, which include amongst others, the professional development and preparation of initial pre-service teachers, the study's findings support Lehtelä and Happonen's (2014, p. 1695) Holistic Student-Centred Guidance Model, that situates the student teacher support within the broader framework. While the findings of the study revealed several perceived shortcomings from the perspectives of the STMs that demonstrated their lack of understanding of their mentoring roles, it is important to note that their perceptions were shaped by their lack of training in student mentoring. The adoption of the Holistic Student-Centred Guidance Model provides an opportunity on how the mentoring process during SBS could be conceptualized by STMs, University of Namibia and schools in the absence of a clear strategy or training programme to guide collaboration efforts. According to this model mentoring should be perceived as an important element providing student teachers with: 1) Personal guidance; 2) Educational guidance; and 3) Career guidance.

Based on the findings of the study the following recommendations are advanced to various stakeholders.

☐ Due to the lack of coordination between the University of Namibia and schools on how SBS could be implemented, it is recommended that the coordination mechanism should be developed and roles and responsibilities for each stakeholder be clearly defined;

☐ One of the findings of the study was that STMs did not receive any induction or/and training on student mentoring. It is recommended that the University of Namibia in collaboration with the Ministry of Education, Arts and Culture (as a key stakeholder) develop a training programme for STMs to enable them play their expected roles effectively and efficiently during SBS. On-going training workshops also

should be organised to help STMs to enhance their professional development and mentoring knowledge and skills.

- ② It was further revealed that lack of incentives has demoralised STMs given the dual roles (as mentors and teachers) they are expected to play which have increased their work without extra remuneration. It is recommended that while the mentoring provides immense unexpected immeasurable benefits, extrinsic motivation through rewards is key for the success of the mentoring process and enhancing motivation for STMs.

References

- Arshavskaya, E. (2016). Complexity in mentoring in a pre-service teacher practicum: A case study approach. *International Journal of Mentoring and Coaching in Education, 5*(1), 2-19.
- Awaya, A., McEwan, H., Heyler, D., Linsky, S., Lum, D., & Wakukawa, P. (2003). Mentoring as a journey. *Teaching and Teacher Education, 20*(1), 45–57.
- Craig, H. J., Kraft, R. J., & du Plessis, J. (1998). Teacher development: Making an impact, USAID, Advancing Basic Education and Literacy Project. Washington, DC: The World Bank.
- Creswell, J. W. (2012). *Educational research: Planning, conducting, and evaluating quantitative and qualitative Research*. Boston, MA: Pearson.
- Cullingford, C. (2016). Mentoring as myth and reality: Evidence and ambiguity. In C. Cullingford (Ed.) *Mentoring in education: An international perspective* (pp.1-11). New York NY: Routledge.
- Ferber, T., & Nillas, L. A. (2010). Through the eyes of student teachers: Successes and challenges in field teaching experiences. *National Teacher Education Journal, 3*(2), 61-86.
- Gujjar, A. A., Bushra, N., Saifullah, S., & Bajwa, M. J. (2010). Teaching practice: Problems and issues in Pakistan. *International Online Journal of Educational Sciences, 2*(2), 339-361.
- Hudson, P. (2013). Mentoring as professional development: 'Growth for both' mentor and mentee. *Professional Development in Education*. Retrieved from <http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/19415257.2012.749415>
- Jaspers, W. M., Meijer, P. C., Prins, F., & Wubbels, T. (2014). Mentor teachers: Their perceived possibilities and challenges as mentors and teachers. *Teaching and Teacher Education, 44*, 106-116.
- Kiggundu, E., & Nayimuli, S (2009). Teaching practice: A make or break phase for student teachers. *South African Journal of Education, 29*, 345-358.
- Lehtelä, P., & Hoppo, I. (2014). Mentors' perceptions of teacher practice: A case study of the School of Vocational Teacher Education. *International Journal for Cross-Disciplinary Subjects in Education (IJCDSE), 5*(2), 1694-1702.

- Leke-ateh., B. A., Assan T. E. B., & Debeila, J. (2013). Teaching practice for the 21st century: Challenges and prospects for teacher education in the North-West Province, South Africa. *Journal of Social Sciences*, 37(3), 279-291.
- Li, Y. (2009). The perspectives and experiences of Hong Kong preschool teacher mentors: Implications for mentoring. *Teacher Development*, 13(2), 147-158.
- Makura, A. H., & Zireva, D. (2013). School heads and mentors in cahoots? Challenges to teaching practice in Zimbabwean teacher education programmes. *Journal of Sexual Aggression*, 1, 3-16.
- Maphalala M. C. (2013). Understanding the role of mentor teachers during teaching practice session. *Int. J. Edu Sci*, 5(2), 123-130.
- Marais, P., & Meier, C. (2004). Hear our voices: Student teachers' experiences during practical teaching. *Africa Educational Review*, 1, 220-233.
- Melesse, S. (2013). The state of student-teachers' support service rendered from cooperative teachers as school-based practitioners: The case of Bahir Dar University, Amhara Region, Ethiopia. *Educational Research and Reviews*, 8(23), 2212-2223.
- Mukeredzi, T. G., & Mandrona, A. R. (2013). The journey to becoming professionals: Student teachers' experiences of teaching practice in a rural South African context. *International Journal of Educational Research*, 62, 141-151.
- Mudzielwana, N. P., & Maphosa, C. (2014). Assessing the helpfulness of school-based mentors in the nurturing of student teachers' professional growth on teaching practice. *Mediterranean Journal of Social Sciences*, 5(7), 402-410.
- Musingafi, M., & Mafumbate, R. (2014). Challenges and prospects for school based mentoring in the professional development of student teachers in Zimbabwe: Academics, mentees and mentors perceptions. *Asian Journal of Economics and Empirical Research*, 1 (2), 32-39.
- O'Connor, T. E. (2005). *The role of the teacher as mentor in the partnership model in schools in the Windhoek Area*. (Unpublished Master's Thesis). University of Namibia.
- Ogonor, B. O., & Badmus, M. N. (2006). Reflective teacher practice among student teachers: The case in a tertiary education institution in Nigeria. *Australian Journal of Teacher Education*, 33(2), 1-11. <http://dx.doi.org/10.14221/ajte.2006v31n2.2>

- Samkange, W. (2015). Challenges faced by mentors and mentees in teacher education in Zimbabwe. *Scholars Journal of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences*, 3(7B), 1217-1219.
- Sethusha, M. J. (2014). Challenges experienced by teaching practice supervisors in an open and distance learning environment. *Mediterranean Journal of Social Sciences*, 5(15), 409-413.
- Starkey, L., & Rawlins, P. (2011). Teaching practicum in 21st century. Retrieved from <https://ako.ac.nz/knowledge-centre/teaching-practicum-in-21st-century-new-zealand/>
- Suri, H. (2011). Purposeful sampling in qualitative research synthesis. *Qualitative Research Journal*, 11(2), 63-75.
- Thorsen, K. E. (2016). Practice teachers' role in teacher education: Individual practices across educational curricula. *Acta Didactica Norge*, 10(2), 179-192.
- Tirivanhu, M. S. (2014). Experiences and preparedness of school-based mentors in supervising student teachers on teaching practice in Zimbabwe. *British Journal of Education, Society & Behavioural Science*, 4(11), 1476-1488.
- Tuli, F., & File, G. (2009). Practicum experience in teacher education. *Ethiop: Journal of Education & Social Sciences*, 5(1), 61-86.
- University of Namibia, (2016). *Faculty of Education Prospectus*. Windhoek, Namibia: Author.
- University of Namibia. (2013). *School Based Studies Manual*. Windhoek, Namibia: Faculty of Education.
- United States Agency for International Development [USAID], (2006). Professional development and quality: Perspectives of Namibian teachers. Washington DC: Author.
- Wilhelm, C. M. (2007). *A case study of three cooperating teachers in arts*. (Unpublished Master's Thesis), Kent State University.
- Yördem, A. & Akyol, B. (2014). Problems of mentoring practices encountered by the prospective ELT teachers: Perceptions of faculty tutors. *European Journal of Research on Education*, 2(Special Issue) 6, 142-146.

- Zulu, A., & Lumadi, M. W. (2014). Managing school based studies in Namibia's Zambezi region: Navigating challenges in the practicum triad. *Mediterranean Journal of Social Sciences*, 5(20), 2842-2846.
- Zulu, A. (2015). *Role parameters within the context of the practicum triad: Teacher training perspectives from Namibia's Zambezi region*. (Unpublished PhD Dissertation), University of South Africa.