

MENTORING NOVICE TEACHERS IN ETHEKWINI METROPOLITAN MUNICIPALITY OF KWAZULU-NATAL PROVINCE OF SOUTH AFRICA: A QUALITATIVE EXPLORATION FROM MENTORS' PERSPECTIVES

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ABSTRACT

This research argued the major motives leading senior teachers to be involved in the mentoring process of newly appointed teachers and its benefits for the mentor teacher. The study used semi-structured qualitative interviews to sample 24 mentor teachers of secondary schools in eThekweni Metropolitan Municipality of KwaZulu-Natal Province South Africa. The study discovered that the mentoring process is saddled with motivations, challenges, and benefits throughout the mentoring process, including internal and external motivations, emotional rewards, positive professional outcomes, and unfavorable consequences. Based on the results from the study findings the research concluded that it is important for stakeholders to understand that the practicum for mentoring has emotional implications for the mentors. It is likely that mentors need support so that they can cope better with the emotional labour of mentoring. Following the results from the research findings the study suggests the implications that researchers and policy-makers need to deepen their understanding of the motives and benefits for mentors to highlight the potential contribution of the mentoring relations to the mentor, to novice teachers, to schools, and to the society in the study locations. This, in turn, may assist in recruiting excellent teachers into mentoring programmes proactively and devotedly.

Keywords: Mentoring Programme, Motivations, Emotions, Rewards, Professional Outcomes, Mentor Teachers.

INTRODUCTION

Mentoring has been defined as a “nurturing process in which a skilled or more experienced person teaches, sponsors, encourages, and counsels a less skilled or less experienced person for the purpose of promoting the latter’s professional and/or personal development” (Adewale & Olusanya, 2019). Mentoring may focus to different degrees on emotional and pedagogical support, and, sometimes, the mentor may even have a formal evaluative role. In an educational setting, the mentor is usually an experienced classroom teacher who accepts into his/her classroom a preservice teacher-in-training or a first year teacher who participates actively in classroom activities while learning the instructional and professional skills needed by the modern-day public school teacher (Daniel & Kalu, 2018; Boaz & Philip, 2020). This study, though, focuses on mentors of novice teachers during their first year of service. As previous studies have indicated, the needs of teachers at various stages of professional development differ (Umar & Babatunde, 2019; Mqadi, 2023a; Mqadi, 2023b), and mentors should be aware of these needs when striving to assist novice teachers.

Research studies on new teacher mentoring have focused on studying the effects of mentoring (Henshaw & Parker, 2020), describing, and comparing programmes (Muller & Benedict, 2019), with some recent interest in the examination of the mentoring process

among individual mentors and their students (Achinstein & Villar, 2023; Mqadi, 2024a; Mqadi, 2024b & Mqadi, 2024c). Most of the emphasis in these studies has been placed on the results of the mentoring for the novice teacher, with relatively little attention paid to the results of the mentoring for the experienced teacher (mentor teachers). Broadly, the few studies on mentor-novice teachers' relationships have shown that they can also enhance, in some sense, the professional development of the experienced teacher (Abraham & Gall, 2021; Butler, Etheridge, James, & Ellis, 2020; Bullough & Draper, 2023; Hastings & Hitler 2023; Howey & Johnson, 2020; Simpson, Hastings, & Hill, 2024; Tauer & Anjorin, 2022). In line with new research on mentoring that illuminates the mentors' point of view, this study attempts to focus on the motives leading experienced South African teachers to participate in a mentoring process and the benefits they may gain from this process. Thus far, the few investigations about the mentor in an educational setting have been conducted mainly in Anglo-American nations and Israel (Hastings & Hitler 2023; Howey & Johnson, 2022; Simpson, Hastings, & Hill, 2024).

South Africa, in which the current study was conducted, however, differs from many Anglo-American nations and South Africa in terms of culture (more collectivist), society (a new country with fewer institutionalized classes), and the organization of the educational system (e.g., a more centralized system) (Iram & Schmida, 2020). All high schools are required to follow a basic national curriculum devised by senior officials in the Ministry of Education. Yet, in recent years, many secondary schools are increasingly becoming autonomous and self-managed, providing enough freedom for school staff to build a vision and mission for their schools, based on the values, communal needs, and ethnic characteristics of their pupils. Consequently, in order to fill the gap in knowledge regarding the mentor's role and the benefits he or she may gain through the mentoring process, this study traced the careers and lives of the mentors. Specifically, the study posed three questions:

- I. What are mentor teachers' motives in participating in a mentoring process?
- II. What is the perceived contribution of the mentoring process to the mentor?
- III. How do contextual determinants affect the mentoring experiences of mentors?

The first part of this article presents the current theoretical literature on the mentoring process. Following a brief description of the research methods and research process, the main body of the article brings the voices of experienced teachers. It ends with a discussion of the findings and their implications for future educational mentoring programmes.

2. THE MENTORING PROCESS: CONTENTS, DETERMINANTS, AND OUTCOMES

Emerging in the early 1980s (Fagbemi & Oladele, 2020), mentoring was introduced into the educational scene as a tool for dealing with high rates of attrition during the first three years of teaching. Participation in a teacher induction program and working with a mentor teacher has been shown to reduce the likelihood of novice teachers transferring schools or leaving the profession (Ingersoll & Smith, 2023).

The mentor's role: The mentor is expected to provide psychological support, technical assistance, and guidance regarding local rules and policies (Wang & Odell, 2019). In the context of "educative mentoring" the mentor assists the novice in interpreting student behaviors and meanings and helps the novice discover how to further his/her learning. As an experienced teacher, the mentor should have the ability to foster the novice teacher's learning and attend to his/her needs, while maintaining the curriculum and ensuring effective and

meaningful student learning. Beginning educational professionals need help on three different levels: professional, social, and emotional. Kram and Adelabu(2020) summarized mentoring functions, putting them into two broad categories that she termed “career functions” and “psychosocial functions.” Career functions are those aspects of a relationship that enhance “learning the ropes” and preparing for advancement in an organization, while psychosocial functions are those aspects of a relationship that enhance a sense of competence, clarity of identity, and effectiveness in a professional role. Among the psychosocial functions described by Kram are role-modeling, counseling, friendship, acceptance, and confirmation. Zeyand Akpan (2019) described the most useful function of mentoring as sponsorship. The mentor puts his or her reputation on the line by actively promoting the protégé and by giving him or her important responsibilities. Mentors use their organizational influence to provide an opportunity for the protégé to gain exposure and visibility in the organization.

The mentor’s role includes providing on-site support and assistance to novices during their first years of teaching (Bonet & Ladoke, 2021; Oplatka & Eizenberg, 2019). Within this context of teacher induction, mentoring refers to the partnering of a veteran teacher with a beginning teacher to provide “systematic and sustained assistance” to novice teachers (Huling-Austin & Awodele, 2021).

The determinants of the mentoring process: Some mentoring programs hire retired teachers. Others release mentor teachers from some or all of their classroom responsibilities. Still, others expect mentors to combine mentoring with full-time teaching (Stephen & Shalom, 2021). Apart from sending various messages about the purposes of mentoring, these arrangements create different situations in which mentors can learn and apply their skills. Most mentoring programs provide some orientation or training. Common topics include clinical supervision, research on effective teaching, beginning teacher concerns, and theories of adult learning. The program structure, the personalities of the teachers involved, and the organizational setting all influence the nature of the mentoring relationship.

Organizational conditions may support or interfere with mentoring relationships. Certain conditions must exist in order for an effective mentoring process to evolve (Kram & Umar, 2019): i) There must be opportunities for frequent and open communication between individuals at different career levels; ii) organizational members must have the interpersonal skills to build supportive relationships as well as the willingness and interest to do so; iii) the organizational culture, reward system, job design, and management practices must value and encourage mentoring. The occupational structure in schools creates an organizational obstacle to mentoring. Most teachers work alone, in the privacy of their classrooms, protected by norms of autonomy and non-interference. Mentor teachers have little experience with mentoring-observing and discussing teaching with colleagues. (Oluwafemi & Gabriel, 2020). A fundamental factor influencing the mentoring relationship is the identity of the mentor teacher. Researchers have documented striking differences in the way mentor teachers conceive and carry out their work with novices (Abdullahi & Parker, 2019). These differences in mentors’ perspectives and practices are linked to differences in role expectations, working conditions, program orientations, and mentor preparation. Andrew and Caleb (2023) underscore the influence of mentors’ beliefs about learning to teach and the impact of different contextual factors (e.g., school culture, national policies) on mentors’ practice and novices’ learning.

The outcomes of the mentoring process for the mentor: Though research on the outcomes of mentoring for the mentor is scarce, interest in the impact of mentoring on the experienced teacher is emerging in the literature, as the introduction to this article showed. Recent studies show that mentoring may benefit the mentor in several ways. It may provide an opportunity for personal and professional development, and the relationships with junior colleagues can enable individuals in mid-career to enhance self-esteem and to pass on personal values and experiences to the next generation (Tauer & Emmanuel, 2021).

The senior professional may view the request to mentor as validation of his/ her status as an expert with knowledge and wisdom to share. Experienced workers approaching retirement may see mentoring as an opportunity to influence the future of the organization and make a meaningful contribution (Gaius & Kowontan, 2022). Studies also revealed that mentoring could provide a learning experience for the mentor. Mentors learned through self-reflection and mutual cooperation. They also added to their knowledge through this interaction with novice teachers and university instructors.

The benefits mentors gain from mentoring include a chance to practice new instructional and classroom management strategies, as demonstrated by novice teachers, in their classes, the chance to share their experiences as professionals (Koerner & Paul, 2023), and an opportunity for practicing teachers to reflect on their practices (Ganser & Aliyu, 2020). Mentoring can reduce the level of isolation felt by practicing teachers (Elliott & Calderhead, 2019).

Mentoring may also bring about negative consequences for the mentor. It may present a drain on the mentor's physical and mental resources (Bullough & Draper, 2022), and, in some programs, the mentor must allocate time from an already busy teaching schedule. Studies have indicated that mentors experienced feelings of displacement and loss of privacy (Koerner & Ajibola, 2020).

In this study, we further the knowledge about the emotions experienced by the mentors, their motivation for participating in the program, and the positive and negative results of the process for them. The conceptual framework that guided our inquiry is presented in the next section.

METHODOLOGY

This research adopted a qualitative research method to sample the opinion of 24 teachers (20 females, 4males) in secondary schools in eThekweni Metropolitan Municipality of KwaZulu-Natal Province South Africa who had experienced mentors of more than 5 years in organizing mentoring training programme that supports novice teachers during their first year of teaching. They are exemplary experienced teachers recommended by their principals and by their supervisors and approved by the secondary school staff.

However, given the fact that teachers at different career stages have different needs (Aladesanmi & Popoola, 2019), this study examined differences that may arise from the specific career stage of the mentor. Previous studies have found that the mentor's career stage influences the type of support offered; mentors in the early career stage provided more psychosocial support than career support, whereas mentors in the mid-career stage provided both career and psychosocial mentoring (Ogungbemi & Babatunde, 2020). Therefore, it stands to reason that mentors at different career stages may also differ in their motivations for

mentoring and gain different benefits from the process. Qualitative methods are suited to the task of describing and understanding mentoring relationships. Ajayi and Ajibade (2021) maintained that an effective way to study educational programs is to gather detailed, descriptive information about what is occurring in the program. Since mentoring is characterized by a process of adaptation to local conditions, needs, and interests, the methods used need to be open-ended, discovery-oriented, and capable of describing developmental processes and changes. A qualitative analysis was used to uncover the themes and subcategories emerging from the text. Each text was coded according to the four-step analytic process recommended by Marshal and Rossman (2019): i.) comparing units of meaning across categories for inductive category coding; ii) refining categories; iii) “delimiting the theory” by exploring relationships and patterns across categories, and iv) integrating data to write theory.

The analysis of interviews also aimed to identify areas of similar and contrasting opinions. As such themes arose, the interviewee was encouraged to expand in a “lengthy conversation piece” (Gabriel & Bala, 2021). Then, by comparing the accounts of different people who had a similar experience, and posing analytical questions—for instance, why is this different from that? How are these two related? —we were able to generate knowledge about common patterns and themes within the mentoring process. The themes emerging from the data reflect a range of experiences, all considered equally valid. In qualitative research, researchers relate not only to the most common or representative themes but also to exceptional aspects, that are seen as no less important or valid, even though they were not expressed by a majority of respondents (Miles & Huberman, 2022). Each different explanation is seen as enriching our knowledge of the possible motivations and experiences of mentors, and data is not discarded as being irrelevant even if only one participant mentioned it.

PRESENTATION OF RESULTS AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

This section presents the opinions of the mentors who took part in the study. This section gives the respondents' perspectives regarding their motivations, outcomes, and context about the research themes.

Research Question 1: What are mentor teachers' motives in participating in a mentoring process?

To understand how senior teachers, feel about mentoring, we first explored what motivates experienced teachers to become mentors. Participation in a mentoring program in Israel is voluntary and the financial compensation is almost insignificant. Since mentors are not relieved of their teaching duties, mentoring is added to an already busy schedule. Under these circumstances, it is important to understand the factors motivating senior teachers to become mentors. Some teachers expressed a basic altruistic attitude to assist struggling novice teachers:

Interviewer: You described how busy you are, so why did you agree to mentor in the first place? Respondent (a male teacher, with 32 years of teaching experience): *“I have no free time and that’s natural. I have lived my whole life with the attitude: help me and I’ll help you. When I first came to eThekweni Metropolitan Municipality of KwaZulu-Natal Province South Africa I got a lot of help from people in my field and outside it. It’s natural to treat people that way. It wasn’t even a question if I should help a novice teacher or not. It’s no problem. I never have any time, so now I have a little less”*.

Many experienced teachers did not have mentors when they were starting, and they believed that this made their initial acculturation more difficult. Experienced teachers described being thrown into the system “to sink or swim” and want to spare novice teachers a similar experience. Although most of the interviewees did not have a formal mentor, many recalled the help of an experienced teacher who became their informal mentor:

Interviewer: Did you have a mentor during your first years as a teacher? Was there someone who helped you that you can remember? Respondent (female teacher, with 18 years of experience): *“No, I didn’t have a mentor, but there was a teacher at school. I used to consult her when I had problems, but she wasn’t my assigned mentor”*.

Interviewer: How did she help you? Respondent: *“I told her about difficulties, (and she gave) suggestions on how to act, and how to use materials in my subject. She was there for me, and by the way, she still is. Experienced teachers who had a significant mentoring experience as novice teachers expressed a desire to “return the favor” and believed that the initial help they received should be paid back into the system”*. *“Another reason given for helping was a perception of mentoring as an integral part of the teacher’s role”*.

Interviewer: Were there any special reasons why you agreed to be a mentor? Respondent *“(female teacher, with 12 years of experience): First of all, I knew her [the novice teacher] and secondly I didn’t feel like it mattered if I wanted to or not. I felt it was my duty as a teacher. As the coordinator of English studies, I started getting involved as a colleague. I have no reason to say “no” just because I don’t want to, I couldn’t say “no.” How can you say “no”? It’s part of teamwork, it’s part of work in the school”*.

Some senior teachers saw mentoring as their chance to ameliorate the school system, due to their belief that mentoring would help keep teachers in the system:

Interviewer: How did you feel when you were first asked to become a mentor? Respondent *“(female teacher, 32 years experience): I was very happy because I love what I do...If we prepare teachers to deal with the difficulties and not run away from them and say: “Ok, well I’m going somewhere else,” I mean to leave for a better salary... then the system loses and all the good people escape the system because they encountered difficulties”*.

Other teachers saw mentoring as a chance not only to improve their school but rather to influence positively the educational system and even all of society:

Interviewer: What could convince more experienced teachers to become mentors?

Respondent (female teacher, with 22 years of experience): *“I think if we explain how they are contributing to the youngsters and that if we want to change and improve the system we just have to adapt and help the younger teachers. If we care about the system... and we need to think of our grandchildren” ...we should mentor new teachers because I don’t want things to stay like they are now, I want them to look different...I think that is a calling and a challenge for experienced teachers. I told the experienced teachers: “Take the job; if you want to change the system it has to be done.”*

Holding a holistic point of view, the mentors perceived mentoring as making a difference for the children, the school, and the school system. It is worth noting that success is not always guaranteed. Some senior teachers hoped that through mentoring they would not only supply practical knowledge but also instill values they believed in. They were disappointed, however, when they failed. On the other hand, some teachers admitted the practical benefits

of training new teachers; they felt that they were training colleagues whose work would affect their own.

Interviewer: Why do you keep agreeing to mentor year after year? *“Respondents (female teacher, with 31 years of experience): Well, first of all, I’m interested in success in my subject. The classes I teach now, well next year I could be given another teacher’s class and I don’t want to get them in a [bad] condition that I could have improved if I had helped her”.*

Several mentors cited personal relationships as part of their motivation for mentoring. These motivations included continuing an existing relationship (i.e., the mentor agreed to participate in the program because he or she was acquainted with the novice), and a philosophy of helping others in general. A preexisting relationship is an important aspect in explaining the motivation to mentor. Many teachers pointed out that they had worked with novice teachers and assisted them even before entering the mentor program. The institutional appointment only formalized the relationship. In many cases, the experienced teachers described how they were approached by the novice teachers and agreed to become their mentors in the program in a way that supports Adeyanju and Alapasa’s (2020) doubt that something “as personal as a mentoring relationship can be formalized in a program”. This personal selection affords a degree of personal choice and mutual consent.

Constraint Factors to Mentoring

While examining the experienced teachers’ motivations for becoming mentors we also explored the factors that could deter senior teachers from accepting this role. Since in this stud, we interviewed only teachers who were mentors, we asked them what could cause them to leave the program or refuse to participate in the future. One of the predominant reasons given for refusing the position is time limitations:

Interviewer: What could prevent you from agreeing to be a mentor?

Interviewer: What could prevent you from agreeing to be a mentor? Respondent (female teacher, with 18 years of experience): *“It depends on the demands. If I was required to attend meetings and conferences, fill in hours, required to give two hours here and two hours there. Sometimes time plays a critical part for teachers and me. You can give up and say: “Another task that demands attention, I’m swamped, I’m under pressure, and I can’t do it.” Here there weren’t any requirements”*

Another negative motive is related to the novice teacher’s conduct. Some mentors expected the novice to demonstrate dedication and cooperation: Interviewer: What could prevent you from agreeing to be a mentor? *“Respondent (female teacher, with 31 years of experience): I think if I worked with a teacher who wasn’t cooperative, maybe. I wouldn’t want to take responsibility. Someone indifferent, who didn’t take my comments seriously and only pretended, who showed me a lesson plan that he didn’t actually teach in class. I would stop the mentoring, I’d say “I’m sorry, either you’re serious or you’re not.”*

Research Question II: What is the perceived contribution of the mentoring process to the mentor?

There are several types of benefits that the interviewees perceived to gain from their mentor-protégé relationships. These include emotional rewards, aspects of professional benefits along with some negative consequences.

Emotional rewards: When asked to outline how they perceive the results of mentoring for themselves, the most significant rewards seemed to be emotional ones. The majority of respondents saw job satisfaction as their main benefit from mentoring. They described feeling pleasure at watching the novice teachers grow and develop, seeing the results of their guidance at the end of the year when the novice teacher was offered a permanent position at the school. In this sense, some interviewees felt they were part of the novice teacher's success:

Respondent (female teacher, with 22 years of experience): *“said she learned a lot; she enjoyed it and felt she was benefiting and that she had helped me. I had told her she helped me because she was assisting in very difficult classes, pupils who need constant assistance and explanations and she was right beside me the whole way. That's what gives me satisfaction in the end, knowing that most of the pupils passed their finals and I'm a part of that, having her as an instructor working with them, going over the material, helping them and they liked her a lot”.*

Receiving positive feedback and gratitude from the novice teachers played an important part in the mentors' feelings about the process. In addition, mentors felt that the principal's opinion was important to them, and praise and recognition from the principal were perceived as part of the rewards of the mentoring process.

Interviewer: Did you feel satisfaction? Respondent (female teacher, with 10 years of experience): *“Yes, I think that's something about teaching, the work is very hard but we thrive on the smallest crumbs of gratitude from our pupils. Those compliments or a compliment from the principal remind us why we come to work. Those little things like being given a role, even if I'm not properly paid for it. It's flattering and that's what you work for”.*

A large part of the interviewees' satisfaction with their mentoring relationship came from the interpersonal interaction with the novice teacher. The senior teachers felt they were establishing long-term relationships, and a few even described a friendship going beyond the professional field (e.g., frequent phone calls and wedding invitations). Yet, the mentors in our study seemed anxious about the negative emotional impact that mentoring would have on them – the way others would see them, their careers, how they benefited from the work or were hurt by it.

Professional benefits. Becoming a mentor provides opportunities for renewal and advancement, a process characterizing mid-life teachers (Ojuolape & Daniel, 2021), and enables mentors to learn new things about themselves or refresh professional practices and perspectives they had neglected.

Interviewer: Could you give me an example of something you learned about yourself by working with the novice teacher? Respondent (female teacher, with 22 years of experience):

“Last year I mentored a Bible teacher. When I viewed her lessons I saw she was very methodical. I'm not. My personality is messier. But since I know my material so well I can get by without too much preparation. But in my first years I was very precise. She reminded me of that methodology [and] she took me back to being orderly. I think my pupils benefited a lot from that”.

Another learning experience for the mentors was being exposed to the younger teacher's point of view and academic knowledge, which included current practices, up-to-date research, and theories. One teacher pointed out that "since the novice teachers were younger and closer to the pupils' age they had an easier time coming up with examples the pupils could relate to." Financial compensation was last on the list of benefits to the mentor and only two teachers mentioned it. Yet, they noted it was nice to get something but the sum did not come near to covering the hours devoted to mentoring and did not present sufficient motivation in itself.

Negative results: Mentors' experiences in the mentoring program were not all positive. In the interviews, mentors expressed some sort of disillusionment when their expectations from the process were not met, or when they experienced the personal price of becoming emotionally over-involved in the mentoring process.

One of the recurrent expectations expressed by mentors was to make a difference by affecting the professional training of a novice teacher, creating a change, and being able to see the results of their work. One teacher explained how she felt when this did not happen:

"I have no problem with mentoring. I have a problem when mentoring fails. That's my problem...It's annoying...he needs to move things forward in class, and when he doesn't do his part then it falls to me. So it's annoying. It's annoying that I keep pushing and pushing him, and he just doesn't get started. (female teacher, with 12 years of experience)"

Another cause for frustration, then, was a sensation that their energy was wasted on a novice teacher who did not have the talent or personality to become a good teacher. One mentor, who had felt that the new teachers she was assigned to help rejected her expertise, left the mentoring role she was involved in and expressed no desire to return.

An additional source of concern stems from the evaluative aspect of the mentors' role. When a mentor had to write a negative report about her novice teacher she felt she was being forced to "be the bad person." Manifesting critical opinions and writing negative reports placed the teacher in an uncomfortable position of conflict with her novice teacher. Indeed, the functions of assistance and assessment have been seen by researchers as incompatible and should not to be carried out by the same person (Williams & Gabriel, 2019).

Research Question III: How do contextual determinants affect the mentoring experiences of mentors?

Several contextual determinants seem to have some influence on the mentoring experience of the mentors. The most important of these is the organizational context. Several interviewees attached great importance to the school's tendency to participate in experimental programs as teachers in these schools are more likely to see mentoring as an integral part of their responsibilities as teachers.

It is likely that teachers whose peers responded favorably to mentoring were encouraged to mentor, whereas teachers who found themselves isolated as mentors, and even frowned upon, felt less comfortable with mentoring. Teachers also cited cultural differences, mentality differences, and technical difficulties as contextual constraints on mentoring. An aspect of mentoring that has not been elaborated on sufficiently in previous studies is the influence of the mentors' career stage on the motivation for mentoring and the perceived benefits of mentoring. Although mentors shared many perceptions regardless of their career stage, we

found some different motivations and benefits that seem to be particular to a certain career stage. “Establishment career” mentors saw mentoring as a kind of informal promotion, a sign that they were trusted and being given more responsibility:

Respondents (female teacher, with 7 years of experience): I’m building myself up now as an instructor. That’s the thing, what started as mentoring with that one teacher gave me the confidence and the experience. When another school approached me and offered me the position of instructor I felt confident, I knew what I was going to do. It gave me confidence and knowledge, of course.

Mid-career mentors felt that being asked to mentor was in itself a badge of honor, recognition of their teaching skills. Respondent (female teacher, with 22 years of experience): *“First of all I think it’s recognition of my expertise as a teacher. It’s a vote of confidence, a compliment. I think it’s very pleasant to reach this stage. That you are recognized as a figure that can pass on her legacy, beliefs, abilities, yes!”*

Teachers in the late-career stage felt that even though they would soon retire they were passing on a legacy by mentoring a novice teacher:

Interviewer: What do you take with you from [the mentoring] process? Respondent (female teacher, with 32 years of experience): *“Two things. First of all, I gave and helped despite everything. Although you are always busy with your own problems and classes, I feel like I passed something of myself on”*. Another way in which mentors at different career stages differed was in their perspective of young teachers.

While teachers in the establishment career stage could identify with novices, older teachers mentioned the impact of the age gap on their feelings. They expressed the difficulties caused by changes in work ethics over time and demonstrated the frustration of senior teachers who cannot relate to the novices’ way of thinking.

Respondent (female teacher, with 22 years of experience): *“[New teachers] want immediate results, they don’t understand that teaching is a process and demands patience...Another problem is that they are very focused on money. If they teach school in the morning they try to find another job in the afternoon, and so they are less available and less focused on school. In the current educational system, you can’t just finish at two and go home. There are lots of conflicts and difficulties because of that”*.

DISCUSSION

An attempt was made in the current study to understand what mentor teachers’ motives are in participating in a mentoring process and what is the perceived contribution of the mentoring process to the mentor teacher himself/herself. From an analysis of the mentors’ accounts, several insights can be provided. First, mentors are motivated by a wide range of both extrinsic and intrinsic factors such as an altruistic desire to help a new teacher and a feeling that mentoring will improve their school, the school system, and even society itself. Some were drawn to mentoring as a result of their own experiences as novices who either received help from others or had to plunge into the deep water alone. Mentoring was viewed as a challenge and a learning experience. Many mentors in this study felt that the process of teaching a novice caused them to refresh their teaching perspectives and manners, a finding that corroborates past research indicating that teachers are motivated by an opportunity to

develop new ways of thinking and new insights (Hastings & Hitler 2023; Howey & Johnson, 2020; Simpson, Hastings, & Hill, 2024). Furthermore, the mentor's career stage has some influence on his/her motives and on the benefit he/she receives: recognition and increased self-confidence in early career stages versus legacy and renewal in later ones. Second, this study explored not only what motivated teachers to become mentors but also what could deter them from taking the position. The three main factors preventing teachers from becoming formal mentors were lack of time, the novice teacher's (negative) attitude, and the organizational atmosphere in the school, factors which were all identified in other national education systems (Fagbemi & Oladele, 2020).

Problems during mentoring arose due to lack of time to devote to mentoring, age gaps that created differences in mentality, and assigning teachers not equipped to deal with professional problems. The time factor is prominent in this study and not surprising since South African mentors are expected to assume mentoring duties in addition to their full-time teaching positions. Many mentors hold additional roles in the school (head of year, department head, etc.) and are not allocated hours by the school to work with the novice. It is likely that teachers who are prepared to go beyond their role requirements and engage in organizational citizenship behaviors (Ingersoll & Smith, 2023) also become mentors of new teachers. Since teachers are not formally required to become mentors and are not properly compensated or allocated time in their schedules, those most likely to become mentors are teachers with strong ideological convictions or a tendency to act altruistically.

Under these conditions, mentors seem to justify their work emotionally and seek their rewards from interpersonal interaction with novice teachers. The results of this study reinforce the findings of previous studies (Abraham & Gall, 2021; Butler, Etheridge, James, & Ellis, 2020; Bullough & Draper, 2023; Hastings & Hitler 2023; Howey & Johnson, 2020; Simpson, Hastings, & Hill, 2024; Tauer & Anjorin, 2022), suggesting that mentoring is an emotional experience for the mentor. Given the different locations of various studies with these findings, this leads to the conjecture that we may be observing a universal phenomenon that may occur not only in a certain society but also around the world. We found that most of the benefits of mentoring are emotional and include feelings of satisfaction, career success, and professional recognition from novice teachers, superiors, and colleagues.

Relationships were one of the most important benefits that the study location teachers cited, indicating that they enjoyed the personal relationship established with the novice teacher. This coincides with South Africa's ideological values as a society of a more collectivist nature with strong ties between individuals (Daniel & Kalu, 2018; Boaz & Philip, 2020). Nevertheless, the dominance of collective values in South Africa may account, at least in part, for the interviewees' propensity to view personal relations as a benefit of their mentoring relations with new teachers without indicating it as a motivational factor. It is likely that persons in a collective society perceive "social relations" as a natural, inherent element in their life that is not supposed to be a motive for taking an action. But, when these persons consider the benefit of their actions, social relations are seen as a fulfillment of their internalized needs for personal relations.

Another relationship important for the successful outcome of mentoring indicated by some interviewees was the mentor's relationship with the principal. As the leader of the school, the principal's attitude towards mentoring in general and his or her degree of support and appreciation for the mentors affects the organizational environment in which mentors work. South Africa's mentors relied on feedback, recognition, and praise from the principal as an

indication they were appreciated and doing well as mentors. Previous research (Henshaw & Parker, 2020) has indicated that the relationship with the principal can provide a mentoring relationship or supplement a formal mentoring connection with an experienced teacher. Since it is the principal's role to assign mentors within the school, asking a teacher to mentor is seen both as a vote of confidence in his or her abilities and as doing the principal a favor by complying with the request; in both cases it may strengthen the mentor's relationship with the principal.

The negative aspects of mentoring we found were mainly emotional. Teachers described feelings of frustration and annoyance when novice teachers were uncooperative or incompetent. Some teachers became so emotionally invested in the relationship that they felt a failure was their own. Negative feelings were attributed to expectations they or others held regarding the impact they would have on the novice teachers. This coincides with previous findings which described negative feelings such as anxiety, disappointment, and frustration (Achinstein & Villar, 2023), concerns regarding lack of time and pressure to carry out the mentoring role conscientiously while still being an effective teacher (Umar & Babatunde, 2019).

While the emotional labor demanded by mentoring occurs in many settings, the surrounding culture affects its direction and content. Values in the workplace are influenced by culture (Ingersoll & Smith, 2023). Indeed, we feel that both the motives and the benefits from mentoring relations described in our study reflect, in some sense, the collective values underlying the South African society in terms of mutual help and emotionality, as well as the centrality of the educational system. In this kind of system, great attention is given to issues of feedback, supervision, and management.

Conclusion and Implications for Educational Policy

I. Based on the results from the study findings the research suggests implications that researchers and policy-makers need to deepen their understanding of the motives and benefits for mentors in order to highlight the potential contribution of mentoring relations to the mentor, to novice teachers, to schools, and to the society. This, in turn, may assist in recruiting excellent teachers into mentoring programs proactively and devotedly.

II. It is important for stakeholders to understand that the practicum has emotional implications for the mentors. It is likely that mentors need support so that they can cope better with the emotional labor of mentoring.

III. Even though many of the mentor teachers in our study expressed overt feelings about mentoring, it is evident that their immediate organizational surroundings influenced their experience. This study suggests that organizational atmosphere is especially important in creating a comfortable working environment for mentors, and points to the principal's decisive role in supporting the mentoring process and the mentor. The principal can do a lot to alleviate the stress mentors experience, by being supportive and understanding of the mentor's feelings and by allocating time in the mentor's schedule. We would suggest, therefore, that those in charge of mentoring programs do more to engage principals' support and foster their understanding of their role in promoting supportive mentoring conditions.

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