

**The influence of mentoring relationships on the professional  
development of in-service distance education students**

by

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Submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of

**MASTER OF EDUCATION**

in the

**DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION MANAGEMENT AND POLICY STUDIES**

at the

**UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA**

**PROMOTER: DR T A OGINA**

**MARCH 2019**

# ETHICAL CLEARANCE CERTIFICATE



UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA  
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA  
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Faculty of Education

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<b>CLEARANCE CERTIFICATE</b>	<b>CLEARANCE NUMBER:</b> <b>EM 18/02/07</b>
<b>DEGREE AND PROJECT</b>	<b>MEd</b>  The influence of mentoring relationships on the professional development of in-service distance education students
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<b>APPROVAL TO COMMENCE STUDY</b>	08 March 2018
<b>DATE OF CLEARANCE CERTIFICATE</b>	14 March 2019

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- Data storage requirements.

## DECLARATION OF ORIGINALITY

I, Karen Gordon (Student number: 88009450), declare that this dissertation entitled: ***The influence of mentoring relationships on the professional development of in-service distance education student teachers*** which is submitted in accordance with the requirements for the Magister Educationis degree at the University of Pretoria is my own original work and has not previously been submitted in any form for any degree or diploma to any tertiary institution. Where the work of others has been used, sources have been identified and acknowledged by means of concise and complete in-text references and in the list of references.

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## DEDICATION

I dedicate this dissertation

- to my late father, Jopie Strydom, and my mother, Liz, who have always set an admirable example to achieve success through hard work and dedication and for inspiring me to be the best that I can be.
- to my loving husband, Andre, and my daughter, Anrè, who supported and encouraged me in my academic aspirations and understood that I needed to spend precious family time to pursue my studies, I love you more than words can say.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to express my sincere gratitude to the following people for helping me achieve this milestone in my life:

- My Heavenly Father who provided me with the strength, knowledge and perseverance to conduct my research successfully. All praise to Him for the mercy that He has bestowed upon me.
- Dr Teresa Ogina, my research supervisor, for her invaluable advice, guidance and inspiring support.
- My fellow post-graduates for all their encouragement and motivation.
- My principal and colleagues for understanding and supporting me throughout my research.
- The Mpumalanga Education Department for allowing me to conduct my research in the province.
- Principals and SGBs for granting me permission to conduct my research at their schools.
- Participants for taking part in this research project and sharing their experiences with me.

## ABSTRACT

The study reports on an investigation into the influence of the mentoring relationship on the professional development of in-service distant education student-teachers. It explored how student-teachers and their mentors at primary schools in Mpumalanga perceive and experience mentoring relationships as part of their professional development. The primary research question that guided this study was to determine what role mentoring relationships play in the professional development of in-service distant education student-teachers. Three sub-questions were used that focused on mentors and mentees' perceptions and experiences of mentoring relationships; aspects of the relationships that contributed most to their professional development; and the mentoring practice within the selected schools.

This qualitative study used a case study design and semi-structured interviews generated the relevant data. The study was grounded in Hudson's model of mentoring for effective teaching and learning as a conceptual framework. The participants consisted of senior teachers who acted as mentors and in-service distant education student-teachers were the mentees at six primary schools in Mpumalanga Province.

The findings of this study show that mentorship appears to be conceptualised as individual or collective student-teacher emotional support and professional support. Mentorship provides learning opportunities for the student-teachers to fill in the gaps in what could be regarded as the unwritten rules of the teaching profession. The positive influence of the mentor relationship involves supporting distance education student-teachers to grow and mature into accountable, responsible and professional teachers. Through the mentoring process mentors have an opportunity to reflect on their practice for their own professional career growth. The negative influence of mentoring was caused by the characteristics of mentor and organisational challenges. Recommendations are made for developing policy and improving practice.

**KEY WORDS:** Mentoring; Mentors; Mentees; Distant education student-teachers; Induction; Relationships; Professional development.

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# CHAPTER 1

## ORIENTATION TO THE STUDY

### 1.1 INTRODUCTION

Distance education provides an opportunity for many students worldwide to access higher education without physically attending classes at higher learning institutions. In recent years there has been an increasing interest and innovation in the use of technology to facilitate the process and ability of students from different contexts to access post-school education (Grimes, 2000; Macintyre & Macdonald, 2011). A major challenge for distant education students, especially in a country that is underdeveloped, is to overcome distance in education. Positive relationships between students, tutors and members of support staff reduce the feeling of remoteness and distance from the tertiary institution and there is a stronger sense of belonging (Macintyre & Macdonald, 2011).

Numerous studies on distance education teacher training have reported that arranging practical teaching for students presents organisational as well as educational difficulties (Du Plessis, 2011; Aldridge, Fraser & Ntuli, 2009). The likely cause of this is the pedagogical distance between student-teachers and training centres, student-teachers and lecturers and students and course material and teachers (Aldridge *et al.*, 2009). Other challenges that are barriers to realistic education for distant education students are the selection of students for certain schools; guidance and supervision when schools are visited; creating relationships; and evaluation and reflection on their teaching practice. Despite these challenges, a few studies examine the professional growth of distance education student-teachers during their in-service training as novice teachers.

Wilson and Demetriou (2007) found that the knowledge gained by novice student-teachers at training institutions and through distance learning is insufficient in the absence of real-life scenarios. They believe that it is crucial to align an educational programme with its practical application in the classroom. In order to practically orientate novice teachers in practical teaching and learning researchers, like

Ingersoll and Strong (2011) as well as Hobson and Malderez (2013), recognise mentoring as a strategy that contributes to novice teachers' training and growth.

Mentoring is a challenging process even though it usually forms part of the orientation of teachers. Studies on teacher education describe mentorship as the guidance of inexperienced educators by more knowledgeable educators (Ingersoll & Smith, 2003). Mentoring is based on the understanding that mentors, as knowledgeable people, are able to develop novice student-teachers. Mentoring has been specifically described by Salinitri (2005) as a method to create a lasting and worthwhile connection between individuals, focusing on its value and involving respect; the desire to learn from one another; and interpersonal skills. Mentoring is different when compared to most retention strategies as the emphasis is placed on general learning and mutual learning, especially that which is based on the relationship between the mentor and the mentee (Salinitri, 2005).

Creating positive mentorship relationships are important in education in order to involve student-teachers in teaching activities and career development (Pianta, Hamre & Allen, 2012). Relationships established through mentorships may also promote the positive cooperation between novice teachers and other co-workers and parents (Ferguson & Johnson, 2010; Merrill, 2006; Romano & Gibson, 2006). In-service distant education student-teachers have an opportunity to develop professionally through mentorship and cooperation with the mentors (Hobson, Ashby, Malderez & Tomlinson, 2009). Mentoring facilitates the process whereby in-service distant education student-teachers - in the early stages of learning - work positively with experienced educators.

Mentoring relationships are complex and successful mentoring involves various skills and knowledge to provide support for mentees (Gless & Moir, 2001; Zachary, 2009). Successful mentoring relationships are dependent on various factors, such as mentors' and student-teachers' personal and professional qualities; mentors' personalities and habits; and the situation or framework of the relationship between the mentor and mentee (Hobson *et al.*, 2009; Rippon & Martin, 2006; Hudson, 2010). Kazin-Boyce (2014) maintains that if inexperienced educators are not supported while learning to teach, they will experience stress and focus mainly

on surviving – a belief that underlines the importance of mentoring student-teachers as novice professionals.

The rationale for this study is that the researcher has been in the teaching profession for many years and, therefore, she has had many opportunities to mentor novice student-teachers. The researcher enjoys these mentoring relationships and receives a certain gratification from observing student-teachers develop into competent teachers. The topic of mentoring is close to her heart and it has become a natural choice for her to study the topic. It came to her attention that numerous in-service distant education student-teachers experience challenges in their mentoring relationships which impacts negatively on their professional development. Many senior teachers who have previously acted as mentors refuse to continue to be involved in mentoring relationships due to negative experiences. In this study the researcher assumed that one possible reason for the lack of professional development could be the absence of supportive or adequate mentoring relationships between mentors and student-teachers.

According to Cruddas (2005), mentoring is a process that leads to growth in one's profession which, in the case of teachers, includes the development of their teaching skills as well as in quality learning. The success of any mentorship is contingent on the behaviour of both the mentor and the mentee. Mentors employ various degrees of cooperation with their mentees, ranging from very supportive to *ad hoc* or random approaches (O'Brien & Goddard, 2006) that may influence the standard of the results (Hellsten, Prytula, Ebanks & Lai, 2009). This study pursued an in-depth understanding of the in-service distant education student-teachers' perceptions of their mentoring relationships and how they influenced their professional development.

## **1.2 PROBLEM STATEMENT**

The challenging context for teacher development in South Africa has been outlined in many studies, including those by Darling-Hammond (2003), Feiman-Nemser (2003) and Smith, (2005). The studies suggest that mentoring newly appointed teachers is critical not only for purposes of retention and reducing attrition but also to provide the support they need to develop professionally and to become

reflective practitioners. Teacher attrition and turnover is particularly high in first year in-service distant education student-teachers when compared with many other occupations (Bullough, 2012; Ingersoll & Smith, 2003). Employee turnover has many consequences for both industry and organisations, but it is particularly serious in the teaching profession where staffing problems may affect the school environment as a whole and learner performance, in particular (Hudson, 2013).

Regardless of the fact that they are thoroughly prepared and have a desire to teach, novice educators are frequently disillusioned by their initiation into education (Le Maistre, 2000; McPherson, 2000). Teacher induction is an effort to overcome the transition from being a student-teacher to being a qualified teacher (Ingersoll & Smith, 2004). The mentorship between a novice teacher as a mentee and a more experienced teacher as a mentor is a widely-used and important aspect of teacher-induction (Carver & Feiman-Nemser, 2008; Corbell, Reiman, & Nietfeld, 2008; Ingersoll & Smith, 2004; Schmidt, 2008). The mentor-mentee relationship is complicated by various demands that are part of the relationship (Valencia, Martin, Place, & Grossman, 2009). Contextual factors may be the cause of lost opportunities for learning, time constraints and the mentor's lack of ability to provide feedback for the mentee which have a negative impact on the sound interpersonal relationship between the mentor and the mentee.

This study acknowledges that mentoring relationships are challenging interactions that hinder and/or foster positive relationships (Bradbury & Koballa, 2008). The problem identified in the literature is that there has been little research on what is necessary for mentoring relationships to be considered successful from the in-service distant education student-teachers' perspectives. The voices of student-teachers as mentees need to be heard and, therefore, the researcher was motivated to explore what determines relationships between experienced teachers as mentors and in-service distance education student-teachers as mentees during their initial phase of teaching.

### **1.3 PURPOSE**

The purpose of this study was to investigate in-service distant education student-teachers' understanding of the concept 'mentorship'. The study also explored the experiences of relationships that in-service distant education student-teachers



have with their mentors. The objective was to acquire some insight concerning the influence of mentoring relationships on the professional development of in-service distant education student-teachers. The interaction between student-teachers and mentors was examined and the participants' opinions on factors that make mentoring relationships productive and effective or unproductive and deficient were established.

#### **1.4 RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

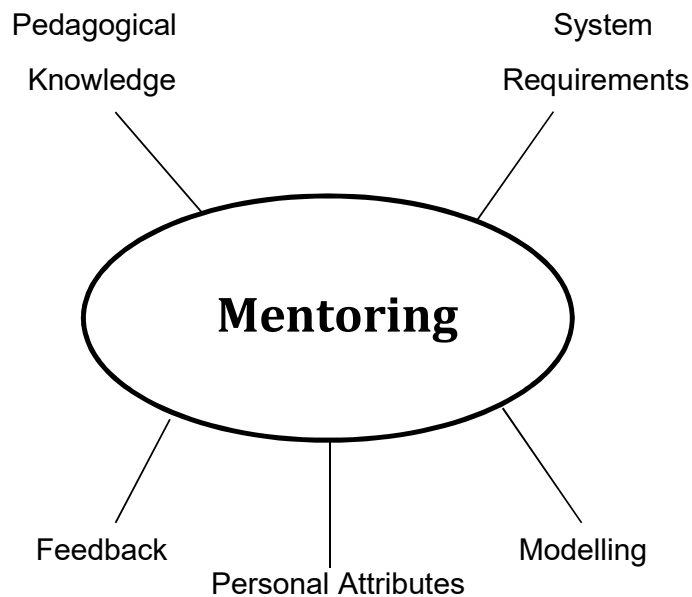
The primary research question was: *What is the influence of mentoring relationships on the professional development of in-service distant education student-teachers?* The secondary research questions were:

- *What do in-service distant education student-teachers understand by the concept 'mentorship'?*
- *How do in-service distant education student-teachers perceive their relationships with their mentors in relation to their professional development?*
- *What influence does the mentoring relationship have on the in-service distance education student-teacher?*
- *How does the mentoring process influence the professional development of in-service distant education student-teachers?*

#### **1.5 CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK**

In this research Hudson's model of mentoring for effective teaching was used as the conceptual framework. Hudson's (2010) model consists of five aspects which are: personal attributes, system requirements, pedagogical knowledge, modelling and feedback.

The five aspects are presented in the figure below which is followed by an explanation of each of the aspects.



**Figure 1.1: Theoretical Framework - Five Factor Model for Effective Mentoring (Adapted from P.B. Hudson, 2010)**

**Personal Attributes:** Good mentors possess a host of specific personal characteristics that involve supporting the student-teachers; being at ease in conversation with the student-teachers regarding educational procedures; and being attentive while listening to the student-teachers. Good mentors are competent educators with strong interpersonal skills; they are trustworthy and they are dedicated to life-long learning (Moir, 2009; Udelhofen & Larson, 2002). Beck and Kosnick (2002) also believe that mentors should be able to provide emotional support. They should encourage student-teachers to develop their own teaching style - even if it is different from their own (Patton, 2006). In addition, mentors should assist student-teachers to see things from different perspectives; provide them with direction; and encourage them to make their own decisions (Kilburg, 2007). Common dispositional characteristics identified by those who have had an opportunity to learn from mentors include authenticity, kindness, enthusiasm, patience, consistency and a positive attitude (Hurst & Reding, 2002). Mentors' own

characteristics should be used to promote the student-teachers' replication of procedures and to establish their self-assuredness as well as other positive attributes. In this study, the findings of the generated data were compared with these attributes.

**System Requirements:** Student-teachers enter schools with little knowledge of the organisation and the politics of school life. They require opportunities to obtain a theoretical and practical understanding of schools as organisations (Achinsteine, 2006). They need help in navigating the school's site and their departments. Mentors are able to provide important information about the daily routine of the school and the cultural norms of the school community (Bartell, 2005). They can help student-teachers understand the school culture by teaching them about curricular approaches, the resources that are available in the school and how to sustain a relationship with the principal and other professionals at the school. The details of imparting knowledge of the school context by more experienced teachers to distance education student- teachers are explored in this study.

**Pedagogical Knowledge:** Successful mentors are able to indicate ways to prepare for education; they create lesson presentation opportunities for the student-teachers. Planning for classroom activities is considered, specifically in this setting and a clear understanding of curriculum and assessment is established. Mentors can help overcome challenges; devise teaching strategies; assist with the formation of lessons; and broaden pedagogical knowledge about the curriculum and evaluation. In this report the voices of the participants regarding professional development in terms of subject knowledge in mentor-mentee relationships are highlighted.

**Modelling:** Mentor's passion for teaching may be reflected in essential teaching features. Significantly, their relationships with the student-teachers are important in education; fostering good connections with learners may show the student-teachers how these actions may influence learner development. The mentor should demonstrate applicable language to be used in the classroom that is proper for educating in terms of efficient education, effective classroom management skills, pro-active lessons and creative lesson plans. The availability of modelling for student-teachers is important for their professional development (Darling-

Hammond *et al.*, 2005). Mentors are often viewed as instructional coaches and are models of good instructional practices (Moir, 2009). They are experienced professionals who are regarded as master-teachers by their colleagues (Trubowitz, 2004). Effective mentors provide evidence of their own achievement of outstanding teaching practice through modelling (Moir, 2009). In this study the role that mentors play as role models for the distance education student-teachers was also explored.

**Feedback:** Successful mentors create opportunities for student-teachers and guide them; they help revise lesson plans; they monitor the teaching of the student-teachers; and they supply verbal and written feedback. Feedback is exceptionally beneficial in examining the practical experience of educational preparation; constructive feedback addresses the technical issues of classroom management, discipline and behavioural issues, administrative duties, interaction with parents, lesson planning, resource acquisition and other needs of student-teachers (Evans-Andris *et al.*, 2006). Mentors provide feedback in the form of written and oral comments which is presented honestly and sensitively (Glenn, 2006). Feedback is specific to the student-teachers' needs and focuses on their own readiness to discuss challenges. The most helpful feedback is descriptive, specific and focused on teaching behaviour (Bartell, 2005). The researcher also explored the ways in which student-teachers received feedback from their mentors during their mentor-mentee relationships.

## **1.6 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY**

The objective of this study was to obtain an understanding of the perceptions that in-service distant education student-teachers have of their mentoring relationships and how this influenced their professional development. The results of this study may indicate strategies for the development of effective professional mentoring relationships. The researcher anticipated that educators would be able to use the findings of this study in establishing mentoring relationships and in developing professional programmes for beginner teachers.

## **1.7 CLARIFICATION OF CONCEPTS**

The key concepts used in this study are described below.

**Distance Education** is an education system where students are not under continuous and immediate supervision of lecturers (Holmberg, 1977). In this study the in-service distant education student-teachers were under the supervision of their mentors in schools while they were studying part-time through distant education organisations with no supervision by the organisations' lecturers.

**In-Service Distant Education Student-Teacher.** In this study student-teachers were defined as beginner teachers who were already in service in the school system, while studying part-time through distant education programmes.

**Mentor.** A mentor can be described as a person who is well conversant with certain knowledge content and can help others who are inexperienced (Truter, 2008). A mentor is a more experienced senior teacher who shares his/her knowledge with less experienced in-service distant education student-teachers, supporting and guiding them in developing into professional, qualified teachers.

**Mentorship.** Mentoring is a process in which a more knowledgeable person leads in developing the skills and competency of a novice person. The process of mentoring includes establishing and advancing an interpersonal relationship between a more experienced person (mentor) and a novice person (mentee). The relationship is strengthened by values such as trust, mutual respect and benefits to the student-teacher and organisation (Pinho *et al.*, 2005:20).

**Mentoring programmes** are established programmes instituted to direct student-teachers development by means of examples related to training, demonstrating and replication (Feiman-Nemser, 1998). In this study mentoring programmes refer to the mentoring activities planned to develop in-service distant education student-teachers' knowledge and skills.

**Mentor relationship** is the relationship between the mentor and mentee during their participation in the mentoring programme. An effective relationship indicates that mentors are accomplishing their responsibility efficiently and that the mentees are gaining knowledge. The relationship concentrates on the development of the mentees through frequent intervention (Caruso, 1992). It is a secure, intense and equally advantageous relationship involving a person who has more knowledge, experience and skills and someone who is less experienced (Sweeny, 2008). In this study the mentoring relationship is the relationship between the in-service

distant education student-teachers/mentees and their more experienced teachers as mentors who guide and support them in their professional development.

**Mentoring-process** is an emerging process in which student-teachers and mentors commit to working together for a predetermined amount of time which is intended to promote professional growth (Sweeny, 2008). Daresh (2003:32) regards mentoring as “an on-going practice in which individuals in an organisation provide support and guidance to others who can become effective contributors to the goals of the organisation.” In this report the mentoring process refers to the professional development activities contributing to the development of in-service distant education student-teachers.

**Novice Teacher.** Novice teachers are those who are less experienced; novice teachers may be student-teachers or teachers in their 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup> or, possibly, 3<sup>rd</sup> year of teaching (Boreen, Johnson, Niday & Potts, 2009). In this study novice teachers were considered to be in-service distant education student-teachers with more than one year practical teaching experience.

**Professional Development.** Steyn and Van Niekerk (2002) explain that professional development takes place by means of a formal, methodical programme that is created to endorse personal and professional growth. Du Plessis *et al.* (2007) see professional development as the acquisition of skills, concepts and attitudes to enhance performance. Professional development, in this report, refers to the participation of student-teachers in development opportunities, so that they may become better equipped as teachers and educational leaders.

**Student-Teacher.** One who is mentored by a more experienced person (Sweeney, 2008). In this study/report an in-service distant education student-teacher is one who is being mentored by a more experienced teacher while working full-time at a school.

**Teacher Education.** Teacher education and teacher training refer to the assistance given to teachers to learn the values, knowledge and skills necessary to complete their duties and responsibilities as competent educators. In this study teacher education is considered to be the professional development of in-service distant education student-teachers through mentorships.

## **1.8 OUTLINE OF CHAPTERS**

This report is organised in five chapters which are as follows:

### **Chapter 1: Orientation to the Study**

In Chapter 1 the researcher introduces the study by presenting an orientation to the research topic, problem statement, rationale, the statement of purpose, aims and objectives, the theoretical framework and the significance of the study.

### **Chapter 2: Literature Review on Mentoring Relationships and Professional Development**

Chapter 2 contains an in-depth exploration of the African and International literature discussion on mentorship and the professional development of teachers. A link between the influence of positive mentoring relationships and the professional development of distant education student-teachers is established.

### **Chapter Three: Research Approach, Design and Methodology**

Chapter 3 describes the research approach, design and methodology used in this study. The procedures for participant selection and the strategy for data generating and analysing are also discussed.

### **Chapter Four: Research Findings and Discussion**

Chapter 4 presents the research findings, analysis and a discussion of how the findings relate to the relevant available literature.

### **Chapter Five: Summary of Findings, Conclusions and Recommendations**

Chapter 5 comprises a summary of the research findings. It draws conclusions and makes recommendations from the research findings.

## **1.9 CONCLUSION**

Chapter 1 has presented the background to this study as well as the research problem, rationale and research questions. The challenges that in-service distant education student-teachers experience during the mentoring process were identified and the gap in literature was emphasised. The conceptual framework and the significance of the study were discussed. The next chapter, Chapter 2,

reviews the relevant available literature on mentoring and professional development to provide a background to this study.



## **CHAPTER 2**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW ON MENTORING RELATIONSHIPS AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT**

#### **2.1 INTRODUCTION**

Chapter 1 consisted of a discussion of the background to the study and presented the purpose, research problem, research questions, rationale, conceptual framework and significance of the research. Chapter 2 is a review of the literature on mentoring relationships in the professional development of in-service distant education student-teachers. This chapter explores the following five main sub-themes on mentoring relationships. The concept of mentoring to indicate different aspects, like its definition, the distinction between formal and informal mentoring and different mentoring styles. Professional development and the purpose of the mentor and the ideal attributes, the value of mentoring, benefits and barriers to professional development; and mentoring relationships, followed by research on mentoring relationships and teachers' perceptions of them.

#### **2.2 THE CONCEPT OF MENTORING**

Mentoring is the developing of the skills of the novice. Researchers, like Ellinger (2010), Hopper (2001), Rhodes *et al.*, (2004) and Smith (2000), argue the effectiveness of mentoring in the development of a professional career. They suggest the importance of mentoring in relation to growth in a career which may lead to job satisfaction. Mentors make use of their expertise and experience to lead and educate less experienced individuals. Various definitions of mentoring are found in literature.

##### **2.2.1 Definitions of Mentoring**

Johnson, (2002) defines mentoring as a process that enables and encourages continuous learning, growth and creativity while Janse van Rensburg and Roodt, (2005) describe mentoring as the transfer of precise knowledge from the mentor to

the mentee by means of a defined process. Blunt and Conolly, (2006) define mentorship from the perspective of a relationship as a process that involves psychological guidance, influence, inspiration from a mentor to a mentee. Mentoring is used as a technique to transfer essential job-related skills, attitudes and behaviour from a more experienced to a less experienced person (Van Dijk, 2008). Top achievers can mentor other employees in organisations to achieve organisational goals (Stone, 2002). According to Pinho *et al.* (2005:20),

“Mentoring is a dyadic relationship in which an older, more experienced member of the organisation fosters the growth and development of a junior employee to a point where he or she becomes a competent professional. Mentoring is also viewed as a dynamic, developmental relationship between two individuals based on trust and reciprocity, leading toward the enhancement of the junior member’s psychological growth and career advancement and toward achieving mutual benefits for the mentor, mentee and organisation.”

Mentoring is a human relation activity that aims at empowering others with knowledge and skills that leads to professional competency and maturity (Shenkman, 2008). This study was based on the definition of mentorship as a human relation activity that leads to professional development.

### **2.2.2 Differentiation between Formal and Informal Mentoring**

Informal mentoring involves an agreement between both parties that the mentees will trust mentors to guide and support them in developing knowledge and improving their skills; the interaction will occur beyond the usual limits of the organisation. In-service and social interaction results in mentors influencing and building a relationship with the mentees. Mentors also give mentees support, leadership and feedback based on their knowledge of how to accomplish tasks; what needs to be done; and how to achieve learning outcomes. From their mentors mentees gain knowledge concerning how to improve their teaching as well as the management of their professional development and personal growth. Informal mentorships are considered a central developmental factor in the promotion of novices in companies (Friday *et al.*, 2004).

Formal mentoring involves a third party - usually the company - that fosters a relationship between mentees and mentors. Mentors should be depended on for guidance and support so that mentees are able to fulfil their potential (Stone, 2002; Friday, Friday & Green, 2004). The specific attributes of a formal mentoring programme include managerial support; corporate strategies; logical pairing of mentors and appropriate mentees through suitable processes; co-operative mentor to mentee pairings; determined length and regular contact between the mentors and their mentees (Friday, Friday & Green, 2004).

### **2.2.3 Types of Mentoring**

The relevant available literature on mentoring merely distinguishes between informal and formal mentoring. However, there are five known types of mentoring that Janse van Rensburg and Roodt (2005) identify. The first type is Executive Mentoring which involves informal relationships with high ranking officials, like executives and directors. The second type is the mentorship done by supervisors and is called Supervisory Mentoring. Thirdly, there is Diversity Mentoring which is concerned with cross-cultural mentoring and involves diverse relationships in terms of race, cross-gender and other cultural differences. The fourth type, Peer Mentoring, is learning from colleagues who are at the same level in terms of work ranking; such relationships are friendly, supportive and mutually beneficial. The fifth type of mentoring is Hierarchical Mentoring which involves passing down knowledge and skills from a senior experienced person to a junior inexperienced person.

## **2.3 PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT**

In the United States (US) there is widespread concern among educators at all levels about the quality of education which has led to a renewed interest in teacher preparation and teacher induction (Ingersoll & Strong, 2011). Some of the concerns include the lack of or poor preparation for a teaching career during the induction process; educational researchers have referred to the transition of beginner teachers from training into their first teaching job as a period of induction (Wang, Odell & Clift 2010).

One of the goals of teacher induction is to provide on-going assistance to novice teachers by means of mentoring programmes. The objective of teacher induction is to enhance the novice teacher's effectiveness in the profession as the quality of a teacher - more than any other factor - can have an effect on how much learners learn (Clark, 2012; Ingersoll & Strong, 2011). Most induction programmes are based on a desire to assist, support and guide novice teachers through their difficult and stressful first years of teaching until they have established a successful professional practice. In some schools mentoring is part of the induction programme of novice teachers.

An induction programme that includes mentoring, orientation and training can be highly effective (Bullough, 2012). While the programmes have a positive impact on novice teachers, a vital aspect of the induction process is strong mentoring (Waterman & He, 2011). It is important that a mentoring programme does not simply become an add-on activity but a well-planned professional development strategy (Johnson *et al.*, 2004). Mentors are an invaluable resource for beginner teachers; they provide support by answering questions, sharing lesson plans, observing classes, providing encouragement and helping the transition of the novice teachers into the school community (Waterman & He, 2011). However, the careful development of the mentor programme is important for its success. A mentor programme that serves to truly support new teachers and decrease the probability of teachers becoming discouraged and leaving the profession requires thoughtful consideration regarding the support structure to boost teachers in their careers (Birkeland, & Feiman-Nemser, 2012).

Well-informed school leaders undertake the responsibility of creating mentor programmes. They do well in recognising that it is not a one-size-fits-all proposition as it is essential that the programme should complement the culture of the school (McCann, Johannessen & Ricca, 2005). For example, in a smaller, rural and more intimate school setting, a simple orientation programme for new teachers may be sufficient as a catalyst to ensure the success of mentoring relationships but a large urban school may be better served with a programme that requires regular meetings between the students and the mentor teachers. Hobson and Malderez (2013) maintain that mentoring programmes should offer interventions that orientate novice teachers at the school and in the community which means that

the programme should be tailored to the specific demographic of the school culture and the environment to best meet the needs of the novice teachers.

Regardless of the type of programme and the implementation style, the goals of the mentoring programme should be based on high quality principles. According to Resta *et al.* (2013), learning to teach is a career-long developmental process - a continuous cycle of inquiry into practice, self-assessment and reflection. The support provided by departments of education should be responsive to the needs of all novice teachers which includes professional learning as the foundation for improving learner outcomes. The focus of these guiding principles should be to help novice teachers confront the challenges of the classroom (Resta *et al.*, 2013). Collegial interpersonal relationships as well as effective communication contribute to the professional growth of newly appointed teachers at the beginning of their teaching careers.

There is no doubt that appropriate training is an important aspect of the support that mentors need as they attempt to help novice teachers. A sound and effective mentoring programme should strive to meet not only the needs of the mentees but also the needs of the mentors through adequate training and compensation (Waterman & He, 2011). Although some programmes include training for mentors, others do not. It is important to note that not all teachers can be good mentors despite their teaching knowledge and skills (Burks, 2010). This finding suggests that teachers need to be trained to become effective mentors.

Stanullis, Little and Wibbens (2012) examined a large-scale mentoring intervention programme to determine whether or not targeted mentoring could make a difference to novice teachers. A specific model for establishing directed discussions with novice teachers was used to enhance the prospective teachers' pedagogical skills. In their study Stanullis *et al.* (2012) revealed the importance of a discussion strategy as a mentoring tool by highlighting the ability of mentors to plan and reflect on their classroom practices after such training as opposed to mentors who were not trained, using the same intervention. This finding suggests that training mentors in certain knowledge and skills has a direct positive impact on the influence that the mentors have on their mentees.

Programmes also vary according to how they remunerate mentors for their services (Ingersoll & Strong, 2011). Depending on particular departments of education, mentors may receive no compensation at all for the time and effort they invest in their assigned novice teachers. When designing mentoring programmes, serious consideration should be given to ensure a positive experience for the experienced teacher-mentors in order to create a momentum for mentoring within schools (Stanullis *et al.*, 2012). Mentors need to be motivated and recognised in their mentoring services.

### **2.3.1 Coaching and Modelling**

Coaching is one professional growth method that contributes to the improvement of schools (Laba, 2011). A mentee is studied by a coach who provides suggestions and recommendations that may lead to improvement (Boyd, 2007). Educators acting as peer coaches reflect on practice and ideas in order to develop their own teaching; they improve one another professionally (Rhodes and Beneicke, 2002).

Modelling is a second method and is concerned with setting a good example in teaching to influence education and learning as well as professional growth (Guskey, 2000; Hirsh & Killion, 2007; Prinsloo, 2010). Reeves, (2008) is of the opinion that institutions are oblivious to the important influence of mentors on professional development.

### **2.3.2 Monitoring, Reflection and Mentoring**

Monitoring, a third method for professional growth, involves classroom visitations and the observation of actual educational practice (Prinsloo, 2010). Teachers are provided with positive reports and suggestions by their mentors on the best ways to improve their educational practice. Guskey (2000) comments that it is essential to make sure that knowledge, skill development and the improvement of educational practice is studied and teachers are given feedback to facilitate their professional growth.

The fourth professional growth method, reflection, supports the continuous re-evaluation of educational practice to determine what was successful and where improvement is possible (Day, 1999; Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1999; Schon, 1991).

Mentors should constantly reflect on their practice to ensure a successful educational environment.

Mentoring is the fifth method for professional growth which is discussed in more detail in the report. It is essential to comprehend the principles of mentoring to recognise the intention of mentoring with regard to professional growth and its influence on professional growth. A discussion on the mentor's role, the attributes associated with the perfect mentor, the need for mentoring and the barriers to mentoring is given below.

### **2.3.3 The Role of Mentors**

Ingersoll and Strong (2011) believe that the role of mentors is concerned with what mentors should be like in order to effectively perform their assigned task. Mentors need to be able to provide inexperienced employees with guidance on how to perform the tasks for which they are responsible (Rikard & Banville, 2010). In the school setting mentors are experienced teachers who share their knowledge with less experienced teachers and gently nudge them forward in their practice. Mentors need to fulfil organisational functions and roles (Janse van Rensburg & Roodt, 2005; Meyer & Fourie, 2004); they should protect mentees from dangerous situations within the organisation; initiate challenging projects; establish and develop mutual relationships; guide and support mentees in practices that may restrict their professional development and growth. They should also develop other behaviour patterns and skills of mentees that can be used in teaching practice.

Ingersoll and Strong (2011) suggest that mentors have three major roles: the role of helper - someone who is a resource and a giver of time, energy and support; the role of colleague - someone who is an advocate for mentees and the profession; and the role model - someone who is a facilitator enabling novice employees to become independent, mature and professional. In terms of the teaching profession, mentors also need to know the roles that building and central office administrators, department heads, lead teachers and others play in new teacher orientation. According to Hudson (2013), it is important for mentors to have assistance and opportunities to voice their thoughts, challenges and solutions with other mentors. Providing "sounding board" assistance (Meyer & Fourie, 2004:41) to mentees by giving them a helpful commentary on their notions.

Making friends with mentees; encouraging their subject interests; exposing them to other mentors in order to give them opportunities to learn from various experienced educators; as well as welcoming and appreciating mentees are all part of mentors' roles. Mentors also act as role models for their mentees.

In terms of acting as role-model for mentees, it is important that mentors improve their own skills to assist others to develop an understanding of their professional development; to recognise and acquire relevant information; and to increase their ability to teach effectively. One way to enhance mentors' own abilities is the process of reflection. Hudson (2013) maintains that mentors can expand the practice of reflecting on their experiences through modelling reflective teaching practice. Generally, teachers need to stay up-to-date with professional practices and inspire novice teachers to do the same by reflecting on their own experiences. Furthermore, they should model and demonstrate relevant applicable instructional behaviour which includes reflection. Mentors should also present opportunities for training and reflection and, in addition, they could demonstrate their own methods of self-evaluation through the evaluation of instructional behaviour and strategies.

Lastly, mentors should share productive feedback with new teachers and examine how reflective teaching practice can assist student-teachers to assess their own professional development. In order to help mentees reflect on their practice researchers, like Hudson (2013) and Waterman and He (2011), recommend that potential mentors should be involved in professional growth activities, studying mentoring practices and what they should do before they start mentoring.

Podsen and Denmark (2000) argue that the component of the mentoring role that is often the most challenging for mentors is providing positive feedback to novice teachers whilst continuing a relationship with them as colleagues. According to Bieler (2012), mentors provide responses to fit the needs of the protégés; they are the leaders who recognise the stages of development and readiness for growth. The growth process may involve providing challenging tasks and encouraging and promoting the development of potential in new teachers.

Most teachers who choose to be mentors have collaborative working styles; however, they also need to assume a directive relationship style (Hudson, 2013). The least successful mentoring relationships are those where the teachers



communicate negative opinions about their positions, their profession and/or the entire mentoring process. Such relationships could be caused by a lack of training on mentoring skills.

Part of the benefit of having trained mentors is that they are able to assist new teachers to design lessons; support them in collecting knowledge about best practice; monitor the novice teacher's lessons; and supply them with positive feedback. New teachers will then carefully think about their preparation and use what they have learnt in their next lessons. Stanulis, Little and Wibbens (2012) found that new teachers who work with expert mentors possess a more advanced level of teaching ability than novice teachers who do not have mentors. The experience of how to assist novice teachers and their ability to provide guidance in targeted areas, such as leading classroom discussion, can be a crucial factor in improving new teachers' teaching skills. Mentors who provide the knowledge new teachers need in leading classroom discussion is an important attribute that may lead to improved teaching practice (Stanulis *et al.*, 2012).

#### **2.3.4 The Attributes of an Ideal Mentor**

Mentorship is an important professional development strategy which calls for mentors to possess or acquire certain characteristics (Christene *et al.*, 2011). A good mentor should exhibit compassion, enthusiasm, generosity, honesty, insightfulness, selflessness and wisdom. The mentor should be good at communicating and emphasising the potential and the importance of continuous communication to mentees. According to Christine *et al.* (2011), it is essential for good mentors to constantly converse with mentees. Guiding the mentees towards successful careers by the persistent sharing of their expertise and wisdom is seen as a major part of good mentoring.

A mentor should have the following characteristics and personal and professional attributes and qualities: an emotionally welcoming attitude to mentees by being friendly, approachable, respectful and open; being an active listener and listening carefully to what the mentees say, conveying an honest interest and giving individual attention (Johnson & Ridley, 2004). The attributes also include echoing mentees' most important concerns. Treating them positively rather than being judgemental of their feelings, ideas and actions; possessing an appropriate sense

of humour with an ability to combine work and fun; and the ability to be humble. In addition, possessing emotional intellect where an emotional awareness and awareness of the feelings of others is demonstrated; being trustworthy; and behaving consistently and with integrity as well as being respectful of the different ideals and values of other people are important attributes.

### **2.3.5 The Importance of Mentoring**

St. George and Robinson (2011) believe that mentoring promotes and improves growth in mentees and mentors. In order for mentoring programmes to succeed, mentors and student-teachers should be committed to them; inexperienced teachers can be assisted by mentors through the development of professional skills which can assist learners to succeed academically. Frydaki and Mimoura (2014) are of the opinion that helping inexperienced teachers to successfully use what they have been taught is a crucial part of any mentoring programme. They also suggest that mentoring programmes can help both mentors and mentees to reconsider procedures and ideas related to effective education and, thereby, assist the new teacher.

Mentoring is more than just guidance for new teachers in institutions. It is a process where recommended practice is shared and serves as support for novice teachers. Rockoff, (2008) maintains that mentoring is important to ensure the success of novice educators as it helps them to develop their professional knowledge and skills. Mentoring is important in that it leads to ensuring that the quality of education and learning is achieved; it also reduces turnover among novice educators (Rockoff, 2008). According to Borsuk (2009), mentoring programmes help novice teachers remain in education; however, should teachers leave the profession, this is usually due to relocation and an offer of better career opportunities elsewhere - not because of the challenges encountered in the profession.

Holloway (2001) believes that mentors benefit from mentorship because they learn about their skills and their shortfalls through mentoring others. It is an opportunity to assess oneself in terms of strength and weakness and the need for the advancement of one's own educational practice. An attentive, methodical mentoring programme has a positive encouraging impact on the accomplishments

of novice teachers and it is a benefit to mentors as well. The support new teachers obtain from mentoring results in better teaching and learning in learners as well as a greater ability to mentor novice teachers.

### **2.3.6 Barriers to Mentoring**

A novice teacher's fear of change and an unwillingness to be mentored are barriers to successful mentoring. According to Haak (2006) and Matthew, Hansen and Williams (2004), mentoring should not be compulsory; it is important that mentees desire growth and professional development. Mentees should embrace change and not be coerced; they should volunteer to be mentored and, in addition, experienced educators should not be forced to mentor the inexperienced teachers.

Time may be a limiting factor. Lee and Feng (2007) maintain that granting mentees and mentors time for meeting and interacting within school hours results in more effective mentoring when compared to after-school mentoring. Insufficient time may also be a barrier to mentoring. Hansford, Ehrich and Tennent (2004:11) add that a "lack of professional expertise and a personality match between the mentor and mentee and the pairing with the mentee can be problematic." This evidence from the literature suggests that the time factor may hinder mentoring in schools; that mentors should be experts and have experience; and that a mutual understanding should exist between mentors and mentees. A mutual understanding may be further influenced by the cultural backgrounds of the mentors and the mentees; Hansford, Ehrich and Tennent (2004) concluded that another limiting factor to mentoring was mentors and mentees different cultural backgrounds as well as gender-related issues.

The existence of a formal mentoring programme and process at a school is an indication of more effective mentoring (Crasborn *et al.*, 2008). Barreraa, Braleyb and Slate (2010) agree that the lack of a formal administration process to guide the mentoring process in schools causes challenges, such as poor support for arranging mentor and mentee meetings and where formal instructions for mentors' guidance of mentees do not exist.

## 2.4 MENTORING RELATIONSHIPS

Mentoring relationships are important in education, specifically as a means to involve student-teachers in the teaching profession and to facilitate constructive interaction between them, their co-workers and parents (Ferguson & Johnson, 2010; Pianta, Hamre & Allen, 2012). Mentees learn to be professional teachers through mentoring and, therefore, it is necessary for them to cooperate with mentors (Hobson, Ashby, Maldarez & Tomlinson, 2009). In the developmental phase of learning the fundamentals of teaching mentees are given an opportunity to interact effectively with mentors who are more informed and knowledgeable about teaching. This interaction creates a teaching-learning relationship with practical educational involvement in terms of practical teaching and internship when mentees are welcomed into mentors' classrooms. At this stage the mentoring relationship is initiated in a more social setting. Beutel and Spooner-Lane (2009) believe that relationships in mentoring originate in the abilities and experience demonstrated by mentors.

Mentors in the process of mentoring may use different leadership styles and establish different types of relationships; while some may prefer to use a display and *laissez-faire* approach, others use more formal approaches (O'Brien & Goddard, 2006). The approaches used by the mentors as they train the mentees have an impact on the consequences of the training (Hellsten, Prytula, Ebanks & Lai, 2009). Establishing relationships between mentors and mentees are subject to the different stages of the mentoring process that include a linear scale of the mentoring relationships which ranges from highly functional relationships to highly dysfunctional ones but most relationships fall in the medium scale (Gormley, 2008). Gormley (2008) notes the complex nature of the interpersonal relationships between mentors and mentees and calls for further research to be done on mentoring relationships (Bradbury & Koballa, 2008). Therefore, a facilitated approach to mentoring supports mentors in their actions and assists in the construction of successful mentoring relationships.

The standard of the mentoring relationships rests on numerous factors involving the mentors' and mentees' individual and professional abilities (Rippon & Martin, 2006); their knowledge and experience (Bullough, Draper, Hall, & Smith, 2008);

the setting or framework of the mentoring (Forsbach-Rothman, 2007); and the choice and combination of mentors and mentees to establish constructive cooperation (Hobson *et al.*, 2009). Although mentors function at different complicated levels and through various stages with challenging needs that influence their behaviour, Valencia, Martin, Place and Grossman (2009) maintain that mentors have different abilities and capabilities which may influence their relationships with mentees and the feedback they give them. Niehoff's (2006) study on mentorship is based on social work; however, the findings concerning mentors' personalities relates to mentoring in an educational context. Niehoff (2006) believes that a strong commitment is essential in establishing positive relationships between mentors and mentees.

Relationships between mentors and mentees demand sound interpersonal interaction and the ability of mentors to communicate pedagogical knowledge successfully to mentees (Gehrke & Gormley, 2008). Barriers to successful mentoring relationships primarily include an absence of support for mentees, inadequate personal abilities and insufficient time for discussion. These and other concerns present the rationale for the careful selection of mentors (Kilburg, 2007; McCann & Johannessen, 2009).

The selection of mentors is a matter that influences mentoring as unwilling mentors could be an obstacle to positive mentoring relationships (Hudson, 2010). In terms of committing to mentoring relationships, Anderson (2007) found that 48 mentors and 56 pre-service educators demanded to be familiar with the control of inconsistency in the mentoring functions. Hansman (2003) added that the relationships between mentors and mentees are associated with socially constructed power. Mentors should be able to control the power relationship that they have with their mentees to avoid negative effects on the relationship (Maynard, 2000). The relationship between mentors and mentees should encourage psychosocial growth and should not be intimidating (Hansman, 2003).

Bradbury and Koballa (2008:2135) recognise causes of stress in relationships when the authority lies with the mentors and mentees "may be unwilling to question the practices of the school or mentor teacher for fear of fracturing the relationship or affecting the mentor's evaluation of their progress." Bradbury and

Koballa (2008) further suggest that in informative interaction other challenges may emerge, such as stress between educational perspectives and mentor support that may compare education development principles and compromise the mentorship relationship. The mentor's roles as friend, trainer and evaluator can be daunting. There is proof that both mentor and mentee require "to illuminate expectations and to foster productive communication" to construct successful mentoring relationships (Bradbury & Koballa, 2008:2143).

Other researchers, like O'Brien and Christie (2005), are of the opinion that mentoring relationships should be based on the statement that mentees pursue the professional and personal abilities of their mentors. Numerous researchers, including Rajuan, Beijaard and Verloop (2007) and Rippon and Martin (2003), confirm that mentees desire an encouraging mentoring relationship with their mentors which is constructed around the mentors' personal characteristics, such as intelligence and interpersonal skills, which improve mentoring. Mentors' personal attributes and skills may determine the nature of their mentoring relationships and motivate the development of skills in their mentees, such as effective communication, positive attitudes, values and confidence (Hudson, 2006). The identified skills may assist in constructing mentoring relationships.

Mentees may also demonstrate personal characteristics that support them in their interaction with their mentors, like being inspired and reflective (Moberg, 2008). In a mixed-method research study Hudson (2013) discovered that skilled mentors expected mentees to have particular desirable characteristics, such as being enthusiastic to teach; being open to relationship construction; and demonstrating a dedication to children and their education. Additional attributes expected of mentees have been identified as being engaged in constant learning; possessing the skill to reflect on positive feedback; being resilient; and taking responsibility for their education. Mentees may have less desirable skills that need more encouragement to achieve a stage of resilience (Gu & Day, 2012; Howard & Johnson, 2004).

Mentoring relationships should provide support, resources and camaraderie for new teachers who are at risk of dropping out of the profession (Hudson, 2013; Ingersoll & Strong 2011). Although relationship-building seems to be an important

aspect of mentoring, little empirical research has been done on the topic of successful mentoring relationships for the professional development of distance education student-teachers and how it affects their retention or attrition from the profession.

This study assumed that a constructive mentoring relationship would assist in facilitating a positive teaching experience. It was, therefore, important to determine methods in which mentors and mentees could contribute to mentoring relationships and enhance professional growth (Margolis, 2007). Successful mentoring relationships where mentors exercise personal qualities may support mentees to consider practices towards reaching objectives (Sempowicz & Hudson, 2012).

#### **2.4.1 Factors that Affect the Mentor Relationship**

While teaching and learning is a topic concerning individual interpretation of practice, it takes place within a social context. In order to create conditions for new teachers to learn all that is expected of professionals and to succeed as reflective, learner-centred educators, an effective mentoring relationship is important. Not everyone is naturally innately capable of forging quality relationships, such as those that are required in mentorship. However, individuals can be taught the skills that contribute to quality mentor relationships (Garber, 2013). According to Burks (2010), a few specific factors that affect the quality of mentor relationships include trust; the active listening skills of mentors; the same grade level taught by mentors and mentees; an awareness of gender differences; and school climate/culture. Trust is an essential element in developing a mentor relationship (Nash, 2010). It may be built through demonstrating active listening skills on the part of mentors. Mentors' abilities to interpret non-verbal communication in terms of thoughts, feelings and body language serve to build trust and effective mentor relationships (Portner, 2008).

Boreen *et al.* (2009) suggest that mentors should have a minimum of 3 to 5 years of teaching experience and that mentors and mentees should teach the same content area or the same grade level. The mentors should be situated in classrooms that are in close proximity to those of the novice teachers. Mentors and mentees should be aware of gender differences, although the importance of

this factor may depend upon other circumstances. In addition, mentors may want to interview the novice teachers to determine whether they support the goals and expectations of the school.

Mentors should encourage their co-workers to talk to the novices about their preparation and previous teaching practice (Frels, Zientek, & Onwuegbuzie, 2013) and they should ask them to suggest mentoring support that they would consider to be most beneficial. Mentors should share something about their own education and backgrounds with their mentees to establish a context within which the mentoring relationship may develop (Ingersoll & Strong, 2011). The distinctive mentoring relationship between mentors and mentees presents opportunities for the mentees to approach and adopt more advanced social functions as they become part of the experienced community.

Mentoring conversations about teaching are important in the development of mentees' professional knowledge (Burks, 2010). If conversations are an integral part of successful mentoring relationships, the way in which mentors communicate is important in the process. Communicating openly and having a trusting relationship are other important elements if the mentoring process is to be successful. Burks (2010) maintains that mentors should be able to observe accurately and provide novice teachers with appropriate feedback about their practice in a respectful and collaborative manner. It is important that mentors do not confuse assessment with evaluation; assessment is a part of the mentoring process that gives novice teachers an opportunity for self-criticism and direction for improvement while evaluation is a final judgment. According to Hobson and Malderez (2013), if novice teachers feel judged, it may cause a failure in their relationship with their mentor.

Other factors cited above that enhance the mentoring relationship are the mentors' teaching experience, shared content areas and grade levels. Mentors should have these factors in common with their assigned novices in order to generate valuable insights into teaching (Efron, Winter & Bressman, 2012). According to Rajuan *et al.* (2011), relationships between mentors and mentees are heavily based on relational factors, such as personal preferences, prior experience, goals and expectations that can influence the successful mentoring process in the



relationships. Much thought needs to be given to the approach that mentors take with mentees; in order for the approach to be effective, mentors and mentees need to collaborate on various ways to work together as quality mentoring occurs when there is a genuine exchange of ideas (Ozder, 2011).

Despite the numerous positive benefits of mentoring, tension may arise during the process. Ingersoll and Strong (2011) discussed a few of the more common problems encountered in mentoring relationships, such as a lack of time for collegial conversations, differences in educational philosophies and qualms about the mentors' approachability concerning evaluation. In addition, another source of tension may be the inappropriate length of mentoring relationships. In most productive relationships, mentors tend to gradually withdraw as the novice teachers gain experience and move from dependent student-teachers to colleagues (Frels *et al.*, 2013).

Whether in formal or informal mentoring relationships, problems are not simple or easily addressed by short-term solutions. The researcher believes that possibly once successful mentoring relationships are established within a mentoring programme, the future generations of mentees will have a more supporting and effective orientation into the teaching profession.

#### **2.4.2 Defining Successful Mentor Relationships**

The quality of mentor relationships can influence the efficacy of programmes, particularly among new teachers. Ingersoll and Strong (2011) suggest effective practices of reflecting, assessing, coaching and guiding that align with mentors' pre-determined critical mentoring functions and mentor-teacher standards to the elements of content, process, adjustment, collaboration and contribution. In terms of context and content, effective mentors act with an intent to align their actions and their relationships with the norms expected within the organisational culture and the principles of adult learning theory (Portner, 2008). As such, beginning teachers' prior perceptions of teaching affect what they learn in the context of mentor relationships (Wang, Odell & Clift, 2010). The quality and effectiveness of mentor relationships are influenced by social and cultural contexts (Wang *et al.*, 2010). Mentors represent a model of an accomplished and self-reliant professional, demonstrating qualities which they instil in the student-teacher, such

as those associated with intellectual growth, i. e., reasoning, creativity, risk taking and problem-solving (Stanulis, Little & Wibbens, 2012).

Effective mentors are described by Cho, Ramanan and Feldman (2011) as those who meet the professional needs of mentees through strategies based on adult learning theory, teacher development, communication and coaching; they attempt to adjust to potential difficulties, providing multiple solutions and purposefully tailor support in each of these areas (Cho *et al.*, 2011). Through processes and adjustment, effective mentors are able to gather information on the progressive development of their mentees, modify their practice and add their own knowledge and skills to assist the student-teachers (Portner, 2008). Portner (2008) further suggests that they employ the concepts of collaboration and contribution that enlist assistance from others that may support their own personal weakness, amplifying the positive impact of mentoring. Mentors also seek personal mentoring education opportunities for growth and improved practice (Portner 2008). Connor and Pokora (2012) add suggested guidelines for developing effective mentors that may be translated into possible aspects that could serve to positively affect mentoring programmes; they include a clear expectation of their roles and an awareness of culture and gender issues.

It is thought that mentors need to support their mentees while challenging them as well. New teachers need to develop a forum where they are encouraged to express their problems and resolve their confusion with an awareness of professional boundaries. Mentors also need mentoring, along with recognition and rewards as well as support and protected time to appropriately plan and perform their duties. It is important that the effectiveness of mentoring relationships should be continuously evaluated (Clark & Bymes 2012). Several recommendations to help make mentors more effective would be avoiding information overload; sharing decision-making; knowing when to intervene; maintaining the relationships; not forgetting content and what mentees are asking for; knowing when to wean; finding time to mentor; and reflecting on the mentoring process (Ingersoll, 2011).

According to Clarke (2012), mentors should initiate contact with the novice teachers to establish an environment in which the novices feel supported as colleagues and full partners in the professional life of the school institution. When

this has been accomplished within relationships an essential background of well-being and confidence to take risks, such as trying new teaching strategies in front of each other, is constructed which is important for enhanced professional development.

## **2.5 RESEARCH ON MENTORING RELATIONSHIPS AND TEACHERS' PERCEPTIONS**

Recent research, by people like Margolis (2007) and Clark and Bymes (2012), on mentoring relationships focuses on the efficacy of mentoring programmes and professional development in retaining new teachers and enhancing teachers' quality of instruction and learner achievement. Many of these studies are quantitative in nature where some researchers have sought to determine teacher perceptions of the programmes in terms of benefits and problems associated with mentoring. The researcher firmly believed that a gap remained in exploring new teachers' perceptions of mentor relationships at an elementary level.

It was thought that the efficacy of mentoring relationships should be examined from the perspectives of both the mentors and the mentee. On the mentor side, researchers have discovered some surprising insights into the mentoring experience. According to Frels *et al.* (2013), mentors came away from the mentoring experience believing that their relationship with mentees had been more beneficial to the novice teacher than it actually was. However, mentors also said that they would have appreciated more training in effective mentoring practices. Margolis (2007) concluded that experienced teachers who acted as mentors experienced an increased desire to remain in the teaching field themselves.

On the other hand, in many studies novices appeared to experience dissatisfaction with a myriad of aspects of the mentor relationship - mostly related to time with their mentors and time allocated for classroom observation. Frels *et al.* (2013) found that novices wanted more time with their mentors; more time to observe other classroom practices; and that their mentor relationship should follow a specific format. Similarly, Clark and Bymes (2012) found that novices desired release time to observe other teachers and common planning time with their mentors.

## **2.6 CONCLUSION**

In this chapter, the relevant available literature on mentoring and professional development was discussed. Challenges experienced in mentoring relationships and their influence on the professional development of in-service distant education student-teachers were addressed. The next chapter, Chapter 3, sets out the research approach, design and methodology used in this study. Data collection and data analysis processes are justified as well as the methods used to ensure the credibility and trustworthiness of the study. Lastly, ethical principles observed in this study are presented.

## CHAPTER 3

### RESEARCH APPROACH, DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

#### 3.1 INTRODUCTION

In the previous chapter, Chapter 2, the literature on mentoring relationships and the professional development of teachers with a particular focus on distant education student-teachers was discussed. In this chapter the research paradigm, approach, design and methodology are presented. The measures taken to enhance trustworthiness of this study as well as the ethical considerations are described.

#### 3.2 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

A primary and secondary research questions that supported and informed the main question were used to direct this study and formulate the interview questions.

##### 3.2.1 Primary Research Question

The primary question was: *What influence do mentoring relationships have on the professional development of in-service distant education student-teachers?*

##### 3.2.2 Secondary Research Questions

The secondary questions were the following:

- *What do in-service distant education student-teachers understand by the concept 'mentorship'?*
- *How do in-service distant education student-teachers perceive the relationship they have with their mentors?*
- *What is the influence of the mentoring relationship on the in-service distance education student-teacher?*
- *How does the mentoring process influence the professional development of in-service distant education student-teachers?*

### **3.3 METHODOLOGY**

This section of the report that deals with the research methodology is divided in three parts: the research paradigm; the research approach; and the research design.

#### **3.3.1 Research Paradigm**

A paradigm guides the researcher on what needs to be done during the research process (Bulla, 2014). It is concerned with how the researcher perceives a phenomenon and understands how knowledge is constructed (Christensen & Johnson, 2010). A paradigm may assist the researcher to conduct the study successfully and to organise the research constructively (Christensen & Johnson, 2010). Bulla (2014) believes that the research paradigm shapes the researcher's way of thinking about knowledge which includes the way knowledge is constructed and the way to comprehend knowledge. This study was based on a constructivist research paradigm. For constructivist theorists, education succeeds when new knowledge and skills are constructed as well as given meaning by individuals who have experienced the phenomenon (Bickhard, 1998).

Shank (1993) maintains that constructivists view education as a process of developing structures of experience as previous knowledge and that experiences shape new comprehension. Meaning is not created by individuals; it is constructed by combining objectivity and subjectivity. Constructivists develop from "simple and general to challenging and specific" (Crotty, 1998:58).

#### **3.3.2 Research Approach**

In this study the approach was qualitative. The qualitative research method emerged from the constructivism paradigm as it focused on meaning given by the real-life experiences of participants in the context of mentoring relationships and its influence on their professional development. According to Creswell (2013), qualitative research happens in a natural environment. Qualitative researchers use various methods that are interactive and humanistic. Qualitative research is evolving rather than anticipated and is fundamentally explanatory. Qualitative researchers view social phenomena as a whole, methodically reflect on who is included in the investigation as well as being aware of personal biographies and

their effects on the study (Creswell, 2012). Qualitative studies emphasise the importance of participants' perspectives and how they enlighten meaning (Creswell, 2012).

In the study qualitative research was deemed appropriate because the researcher wanted to collect data on the phenomenon being researched: the relationship between in-service distant education student-teachers and their mentors. In contrast to qualitative methods, quantitative methods do not meet the characteristics and goals of this study; quantitative studies focus on "a description of trends or a need for an explanation of the relationship among variables" expressed statistically (Creswell, 2012:13). Quantitative researchers often use research instruments that search for answers related to how much, how many, when and who; qualitative methods are used to explore phenomenon using detailed data to promote interaction between participants and events that may reveal the phenomenon (Punch 2013). Qualitative studies allow participants to tell a researcher what they think is important. The results of this research are not numeric ratings but transcripts of what participants said (Merriam, 2014).

In this study the researcher was keen to hear the voices of the participants regarding their mentoring relationships related to the professional development of in-service distant education student-teachers. She was interested in understanding the viewpoints and perceptions of the participants and how they made sense of their experiences. Qualitative studies indicate an emphasis on the significance of participants' perspective and how they inform meaning for the participants (Creswell, 2012).

### **3.3.3 Research Design**

Qualitative case study methods are often used to provide an in-depth look at particular cases (Creswell, 2012). This research was based on a case study design that involved six different primary schools which allowed the researcher to analyse data and give meaning to the influence that mentoring relationships have on the professional development of teachers in primary schools. Case studies normally include various data gathering methods and data sources, such as interviews, surveys and historical data collection, to provide different perspectives and an understanding of a single or a few cases (Creswell, 2012; Merriam, 2014).

According to Yin (2003), a case study is where the object is an integral part of its context; in this study it is the mentoring relationship between mentors and student-teachers and its influence on their professional development. Furthermore, Yin (2003) is of the opinion that case study research is an important method of social science investigation that disseminates diversity of purposes of case study research methods.

Three different examples of case studies exist: intrinsic, instrumental and collective (Stake, 1995). The intrinsic case study attempts to understand specific cases that are examined and is suited to evaluate research that attempts to give sense to certain experiences. This case study normally focuses on one participant examined in context and the results cannot be generalised. The instrumental case study examines every case as an opportunity to comprehend and explore something; the researcher considers the influence of context and is able to generalise the results of the study (Cousins, 2005). The collective case study uses several cases to maximise data collection and develop a larger possibility of generalisation. The collective case study was utilised in this research as the study was conducted at six different primary institutions and at six different sites.

The benefit of the collective case study method is that it is frequently researcher-centred where the researcher is part of activities and studies the participants in context. Cousins (2005) is of the opinion that the case study provides a comprehension of the context of research from a holistic view which enables an understanding of factors that could influence participants' views but could be researcher-biased. However, it was believed that this could be managed. The case study is a suitable method as it involves various research styles. In case studies data is gathered by means of semi-structured interviews using open-ended questions that generate detailed information which, on analysis, may be interpreted.

Another benefit of the case study is the possibility to imitate reality and deduct meaning through data while being aware of the context of the study. This method was suited to this study as it allowed for ways of collecting data as well as a means to evaluate it *via* the qualitative constructivist paradigm and meaning could be found and formed through the study of texts.



A negative aspect of the case study is that it could be seen as researcher-biased in the interpretation of data and, therefore, this approach may be considered neither scientific nor credible (Cousins, 2005). A case study involves deductive reasoning and it is difficult for the researcher to be emotionally detached from the data; the researcher should look at the complete picture rather than focus on searching for what she wishes to find (Cousins, 2005). Another negative aspect or limitation of the case study is that generalisation beyond content is impossible. Denzin and Lincoln (2000) maintain that the conclusions of a case study cannot be applied to various contexts.

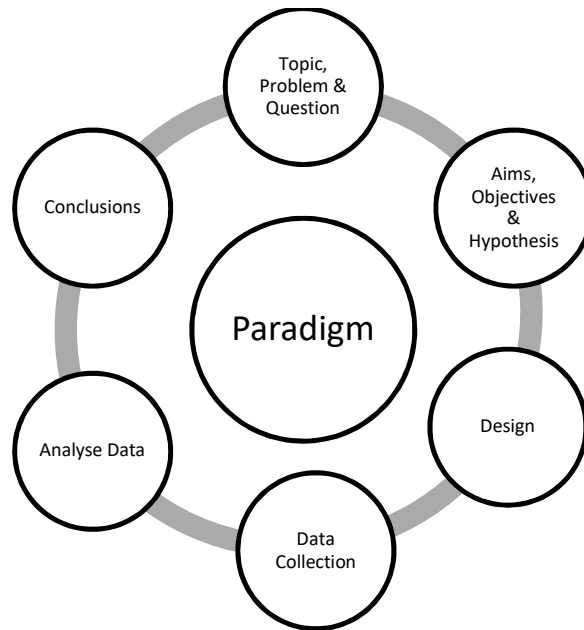
Using a case study in research could be disadvantageous as the sites where it is conducted are limited; it restricts the researcher in terms of accessibility; the number of participants; and the time available to spend on-site. In this study the research sites were located in the researcher's area where the participants were easily accessible.

In order to conduct a more scientific study through the case study design, the researcher employed triangulation to substantiate the evidence gathered from the data. In her descriptions the researcher also attempted to provide a comprehension of the perceptions of the interviewees. She shared her conclusions with the participants and allowed them to confirm and talk about the results - this validated the researcher's comprehension regarding their contributions. Triangulation means using more than one method to collect data on the same topic.

In the study the researcher used the case study because the design was appropriate to achieve its goals. The advantages were considered to be the possibility to expose unique observations concerning in-service distant education student-teachers in context and to supply rich contextual proof of the phenomenon. The approach concurred with Yin's (2003) belief that a case study is suitable and relevant in research conditions where the phenomenon is limited to a certain context.

### **3.4 THE RESEARCH PROCESS**

The research process is summed up in Figure 3.1 below.



**Figure 3.1 Research Process**

### **3.5 DATA COLLECTION**

The data collection process in this study began with a sampling process. Purposive sampling was used to select the in-service distant education student-teachers and their mentors who had the relevant knowledge and experience related to the research questions. According to Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2010), purposive sampling allows researchers to choose particular cases to be part of the sample because of set selection criteria and the aims of the studies.

This research included twelve primary school in-service distant education student-teachers and six mentors from six primary schools in Mpumalanga. The student-teachers who were selected had previously interacted with the same mentor in a mentoring programme for more than two years. The researcher approached the principals, in-service distant education student-teachers as well as their mentors from the different schools before she commenced with her research. Once permission had been obtained from the principals, the in-service distant education student-teachers and mentors were contacted and they received letters of informed consent. The participants were asked for consent to communicate their opinion and feelings about their experiences of the mentor-mentee relationship.

### **3.5.1 Data Collection Methods**

The data collection methods used in this study included semi-structured interviews and field notes involving in-service distant education student-teachers and their mentors. Xaba (2010) is of the opinion that the qualitative method allows researchers to explore three aspects in a study: to comprehend human actions and experiences; to focus on the phenomenon being studied in the natural context; and to comprehend how the participants interpret phenomena.

#### **3.5.1.1 Interviews**

The main source of data gathering was through the use of semi-structured in-depth interviews. Interviewing is viewed as one of the most prevailing ways to comprehend human behaviour and, therefore, interviewing was used in this research (Koshy, 2005). The use of interviews, through participants' responses to questions, granted the researcher access to their assembled realities and explanations of their own experiences (Fontana & Frey, 2000). In-depth interviews also assisted the researcher in seeking an understanding of participants' perceptions of their experiences through repeated face-to-face meetings.

The semi-structured interview focused on specific topic areas that the researcher wanted to explore during the course of the interviews; how the questions were posed and the exact nature of the questions were the preference of the interviewer (Bryman, 2001). This allowed her the flexibility to respond instantly to issues mentioned by participants, ask investigative questions and allow participants to discuss issues they considered important. The interviewer's focus was on gathering relevant data which guaranteed that the research questions would be answered and, in addition, she sought to ensure cross-case comparability (Bryman, 2001). The in-depth individual interviews explored the perspectives of participants' initial experiences of mentoring. Both student-teachers and mentors were interviewed.

Predetermined interview questions were given to each participant several days before each interview to allow them to reflect upon the questions in terms of their experiences and to prepare for the interviews. The face-to-face interviews were approximately 45 minutes in length and conducted at participants' workplaces.

### **3.5.1.2 Field notes**

According to Caelli (2001), the recording of field notes during the research process assists to further explain the interviews. Supporting data was collected in the form of field notes that were taken during the school visits and when the interviews had been completed. Working as the interviewer, the researcher took notes and observed the participants during the interview process in order to record non-verbal communication (Creswell, 2012). She made explanatory and reflective notes that included impressions, feelings and thoughts about the interviews. The notes were taken while the participants discussed the interview questions that were being tape-recorded with their permission. The researcher added further impressions after participants had left the room. This information was used as a means to improve and establish the interpretation of data during the analysis process.

Interview transcripts were e-mailed to each participant for authentication. This information was used to improve and confirm the interpretation of data during the analysis process. The researcher transcribed key words, phrases, and statements in order to permit the voices of the participants to be heard. The notes helped to facilitate the development of new questions if any were deemed necessary after the interview questions had been asked and recorded.

## **3.6 DATA ANALYSIS**

The aim of data analysis is to find proof to answer and inform the research questions. In this study the researcher made use of thematic analysis.

### **3.6.1 Thematic Analysis**

McLeod (2011:21) describes thematic analysis concisely as a method seeking “to uncover patterns of meaning in participants’ accounts of experience.” It is a way to identify, analyse, organize, describe and report themes uncovered in a data set (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Thematic analysis is commonly used to analyse data in a qualitative study. The analysis process involves identifying, analysing and reporting patterns or themes in the research data (Brown & Clarke, 2006). According to Boyatzis (1998), thematic analysis is a translator for people using the

languages of qualitative and quantitative analysis that allows researchers using varying styles to interact.

Due to its theoretical freedom, thematic analysis provides for flexible approaches that may be varied to suit the requirements of the research and that give a rich and detailed complex report of data (Braun & Clarke, 2006; King, 2004). The reasons for the researcher's choice of this method were: thematic analysis is easy to use by novice researchers who are not familiar with more complex types of qualitative analysis; it is flexible in that it gives the researchers the choice of a theoretical framework; and through its flexibility, thematic analysis allows for the rich, detailed and complex analysis of data accumulated in the study.

### **3.6.2 Organising the Data**

In this study the researcher recorded and transcribed the recorded interview conversations *verbatim*. The transcribed data was tabulated in terms of the research and interview questions; data segments were identified that related directly to the research questions. The segments were coded and the codes were merged to form categories, sub-themes and themes (Lewis *et al.*, 2009). In order to ensure trustworthiness, triangulation was done by comparing different data sources to verify the results.

### **3.7 THE ROLE OF THE RESEARCHER**

Creswell (2012) maintains that “qualitative researchers collect data through studying documents, observing behaviour or interviewing participants. They may use a protocol - an instrument for data collection – but the researchers are the ones who collect the information.” The researcher was the primary instrument for collecting and analysing the data. When the student-teachers and the mentors were contacted to participate in the in-depth interviews, they were comfortable with the objective of the research and were willing to provide information and describe their perceptions. Although the researcher is a teacher and a mentor in the school district, it was important for her to put aside any pre-conceived criteria for success in the mentoring relationship; she concentrated on exploring the criteria provided by student-teachers in the study.

In studies researchers play an important role which involves building a rapport and meaningful relationship with participants and creating a relaxed environment for conversations to take place between themselves and the participants (Roller, 2015; Creswell, 2003). The responses of the participants in this study were in no way influenced by the opinion and the background of mentoring and professional growth experiences of the researcher. Participants were not pressed to disclose any information that they were unwilling to share; participation was voluntary. The researcher ensured that the participants felt comfortable in responding to the questions she asked (Roller, 2015; Creswell, 2003).

### **3.8 TRUSTWORTHINESS OF THE STUDY**

Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2007) maintain that research may be supported if it is credible, transferable, dependable and conformable.

#### **3.8.1 Credibility**

The credibility of research refers to its believability and trustworthiness. Credibility ensures that the research is valid as the results should represent reality. In a qualitative study the research results are subjective. This study was constructivist in nature and, therefore, the findings were reached through deduction. The reliability of the research lies with the reader to comprehend the results as perceptions vary and data interpretations differ. Interview scripts were checked by participants to ensure the authenticity of the data. The researcher guaranteed the trustworthiness of data by doing member-checking (Creswell, 2007).

#### **3.8.2 Transferability**

The transferability of the findings of this study may be determined by the reader. The findings of qualitative research using a case study are difficult to generalise because it involves only a small purposively selected sample of participants and yields specific context bound findings. The findings of this research should be tested in more contexts in order to generalise them.

#### **3.8.3 Dependability**

Dependability refers to how many times a researcher is able to repeat the study with the same subjects in an identical environment. (Creswell, 2008; Yin 2009).

The results of this study need further research to determine whether they could be imitated. The reliability of the research could be enhanced by gathering detailed data and achieved by supplying details of the process used in this research (Creswell, 2009)

This study sought to ensure reliability of findings by means of a number of mechanisms. Firstly, the researcher established a rapport with the participants before the interviews to encourage them to talk freely about their experiences. The validity and accuracy of the findings were ensured through member-checking, bracketing and peer debriefing. Participants were requested to study and review the transcripts of the interviews in order to determine whether they were certain that all information or themes were accurate - a process termed 'member-checking' (Creswell, 2012). Member-checking is mostly used in a qualitative methodology; it is a quality control method that researchers employ to improve the accuracy, credibility and validity of their recordings which have been made during the research interviews (Barbour, 2001; Byrne, 2001; Doyle, 2007).

### **3.9 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS**

This study used a qualitative approach as well as a case study design where the researcher interacted with the participants as she was gathering data. Ethical considerations require researchers to be aware of participants' emotional conditions during interviews (McMillan & Schumacher, 2001). Researchers should respect the opinions of participants and safeguard their privacy (Creswell, 2003); other ethical considerations include the protection of the human rights of the participants as well as confidentiality and anonymity. The informed consent should protect participants against harm during the research and ensure their voluntary involvement.

#### **3.9.1 Informed Consent**

Henning (2005:73) maintains that the participants who will be involved in a study should consent to participate in the research which may be given in verbal or written form - or both. The consent form should explain what the research is about and what involvement is expected of the participants. The researcher explained to

the participants how confidentiality and anonymity issues would be dealt with in this study.

### **3.9.2 Harm and Risk**

The researcher ensured that no harm was experienced by the participants by protecting them; no sensitive or embarrassing issues were discussed that could be psychologically harmful. She also ensured that a trusting relationship was established with the participants.

### **3.9.3 Honesty and Trust**

In order to promote honesty and reliability the ethical considerations of this study were strictly enforced. In the analysis of the data honesty prevailed and only truthful interpretations of the information were made.

### **3.9.4 Privacy, Confidentiality and anonymity**

To ensure that privacy was protected, the locations of the research are not mentioned in this report or any identity revealed. In this study all participants were given a code name in the form of letters and numbers to hide their true identities.

### **3.9.5 Voluntary Participation**

The participants' participation was voluntary and they were allowed to exit the study at any stage. They were informed that they were not compelled to participate and if they elected not to participate, they would not suffer any consequences or penalties.

## **3.10 CONCLUSION**

Chapter 3 has set out the research approach, design and methodology used in this study. The case study design research was embedded in an interpretive paradigm and purposive sampling was used to select the participants who were then interviewed. In the next chapter, Chapter 4, the research findings are described and discussed in relation to the literature on mentorship and professional development.



## CHAPTER 4

### RESEARCH FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

#### 4.1 INTRODUCTION

In the previous chapter, the research methodology was discussed, including the methods used for data collection and data analysis. In this chapter, the data generated by means of interviews with student-teachers and mentors is detailed and the findings are presented as themes and sub-themes that are aligned with the research questions. A discussion of the findings as they relate to literature is given as a summary at the end of each theme.

The purpose of this study was to investigate the perceptions of in-service distant education student-teachers concerning their mentoring relationships and their influence on their professional development. The study was directed by the primary research question: *What influence do mentoring relationships have on the professional development of in-service distant education student-teachers?* The secondary questions that guided this study were:

- *What do in-service distant education student-teachers understand by the concept 'mentorship'?*
- *How do in-service distant education student-teachers perceive the relationship they have with their mentors?*
- *What is the influence of the mentoring relationship on the in-service distant education student-teacher?*
- *How does the mentoring process influence the professional development of in-service distant education student-teachers?*

#### 4.2 BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION OF THE PARTICIPANTS

The biographical information of the participants in this study, given in Table 4.1 below, reflects the profiles of the mentors and student-teachers.

**Table 4.1: Biographical Information of Mentors and Student-Teachers**

School	Participant	Age	Gender	Experience	Subject	Education	Institution
A	Mentor A	48 years	Female	27 years	HOD Foundation Phase	HDE	NKP NWU Mentorship training programme
	Student Teacher 1 A	26 years	Male	8 years	History Geography	B.Ed. Intermediat e and Senior Phase 4 <sup>th</sup> year	Unisa
	Student Teacher 2 A	28 years	Female	5 years	All Foundation Phase subjects	B.Ed. Foundation Phase 4 <sup>th</sup> year	Unisa
B	Mentor B	30 Years	Male	11 years	HOD Intermediate and Senior Phase	B.Ed. Intermediat e and Senior Phase	NWU Unisa NWU Mentorship training programme
	Student Teacher 1 B	23 years	Female	5 years	Psychology Afrikaans English	B.Ed. Intermediat e and Senior Phase 4 <sup>th</sup> year	Unisa
	Student Teacher 2 B	24 years	Female	6 years	Mathematics Afrikaans	B.Ed. Intermediat e and Senior Phase 4 <sup>th</sup> year	Unisa
C	Mentor C	59 years	Female	37 years	Teacher Foundation Phase Grade1	HDE NWU Mentorship training programm e	GOK

	Student Teacher 1 C	22 years	Female	4 years	All Foundation Phase subjects	B.Ed. Foundation Phase 4 <sup>th</sup> year	NWU
	Student Teacher 2 C	24 Years	Female	3 years	All Foundation Phase subjects	B.Ed. Foundation Phase 3 <sup>rd</sup> year	Unisa
D	Mentor D	55 years	Female	32 years	Deputy Principal	HDE	NKP
	Student Teacher 1 D	23 years	Female	6 years	All Foundation Phase subjects	B.Ed. Foundation Phase 3 <sup>rd</sup> year	Unisa
	Student Teacher 2 D	25 Years	Male	7 years	Business studies Afrikaans English	B.Ed. Intermediate and Senior Phase 4 <sup>th</sup> year	Unisa
E	Mentor E	37 years	Female	8 years	Subject head English HL	B.Ed. Intermediate and Senior Phase B.Ed. Honours	Unisa
	Student Teacher 1 E	25 years	Female	5 years	Psychology English	B.Ed. Intermediate and Senior Phase 4 <sup>th</sup> year	Unisa
	Student Teacher 2 E	29 years	Female	9 years	English Special Education	B.Ed. Foundation Phase 4 <sup>th</sup> year	Unisa
F	Mentor F	51 years	Male	34 years	HOD Intermediate Phase	HDE	NKP

	Student Teacher 1 F	28 years	Female	10 years	All Foundation Phase subjects	B.Ed. Foundation Phase 4 <sup>th</sup> year	Unisa
	Student Teacher 2 F	23 Years	Female	3 years	English Mathematics	B.Ed. Intermediate and Senior Phase 3 <sup>rd</sup> year	Unisa

### 4.3 RESEARCH AND INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

The research and interview questions are given in Table 4.2 below.

**Table 4.2: Research and Interview Questions**

Research Questions	Interview Questions
Biographical questions	Please tell me about yourself? How long have you been at this school? How long have you been a mentor? Did you receive any training in mentorship?
<i>What do the student-teachers and mentors understand by the concept mentorship?</i>	Please tell me what you regard as mentorship? How would you describe the mentorship process?
<i>How do in-service distant education student-teachers and mentors perceive their lived experiences of mentorship relationships?</i>	Tell me about your experiences of being a mentor? Tell me about the time you spent on mentoring activities? What challenges did you experience in your mentor relationship and how were they overcome?

<p><i>What is the influence of the mentoring relationship on the distant education student-teacher?</i></p>	<p>How was your mentoring relationship initiated or established?</p> <p>What did you expect to learn or receive through your mentoring relationship?</p> <p>Tell me about any personality traits that affected your mentoring relationship positively or negatively?</p>
<p><i>How does the mentoring process influence the professional development of distant education student-teachers?</i></p>	<p>Describe two most impactful interactions that you had with your mentee and what precipitated the interaction.</p> <p>How did the mentor relationship enhance or influence your job performance?</p> <p>How beneficial was your mentoring experience to your professional development?</p> <p>Do you think mentoring has a place in the professional development of educators?</p> <p>In your opinion, what factors inhibit the use of mentoring as a professional development strategy?</p>
	<p>Is there anything else that you would like to tell me about mentoring?</p>

#### **4.4 RESEARCH QUESTIONS, THEMES AND SUB-THEMES**

The following table, Table 4.3, indicates the link between the research questions and the themes.

**Table 4.3: Research Questions, Themes and Sub-Themes**

<b>Research Questions</b>	<b>Themes and Sub-Themes</b>
<p><i>What do in-service distant education student-teachers and mentors understand by the concept mentorship?</i></p>	<p><b>Theme 1: Understanding of the Concept ‘Mentorship’</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Emotional support</li> <li>• Learning from a more experienced person</li> <li>• Professional support</li> <li>• Support in curriculum delivery</li> <li>• Support in classroom management.</li> </ul>
<p><i>How do in-service distant education student-teachers and mentors perceive their lived experiences of mentorship relationships?</i></p>	<p><b>Theme 2: Perceptions of the Mentoring Relationship</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Time for interaction</li> <li>• Communication</li> <li>• Trust in the relationship.</li> </ul>
<p><i>What is the influence of the mentoring relationship on the in-service distant education student-teacher?</i></p>	<p><b>Theme 3: The Process of the Mentoring Relationship</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The role of the mentor</li> <li>• Attributes of the mentee</li> <li>• Personality traits.</li> </ul>
<p><i>How does the mentoring process influence the professional development of in-service distant education student-teachers?</i></p>	<p><b>Theme 4: The Influence of the Mentoring Process on the Professional Development of Distance Education Student-Teachers</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Positive influence of mentoring process on the professional development of distance education student-teachers</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Negative influence of mentoring process on the professional development of distance education student-teachers.</li> </ul>
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## 4.5 RESEARCH FINDINGS

The research findings are aligned with the research questions; they are presented in themes and sub-themes. The researcher analysed the responses of the participants and compared the findings with the literature on mentoring relationships and professional development. A summary is given at the end of each theme.

### 4.5.1 Theme 1: Participants' Understanding of the Concept 'Mentorship'

The participants who were mentors and student-teachers were asked to define mentorship. In doing so, they spoke about their experiences as mentors and mentees. The following are the findings related to the research sub-question: *What do the student-teachers and their mentors understand by the concept 'mentorship'?*

#### 4.5.1.1 Sub-Theme 1: Emotional Support

The findings of this study show that mentors understand mentoring as the provision of emotional support for their mentees who find the transition from higher education to in-service distant education student-teachers an overwhelming experience. The student-teachers cited feelings of insecurity related to uncertainties, realities and challenges. The participants identified the importance of mutual friendship and a supportive relationship to ensure emotional support. The following are some of the relevant participants' responses:

*"A mentor is a substitute mother or father who supports and guides you into the school system, assisting you with school and classroom management skills...helping you to solve problems that you are experiencing... they should also offer you a shoulder to cry on...we ensure that the students feel welcome and comfortable at the school"* (MA).

*“The mentor plays an important part during the mentoring process as the student needs constant guidance and support there is no way that the students can be left to survive on their own” (MC).*

*“The mentor will become your best friend at school as he/she will assist and guide you in all the activities of the school” (ST1B).*

*“Having a mentor-teacher when I started at the school really helped me a lot as there was someone that I could go to when I needed help” (ST2F).*

It seems that the mentors in this study recognise that the goal of mentoring is to provide guidance and support to student-teachers. The participants understand the concept ‘mentorship’ as an emotional attachment of caring and nurturing with someone who is providing guidance in an established relationship of trust. This requires considerable emotional investment by the mentor in the mentee’s growth and development. It also means that the mentee has to trust the abilities of the mentor to provide emotional support. Mentorship appears to be conceptualised as individual student-teacher emotional support as well as support from multiple other sources.

Studies done on mentoring suggest that a mentor should safeguard the professional well-being of a mentee in the organisation. The expectation of what should be done by the mentee should be realistic in order to encourage professional growth; mentorship should not be an inhibiting factor. The relationship established as well as developed behavioural characteristics should improve the quality of teaching and learning (Janse van Rensburg & Roodt, 2005; Meyer & Fourie, 2004). The responses of the participants were similar to those reported in earlier studies (Ellinger, 2000; Hopper, 2001; Rhodes & Stokes, 2004).

#### **4.5.1.2 Sub-Theme 2: Learning from a More Experienced Person**

In this study a mentor was conceptualised as a senior teacher with several years of experience in the field. The mentee who is an in-service distant education student-teacher develops skills and gains experience during the process of mentoring. It is evident that the key role of the mentor is to provide guidance and support the in-service distant education student-teacher. The findings in this sub-theme indicate



that student-teachers who had a personal bond with their mentors experienced more growth in their professional development than those who did not have close personal relationships with their mentors. The participants shared the following sentiments:

*"...it is better to have one mentor per individual. It makes it easier because you get more one on one time. When you are one mentor and you have four or five mentees it can get difficult to give everyone the attention they need"* (MT2B).

*"I think that every student should have his own mentor to supervise and support him so that they can build a relationship and have enough time to exchange ideas and to learn from each other"* (ME).

*"...if a new teacher starts there is a team that does the mentoring"* (MB).

The findings of this study indicate different understandings of mentor relationships; while some participants understand mentoring as a close individual relationship, others perceive mentorship as a pool from which knowledge and experience can be drawn. The following student-teacher prefers to be guided by many people, unlike the other two participants:

*"I found it helpful to have more than just one person to talk to about my classroom situations and how things are working for me. It's really important to have different people to talk to and give you different input, so you don't have to sort things out on your own"* (ST1A).

The participants' perceptions regarding their understanding of mentorship are evident in the responses given below:

*"It is when an experienced teacher gives support to student-teachers by sharing his knowledge and experience"* (MC).

*"...is a process that the student needs to accomplish the goal of becoming a competent teacher"* (ME).

The student-teachers ranked emotional support from their mentors as one of the most helpful factors in their development as it reduced their sense of isolation.

According to the research findings, mentoring at school has been noted as an overarching responsibility of the mentor.

#### **4.5.1.3 Sub-Theme 3: Professional Support**

Professional support was another aspect of mentoring that was identified in this study. Mentors were perceived by the participants as professional people who are able to provide guidance and support for student-teachers in the teaching profession. The participants regarded professional support as key to student-teacher development in their responses to questions:

*“To have a mentor is very beneficial especially for a student-teacher because student-teachers need to know how the school system works. Going to university, you don’t really learn how the school is run. I think having a mentor is more important for learning how the school is run even though you need to know the curriculum” (MA).*

*“There are some things that you just have to learn from people, the mentor is that person who is able to give you that information which is not always readily available in textbooks” (ST1A).*

This finding suggests that mentoring provides the student-teachers with the space to develop ideas and to grow professionally in fulfilling their true potential. The quotations imply that there are certain aspects of the teaching profession that cannot be predetermined but are learnt in practice under the guidance of a more experienced person during the mentoring process. These learning opportunities fill the gaps and could be regarded as the unwritten rules of the teaching profession. The mentors and the student-teachers viewed professional support as providing opportunities to develop in the profession. The participants shared the following about their perceptions of professional development with regard to their understanding of mentoring:

*“...assisting you with school and class management skills ...help the mentee to improve his or her abilities and skills through observation, assessment and modelling... helps the student-teacher to set goals to achieve with the next lesson presentation” (ME).*

*“...develop good communications skills, their subject knowledge, how to use different resources, e.g. technology and they must learn how the administrative duties must be done within the school” (ST1E).*

*“The mentor builds the student’s confidence so that the student will have enough confidence to cope with all the teaching demands ... The student also learns various strategies and methods to use when teaching” (ST1D).*

It appears that the mentoring process is perceived as an opportunity for professional growth as the participants felt that their experiences within the mentoring relationship helped them grow and develop. The findings of this study suggest that besides providing support, the assistance of mentors contributes to student-teachers’ professional growth through the development of a variety of skills for instructional competence. This finding is in line with that of Chung-Wei *et al.* (2010) who are of the opinion that professional development is fundamental to school improvement and mentorship is one strategy that can be implemented for teacher development and general school improvement. They further assert that mentoring provides a caring relationship for individual teachers who need to be developed. It contributes to better teaching and learning experiences as well as improvement in schools as organisations. Student-teachers enter schools with little knowledge of the organisation and the politics of school life; they need opportunities to gain theoretical and practical understanding of schools as organisations (Achinstein, 2006). They should be assisted in navigating the school site and their departments. Mentors can serve this purpose by providing important information about the daily routine of the school and the cultural norms of the school community (Bartell, 2005). Mentors help student-teachers understand the school culture by teaching them about the school’s curricular approaches; resources that are available at the school; and how to sustain relationships with the principal and other professionals at the school. Mentoring raises the quality of teaching and learning and should be carefully planned as part of professional development which is related to the improvement of practical knowledge and skills required to enhance the competency levels of teachers. The findings of this study indicate that mentoring is important for the professional development of teachers at various levels and, more particularly, that of novice teachers.

#### **4.5.1.4 Sub-Theme 4: Support in Curriculum Delivery**

The responses from participants show that mentorship is associated with curriculum delivery and professional development. The professional development aspects of mentoring is linked to guiding, supervising and offering professional advice as well as providing in-service training programmes to assist student-teachers achieve the goals and objectives of the curriculum. The participants maintained the following:

*“Student-teachers should learn by observation and practical experience...”*  
(MA).

*“There are some things that you just have to learn from people, the mentor is the person who is able to give you that information which is not always readily available in textbooks”* (ST1A).

*“A mentor is a person who has to motivate, encourage and teach students about the practical side of teaching. The students have to learn from the mentor what they are not taught at university”* (ST1E).

In this study the participants perceived mentoring as a developmental process. Mentoring is deemed to be a process in which mentors work with the student-teachers and empower them to reflect on and manage new challenges effectively. In the relevant literature Stanulis, Little and Wibbens (2012) found that the benefit of having trained mentors is that they are able to assist new teachers design lessons; support them in acquiring knowledge about best practice; monitor the novice teacher’s lessons; and provide positive feedback. New teachers can then reflect on their preparation and use what they have learned in future lessons. Stanulis *et al.* (2012) note that new teachers who work with expert mentors possess a more advanced level of teaching ability than novice teachers who did not have mentors. The experience of assisting novice teachers in their abilities by providing guidance in targeted areas, such as leading classroom discussion, can be important in improving new teachers’ teaching skills. Mentorship also includes the management of classroom behaviour of learners as well as the teaching and learning environment (Stanulis *et al.*, 2012).

In order to be a role-model for mentees mentors should improve their own skills which will enable them to assist others to develop a greater understanding of their

work; recognise relevant information; and increase their abilities. One way to enhance mentors' own abilities is the process of reflection. Hudson (2013) maintains that mentors may develop this practice through modelling reflective teaching practice and by recognising existing understanding and educational criteria. Mentors need to stay up-to-date with professional practices and inspire novice teachers to do the same. Moreover, they need to model and demonstrate applicable instructional behaviour. Mentors could demonstrate their own methods of self-evaluation through an evaluation of their instructional strategies and behaviour. In terms of the reviewed literature, quality mentoring relationships are a requirement for effective curriculum delivery in schools. Mentoring is a process in which challenges are addressed and skills are acquired to improve teaching and learning. It is through mentoring that educators grow in their subject fields and deliver the curriculum successfully.

#### **4.5.1.5 Sub-Theme 5: Support in Classroom Management**

Classroom management includes a range of activities that take place in the classroom. For student-teachers the concept includes lesson planning and delivery, the classroom environment and learner behaviour. It also includes managing learners with different behaviour problems and being sensitive to measures used to discipline learners. The following quotations from the responses of participants indicate that there is a need for support with classroom management:

*“One of the most impactful interactions I have had with one of my mentees was on teaching her how to handle discipline in her classroom” (ME).*

*“I still need some guidance in discipline as the learners think I am still young and they like to challenge me” (ST1A).*

*“I am experiencing problems with discipline, the learners do not respect me and they never listen to me...” (ST2D).*

The participants' understanding of the concept 'mentoring' includes the principles of learning through observation, example and regular feedback. This is suggested in the following extract from a response:

*“...mentors should also remember that students as well as learners learn through their example, therefore their behaviour should be worth following” (ST2F).*

Although, generally, the student-teachers appear to seek help to improve their classroom management skills, in this study it was found that not all of them are eager to learn; some tend to be passive. This finding is supported by the following observation:

*“Students not following advice e.g. discipline are highly frustrating due to their passiveness” (MA).*

Developing skills needed for classroom management is important; the mentees receive support to be able to deliver the curriculum properly. Darling-Hammond *et al.* (2005) believe that mentor-teachers should demonstrate effective management skills as well as the applicable language that is proper for efficient teaching and learning to take place in the classroom to novices. They should also provide pro-active and creative lesson plans. The practice of modelling is important in the development of student-teachers for them to be able to manage their classrooms (Darling-Hammond *et al.*, 2005). Mentors are often viewed as instructional coaches who are models for good instructional practice which includes classroom management (Moir, 2009). The literature indicates that the majority of South African educators need to strengthen their subject knowledge, pedagogical content knowledge and teaching skills and that the crucial role played by mentors in student-teacher professional development cannot be ignored (Ingersoll and Strong, 2011). This is supported by Hudson who believes that mentors play an important role in ensuring that student-teachers are appropriately developed professionally to improve learning for all learners in schools.

#### **4.5.1.6 Summary of Theme 1**

The findings of this theme shows that mentorship is about building interpersonal relationships based on values, such as mutual trust and respect, in the professional growth of both the mentor and the student-teacher. Mentors are often more mature in terms of knowledge and pedagogical skills and they are capable of nurturing in-service distant education student-teachers to become competent professionals. In

this study it was found that in terms of supportive relationships student-teachers achieve success and gain self-confidence.

#### **4.5.2 Theme 2: Perceptions of the Mentoring Relationship**

The mentoring relationship refers to the interaction between the mentor and student-teacher. This theme explored the perceptions of the participants and the factors contributing to mentoring relationships. The following data reflects the findings related to the research question: *How do in-service distant education student-teachers and mentors perceive their lived experiences of mentoring relationships?*

##### **4.5.2.1 Sub-Theme 1: Time for Interaction**

It seems that a foremost challenge in the mentoring relationship is finding time for mentors and mentees to interact. In practice student-teachers and mentors find that busy school days compete with the congested personal schedules of both parties and their honest intentions to connect often fall by the wayside.

All the participants cited the fact that they were assigned a mentor/mentee by their school principals. Although mentors were assigned to the student-teachers, the study revealed that some student-teachers sought out other teachers whom they felt more comfortable with, especially those who could make time to help them, and this affected their relationship with their mentors:

*“My mentor told me to ask one of the other teachers to assist me” (ST2A).*

*“All the teachers are rather busy at the school, some were very helpful while others just made it clear that they all have their own responsibilities and duties and do not have time for mentoring” (ST1E).*

One school’s mentoring programme required that the mentors and mentees should meet at least once a week. The other schools’ mentoring programmes provided less time to meet:

*“We have no time to have regular meetings. I only meet with the students if they come to me for help or I go on class visits to supervise and monitor their lessons...I think that quality time for mentoring is getting lost with a system*

*that is so vague on training and employment of distant education student-teachers” (MB).*

*“Due to time constraints, I only have meetings with the mentees every second week...I think that it would be more valuable to the mentee if it was possible to have a meeting once a week...If too much time has gone by, the mentees are reluctant to talk about previous issues they have experienced” (ME).*

*“Unfortunately, I don’t think that the mentors get to know the students that well, because we don’t spend much time together” (ST1A).*

The experiences of the student-teachers indicate that the time spent with mentors can either impede mentoring relationships or improve them; either way it has an impact on professional development. This finding also suggests the neglect of time management in the planning of mentorships. It further implies that an effective mentorship is based on the relationship between the mentor and the student-teacher which takes time to build. The provision of adequate time for interaction in mentoring programmes creates opportunities for developing trusting relationships that would encourage more effective communication between mentors and student-teachers.

Many researchers allude to the importance of the amount of time spent in mentoring novice teachers. Rockoff (2008) concludes that the success of the mentoring relationship and the retention of new teachers is strongly linked to the number of hours the mentor spends with the novice teacher. Hansford, Ehrich and Tennent (2004) found that a lack of time was one of the most profound barriers to mentoring, followed by the mismatch between professional expertise and the personalities of mentors and mentees. The findings of this current study support the argument presented by Hansford *et al.* (2004) and Lee and Feng (2007) echo the importance of time in mentoring as a factor that determines the effectiveness of the mentoring process. They also stated that the mentoring process requires an adequate time allocation which may demand the use of an hour after school to devote to developmental activities. Some studies reveal that novice teachers experienced dissatisfaction with a myriad of aspects of the mentor relationship - mostly related to time with mentors and time for classroom observation. Frels *et al.* (2013) found that, in general, novice teachers wanted more time with their mentors; more time to



observe the classroom practice of other teachers; and that their mentor relationship should follow a more specific format. Similarly, Clark and Bymes (2012) found that novices desired release time to observe other teachers and common planning time with their mentors.

#### **4.5.2.2 Sub-Theme 2: Communication**

Every goal of the mentor relationship hinges on the ability of the mentor and the student-teacher to communicate effectively. In this study communication proved to be one of the most difficult aspects of the mentoring relationship. The findings of the study suggest that accessibility and trust are two important components in ensuring a successful relationship between the mentor and the student-teacher. The participants' comments regarding accessibility included the following:

*“All the teachers are rather busy at the school, some were very helpful while others just made it clear that they all have their own responsibilities and duties” (ST1E).*

*“We never spoke much I assume that it is because we never had time we are always busy with the learners” (ST2A).*

The above quotations suggest the need for a sense of connection in communication between the mentor and the student-teacher. Physical interaction is perceived as important in enhancing communication in the mentor and the student-teacher relationships.

Communication in the form of empathy, active listening and listening for potential is a tool that is used in mentoring relationships to help build confidence and a mutual understanding between mentors and student-teachers. The following response contains evidence for the researcher making the above statement:

*“Not all the students are spontaneous and like talking, some are shy and do not have the confidence to talk freely, as a mentor you have to encourage students to communicate and express their needs” (MD).*

Effective communication seems to have been experienced by the participants in terms of collaboration in various ways to enable interaction inside and out of school. The following statements illustrate this finding:

*“They are encouraged to attend special occasions, e.g. social functions, team building, etc...through this we try to establish good relationships with our students” (MA).*

*“We did everything together; rugby, cricket and we became good friends” (ST2D).*

*“There were times when students were separate and there were times when we were part of the staff, but we mainly worked together as one big family or group” (ST3B).*

The participants further suggested that gender barriers in communication contributed to a communication gap between mentors and student-teachers. They maintained:

*“The male teachers were a challenge as most of them are more committed to socialising and sport than teaching, they had lots of issues and it took a while to change their perception and make them take responsibility...due to the support of the principal for these teachers I think it influenced my relationship with them negatively...all students should be treated the same and there should be no preferences made by the principal or teachers” (ME).*

*“It is also easier to communicate with the male teachers and you get to know them better as there are many issues you can discuss with them” (ST2B).*

Participants agreed that the ability to communicate effectively was an essential skill in the mentoring relationship. Communication is a dynamic process and how communication takes place can positively or negatively affect relationships. Another challenge that emerged in this study was communication between different generations. The following statement illustrates this:

*“The different generations, the gaps between ages, the younger generations have different views of their role in the school it is sometimes challenging to guide them sufficiently in the school” (MA).*

The responses of the participants imply that effective communication is essential to building trusting and strong relationships. Student-teachers are still learning how to communicate successfully and they often rely on their mentors to take the lead and teach them how to communicate in the relationship. Communication features regular contact between the mentor and student-teacher and, therefore, the communication method used should meet the needs of both parties.

In order for mentors to provide productive guidance, they need to understand and appreciate the capabilities of the mentees in their interpersonal communication. Christine *et al.* (2011) support the need for on-going communication between mentors and mentees which should include the sharing of knowledge and skills. Every goal of the mentor relationship hinges on the ability of mentors and mentees to communicate effectively. The relevant literature suggests that communication is one of the most difficult aspects of the relationship (Moir *et al.*, 2009). The results of this study demonstrate that two components are important in order to reliably secure this successful connection: accessibility of the mentor to the mentee and the existence of a trusting relationship between them.

#### **4.5.2.3 Sub-Theme 3: Trust in the Relationship**

A trusting relationship between the participants is deemed to be of paramount importance which involves an easy, natural rapport between the participants. The student-teachers cited this as one of the most important aspects of the mentoring relationship. It is believed that the mentoring programme should be grounded in accountability and interpersonal relationships that are strengthened by trust. The participants maintained:

*“The mentor should be the leader in the relationship by showing interest in the student and reaching out to them...you bond with the young students to establish a relationship with them. The students need to trust you and feel comfortable talking to you in order for them to learn from you...the fact that student-teachers had the courage to confide in the mentor...”* (MD).

*“This relationship helps me a lot, because I know that I have someone I can trust to guide me and support me in my development as a teacher...I have*

*respect for her and trusts her completely to help me with anything I need”*  
(ST2C).

They stated that communication was the thread that enables mentors to create a culture of trust within the mentoring relationship. Once trust is established, mentors can achieve their goals more efficiently with the full faith and support of the student-teachers. A trusting relationship between the participants is important which involves an easy, natural rapport between the participants. Hudson (2010) is of the opinion that trust can be built through demonstrating active listening skills by the mentor. The mentor’s ability to discern non-verbal communication in terms of thoughts, feelings and body language is shown in the literature as well as in this study to have a positive influence on the mentoring relationship.

#### **4.5.2.4 Summary of Theme 2**

In this study the researcher found that effective mentoring relationships support student-teachers’ professional development and success and promote future mentor relationships for both mentors and student-teachers. Good mentors possess a host of specific personal characteristics, including supporting student-teachers by being at ease in their dialogue regarding educational procedures and by being attentive while listening to the student-teachers. They are competent educators with strong interpersonal skills; they are trustworthy; and they are dedicated to life-long learning (Moir, 2009; Udelhofen & Larson, 2002). Beck and Kosnick (2002) add that mentors should to be able to provide emotional support and they should encourage student-teachers to develop their own teaching style - even if it is different to their own (Pitton, 2006). Furthermore, mentors help student-teachers see things from different perspectives and provide them with direction, while encouraging them to make their own decisions (Kilburg, 2007).

#### **4.5.3 Theme 3: The Influence of Mentoring Relationships on Distant Education Student-Teachers**

In this study it was found that mentoring relationships are influenced by the way in which the mentors understand their roles; the attributes of mentors and their

personality traits influence the mentoring relationships of distant education student-teachers.

#### **4.5.3.1 Sub-Theme 1: The Role of the Mentor**

The participants in this study regarded the mentor as the expert in the relationship; the mentor has experience in the field and acts as a guide in the professional development of student-teachers. The participants confirmed that mentors share information about their career paths and provide guidance, motivation, emotional support; they act as role models in mentoring relationships. The following was said regarding the role of the mentor in the mentoring relationship:

*“...it is the responsibility of the mentor to share his/her knowledge with someone who does not have the knowledge yet” (MB).*

*“The mentor gives guidance and feedback on lesson planning and presentation” (MC).*

*“...commits to helping a student-teacher develop to his/her full potential by sharing their knowledge and experience... ability to encourage and inspire the students” (MD).*

*“...help the mentee to improve his or her abilities and skills through observation, assessment and modelling...to set goals to achieve” (ME).*

*“The mentor will become your best friend at the school as he/she will assist and guide you in all the activities of the school” (ST1B).*

*“...motivate, encourage and teach students about the practical side of teaching... the students have to learn from the mentor what they are not taught at university” (ST1E).*

From the findings in this study it appears that the rapport that is established between mentors and mentees may enhance the mentoring experience. Mentors were said to play multiple roles in supporting the in-service distant education student-teachers. Their roles in the relationships included supporting the mentoring process and professional development by assisting the student-teachers to clarify the goals to be

achieved. They helped student-teachers reflect on their experiences and link them to their professional development. The mentors also provided counselling skills, such as active listening, reflecting and clarifying to help the student-teachers gain insights into their own progress. In the literature Ingersoll and Strong (2011) suggest three major roles that mentors play: (a) helper, someone who is a resource and a giver of time, energy and support; (b) colleague, someone who is an advocate for the mentee and the profession; and (c) model, someone who is a facilitator who enables the novice teacher to become independent, mature and professional.

Mentors need guidance in clarifying the roles and tasks for which they are responsible (Rikard & Banville, 2010). Ingersoll and Strong (2011) believe that a role is a description of what a mentor has to be like in order to effectively perform his/her assigned task. In the school setting mentors are experienced teachers who share their knowledge with less experienced teachers and gently nudge them forward in their practice. It is important to continuously evaluate the effectiveness of the mentoring relationship (Clark & Bymes 2012). Mentors can make mentees more effective by avoiding information overload; sharing decision-making; knowing when to intervene; maintaining the relationship; not forgetting content; and understanding what the mentee is requesting (Ingersoll, 2011).

Through various approaches and adjustments, effective mentors are able to gather information on the progressive development of their mentees, modify their practice, and use their own knowledge and skills to assist the student-teacher (Portner, 2008). Portner (2008) maintains that effective mentors employ concepts of collaboration and contribution that enlist assistance from others that may be used to support their own personal weaknesses and amplify any positive impact. Mentors look for personal mentoring education opportunities to grow and improve their practice. Connor and Pokora (2012) suggest guidelines for developing effective mentors which can be translated into possible aspects that could serve to positively affect mentoring programmes as well as mentoring relationships. These include clear expectations of their roles and an awareness of culture and gender issues.

The role of a mentor is to act as a role-model for the mentee. It is, therefore, important for mentors to improve their own skills to assist others to develop a greater

understanding of their work, recognise relevant required information and increase their abilities. One way to enhance mentors' own abilities is the process of reflection. Hudson (2013) presents ways in which mentors can expand this practice through modelling reflective teaching practice. Teachers, as mentors, need to stay up-to-date with professional practices and inspire novice teachers to do the same. Moreover, they need to model and demonstrate applicable instructional behaviour and present opportunities for reflection. Mentors can demonstrate their own methods of self-evaluation through an evaluation of instructional strategies and behaviour. Researchers, like Hudson (2013) and Waterman and He (2011), recommend that potential mentors participate in professional development activities to learn about the mentoring practice and identify what is expected of them before they start mentoring. Understanding the implications of the role that mentors are expected to play can help in establishing positive relationships between mentors and mentees.

Podsen and Denmark (2000) argue that the component of the mentoring role that is often the most challenging for mentors is providing positive feedback to novice teachers whilst continuing their relationship as colleagues. According to Bieler (2012), mentors provide responses to fit the needs of their protégés; they are leaders who recognise the stages of development and readiness for growth. Mentors should challenge, encourage and promote the undeveloped potential of new teachers. Most teachers who choose to be mentors have a collaborative working style; however, mentors should also assume a very directive style (Hudson, 2013). The least successful mentoring relationships are those in which the teachers communicate negative views about their positions; about their professions and about the entire mentoring process.

The quality of the mentor relationship may influence the efficacy of the programme, particularly among new teachers. Ingersoll and strong (2011) suggest effective practices that align with mentors' pre-determined critical mentoring functions that include assessing, coaching and guiding and they relate these mentor-teacher standards to the elements of content, process, adjustment, collaboration and contribution. In terms of context and content, effective mentors act with an intent to align their actions and the relationship with the norms expected within the organisational culture and the principles of adult learning theory (Portner 2008). As

such, beginning teachers' prior perceptions of teaching affect what they learn in the context of the mentor relationship (Wang, Odell & Clift, 2010). The quality and effectiveness of the mentoring relationship is influenced by social and cultural contexts (Wang *et al.*, 2010). Mentors represent a model of an accomplished and self-reliant professional, demonstrating qualities which they instil in the student-teachers, such as characteristics associated with intellectual growth, i. e., reasoning, creativity, risk taking and problem-solving (Stanulis, Little & Wibbens, 2012). It was found, in conjunction with the literature, that it is a challenge to describe the ideal mentor due to their multiple personalities, background experiences, knowledge and skills.

#### **4.5.3.2 Sub-Theme 2: Attributes of the Mentor**

Collectively, the participants suggested that the following attributes were necessary for establishing effective mentorship relationships: kindness, care, acceptance, accountability and guidance; being willing to listen, non-judgemental, positive and honest; showing empathy; trusting; having patience; being even-tempered, mature and available. Another attribute that the participants included was a willingness to spend time with the mentees. These attributes are reflected in the following extracts from participants' responses:

*"Mentors should have the ability to encourage and inspire the students"* (MD).

*"To be a mentor requires commitment to supervise and give guidance to student teachers"* (ME).

*"If you think about it mentorship, it probably is someone who is a role model or sets an example for you, let's say a mentor is someone in whose footsteps you can follow"* (ST1A).

*"Someone who guides you if you have any problems that can help you and give you answers if you have any crises...someone who can assist you...someone you can fall back on for advice and help when you may need it"* (ST2A).

*"...someone invests his time and energy to help you adapt in the school"* (ST2B).



*“Some mentors are more passionate and enthusiastic than others...”* (ST2E).

Christene *et al.* (2011) are of the opinion that the personal qualities of mentors should include compassion, enthusiasm, generosity, honesty, insightfulness and selflessness. All these attributes should be reflected in the relationship that mentors have with their mentees. Mentors are required to provide guidance in a productive manner and this may be made possible if the relationship that the mentor and the mentee has is a conducive one. Common dispositional characteristics identified by those who have had good relationships with their mentors and opportunities to learn from the mentors include authenticity, kindness, enthusiasm, patience, consistency, and a positive attitude (Hurst & Reding, 2002). Previous research indicates that student-teachers believe that a good mentor should have unique attributes that encourage good relationships.

#### **4.5.3.3 Sub-Theme 3: Personality Traits**

The participants in this study also cited certain personality traits that enable effective mentor-mentee relationships. According to the participants, personality traits reflected characteristic patterns of thought, feeling and behaviour and were said to imply consistency and stability – as may be seen in the following:

*“Some student-teachers were very good and had the right personality to work with kids and I could really see a future in education for them, but others did not and should not become educators due to the wrong attitude towards the profession, they are only there because they need a job to receive money at the end of the month”* (MC).

*“Some of our personalities did not match and the attitude of the student and led to us not getting along”* (ME).

In the literature Johnson and Ridley (2004) suggest that mentors should be friendly, empathetic and approachable so that mentees may easily interact with them and promote professional development.

#### **4.5.3.4 Summary of Theme 3**

In this study the participants believed that mentors need to carefully consider the approach they take with student-teachers for communication in the relationship to be

effective. Effective communication seems to have been experienced by the participants who collaborated in various ways both in and out of school. Trust and rapport facilitated communication for both parties. Mentors' ability to discern non-verbal communication in terms of thoughts, feelings and body language was shown in this study to have a positive effect on mentoring relationships.

#### **4.5.4 Theme 4: Perceptions of the Influence of the Mentoring Process on the Professional Development of Distance Education Student-Teachers**

In this study the participants expressed mixed opinions regarding the influence of mentoring on the professional development of distance education student- teachers. The sub-themes below explain how the mentors and the student-teachers viewed the influence of mentoring.

##### ***4.5.4.1 Sub-Theme 1: Positive Influence of the Mentoring Process on the Professional Development of Distance Education Student-Teachers***

Some of the participants in this study saw mentoring as a valuable process that provides support for the student-teachers at critical points in their professional development. Mentoring was perceived by the participants as a process that benefits both mentors' and mentees' professional development. The mentoring relationship was described as a mutual way of learning and allowing both mentors and mentees to develop transferable skills that would help them during their time in the mentoring programme and beyond. The participants in this study believed that mentorships had a positive influence on the mentors as well as the mentees. The benefits of being a mentor are described by a participant in the following response:

*"It is satisfying to see how the students develop and grow due to your input...I learned that I have to empower myself by doing more research so that I can be of better assistance to the students"* (MF).

The positive influence of mentoring on the professional development of in-service distant education student-teachers was described by another participant in the following response:

*“She taught me almost everything I am using today, because when you come into a teaching position it's not the same as in theory. It is completely different to what you learn in books and at university”* (ST2B).

The findings of this study show that mentoring relationships can help in-service distant education student-teachers during the early years of their career. The time set aside for mentoring as well as the type of relationships established makes a difference in terms of negative and positive mentoring experiences.

A study by Ingersoll and Strong (2011) suggests that the quality of the mentoring relationship can influence the efficacy of the programme, particularly among new teachers. Effective practices that are aligned with mentors' pre-determined critical mentoring functions of assessing, coaching and guiding and related to set standards of operation, such as subject content, process, adjustment, collaborations and contribution, promote positive mentoring relationships. According to Frels *et al.* (2013), mentors may have a positive mentoring experience and the ability to benefit from the mentoring process; however, the mentors can also benefit from more training in effective mentoring practices. In addition, Margolis (2007) concludes that experienced teachers who acted as mentors experienced an increased desire to remain within teaching themselves. The findings of this study are in line with those in the literature in that the participants in this study recognised that supportive and healthy relationships formed between mentors and mentees are both immediate and long-term and contribute to the professional growth of both mentors and mentees.

#### ***4.5.4.2 Sub-Theme 2: Negative Influence of Mentoring Process on the Professional Development of Distance Education Student-Teachers***

This study found that mentors wanted to provide valuable practice experiences for student-teachers but that there were certain constraints, such as time and limited resources, which had a negative effect on the professional growth of the student-teachers. The mentor's role is paramount in student assessment and the mentor should receive the support necessary to enhance the professional development of

student-teachers. This is not always possible given that some mentors lack training in what is expected of them.

In this study the participants complained about competitiveness, conflict, unwillingness to share professional knowledge among teachers and tardiness in providing feedback as well as some mentors' inadequate administrative skills. The student-teachers also cited time constraints for knowledge sharing, not greeting student-teachers and a lack of self-confidence as challenges that had negative influence on their professional development. This is illustrated in the following example of a response from a mentor-teacher:

*"I would say that it depends on the attitude of the student-teachers on how they experience their mentorship. Although many student-teachers are positive and eager to learn, some think they know everything about teaching and that it is easy being a teacher. They neglect their responsibilities and duties and often get into trouble. They do not like to be reprimanded and I therefore would say that they experience mentoring negatively due to their own mistakes" (MD).*

Barriers or inhibitors to positive mentoring relationships, such as the novice teachers' fears of change and their reluctance to be mentored have a negative influence on their career development. Researchers, like Haak (2006) and Matthew, Hansen and Williams (2004), are of the opinion that it takes commitment from both the mentors and the mentees to make the mentoring experience successful. Mentoring should not be a coerced relationship but a mutual and voluntary process that leads to growth. Cultural diversity can also be a barrier to mentoring relationships that promote professional development as well as cultural differences and gender inferiority or superiority (Hansford, Ehrich & Tennent, 2004).

Short-term mentoring relationships may be the result of poor interpersonal relationships, clashing personalities, interest and expectations (Jekielek *et al.*, 2002). In cases where mentors are unprepared and lack skills in relating to student-teachers professional development through mentoring is often not effective and this may discourage novice student-teachers and reduce their optimism concerning their teaching careers. Rhodes and Du Bois (2006) found that the mentor-mentee

relationship is weak when there is no emotional bond to support the professional development of mentees.

#### **4.5.4.3 Summary of Theme 4**

Mentor relationships between experienced teachers and student-teachers can be beneficial to both teachers and students; by being mentors, teachers may gain a more intimate and rewarding relationship with the student-teachers. Mentors assist and watch student-teachers grow and mature into accountable, responsible professional teachers. They are able to share aspects of their personality and personal life outside of the classroom; the student-teachers are able to learn from, and be guided by, mentors concerning life choices and personal decisions that are represented by the mentors. The student-teachers are able to enter into a relationship with the mentors goes beyond the classroom; they can be counselled and guided by the mentors in a manner that is more intimate than the typical teacher/student relationship. This type of mentorship allows student-teachers to learn, not only academically, but also about key issues concerning personal choices.

#### **4.6 CONCLUSION**

In this chapter the researcher presented the research findings in terms of themes and sub-themes. *Verbatim* quotations were used to elaborate and support the findings. Each finding was compared with those in the literature. In the next chapter a summary of the research findings is given, conclusions are drawn and recommendations are made.

## CHAPTER 5

# SUMMARY OF THE FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

### 5.1 INTRODUCTION

Chapter 5 presents a summary of the results based on the findings of the research which were given in the previous chapter. In the study participants with experience of mentoring relationships were interviewed in order to determine what their understanding of the concept 'mentorship' was; how distance education student-teachers perceive the relationship they have with their mentors and the influence of mentoring relationships on the professional development of in-service distant education student-teachers. The needs of in-service distant education student-teachers and the challenges faced by both the mentors and student-teachers were recognised and identified. In this chapter, the researcher also draws conclusions and makes recommendations based on the findings of the study.

### 5.2 SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

The primary research question in this study was: *What influence do mentoring relationships have on the professional development of in-service distant education student-teachers?* Secondary research questions were used to answer and inform the main research question.

#### 5.2.1 How the Participants Defined and Understood the Concept 'Mentoring'

The findings of this study show that mentors are required to provide emotional support to their mentees as they find the transition from higher education to in-service distant education student-teacher an overwhelming experience. The student-teachers shared feelings of insecurity related to uncertainties, realities and challenges. The participants identified the importance of mutual friendship and a supportive relationship to ensure emotional support. It seems that the mentors in this study recognise that the goal of mentoring is to give assistance and encouragement to the student-teachers. The participants understand the concept 'mentorship' as an

emotional attachment of caring and nurturing which includes providing guidance by establishing a relationship of trust. The mentoring process requires considerable emotional investment by the mentors in the mentees' growth and development. It also means that the mentees have to trust the abilities of mentors to provide encouragement.

Mentorship appears to be conceptualised as individual student-teacher emotional support as well as support from multiple other sources. The findings indicated that student-teachers who had a personal bond with their mentors experienced more growth in their professional development than those who did not have a close personal relationship with their mentors. The findings of this study reflect different understandings of mentor relationships; while some participants understand mentoring as a close individual relationship other perceive mentorship as a pool of support from knowledge, skills and experience may be drawn. The student-teachers ranked emotional support from their mentors as one of the most helpful factors in their development as it reduced their sense of isolation and made mentoring a human interaction process.

Professional support was another aspect of mentoring that was identified in this study. Mentors were perceived by the participants as professional people who are able to provide guidance and support for student-teachers in the teaching profession. The participants regarded professional support as key to student-teacher development. The findings suggest that mentoring provides student-teachers with the space to develop ideas and to grow professionally to fulfil their true potential. The findings imply that there are certain aspects of the teaching profession that cannot be predetermined but are learnt in practice under the guidance of a more experienced person during the mentoring process. Such learning opportunities fill the gaps and could be regarded as the unwritten rules of the teaching profession. The mentors and the student-teachers view professional support as providing opportunities to develop in the profession. The mentoring process is perceived as an opportunity for professional growth as the participants felt that their experiences within mentoring relationships helped them grow and develop. The findings of this study suggest that besides providing support, the assistance of the mentors

contributes to student-teachers' professional growth through the development of a variety of skills for instructional competence.

In terms of the delivery of the curriculum the findings indicate that professional development includes the administration of professional development activities; managing, organising and proposing professional guidance; and providing in-service training programmes to support student-teachers to achieve the aims and objectives of the curriculum. Mentoring seems to be a method in which mentors help student-teachers face new challenges and through reflective activities and professional conversations improve their teaching practice. 'Classroom management' is a phrase student-teachers used to define the practice of guaranteeing that classroom lessons proceed efficiently without disruptive behaviour from learners that compromises the delivery of instruction. The term also indicates the pro-active prevention of disruptive behaviour as well as efficiently reacting to it after it occurs. In this study it was found that classroom management is a challenging aspect of teaching for many student-teachers and that there is a need for support in the management of classrooms.

Although student-teachers seek help to improve their classroom management skills, it was found that not all student-teachers are eager to learn - some tend to be passive. The participants agreed that classroom management was important because it reinforces appropriate implementation in curriculum development. Classroom management can be described as the activities and guidelines that teachers apply to construct an effective learning atmosphere that is discovered by student-teachers through their practical experiences with their mentors.

The participants' perception of the concept 'mentoring' reflects the principles of learning through observation, example and regular feedback. The findings further revealed that mentorship can be understood as a nurturing relationship that is established on mutual trust and that proceeds to the development and professional growth of both mentors and student-teachers. Mentors are experienced and skilled teachers who assist in-service distant education student-teachers on a professional level to develop into competent teachers. In this study it was found that with a supportive relationship, student-teachers achieve success and develop self-confidence.



## **5.2.2 Perceptions of the Mentoring Relationship**

One of the foremost challenges in the mentoring relationship proved to be finding time to interact. In practice student-teachers and mentors believe that busy school days compete with both parties' congested personal schedules and that their honest intentions to connect often fall by the wayside. All the participants confirmed that the school principal assigned a mentor/mentee to them. Although mentors were assigned to the student-teachers, the study revealed that the student-teachers sought out other teachers with whom they felt more comfortable, especially those who could make time to help them. The experiences of the student-teachers indicate that the time spent with mentors can either impede a mentoring relationship or improve it - either way it has an impact on professional development. This finding also suggests neglect of time management in the planning of mentorships. It further implies that effective mentorships are based on relationships between mentors and student-teachers which take time to build. Adequate time for interaction could create opportunities for developing trusting relationships that would encourage effective communication between mentors and student-teachers.

Every goal of the mentoring relationship hinges on the ability of mentors and student-teachers to communicate effectively. There is a need for a sense of connection in the communication between mentors and student-teachers. In this study communication proved to be one of the most difficult aspects of the mentoring relationship. The findings indicate that accessibility and trust are two components that are important in ensuring a successful mentor-mentee relationship. Physical interaction is perceived as an important element in enhancing communication in the mentorship relationships. Communication in the form of empathy, active listening and listening for potential are tools used in the mentoring relationship to help build confidence and a mutual understanding between mentors and student-teachers.

The participants who collaborated in various ways and interacted in and out of school seemed to experience more effective communication. The participants further suggested that gender barriers to communication contributed to a communication gap between mentors and student-teachers. Another challenge that emerged in this study is communication between different generations. In terms of the mentoring

relationship they agreed that the ability to communicate effectively was an essential skill.

Communication is a dynamic process and how communication takes place can affect relationships positively or negatively. The responses of the participants implied that effective communication is essential to build trusting and strong relationships. Student-teachers are still learning how to communicate successfully and they often rely on their mentors to take the lead and teach them how to communicate in the relationship. Communication includes frequent interaction between mentors and student-teachers and the communication technique should meet the requirements of both parties. Successful communication approaches help participants exchange knowledge without confusion and misinterpretation.

A trusting relationship between the participants is of paramount importance which involves an easy, natural rapport between participants. The student-teachers believe that this is one of the most important aspects of the mentoring relationship. The mentoring relationship is an unquestioning one; it is also accountable for the professional development of mentors and mentees. According to the participants, communication enables mentors to create a culture of trust within the mentoring relationship; once trust has been established, mentors can achieve their goals more efficiently with the faith and support of the student-teachers.

Mentoring is an informative process where a more knowledgeable person takes time and invests it in less experienced individuals by guiding them in areas of professional life, academic life and personal life. Skilled mentors share their knowledge and wisdom with the mentees by means of interpersonal communication skills. It is found that effective mentoring relationships support student-teachers' professional development and success, promoting future mentor relationships for both mentors and student-teachers.

### **5.2.3 The Process of Mentoring Relationships**

Mentorship is a connection in which a more knowledgeable or more experienced person helps to guide less knowledgeable or less experienced individuals. Mentorship involves learning and developing partnerships in terms of professional issues. Mentorship practice and relationships influence the amount of psycho-social

support, career guidance, role modelling and communication that occurs in the relationships between in-service distant education student-teachers and mentors.

In this study it was found that the roles, attributes and personality traits of mentors influenced the mentoring relationship. The participants regarded the mentor as the expert in the relationship who has experience in the field and guides the professional development of student-teachers. The advice, knowledge and resources a mentor shares depend on the structure and objectives of the specific mentoring relationship. The participants confirmed that mentors share information about their profession; they provide guidance, motivation, emotional support and acts as role models. Mentors are expected to take responsibility for developing relationships, establishing communication and guaranteeing that the atmosphere of meetings is conducive to learning for those being mentored, i.e., the mentees.

In this study it was found that mentors are able to assume numerous different roles in the course of a relationship, depending on the requirements of the in-service distant education student-teacher which include the following:

- Supporting the mentoring process and professional development by helping student-teachers clarify and achieve their goals.
- Helping student-teachers to reflect on their experiences and encourage their professional development.
- Providing theoretical models to support development.
- Developing counselling skills, such as active listening, reflecting and clarifying, to enable student-teachers to gain an insight into their own progress.

Collectively, the participants cited the following attributes as necessary for being an effective mentor: kindness, caring, accepting, accountable, guiding, listening, non-judgemental, positive, honest, empathetic, trusting, patient, even-tempered, mature, and available. Another attribute that the participants included was a willingness to spend time with the mentees. Personality traits reflected participants' characteristic

patterns of thought, feeling and behaviour; they also include consistency and stability.

Mentors need to consider the approaches they take with the student-teachers so that communication in the relationships is effective. Effective communication was experienced by the participants in various ways in collaboration both in and out of school; trust and good rapport made communication easier for both parties. Mentors' ability to discern non-verbal communication in terms of thoughts, feelings and body language was shown in this study to have a positive effect on the mentoring relationship.

#### **5.2.4 The Influence of the Mentoring Relationship on the Professional Development of In-Service Distance Education Student-Teachers**

Mentoring provides valuable support to the programme's participants at critical points in their professional development, making the process beneficial to the mentors and the mentees. The mentoring relationship is a means of mutual education which allows participants to develop transferable skills that will help them during their time in the mentoring programme and beyond. This study has shown that mentoring relationships can have a positive influence by helping in-service distant education student-teachers go through challenging experiences during their transition from student-teacher to competent teacher - a process that includes dealing with stressful situations in the home and transitioning to maturity. The participants agreed that intimate strong supportive relationships between mentors and mentees that continue for a considerable amount of time are important for training to be successful. The lack of adequate time allocated for mentoring means that mentoring relationships may be at risk for student-teachers who depend of their mentors for career guidance and advancement.

The participants in this study acknowledged that healthy relationships that are created between mentors and mentees have direct and long-term benefits for mentors and mentees, including having a positive influence on the professional development of the student-teachers. However, apart from positive experiences, mentoring can be problematic as mentoring relationships are complicated - they can be rewarding as well as challenging at times. In this study mentors indicated that

they wanted to provide valuable practical experiences for student-teachers but were constrained by multiple demands as well as the limited availability of resources and time. As the mentors' role is important in student assessment, they should receive the support necessary to enhance the professional development of the student-teachers.

Mentoring relationships between experienced teachers and student-teachers can be beneficial to both the teachers and the students; by being mentors, teachers may be enriched professionally in terms of a more intimate and rewarding relationship with the student-teachers. Mentors help and observe the student-teachers grow and mature into accountable and responsible professional teachers. They are able to share aspects of their personalities and personal lives outside the classroom; the student-teachers are able to learn from, and be guided by, the mentors concerning life choices and personal decisions as they are able to enter into relationships with the mentors that go beyond the classroom. The student-teachers may be counselled and guided by the mentors in ways that are more intimate than the typical teacher/student relationship; they allow the student-teachers to learn academically and to absorb key lessons in making personal choices - as exemplified by the mentors.

In this study the participants complained about the negative influences of mentoring that include competitiveness, conflict, an unwillingness to share professional knowledge among teachers, tardiness in providing feedback and some mentors' inadequate administrative skills. The student-teachers also cited time constraints in sharing knowledge, mentors not greeting student-teachers and a lack of self-confidence as challenges which have a negative effect on the professional growth of the novice student-teacher. One of the major pitfalls or dangers that seem to plague mentor/student-teacher relationships is when mentors become friends with the student-teachers; all of the participants interviewed stressed that when student-teachers recognise the teacher-mentors as friends rather than as authority figures, the teachers have less influence on the students. Several mentors stated that student-teachers do not seek or take meaningful advice from their friends; they would rather seek out trusted figures and accept advice from them.

### **5.3 DELIMITATION OF THE STUDY**

This study was concentrated in six primary schools in one district in the Mpumalanga Province. It explored the perceptions of in-service distant education student-teachers in mentoring relationships and their influence on their professional development. The selection of participants was limited to second year in-service distant education student-teachers and their mentors. Teachers who were not involved in mentoring student-teachers were not included in the study. As the research was limited to primary schools in one district under the Mpumalanga Department of Education, secondary schools in the province were excluded.

### **5.4 LIMITATION OF THE STUDY**

The researcher used a qualitative research paradigm with interviews as a data collection method. The number of participants was limited given the nature of the qualitative study. Additional participants could have been included through the use of questionnaires if this was a quantitative study. The findings of this study cannot be generalised to secondary or even other primary schools in different settings outside the scope of the study.

### **5.5 CONCLUSIONS**

The rationale for this study was to investigate the perceptions of in-service distant education student-teachers in mentoring relationships and how these relationships influenced their professional development. In interviewing the participants, the researcher explored how mentors were able to step into voids in the lives of student-teachers and guide them through challenging experiences. The type of relationship between mentors and mentees was found to have various influences on the professional development of the student-teachers. The positive influences were linked to certain attributes and characteristics of the mentors. The emotional aspect of the relationships was examined as well as the ability to communicate effectively and build trust – factors that contributed to the effectiveness of the mentoring process. A lack of time and resources worked against positive mentor-mentee relationships and the professional development of the student-teachers. The findings of this study suggest that the mentoring goes beyond the role of classroom teacher

and that it contributes positively to the professional development of in-service distant education student-teachers.

## **5.6 RECOMMENDATIONS**

Grounded in the findings of the study, the following recommendations are made regarding the perception of mentoring relationships and their influence on the professional development of in-service distant education student-teachers.

### **5.6.1 Understanding of the Concept 'Mentorship'**

In terms of understanding the concept 'mentorship', it is recommended that school policies on mentoring should be clear to all teachers involved in mentoring. There should be a mutual and shared understanding of the concept which should be used as a framework for professional development programmes.

### **5.6.2 Perceptions of the Mentoring Relationship**

As far as perceptions of the mentoring relationship are concerned, it is recommended that all mentors involved in such relationships should receive assistance and guidance in addressing the needs of in-service distant education student-teachers. The following should be considered:

- Mentors should have some access to training or workshops to equip them with knowledge and skills as well as the resources needed to promote effective mentorships.
- Formal training should be planned based on an assessment of the needs of the student-teachers or mentees with an aim to achieve professional development goals of the individuals and the schools.
- Mentoring should consist of one-on-one sessions as well as group sessions, if required by the mentees.
- Departments should prepare a unique school policy relevant to mentoring relationships and professional development in the particular school context. In such policies the purpose of mentoring relationships should be clearly defined.

### **5.6.3 The Process of Mentoring Relationships**

The following recommendations are made regarding the process of mentoring relationships:

- Strategies that outline the processes and procedures of the mentoring relationship should be formulated to guide and assist mentors to interact with their mentees.
- Mentors should motivate and recognise the achievements of student-teachers. This should be done *via* confidential verbal acknowledgement, written thank you notes, small gifts and public acknowledgement or praise.
- Support, using clear effective communication between mentors and student teachers, should be available; where possible, regular student-mentor meetings should be held and feedback should be given.
- Mentors should be committed to their mentees by investing time and energy in the mentoring relationship which should enable them to contribute to the professional development of their student-teachers.

### **5.6.4 Professional Development through Mentoring**

In order to facilitate professional development through mentoring, mentors should undertake the following in their schools:

- They should create a school climate/culture which promotes an ethos and understanding where mentoring relationships become part of professional development.
- They should make student-teachers feel useful and encourage them to take responsibility for assignments and activities. This could be achieved through effective delegation and allowing student-teachers to be responsible for assignments without dictating or specifying a method.
- Mentoring programmes should be improved through the continuous professional development of the mentors.
- Opportunities for performance should be created and criteria as well as standardised levels of mentorship should be established. The mentors as well as the student-teachers should be held accountable for a successful and



effective mentorship process. In-service distant education student-teachers should be pro-active in mentoring relationships to ensure their professional development.

#### **5.6.5 Recommendations for future research**

Further studies should be conducted in the area of mentoring in-service distant education student-teachers by experienced teachers and how mentors should create successful mentoring relationships while contributing to the professional development of in-service distant education student-teachers. In future research the studies should explore differences in levels by comparing and contrasting the perceptions of in-service distant education student-teachers at primary and secondary schools in other provinces of the country. It is also recommended that a longitudinal study be undertaken that examines mentees over a time period to establish their professional development and draw conclusions concerning how mentoring has affected their teaching practice over time.

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## ANNEXURES

### Annexure A: Permission letters

#### Letter to the Mpumalanga Department of Education



Department of Education Management & Policy Studies  
Faculty of Education  
University of Pretoria  
Pretoria  
0002

Attention: The Head of the Department of Research

Dear Sir/Madam

#### **Research Project**

My name is Karen Gordon and I am a M.Ed. student at the University of Pretoria. My research study is on The Influence of the Mentoring Relationship on the Professional Development of In-Service Distant Education Student-Teachers.

My study is supervised by Dr T. A. Ogina, a lecturer at the University of Pretoria, Department of Education Management and Policy Studies. The Department of Education has approved my research and a copy of the letter of approval is attached to this document. The study has also been approved by the Ethics Committee of the Faculty of Education at the University of Pretoria and has been given the reference



number\_\_\_\_\_ (to be filled in before being sent to the Head of Department Research).

The purpose of this letter is to request your permission to invite student- teachers in primary schools in the Gert Sibande area of Mpumalanga and their mentors to participate in this study.

### **Research proposal in short**

**Title of the research project: The Influence of the Mentoring Relationship on the Professional Development of In-Service Distant Education Student-Teachers**

**Problem statement:** The problem in this study is that there has been little research on what is necessary for a mentoring relationship to be considered successful from the in-service distant education student-teachers' perspectives. Research is needed to determine how mentors and mentees can strengthen the mentor and mentee relationship and what motivates the in-service student-teachers to remain in the profession or what demotivates them and they leave the profession.

**Aims and objectives:** Through this study, the researcher aims to obtain an understanding of the compelling influence of teacher mentoring relationships on in-service distant education student-teachers and how they can possibly contribute to the retention of student-teachers.

**Scope and duration of the project:** Estimated duration of this study

Writing Chapters 1, 2 & 3

Ethics application	February 2018
Ethical clearance	April 2018
Data collection and processing (clearance)	April to June 2018(depending on Ethics)
Data analysis	June and July 2018
Writing report	July to September 2018

Final draft and submission

October to November 2018

Data collected in this study will be kept strictly confidential and neither the schools nor the participants will be recognisable in any report. The student-teachers and their mentors who are participating may withdraw at any time during the research process without any penalty.

After I have received approval to approach student-teachers and their mentors in the Gert Sibande area in Mpumalanga to participate in this study, I will

- obtain informed consent from them, and
- arrange a suitable time for data collection at the school, which will be after school hours.

The findings of this study may provide insights into Education Leadership, Management and Policy issues concerning mentoring in schools.

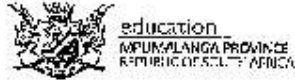
Should you have any questions regarding this study, please contact me (see contact details below) or my supervisor Dr T. A. Ogina; 072 128 9958; taogina@up.ac.za

Thank you for taking the time to read this information.

Kind regards

Karen Gordon  
Cell (082 465 4531) [andrg7@yahoo.com](mailto:andrg7@yahoo.com)

Dr Teresa Ogina  
Supervisor (taogina@up.ac.za)



Building No. 5, Government Freeway, Riverside Park, Middelburg, Driefontein  
 P.O. Box 811241, Alberton, 1252  
 Tel: 013 766 5476 or 013 Fax Line: 013 766 5470

Minister of Education, Mpumalanga Province

Department of Education

Middelburg District

Ms Karen Gordon  
 University of Pretoria

PRETORIA  
 0012

**RE: APPROVAL OF YOUR APPLICATION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH: (YOURSELF)**

Your application to conduct research was received and is therefore acknowledged. Mentoring is indeed one of the cornerstones of workplace development. Research that is intended to explore this field of management is welcomed. Your request to conduct a study in the department is therefore approved. The approval of your research project is subject to you observing the provisions of the departmental research policy which is available in the departmental website.

In terms of the research policy, data on any research activity can only be conducted after school hours as per appointment with affected participants, however, with proper arrangements, data collection could be collected as per the plan of the researching institution. You are requested to share and update the department regarding your findings with the relevant sections of the department. To this effect, your final approved research report should be submitted to the department so that your recommendations could be implemented. You may be required to prepare a presentation and present to the relevant sections of the department.

For more information kindly liaise with the department's research unit @ 013 766 5476 or [a.baloyi@education.mpu.gov.za](mailto:a.baloyi@education.mpu.gov.za).

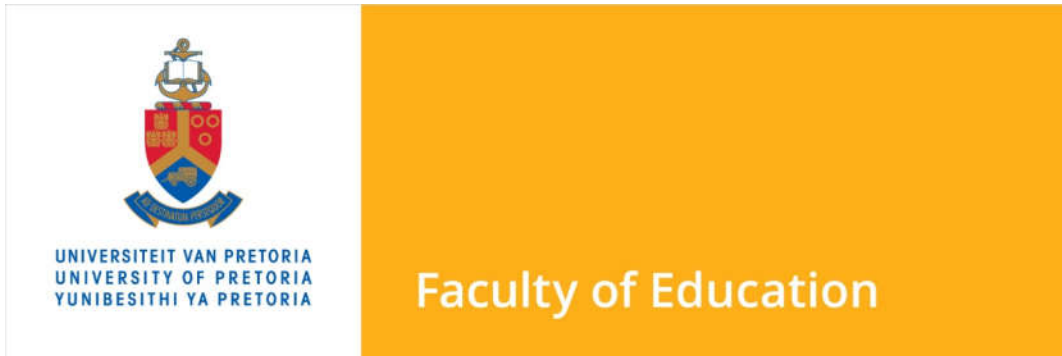
The department wishes you well in this important project and pledges to give you the necessary support you may need.

M.S. MOKO MHLABANE  
 HEAD: EDUCATION

18/5/18  
 DATE



## Letter to the Chairperson of SGB



Department of Education Management & Policy Studies  
Faculty of Education  
University of Pretoria  
0002 Pretoria

Dear SGB Chairperson

### **The Influence of the Mentoring Relationship on the Professional Development of In-Service Distant Education Student-Teachers**

My name is Karen Gordon and I am a B.Ed. Masters student at the University of Pretoria. I am conducting research on: The Influence of the Mentoring Relationship on the Professional Development of In-Service Distant Education Student-Teachers.

My project is supervised by Dr T. A. Ogina who is a lecturer at the University of Pretoria. The Department of Education has approved my research and a copy of the approval letter is attached to this document. The study has also been approved by the Ethics Committee of the Faculty of Education of the University of Pretoria and has been given the reference number\_\_\_\_\_ (to be filled in before being sent to Chairperson SGB).

The purpose of this letter is to request your permission to invite student- teachers in your school to participate in this study.

The aim of the study is to obtain an understanding of the mentoring relationship through the perceptions of in-service distant education student-teachers and the influence it has on their professional development.

The data will be collected through **tape-recorded interviews**. Each interview will take 30-45 minutes. Only student-teachers who have given their consent will participate in this study.

Data collected from this study will be kept strictly confidential and neither the school nor the participant will be identifiable in any report. The student-teachers who participate may withdraw at any time during the research process without any penalty.

After I have received approval to approach student-teachers in your school to participate in this study, I will:

- obtain informed consent from them.
- arrange times for data collection in your school which will be after school hours.

The findings of this study may provide insights into Education Leadership, Management and Policy issues concerning mentoring in schools.

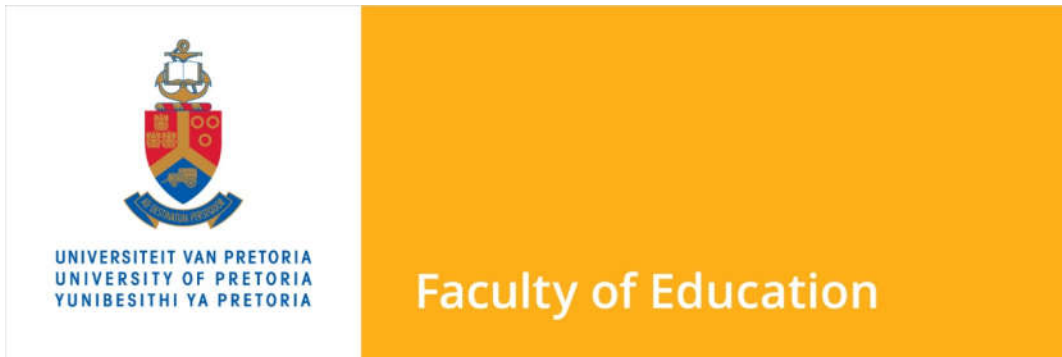
Should you have any questions regarding this study, please contact me (see contact details below) or my supervisor, Dr. T. A. Ogina on 072 128 9958 or [teresa.ogina@up.ac.za](mailto:teresa.ogina@up.ac.za)

Thank you for taking time to read this information.

Kind regards

Karen Gordon  
082 465 4531  
[andrg7@yahoo.com](mailto:andrg7@yahoo.com)

## Letter to the Principal Requesting Permission



Department of Education Management & Policy Studies  
Faculty of Education  
University of Pretoria  
0002 Pretoria

Dear Principal

**Research Project: The Influence of the Mentoring Relationship on the Professional Development of In-Service Distant Education Student-Teachers**

My project is supervised by Dr T. A. Ogina who is a lecturer at the University of Pretoria. The Department of Education has approved my research and a copy of the approval letter is attached to this document. The study has also been approved by the Ethics Committee of the Faculty of Education of the University of Pretoria and has been given the reference number\_\_\_\_\_ (to be filled in before being sent to principal).

The purpose of this letter is to request your permission to invite student-teachers in your school to participate in this study.

The aim of the study is to obtain an understanding of the mentoring relationship through the perception of in-service distant education student-teachers and the influence it has on their professional development.

The data will be collected through **tape-recorded interviews**. Each interview will take 30-45 minutes. Only teachers who have given their consent will participate in this study.

Data collected from this study will be kept strictly confidential and neither the school nor the participant will be identifiable in any report. The student-teachers who participate may withdraw at any time during the research process without any penalty.

After I have received approval to approach student-teachers in your school to participate in this study, I will

- obtain informed consent from them.
- arrange times for data collection in your school which will be after school hours.

The findings of this study may provide insights into Education Leadership, Management and Policy issues in schools.

Should you have any questions regarding this study, please contact me (see contact details below) or my supervisor Dr T. A. Ogina on 072 128 9958 or [teresa.ogina@up.ac.za](mailto:teresa.ogina@up.ac.za)

Thank you for taking time to read this information.

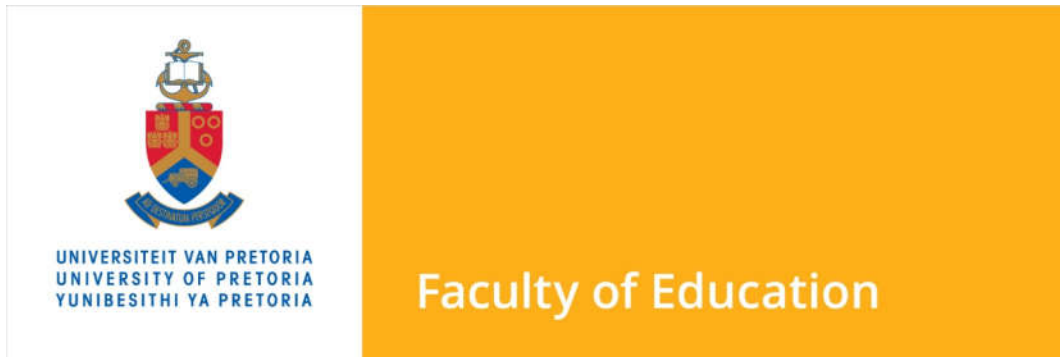
Kind regards

Karen Gordon

Cell no: 082 465 4531

E-mail: [andrg7@yahoo.com](mailto:andrg7@yahoo.com)

## Letter to the Participants Requesting Informed Consent



Department of Education Management & Policy Studies  
Faculty of Education  
University of Pretoria  
0002 Pretoria

Dear Participant

### **Research Project: The Influence of the Mentoring Relationship on the Professional Development of In-Service Distant Education Student-Teachers**

My name is Karen Gordon and I am a B.Ed. Masters student at the University of Pretoria. I am conducting research on the experiences of in-service distant education student-teachers on their mentoring relationship for retention in the profession.

My project is supervised by Dr T. A. Ogina who is a lecturer at the University of Pretoria. The Department of Education has approved my research and a copy of the approval letter is attached to this document.

The purpose of this letter is to invite you to participate in this study; before you agree or refuse to participate in this study, please read the information about the intended research below. The aim of this study is to obtain an understanding of the mentoring relationship through the perceptions of in-service distant education student- teachers and the influence it has on their professional development.



Should you agree to participate in this study, I will collect data through **tape-recorded** semi-structured interviews. I will interview you (it will take 30-45 minutes) after school hours at a place that is convenient for you. Data collected from this study will be kept strictly confidential and neither the school nor you will be identifiable in any report. However, taking part in this research means that the principal and your colleagues will know that you are part of the research since I will explain the purpose of my study to all staff members. Despite that, you will not be identifiable. If you decide to participate in this study you have the right to withdraw at any time during the research process without any penalty. **All data collected with public funding may be made available in an open repository for public and scientific use.**

If you have any questions regarding this study, please contact me (see contact details below) or my supervisor Dr T. A. Ogina on 072 128 9958 or [teresa.ogina@up.ac.za](mailto:teresa.ogina@up.ac.za)

Thank you for taking time to read this information.

Kind regards

Karen Gordon

Cell no: 082 465 4531

E-mail: andrg7@yahoo.com

Department of Education Management and Policy Studies

Faculty of Education, University of Pretoria, 0002 Pretoria

**Annexure B: Letter of Informed Consent**

**Research Project: The Influence of the Mentoring Relationship on the Professional Development of In-Service Distant Education Student-Teachers**

I confirm that I have been informed about the nature of the research and that my rights have been explained to me. I have discussed the project with the researcher, Karen Gordon, who is conducting the project for her B.Ed. Master's degree, supervised by Dr T. A. Ogina in the Department of Education Management and Policy Studies at the University of Pretoria. I understand that if I consent to participate in this project, I will be interviewed.

I understand that if I participate in this study my contribution will be kept confidential and I will not be identifiable in any research report. I also understand that there are minimal risks associated with this study. I understand that I will remain anonymous, my participation is voluntary and I have the right to withdraw at any time during the research process. My withdrawal will not affect me in any way.

For more information and questions I may contact the researcher, Karen Gordon, cell phone number: 082 465 4531 e-mail: [andrg7@yahoo.com](mailto:andrg7@yahoo.com) or the supervisor, Dr T. A. Ogina on 072 128 9958 or [teresa.ogina@up.ac.za](mailto:teresa.ogina@up.ac.za)

I understand that by signing the consent letter I am agreeing to participate in this study. I also understand that my contribution will be used primarily for a Research Project for the B.Ed. Master degree. **All data collected with public funding may be made available in an open repository for public and scientific use.**

Participant's name: .....

Date: .....

Signature: .....

## Annexure C: Interview Protocol/Schedule

### INTERVIEW PROTOCOL FOR PARTICIPANTS

#### Interview Questions for mentors and mentees:

1. Please tell me about yourself? How long have you been at this school? How long have you been a mentor / mentee? Did you receive any training on mentorship?

2. Please tell me what you regard as mentorship?

3. How would you describe the mentorship process?

4. Tell me about your experiences of being a mentor /mentee?

5. Tell me about the time you spent on mentoring activities?

6. What challenges were experienced in your mentor/mentee relationship and how were they overcome?

7. How was your mentoring relationship initiated or established?

8. What did you hope to learn or receive through your mentor(ing) relationship?

9. Tell me about the personality traits that affected your mentoring relationship positively or negatively?

10. Describe the two most impactful interactions that you had with your mentor/mentee, and what precipitated the interaction.

11. How did the mentor/mentee relationship enhance or influence your job performance?

12. How beneficial was your mentoring experience to your professional development?

13. Is there anything else that you would like to tell me about mentoring?

## **Annexure D: Interview Transcript (One transcript)**

### **Interview questions for the mentor:**

Mentor Teacher 1 A - Susan

11 July 2018 15:00

***Thank you so much for coming to the interview. In order to make you feel more comfortable during this interview. I would like to remind you that all the information collected will be held in the strictest of confidence. A pseudo for your name and the name of the school will be used in this research. You may at any time decline to continue with this interview. This interview will be tape recorded. May we begin?***

### **Research questions:**

#### **1. Biographical questions:**

##### **1.1 Please tell me about yourself?**

I am 48 years old. I have been teaching for 25 years now. I am at my current school for 13 years. I studied my THED diploma at Normal College Pretoria and my BA through Unisa.

##### ***In which area do you specialize?***

Foundation phase.

##### ***How long have you been a mentor?***

Informally 20 years, more structured and formally as part of my job description 3 years. My responsibilities are to welcome new teachers and student teachers at the school, induction into school management, class discipline and the explaining of extra mural activities.

##### ***How is this done?***

Depending on the situation a one on one meeting is held were the school manual that include a brief history of the school, responsibilities at the school, examples of the different responsibilities – general guidelines for teachers, the dress code, school times, code of conduct, social media guidelines, general contact details of staff and school. Subject head and grade leaders.

After the Induction meeting, the mentorship is transferred to the subject head and grade leaders where they will receive guidance and support regarding to the subject policies and necessary information about the various subjects that needs to be done.

Financial and personal details of new teacher's needs' to be completed and filed in their induction manual.

##### ***Did you receive any training on mentorship?***

Yes, at NWU I completed the mentoring course for 3 months

***Do you think it is necessary for mentors to receive training?***

Yes, it is to update your knowledge and help you see mentorship in perspective, to understand the importance of mentorship and to broaden your perception, it opens you for more possibilities and make you focus on things you did not before. Prepare you for problems that can occur and gives you long term goals to achieve.

***Do you think anyone can be a mentor?***

No, first of all you need teaching experience to reduce problems you have, one should have good people skills and leadership qualities, and there should also be a link between the line function of the school and effective communication with the principal.

***Please explain some of the challenges that you have experienced:***

Different generations, the gaps between age, the younger generations have a different view of their role in the school it is sometimes challenging to guide them sufficiently in the school, e.g. about the way to speak to teacher's in a proper manner, showing respect / to act professionally, to show creativity without overstepping the boundaries of professionalism. To know their place, in the school, not to be friends with the learners and not to be too comfortable with the staff.

Discipline, the student teachers should be able to learn how to deal with discipline from more experienced teachers. Discipline is challenging sometimes still challenging for teachers with lots of experience, for student teachers this challenge is often even worse. As part of the induction programme into the school, they get a crash course of do's and don'ts, problem-solving techniques and through brainstorming activities possible solutions to discipline problems that might occur. I often refer them to observe from teachers who set an excellent example with lots of experience.

***2. What do the student teachers and their mentors understand by the concept mentorship?***

A mentor is like a substitute mother or father that support and guides you into the school system assisting you with school and class management skills. It is someone you can speak to if you need support or guidance, or to help you solve problems that you are experiencing, they should also offer you a shoulder to cry on. Students may think it is a person who wants to control them or boss you around -when someone is to strict. Guiding and coaching student teachers present a fine line between disciplining the students as well.

***2.1 Please tell me what you regard as mentorship?***

It is someone with more experience that is qualified to guide, teach and help new teachers to find their feet in the school. It must be a role model and someone that is approachable, have lots of patience and have a passion for what they do.

## **2.2 How would you describe the mentoring process?**

I try to be in contact with student teacher or novice asap, get background information, arrange a time for the induction programme and to have regular contact with them to follow up on their integration in the school. Student teachers needs more contact and support, guidance and intervention strategies should be used regularly. A mentoring relationship is established through the time that one spent with each other providing support and encouragement.

## **3. How do in-service distant education student-teachers and their mentors describe their lived experiences on mentorship relationships?**

A mentoring relationship relies on a positive learning experience through guidance and support. The mentor should be committed to the mentee with the goal as to improve their skills and development. I encourage all the senior experienced teachers to provide me with feedback and comments on the students' progress. I also train the mentor teachers on observing the students lesson presentations and planning, how to give feedback and critique they have to fill out observation form and lesson comments.

### **3.1 Tell me about your experiences of being a mentor?**

Firstly, I love doing it expands my knowledge developing my skills outside the class room this is my own project after my mentor course in developing this whole mentor developing programme I learned a lot from the students and from the different universities the admin etc.

I gained more authority at school, I work more closely with the principal and secretary line function improves communication helping student and teachers to be more focused. You can solve problems before it happens.

### **3.2 Tell me about the time you spent on mentoring activities?**

With the students as a group the induction meeting, a meeting once a term unless there are problems shorter meetings once a month. Students lesson feedback weekly one lesson per week. Guidance with preparation and lesson mentor has tick list to complete. Students rotate in phase they are specializing in rotes 2 periods per day with HOD and 2 other periods with other HOD helps with physical education every day she is with a different grade.

Intermediate phase 4-7 students are allocated to a grade rotates every term every second week they go a different teacher to observe. The also help with the physical education of life skills. Involved with all extra mural act at school as coaches. Buffer between principal and students remember student is still learning they have 2 studies per day.

### **Do you think this is enough time to establish a relationship?**

For long term yes, it is an on-going process.

Students also help with duties when teachers are absent. Gaining exp in different subject's focus is not being mentored it is about classroom management and discipline. Always an issue time is our enemy.

#### **4.2 What did you hope to learn or receive through your mentor relationship?**

Experience leadership development people skills qualities, communication skills problem solving skills. New challenges the gain more information about the training of the students.

#### **4.3 Tell me about the personality traits that affected your mentoring relationship positively or negatively?**

Negatively – cultural difficulties black male students found it difficult to accept authority students not following advice e.g. discipline highly frustrating due to passiveness.

Positively- patience stretched to the limit, organisational skills improved to fit work plans in school programme. Love for adventure and challenges were satisfied.

#### **Should mentoring be done according to gender?**

Yes and no it is not always practical possible no important do you need more than one mentor different mentor rugby coaching subject relationships female teacher better. The more mentors the better.

#### **5. How does the mentoring process influence the mentees in terms of? personal and professional development?**

First of all, they can release very quickly they can confirm whether or not they are meant to be a teacher or not. Affirmation of career. To explore with with age group are they more comfortable. They get to know themselves and their colleagues the learn post energy of teaching grow prof helps them to realise they're important and their worth also boundaries and discipline brings then to realisation of how to be and not to be.

#### **5.1 Describe the two most impactful interactions that you had with your mentee and what precipitated the interaction?**

What made an impact on me is that life is short persons are placed with you for a reason make the best of your time.

We had a homogenise experiment at our school the student teacher could not handle the sit all people has challenges to overcome. Even if you can't cope get help and pray. **If discipline is a problem the students move to a younger group.**

#### **5.2 How did the mentor relationship enhance or influence your job performance?**

It improved my planning skills, people relation, and communication skills.

**5.3 How beneficial was your mentoring experience to your professional development?**

I have more authority and can give more guidance to the trading of teacher-mentor support. Problem-solving and challenging situations to structure the mentoring process. Surely there is a gap between university and reality learns through university a lot depends on the personality and the attitudes. University students tend to be more creative. It all about choice.

**6. Is there anything else that you would like to tell me about mentoring?**

It is of utmost importance in your school to make it more effective you must have a structured process for the students to follow to save time and energy. For a new teacher to make teaching a positive experience to bring passion back into teaching by providing the right mentors.



## Annexure E: Example of Analysis Table

Questions and sub	Responses	Segments	Categories	Themes/Sub
<p><b>1. What do the student-teachers and their mentors understand by the concept mentorship?</b></p> <p><i>(Interview question: Please tell me what you regard as mentorship)</i></p>	<p><b><u>Mentor Teacher 1 A</u></b></p> <p>A mentor is like a substitute mother or father that support and guides you into the school system assisting you with school and class management skills.</p> <p>It is someone you can speak to if you need support or guidance, or to help you solve problems that you are experiencing, they should also offer you a shoulder to cry on.</p> <p>Students may think it is a person who wants to control them or boss you around - when someone is to strict.</p> <p>Guiding and coaching student-teachers present a fine line between disciplining the students as well.</p>	<p>A <i>mentor is like a substitute mother or father that support and guides you into the school system assisting you with school and class management skills (MT1A)</i></p> <p><i>...to help you solve problems that you are experiencing, they should also offer you a shoulder to cry on. (MT1A)</i></p> <p><i>Students may think it is a person who wants to control them or boss you around - when someone is to strict. (MT1A)</i></p> <p><i>Guiding and coaching student teachers present a fine line</i></p>	<p>Mother or father figure (<i>emotional support</i>)</p> <p>Management skills (<i>professional support</i>)</p> <p>Problem-solving skills (<i>professional support</i>)</p> <p>Shoulder to cry on (<i>emotional support</i>)</p> <p>Control, boss them around when to strict (<i>respect / authority</i>)</p> <p>Guiding and coaching presents fine line in disciplining (<i>professional support</i>)</p>	<p><b>Positive perceptions of mentorship</b></p> <p><b>Professional development</b></p> <p><b>Negative perceptions of mentorship</b></p>

		<p>between disciplining the students as well. (MT1A)</p>		
	<p><b><u>Mentor Teacher 2 B</u></b>  As the mentor already has all the knowledge it is the responsibility of the mentor to share his/her knowledge with someone who does not have the knowledge yet.</p> <p>The mentor provides all the necessary information about the curriculum and school practices to the student-teacher.</p>	<p>...it is the responsibility of the mentor to share his/her knowledge with someone who does not have the knowledge yet. (MT2B)</p> <p>The mentor provides all the necessary information about the school and curriculum to the student-teacher. (MT2B)</p>	<p>to share his/her knowledge with someone who does not have the knowledge.</p> <p>provides all the necessary information about the curriculum and school practices</p>	<p><b>Pedagogical skills</b></p>
	<p><b><u>Mentor Teacher 3 C</u></b>  It is when an experienced teacher gives support to student-teachers by sharing their knowledge and experience.</p> <p>A mentor should teach student-teachers how to manage their classroom practices.</p> <p>They should also show student-teachers how to</p>	<p>It is when an experienced teacher gives support to student-teachers by sharing their knowledge and experience. (MT3C)</p> <p>A mentor should teach student-teachers how to manage their classroom practices (MT3C).</p>	<p>Support  Share knowledge and experience</p> <p>how to manage their classroom practices</p> <p>differentiate between learners' personalities and abilities</p>	<p><b>Perceptions of the types of skills developed in mentorship</b></p>

	<p>differentiate between learners' personalities and abilities and how to present the learning material on different levels so that all the learners will understand the work.</p> <p>The mentor should also give the mentee assistance on the administrative duties in the school.</p> <p>The mentor must also give guidance and feedback on lesson planning and presentation.</p>	<p><i>They should also show student-teachers how to differentiate between learners' personalities and abilities and how to present the learning material on different levels so that all the learners will understand the work. (MT3C)</i></p> <p><i>The mentor should also give the mentee assistance on the administrative duties in the school. (MT3C)</i></p> <p><i>...give guidance and feedback on lesson planning and presentation. (MT3C)</i></p>	<p>present the learning material on different levels</p> <p>assistance on the administrative duties</p> <p>Guidance and feedback (support)</p>	
	<p><b><u>Mentor Teacher 4 D</u></b> It is when a teacher commits to helping a student-teacher develop to his/her full potential by sharing their knowledge and experience with</p>	<p><i>It is when a teacher commits to helping a student-teacher develop to his/her full potential by sharing their knowledge and</i></p>	<p>requires commitment to supervise and give guidance</p> <p>encourage and</p>	<p><b>Mentorship attributes</b></p>

	<p>them.</p> <p>Mentors should have the ability to encourage and inspire the students to become the best they can be.</p> <p>In addition to this the student-teacher must have the right attitude and be willing to learn from the mentor.</p>	<p>experience... (MT4D)</p> <p>Mentors should have the ability to encourage and inspire the students (MT4D)</p> <p>...student-teacher must have the right attitude and be willing to learn... (MT4D)</p>	<p>inspire the students</p> <p>right attitude and be willing to learn</p>	<p>Factors that could influence mentorship</p>
	<p><b><u>Mentor Teacher 5 E</u></b></p> <p>I believe that mentorship is very important to student teachers and that it is a huge responsibility.</p> <p>To be a mentor requires commitment to supervise and give guidance to student teachers, to support them to become qualified teachers.</p> <p>A mentor can help the mentee to improve his or her abilities and skills through observation, assessment and modelling.</p>	<p>I believe that mentorship is very important to student teachers and that it is a huge responsibility. (MT5E)</p> <p>To be a mentor requires commitment to supervise and give guidance to student teachers. (MT5E)</p> <p>...help the mentee to improve his or her abilities and skills through</p>	<p>Understanding of mentoring</p> <p>Responsibility</p> <p>Commitment</p> <p>improve his or her abilities and skills</p> <p>observation, assessment and modelling</p> <p>providing both feedback and support</p>	

	<p>The mentor teacher will review lesson plans and observe the student teacher following the teaching sessions, providing both feedback and support.</p> <p>The mentor helps the student-teacher to set goals to achieve with the next lesson presentation.</p>	<p><i>observation, assessment and modelling. (MT5E)</i></p> <p><i>The mentor teacher will review lesson plans and observe the student teacher following the teaching sessions, providing both feedback and support. (MT5E)</i></p> <p><i>The mentor helps the student-teacher to set goals to achieve with the next lesson presentation. (MT5E)</i></p>	<p>set goals</p>	
	<p><b><u>Mentor Teacher 6 F</u></b> Mentorship is part of the induction programmed for student-teachers.</p> <p>The mentor provides all the necessary information about the school and curriculum to the student-teacher, they are responsible for the training, monitoring and supervision of all the</p>	<p><i>Mentorship is part of the induction programmed for student-teachers. (MT6F)</i></p> <p><i>The mentor provides all the necessary information about the school and curriculum to the student-</i></p>	<p>induction programmed</p> <p>responsible for the training, monitoring and supervision</p>	

	<p>activities the student is involved in.</p>	<p>teacher, they are responsible for the training, monitoring and supervision of all the activities the student is involved in. (MT6F)</p>		
	<p><b><u>Student Teacher 1 A</u></b>  Mentorship when you carefully think about it is someone who is a role model or sets an example for you; let's say a mentor is someone in whose footsteps you can follow.</p> <p>When you study they do not always teach you basically what is appropriate in the real world.</p> <p>There are something's that you just have to learn from people, the mentor is that person who is able to give you that information which is not always readily available in textbooks.</p>	<p>If you think about it mentorship, it probably is someone who is a role model or sets an example for you, let's say a mentor is someone in whose footsteps you can follow. (ST 1A)</p> <p>There are something's that you just have to learn from people, the mentor is that person who is able to give you that information which is not always readily available in textbooks. (ST 1A)</p>	<p>A mentor as a role model</p> <p>To practice what you learn in theory</p>	

	<p><b><u>Student Teacher 2 A</u></b> Mentorship is when someone mentors you. Someone who guides you if you have any problems that can help you and give you answers if you have any crises. Someone who can assist you.</p> <p>A mentor is someone you can fall back on for advice and help when you may need it.</p>	<p>Someone who guides you if you have any problems that can help you and give you answers if you have any crises. Someone who can assist you. (ST2A)</p> <p>A mentor is someone you can fall back on for advice and help when you may need it. (ST2A)</p>	<p>Give assistance</p> <p>Problem-solving</p> <p>Advisor</p>	
	<p><b><u>Student Teacher 1 B</u></b> I think a mentor is someone that is there to help you when you start teaching. You will learn from the mentor how to do certain things and the mentor will share all the information you need to know with you.</p> <p>Mentorship is when you learn from the mentor in order to improve your abilities.</p>	<p>I think a mentor is someone that is there to help you when you start teaching. (ST1B)</p> <p>Mentorship is when you learn from the mentor in order to improve your abilities. (ST1B)</p> <p>The mentor will</p>	<p>Helper</p> <p>Improve your abilities</p> <p>Best friend (relationship / positive support)</p>	<p>Positive factors contributing to the mentoring relationship.</p>

	<p>The mentor will become your best friend at the school as he/she will assist and guide you in all the activities of the school.</p>	<p><i>become your best friend at the school as he/she will assist and guide you in all the activities of the school. (ST1B)</i></p>		
	<p><b><u>Student Teacher 2 B</u></b>          What I regard as mentorship is when someone invests his time and energy to help you adapt in the school.</p> <p>The person will explain to you how things should be done and what is expected from you.</p>	<p><i>What I regard as mentorship is when someone invests his time and energy to help you adapt in the school. (ST2B)</i></p> <p><i>The person will explain to you how things should be done and what is expected from you. (ST2B)</i></p>	<p>commitment</p> <p>support</p>	
	<p><b><u>Student Teacher 1 C</u></b>          Mentorship it is when a senior teacher provides guidance and leadership.</p> <p>It is when you get to a school and them to give you a mentor to teach you the practical aspects of teaching.</p>	<p><i>Mentorship it is when a senior teacher provides guidance and leadership. (ST1C)</i></p> <p><i>It is when you get to a school and them to give you a mentor to teach you the practical aspects of teaching. (ST1C)</i></p>	<p>Leadership</p> <p>Practical aspects of teaching</p>	
	<p><b><u>Student Teacher 2 C</u></b></p>	<p><i>When you learn</i></p>	<p>More</p>	



	<p>When you learn how to do things from another person that is older and wiser than you.</p> <p>It is a development activity in which you grow as a person. You learn and improve your knowledge by communicating with your mentor.</p>	<p><i>how to do things from another person that is older and wiser than you. (ST2C)</i></p> <p><i>It is a development activity in which you grow as a person. You learn and improve your knowledge by communicating with your mentor. (ST2C)</i></p>	<p>experienced person</p> <p>development activity</p> <p>grow as a person</p> <p>learn and improve your knowledge</p>	
	<p><b><u>Student Teacher 1 D</u></b></p> <p>Mentorship I think is when you are supported by someone to help you to acquire new skills.</p> <p>It is a process by which you gain new knowledge.</p> <p>It is motivating students, encouraging them and to put strategies in place for them to develop.</p> <p>It is also finding potential in students and making it grow.</p>	<p><i>Mentorship I think is when you are supported by someone to help you to acquire new skills. (ST1D)</i></p> <p><i>It is a process by which you gain new knowledge. (ST1D)</i></p> <p><i>It is motivating students, encouraging them and to put strategies in place for them to develop. (ST1D)</i></p> <p><i>It is also finding potential in</i></p>	<p>acquire skills</p> <p>gain new knowledge</p> <p>motivating and encouraging</p> <p>finding potential in students and making it grow.</p>	

		students and making it grow. (ST1D)		
	<p><b>Student Teacher 2 D</b></p> <p>It is basically when someone is appointed to supervise and monitor you to ensure that you understand your duties and responsibilities and that you execute it correctly. Like at the school I have learned a lot from my mentors, they helped and taught me everything I needed to know.</p> <p>I had to go and sit in class with that person for a while, they informed me about the rules of the school, told me how I should interact with the learners and how I could assist them in their classrooms.</p>	<p>It is basically when someone is appointed to supervise and monitor you to ensure that you understand your duties and responsibilities and that you execute it correctly. (ST2D)</p> <p>...they informed me about the rules of the school, told me how I should interact with the learners and how I could assist them in their classrooms. (ST2D)</p>	<p>Supervise and monitor</p> <p>Giving information</p> <p>how I should interact with the learners</p> <p>how I could assist them in their classrooms</p>	
	<p><b>Student Teacher 1 E</b></p> <p>A mentor is a person who has to motivate, encourage and teach students about the practical side of teaching; the students have to</p>	<p>...is a person who has to motivate, encourage and teach students about the practical side of teaching the</p>	<p>Motivates and Encourage</p> <p>Practical skills and methods learned from the</p>	<p>Perceptions of skills developed through</p>

	<p>learn from the mentor what they are not taught at university.</p> <p>The student's need to learn about boundaries with the learners, parents and teachers.</p> <p>They must also develop good communications skills, their subject knowledge, how to use different resources, e.g. technology and they must learn how the administrative duties must be done within the school.</p>	<p><i>students have to learn from the mentor what they are not taught at university. (ST1E)</i></p> <p><i>The student's need to learn about boundaries with the learners. (ST1E)</i></p> <p><i>They must also develop good communications skills, their subject knowledge, how to use different resources, e.g. technology and they must learn how the administrative duties must be done within the school. (ST1E)</i></p>	<p>mentor</p> <p>Personal growth</p> <p>Developing skills</p>	<p>mentorship</p>
	<p><b><u>Student Teacher 2 E</u></b></p> <p>The first principal I had was very involved with the student teachers; he showed me all the good things about teaching and the bad things. He showed us the first</p>	<p><i>... very involved with the student teachers, he showed me all the good things about teaching and the bad things. He showed us the first time how</i></p>	<p>Involvement (positive relationship attribute)</p>	<p>Mentoring relationship positive factors</p>

	<p>time how things should be done, and after that we had to do it on our own.</p> <p>The principal and the HOD of the foundation phase gave me support constantly if I made a mistake they would help me and show me the correct way.</p> <p>I think that this is mentorship by learning from more experienced people that shares their knowledge with you and correct you when you do something wrong.</p>	<p><i>things should be done, and after that we had to do it on our own. (ST2E)</i></p> <p><i>...gave me support constantly if I made a mistake they would help me and show me the correct way.... (ST2E)</i></p> <p><i>I think that this is mentorship by learning from more experienced people that shares their knowledge with you and correct you when you do something wrong. (ST2E)</i></p>	<p>On-going support intervention</p>	
	<p><b><u>Student Teacher 1 F</u></b></p> <p>It is when someone shows you the ropes. The ways to do things correctly.</p> <p>How to handle things and situations especially when you're a teacher there are many situations in which</p>	<p><i>It is when someone shows you the ropes. The ways to do things correctly. (ST1F)</i></p> <p><i>How to handle things and situations especially when you're a teacher there are many</i></p>	<p>Problem-solving</p>	<p>Perceptions of the types of skills developed in mentorship</p>

	you must solve problems.	situations in which you must solve problems. (ST1F)		
	<p><b>Student Teacher 2 F</b></p> <p>A mentor is a person that gives the student help when they need it to do their work properly at school.</p> <p>The student learns from the mentor through observation, by asking questions and by following the mentors' example.</p>	<p>A mentor is a person that gives the student help when they need it to do their work properly at school. (ST2F)</p> <p>The student learns from the mentor through observation, by asking questions and by following the mentors' example. (ST2F)</p>	<p>Support when needed</p> <p>Do work properly</p> <p>Learns through observation asking questions following example</p>	

## Annexure F: Proof of Language Editing

### DECLARATION OF EDITING

29 March 2019

#### TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

This is to confirm that I have language edited and proof-read the dissertation by Ms Karen Gordon entitled:

**The Influence of the Mentoring Relationship on the Professional  
Development of In-Service Distant Education Student-Teachers**

The language editing/proof-reading process included the checking of spelling, punctuation, syntax and expression. An attempt was made to simplify complex sentences and, where necessary, combine short sentences to clarify meaning. Attention was given to the use of various language elements, such as prepositions, consistency in language usage and formatting as well as capital letters and punctuation.



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