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## Effective mentoring: Understanding factors affecting the holistic development of pre-service teachers during teaching practice

Sicelo Ziphozonke Ntshangase  and Zinhle P Nkosi 

School of Education, Language and Arts Education, University of KwaZulu-Natal, Durban, South Africa  
ntshangases2@ukzn.ac.za

The purpose with this article is to amplify the significance of effective mentoring of pre-service teachers in order to address classroom matters and situational issues associated with teaching practice. Open-ended interviews were conducted with 10 pre-service teachers about the ways in which they experienced mentoring during their teaching practice. The majority of pre-service teachers have raised concerns that once they were dispatched to schools, they found themselves without adequate mentorship from in-service mentors and mentor lecturers. The study was contextualised in less-privileged South African schools and involved fourth-year Bachelor of Education and Postgraduate Certificate in Education pre-service teachers as participants. Findings suggest that the common denominator among the documented lived experiences of the interviewed pre-service teachers was a lack of information about the difficulties that in-service teachers in less-privileged schools faced on a daily basis, especially in townships or rural areas where facilities such as computer rooms, smart boards and data projectors are not available. The Sitativity theory was used to frame the argument that the lack of effective mentoring that pre-service teachers received resulted in them not successfully adapting to the situation in less-privileged schools during teaching practice.

**Keywords:** lived experiences; mentorship; pre-service teachers; rural and township schools; teaching practice

### Introduction

Teacher education institutions globally place a high value on teaching practice as a formal induction programme for pre-service teachers to an authentic school educational context where they should translate pedagogy into practice (Nkambule & Mukeredzi, 2017). If teaching practice is valued internationally by teacher education institutions as a fundamental aspect of preparing pre-service teachers for the real world of teaching, good mentorship should be a priority (Yidana & Aboagye, 2018). Good mentorship requires collaboration between teacher education institutions and the schools where pre-service teachers are placed so that all stakeholders understand the complexities associated with teaching practice (Adie & Barton, 2012). Although pre-service teachers should have pedagogical content knowledge of the school subject they intend to teach, mentorship from experienced teachers with vast classroom experience should always be encouraged (Botha & Reddy, 2011).

The purpose with this article was to amplify the significance of effective mentoring of pre-service teachers in order to address classroom matters and situational issues associated with teaching practice.

Teaching a language such as isiZulu Home Language requires a balance between understanding the content as required by the National Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS) and applying the correct pedagogy in a suitable context and to the correct learners. The socio-cultural environment of learners often plays an integral role in influencing the complex dynamism of the classroom. It could be challenging for pre-service teachers to understand those practical details if they do not receive assistance from experienced teachers (Nkambule & Mukeredzi, 2017). In this article we present and analyse the lived experiences of isiZulu Home Language pre-service teachers regarding the mentorship they had received from the in-service teachers, and their journey before, during and after their teaching practice. The lived experiences of the participants in this study are presented and analysed by answering the following primary questions:

- a) What is the nature of mentoring provided to isiZulu Home Language pre-service teachers during the teaching practice at Inanda schools?
- b) Which factors influence the holistic development of isiZulu pre-service teachers in the schools where they are placed?

### Literature Review

#### *The significance and benefits of mentorship*

In this article mentorship is contextualised specifically for pre-service teachers and how it shapes their lived experiences during the teaching experience. Mentorship is described as a process or an activity that promotes an ongoing symbiotic relationship between an experienced in-service teacher (mentor) and a less-experienced pre-service teacher (mentee) by providing personal and professional support, development and well-being in preparation for the teaching profession in the school context (Aspfors & Fransson, 2015). Mentorship is impossible if it is not a joint venture of inquiry between the experienced in-service teachers and less-experienced pre-service teachers in exploring novel ideas on teaching practice (Burgess & Mayes, 2007; Hurd, Jones, McNamara & Craig, 2007). The lived experiences of pre-service teachers are often shaped by self-identity and a professional mission of in-service teachers who can relate their stories to the less-experienced future teachers about the dynamism of teaching (Frick, Carl & Beet, 2010). The individual self-identity and professional development of pre-service teachers are not “only confined to their relationships with the staff

(including mentors) and students, but is inextricably intertwined with the educational ethos of the school as well as national education imperatives” (Frick et al., 2010:423). Pre-service teachers, therefore, should be able to navigate from self-identity to development within the context of the wider environment during their teaching practice. They cannot do this without proper mentorship from experienced in-service teachers who have had exposure to all situations of the teaching profession, inside and outside of the classroom environment. Mentorship is a critical part of teaching practice because it provides invaluable benefits for pre-service teachers, including

... strengthening the development of specific teaching competencies, providing opportunities for self-reflection, providing opportunities for sharing experiences with a mentor, supervisor and peers, promoting problem-solving capacity and team skills in student teachers and an appreciation of the life of the whole school as distinct from teaching in individual classroom, encourage formation of learning communities and promotion of team work, providing opportunity for student teachers to establish themselves as generative and innovative teaching professionals through authentic participation in school and community activities and meeting real pupils/learners and real situations enables student teachers to develop a repertoire of skills in dealing with different learning situations. (Asuo-Baffour, Daayeng & Agyemang, 2019:260)

Mentorship is critical because it affects the assessment of pre-service teachers during their teaching practice. Since the future of these pre-service teachers depends on them passing their teaching practice, lecturers and mentor teachers should collaborate in giving all the necessary support. “In order to ensure coordinated efforts for the enhancement of mentorship in schools, which includes assessment, mentor teachers should concentrate on building strong relationships of trust and goodwill with pre-service teachers and higher education institutions” (Mohono-Mahlatsi & Van Tonder, 2006:394–395). There seems to be a gap in mentorship where pre-service teachers feel that they do not get effective mentorship that addresses both the subject content knowledge and the situational issues of the schools where they are placed (Asuo-Baffour et al., 2019). Hence the purpose of the study reported on here was to address the issue of effective mentorship and how it influenced the pre-service teachers’ inadequacy to withstand the burden and stress exerted on them by the daunting tasks of enduring induction to the teaching profession through the teaching practice programme.

#### *The role of the mentor teacher to the holistic development of the pre-service teacher*

The success of pre-service teachers is hindered by the inability of in-service teachers to provide effective mentoring that promote the holistic development of their mentees (Singh & Mahomed, 2013). Holistic development in this article refers to mentorship that ignites proficiency in both the subject content and personal skills to adapt in any situational context. Most in-service teachers and mentor lecturers are not skilled at providing both pedagogical content knowledge and personal support to their mentees to enable them to withstand the harsh situational environment (Singh & Mahomed, 2013). When pre-service teachers are despondent, confused and doubting themselves, some mentors do not become the pillar of strength, who are always there to infuse hope, optimism, and life-long lessons (Rowley, 1999).

Ligadu (2012) poses that mentor teachers are critical in the personal and professional growth of mentees, which goes beyond the pedagogical and content knowledge of the subject to include emotional and psychological gains. Emotional and psychological gains of pre-service teachers are guaranteed if the mentor teachers guide and advise “on pedagogic matters, such as planning, instructional skills, knowledge and organisation of content and resources, and classroom management” (Singh & Mahomed, 2013:1374). Such guidance, therefore, is insufficient if mentors do not become role models to their mentees and if their mentorship lacks empathy (Schwille, 2008).

Mentors must understand their influence in supporting mentees. Research by Liu (2014); Rajuan, Beijaard and Verloop (2007) shows three facets of mentoring, namely person-oriented, practice-oriented, and technique-oriented skills. Mentor teachers, in most cases, tend to ignore the personal-oriented facet and concentrate mainly on practice-oriented and techno-oriented approaches that focus on shaping the teaching skills, interpersonal interactions and career competitive ability (Liu, 2014; Rajuan et al., 2007). Consequently, this leaves the pre-service teachers emotionally and psychologically vulnerable. Therefore, mentors should consider mentorship approaches focusing on the holistic development of their mentees.

#### *The role of the mentor lecturer in supporting the pre-service teacher*

Quick and Siebörger (2005) conducted research and report that mentoring is fruitless if the roles of mentors are not clearly defined. In their findings, Quick and Siebörger (2005) report that schools

expect mentor lecturers to play a bigger role in supervising and mentoring pre-service teachers. Universities or teacher education institutions also expect schools or in-service teachers to be sole mentors, ensuring that pre-service teachers receive effective mentoring that guarantees a holistic development of their mentees (Quick & Siebörger, 2005).

Quick and Siebörger (2005) are of the view that mentorship should be a collective responsibility of schools and universities or teacher education institutions. We agree that mentoring is a shared responsibility.

Most universities or teacher education institutions have mentorship programmes designed to educate mentor lecturers on how to form partnership with schools or in-service teachers in mentoring the pre-service teachers (Freeman, 2001). These programmes are aimed at eradicating the misconceptions that the role of mentor lecturers is only to assess whether students are able to demonstrate the pedagogical content knowledge of the subject as it was taught or learned in the lecture hall (Castañeda-Trujillo & Aguirre-Hernández, 2018). These mentorship programmes, therefore, defuse the myths that the subject content and disciplinary and socio-cultural knowledge are fundamental aspects of the mainstream teaching profession that supersede partnership of all stakeholders and a holistic development of the mentees (Lucero Babativa, 2015). It is against this background that the argument raised in this article clearly demonstrates that mentorship goes beyond understanding pedagogy and subject content to consider the personal-oriented aspects of pre-service teachers' growth (Fajardo Castañeda & Miranda Montenegro, 2015).

#### *Understanding the environment, context, and situation of previously disadvantaged schools*

The socio-economic environment and situation of the school usually determine the context in which learning takes place. Research on South African education contexts and situativity shows that previously disadvantaged schools in rural and township areas are lagging regarding school facilities such as computers, data projectors, libraries, and electricity, compared to their urban counterparts (Heeralal & Bayaga, 2011; Nkambule & Mukeredzi, 2017). The lack of school facilities influences the lived experiences of pre-service teachers because they find themselves frustrated, isolated and disempowered in doing the best they can under such appalling circumstances (Heeralal & Bayaga, 2011).

It must be emphasised that not all rural and township schools are characterised by the lack of resources and infrastructure (Nkambule & Mukeredzi, 2017). However, most of these schools

are lacking these resources because of the socio-economic standing of the communities feeding the schools' population (Balfour, Mitchell & Moletsane, 2011; Moletsane, 2012). When preparing pre-service teachers for teaching practice, universities or teacher education institutions frequently ignore to alert them about the socio-economic contexts of the schools to which they would be sent (Yidana & Aboagye, 2018).

Rural and township schools are characterised by complexities, including social ills as disease, isolation, neglect, poverty, low literacy levels, low learner achievement, inadequate facilities and services, unfavourable policies, and low self-esteem of teachers because of marginalisation and misconceptions that they are not good enough compared to their counterparts who teach in the former White only schools in suburban areas (Johnson & Strange, 2009; Myende & Chikoko, 2014; Pennefather, 2011). Consequently, rural and township schools are frequently associated with poor education and dysfunctionality, making it challenging for pre-service teachers to adapt during their teaching practice (Balfour et al., 2011; Moletsane, 2012).

#### *Theoretical Framework*

The theory framing the argument of this article is grounded on the principles of the Situativity theory. According to Goodyear and Carvalho (2014), the physical space and all the socio-cultural situativity and resources affect the face-to-face learning activity. The Situativity theory originated from Vygotsky's socio-constructivist theory, emphasising the significance of culture and society as generative forces in the ultimate development of the human mind (Yeoman & Wilson, 2019). Situativity theory considers the role of both the individual and community in the process of understanding the discourse and practices of learning, thus suggesting that experienced in-service teachers can enhance the personal and professional development of pre-service teachers to improve their teaching practice (Little, 2002).

The Situativity theory demands an environment where in-service teachers, pre-service teachers and universities or teacher education institutions collaborate to explore and navigate ways of improving the teaching practice programmes through supporting one another (Seago, 2004). The Situativity theory allows for robust engagement, communication, supportive discussions, constructive criticism, and a strike of balance between individual learning repertoires and the cohort of a community of practice (Putnam & Borko, 2000). We employed the Situativity theory because the knowledge, thinking, and learning of pre-service teachers cannot be

separated from the context of the schools in which they are placed to do their teaching practice. The Situativity theory “includes situated cognition, situated learning, ecological psychology, and distributed cognition” (Durning & Artino, 2011:188). These steps are explained succinctly in the analysis of the findings.

### Methodology

With this article we explore the lived experiences of isiZulu Home Language pre-service teachers during their teaching practice at Inanda schools, in the province of KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa. The interpretive paradigm was used to qualitatively present and analyse the context under which the isiZulu Home Language pre-service teachers conducted their teaching practice and the mentorship they received from the schools and the University of KwaZulu-Natal. Ten fourth-year Bachelor of Education and Postgraduate Certificate in Education pre-service teachers were purposively selected as they were in their final year of study and it was thought that they had developed stronger instinctive survival skills than the first, second or third-year students. The selected students were deemed fit for the purpose of this study to highlight the severity of the challenges faced by pre-service teachers regarding the socio-cultural context of the schools in which they are placed. The 10 pre-service teachers were placed at schools in Inanda, north of Durban, and one of the authors of this article was appointed as their mentor lecturer. Contact with the participants was made easier as the participant provided the mentor lecturer with all their cell phone numbers. The open-ended interview questions were sent to the participants via WhatsApp group chats.

Inanda schools were purposively chosen because they were located in Inanda, a semi-urban, semi-rural, and semi-township area. Secondly, Inanda is a heritage and tourist hotspot because of its rich history associated with global political icons such as MK Gandhi and JL Dube, and it is the home of the famous Nazareth Baptist Church (Munien, Nkambule & Buthelezi, 2015). Thirdly, Inanda is located within the eThekweni Municipality, which is close to the University of KwaZulu-Natal, the teacher education institution from where this study was conducted. Fourthly, Inanda is predominantly populated by African isiZulu-speaking residents, with a total population of 153,619 comprising 2,623 households (Statistics South Africa [SSA], 2012). Inanda was established as an African reserve by the apartheid regime and is characterised by socio-economic complexities such as exclusion, poverty, and unemployment, exceeding 27% (Mtshali, Raniga & Khan, 2014; SSA, 2012) at the time of the study. Furthermore, with these schools being in an underprivileged area, the pre-service teachers were

bound to be confronted with the challenges that teachers experience in such schools. This context fits well with the Situativity theory because it should demonstrate how the environmental setting influences the learning process.

Reflective open-ended interviews questions were distributed to the participants using a WhatsApp group chat, which was created to engage with the isiZulu Home Language pre-service teachers about their teaching practice experiences. The WhatsApp group chat made it easier for the pre-service teachers to narrate stories regarding their practice reflectively. The conversations were guided by reflective open-ended and follow-up questions. Each member of the group could see what others experienced and could learn from or identify with others' stories. Discussions were continuous as they happened during and after teaching practice. These discussions, however, excluded the mentor teachers, as the WhatsApp group chat included only the mentor lecturers and the pre-service teachers. Mentor teachers were deliberately excluded from the conversations to allow the pre-service teachers to freely communicate their teaching-practice experiences with the mentor lecturer. The conversations were screenshot and e-mailed to the mentor lecturer who would also assess the participants' teaching practice. The e-mailed screenshots were printed and analysed by both authors of this article, using the thematic analysis approach to interpret the pre-service teachers' lived experiences during teaching practice.

For the sake of trustworthiness and credibility, the pre-service teachers' comments were repeated verbatim and then analysed qualitatively using the Situativity theoretical framework. In order to protect their identities, the participants' real names were never used. Instead, the participants were referred to as Participant 1, Participant 2, et cetera. Confirmability and credibility of the data were guaranteed by member checking. The participants were requested to confirm whether the data were analysed and presented exactly as was discussed. This information was also shared via the same WhatsApp group chat. Studies show that if the same data were to be transferred to another researcher, similar conclusions are likely be reached (Merriam, 2009). The transcripts of the conversations will be stored safely in hard and soft copies for possible future reference for a period of 5 years, as prescribed by the University of KwaZulu-Natal.

With this study we aimed to promote good mentorship and collaboration between the teacher education institution and the selected schools in order to provide the pre-service teachers with a period of holistic development during the period

of their teaching practice. Above all, the aim was to demonstrate the significance of the context and situativity to the personal and professional development of these pre-service teachers.

### Findings

The findings presented below are based on the four main questions that were posed to 10 isiZulu Home Language pre-service teachers. The questions and responses were presented in isiZulu. For the sake of readability and comprehension to a wider readership, the questions and responses were translated into English. This section is divided into three themes, namely the situativity difficulties faced by pre-service teachers, the missing link in the mentorship programme provided to pre-service teachers, and the relevance of the university curriculum to the school syllabus. These themes were influenced by the data that were collected, not the other way around. The data presented here are succinctly analysed in the discussion section.

#### The Situativity Difficulties Faced by Pre-service Teachers

The first question focused on the difficulties that the pre-service teachers experienced because of a lack of infrastructure and other essential resources. The question was posed as follows: *Isimo sendawo nesomnotho, okungangena kukho ingqalasizinda nezinsizakusebenza sasiwuphazamisa kanjani umsebenzi wakho?* (How did the socio-economic factors such as availability of good infrastructure and basic resources affect your teaching practice?)

#### Participant 1

*Esikoleni engangikusona bayashoda kakhulu ngezinsizakufunda. Lokhu kwaba yinkinga uma sengisebenza ngoba okokuqala izingane ziningi, okwesibili izincwadi azikho. Kwakumele ngibhale amanothi ebhodini ngiwachaze ngakusasa ngoba namaphepha agayiwe abafuni benzelwe. Kwesinye isikhathi ngibenzele amashadi ukuze isifunjwana sosuku siqhubeke kahle. Kodwa angifuni ukuqamba amanga, kwakuba nzima ukufundisa ngaphandle kwezinsiza.* (The school in which I was posted did not have adequate teaching resources. This created problems for me because of large classes and insufficient books. I had to spend the whole lesson writing notes on the board, which I would only explain the following day since the school did not allow us to photocopy the notes for learners. Sometimes I would make charts to demonstrate to learners what was learned on the day. However, I will not lie, teaching without the necessary resources was hard.)

#### Participant 2

*Esikoleni engangikuso babengenazo izinsizakufundisa ezanele. Lokhu kujwayelekile ezikoleni ezisemalokishini. Kuba nzima ukuhlela ezinye izifunjwana ngenxa yokungabi nazo izinsiza ezihambelana nazo, isifunjwana sigcina*

*singasazifezi injongo/izinhloso. Kugcina sekwenza nesifunjwana singahehi abafundi ukuba bagxilise amakhanda kokufundwayo.* (The school I was in did not have the teaching resources. It was difficult to teach some topics without the necessary resources and this, sometimes, prevented learners from achieving the required outcomes. This also resulted in learners losing focus because the lesson was not stimulating enough.)

#### The Missing Link in the Mentorship Programme Provided to Pre-service Teachers

The second question was to investigate whether pre-service teachers received adequate mentoring from the experienced in-service teachers. The question was as follows: *Ngenkathi nenza i-teaching practice yenu nicabanga ukuthi naluthola usizo olwanele kuma-mentor teacher enu?* (Do you think that you had received adequate mentoring from your mentor teachers during your teaching practice?)

#### Participant 3

*Angilutholanga usizo olwanele ngoba i-mentor yami yanginika incwadi nje ngifika yathi angifundise engikubonayo nengikuthandayo. Yayiza gqwa gqwa nasekilasini. Kwangilimaza kakhulu lokho.* (I did not get adequate mentoring because my mentor teacher only gave me a textbook on the day of my first arrival and said I should teach whatever I like. My mentor teacher did not come with me to class most of the time. This really had a negative impact on me.)

#### Participant 4

*Angilutholanga usizo olwanele mina. I-mentor yami yayihlezi ingekho, ingiyekela ngiye ekilasini ngedwa ingatholakali, kwesinye isikhathi inyamalale ingangiyalelanga ukuthi ngiqhubeke nasiphi isifunjwana. Ngase ngisizwa u-CAPS kanye nozakwethu esenza nabo ibanga elilodwa.* (I did not get enough assistance. My mentor teacher was always unavailable and could not give me guidance on what to do. I only relied on the CAPS document and from assistance by other pre-service teachers with whom I was teaching the same grade.)

#### Participant 5

*Eyami i-mentor yayingaxoxisani nami kuze kube yimina oya kuyona, inginike ekuseni umsebenzi okwakunganginiki isikhathi esanele sokulungiselela.* (My mentor avoided any conversation with me unless I had to insist that we talk about what I should do. Sometimes, the mentor would just give me work to do in the morning, with no adequate time to prepare.)

#### Participant 6

*Iqiniso ukuthi ama-mentor ayavilapha ukwenza imisebenzi yawo uma kufika thina ezikoleni. Abasicabangeli ukuthi nathi silapha nje sizocosha ulwazi kubona not ukubenzela umsebenzi wabo. Bajatshuliswa ukuthi sebezothola ukuphumula thina sibaqhubekele nomsebenzi, phezu kwalokho bengasiyaleli nokuthi sihambe kuziphi izinyathelo.*

(The truth is that mentor teachers are lazy to work when there are pre-service teachers at their school. They forget that we are here to learn, not to do their work. They only become excited that we are there and now they will get a relief, as we do all the work for them. On top of that, they do not even bother to guide us on what to do.)

The third question investigated whether the mentoring was only about the pedagogical and subject content knowledge or also about personal orientation. The question was as follows: *Luhlobo luni losizo enaniluthola kuma-mentor teachers enu, kwakuwusizo mayelana nesifundo kuphela noma babephinde banisize ngokuthi wena njengomuntu yikuphi okumele ukwenze ukuze ukwazi ukubhekana nezinsalelo zokuba nguthisha?* (What sort of mentorship did you receive? Was the mentoring only directed at what or how to teach, or were you also guided on how to grow as a person to face the challenges of being a teacher?)

#### Participant 7

*Babesizisa ngesifundo kakhulu. Kwakwenzeka ukuthi uma uyoqala ikilasi besho-ke ukuthi izingane oya kuzona zinjani nokuthi yini okumele uyilindele nokuthi uma besithatha kancane yikuphi okumele sikwenze njengokuthi sibike kubona nakuma HoDs.* (Most of the mentoring was subject-specific. Some other times though, the mentor teacher would warn you that in the class you would be teaching there are some impossible learners who might undermine your authority and that if it happened, we should know how to handle them or report those learners to them or HoDs [Heads of Departments].)

#### Participant 8

*Yebo babebuyise basize ukuthi ungabhekana kanjani nezinsalelo zokuba nguthisha. Lokhu kufaka indlela yokubhekana nabafundi abangalaleli, abathanda ukubukwa kanye nabahlakaniphe kakhulu...* (Yes, the mentor teachers could sometimes give us tips on how to face the challenges of being a teacher. This included the manner of handling disruptive learners and those who were attention seekers, also the gifted learners.)

#### Participant 9

*Eyami yayigxile esifundweni kepha yayibuyise ithi nqampu ngezinsalelo zokuba nguthisha. Wangitshela ngobunzima ababhekana nabo ekilasini kwazise phela izingane azifani uma kuya ngasekuqondeni isifundo...* (My mentor focused on the subject content most of the time, although he/she would tell me about the challenges a teacher may face in the classroom, more especially because learners have different abilities and learning styles.)

#### The Relevance of the University Curriculum to the School Syllabus

With the fourth question we investigated whether the mentor lecturers or lecturers in the teacher education institutions were preparing their

students sufficiently to face the challenges of the real classroom, or whether they only taught the pedagogical and subject content foreign to the school syllabus. The question was phrased as follows: *Ulwazi lwesifundo enanilunikezwe ngabafundisi benu basenyuvesi ngenkathi kufundwa lukwazile yini ukunijika ngokwanele ukubhekana ne-teaching practice?* (Do you think that what you have learned at the university was adequate to prepare you for the teaching practice?)

#### Participant 10

*Alukwazanga ukusijika ngokwanele ngoba uyathola ukuthi kwamanye ama-module kufundwa izinto ezingekho noma ezingafundwa ezikoleni. Lapho kusuke sekudingeka ukuthi wena njengothisha wenze ucwaningo olusha ngaleso sifunjwana osiqabukayo noma ubuyise ulwazi lwangaphambilini.* (The things that we learn at university did not equip us with adequate knowledge to teach at schools because most of what we learned from university modules is not in line with what is being taught at the school level. At school we are confronted with new topics, and as a pre-service teacher, one must research extensively around the topic before you attempt teaching it or use the previous knowledge.)

#### Discussion

The responses given above (Participants 1–10) show the gravity of the situation in less-privileged schools regarding the lack of books and other essential teaching materials such as computers, data projectors, and printers. The situative learning context of writing notes on the board for the whole lesson without explaining them to learners can have numerous cognitive situative repercussions. Firstly, the lesson will be boring, and learners will lose interest, resulting in them becoming disorderly. Secondly, the desired outcomes of the lesson are delayed because the teacher must explain the notes the next day. Pedagogically, the lesson becomes non-interactive and teacher-centred instead of being stimulating and learner-centred. The situative context of a lack of resources associated with rural and township schools, therefore, makes teaching practice severe for pre-service teachers (Nkambule & Mukeredzi, 2017).

When pre-service teachers are confronted by these challenges during their teaching practice in township and rural schools, they become emotionally and psychologically frustrated. They find themselves not knowing what to do. "Literature also demonstrates that teaching in rural [and township] settings ostensibly requires relevant knowledge and skills to cope with various eventualities, and complexities in those contexts" (Mukeredzi, 2016:88). The best way to cope with these difficulties is for experienced in-service teachers and mentor lecturers to work collaboratively in developing their mentees

holistically, which involves both academic and personal development. If there is a missing link regarding the mentoring offered, the results could be regressive instead of progressive.

Although some pre-service teachers commended their mentor teachers for giving them all the help they needed, most of the participants, as shown above, felt that their mentor teachers did not give them adequate mentoring. These mentees reiterated that they were left by themselves with bigger classes and they had to do all the work that their mentor teachers should have done. Seemingly, there is a trend that once the pre-service teachers have landed, the mentor teachers find themselves on a holiday. Because of the lack of mentoring, most of these pre-service teachers had to rely on each other for survival tips during their teaching practice. This is alarming because they were all there to learn, to be guided and shown the way by experienced in-service teachers in partnership with mentor lecturers.

The pre-service teachers' university experiences might not help them in the school context. It, therefore, is crucial that the in-service teachers and mentor lecturers, with much experience and knowledge of the school context, should be there to guide the mentees. The Situativity theory "takes the perspective that knowledge, thinking (cognition), and learning are situated in experience; that is, they are situated within the participants, the culture, and the physical environment of an activity" (Durning & Artino, 2011:198). The pre-service teachers might find it difficult to adapt to the context of the school and excel in their teaching practice if there is no transfer of knowledge, learning, and experience from those who know how to overcome or solve the context-based problems (Durning & Artino, 2011). Although it is noted from the responses given by the pre-service teachers during the reflective interviews that most of the in-service teachers were lazy and did not want to help, it must be argued that some of these mentors did not know how to mentor others. Literature has shown that some deficits in mentoring could be caused by a lack of knowledge and understanding of the whole idea of mentoring, being ignorant of the roles of mentors, and a lack of coherent communication or a memorandum of understanding between the schools and the universities or teacher education institutions (Nyaumwe & Mtetwa, 2011).

Some responses, particularly the response of Participant 10, portray not only pre-service teachers' misunderstanding of what knowledge, skills and values were provided by the university education but also a disconnect between the rationality behind pedagogy and the construction of knowledge. These responses demonstrate that pre-service teachers expected universities to teach

exactly what was taught at primary and secondary schools. Judging from the response provided by Participant 10, in particular, the university, on the other hand, expected of students, that once they have been taught the pedagogy, would be able to apply it to any given context in the classroom. The response given by Participant 10 portrays the teacher as the only contributor to the construction of knowledge. The pre-service teacher is the only one who seeks knowledge to spoon-feed the learners, relying on research and prior knowledge – prior knowledge being the knowledge of the subject matter that he/she was taught in basic education by her or his primary or high school teachers. Based on the responses by Participant 10, the pedagogical and subject content knowledge shared by the university lecturers were inadequate.

There is an apparent misalignment or misfit between what the university education aims to produce and what the pre-service teachers perceive as relevant. This further ignites debate on whether there is such a thing as a surface learner and deep learner or whether context determines the two segments of learners. Research reveals that context is significant in shaping whether one is a surface or deep learner (Biggs & Tang, 2007; Redden, Simon & Aulls, 2007; Tacconi & Hunde, 2013). The pre-service teachers who cannot use the pedagogical and subject content knowledge to suit the context of the school environment are usually shaped by the instructional approach to which they are accustomed. Pre-service teachers whose previous exposure to schooling was characterised by behaviourist-oriented pedagogy where the focus was on actions and the mere transmission of knowledge, are more likely to become surface learners (Dejene, Bishaw & Dagnaw, 2018). Pre-service teachers who were exposed to constructivist-oriented and interactive approaches were likely to become deep learners (Dejene et al., 2018).

The responses presented above indicate that all is not doom and gloom because some mentor teachers worked unselfishly with the pre-service teachers and mentor lecturers to help them develop holistically during their teaching practice. It is liberating to see that although most of the mentoring was linked to the pedagogical and subject content knowledge, there were conscientious efforts from the mentors to develop the personal side of the mentees. The Situativity theory emphasises the significance of Vygotsky's Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) (1978), which considers that the interference of those in the know of the context and the situation is crucial in shaping the knowledge, learning, and experiences of novices.

The mentor teachers and mentor lecturers who supported the pre-service teachers emotionally might have understood and

appreciated that, although the individual personalities of their mentees were essential to prevail in their practice, critical guidance in the pedagogical and content knowledge could not stand on its own (Mukeredzi, 2016). However, caution should be taken to ensure that pre-service teachers are not bombarded with the ideas of their mentor teachers or mentor lecturers and that they should be allowed to find their identities within the school context. This, however, cannot be achieved without good mentoring, which aims at developing all the facets and faculties of pre-service teachers.

### Conclusion

The participants in the study revealed that not all pre-service teachers received good mentorship during their teaching practice aimed at developing them holistically as future professional teachers. The literature also reveals that sometimes insufficient mentoring is caused by a lack of knowledge of what mentoring entails. Universities or teacher education institutions, therefore, are encouraged to have pre-teaching practice training programmes or seminars for all mentor teachers and mentor lecturers so that everybody knows what is expected of the mentors. However, some participants revealed that some mentor teachers and mentor lecturers went out of their way to develop the pre-service teachers in all facets of development, including pedagogical and content knowledge, and the personal-oriented aspect of knowledge. The emotional support given to some of the pre-service teachers by their mentors lessened their fear, anxiety of the different contexts of the school environment. However, most of the lived experiences of pre-service teachers in less-privileged rural and township schools, such as Inanda, were unpleasant because of several complexities and challenges, most of which were influenced by a lack of infrastructure and basic teaching resources such as books, computers and printers. The lesson learned from these experiences is that the universities sometimes do not prepare pre-service teachers sufficiently to adapt to these socio-economic contexts. Consequently, this comes as a shock to the pre-service teachers during their teaching practice. Universities or teacher education institutions, therefore, must orientate students well enough regarding the complexities and dynamics of South African schools and contexts before pre-service teachers are dispatched to such schools. This is crucial, mainly because students who are placed in affluent urban schools do not experience the same adversities (Balfour et al., 2011). Although this was not a comparative study between affluent urban schools and underprivileged rural or township schools, the distinction between these two different contexts is worth mentioning.

The pre-service teachers' responses also reveal that universities are distant regarding space and knowledge systems compared to schools and what is expected of teachers. University lecturers must bridge this gap and explain succinctly how the pedagogical and subject content knowledge they teach should be linked to any given context in the school environment. This could diffuse the confusion among pre-service teachers and create a mutual understanding between academics and their students. It might further cement an inseparable bond between universities and school sites, thus creating a permanent partnership between these segments of education. Currently, there seems to be a discord between schools and universities and university lecturers seem aloof in their academic environment. The only times that university lecturers visit schools are when they go to critique or assess pre-service teachers' lessons. Consequently, it projects academics as assessors instead of lecturer mentors. Academics, therefore, should know how they should play their roles as mentor lecturers to pre-service teachers.

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### Authors' Contributions

Both authors contributed equally in generating data and writing the manuscript.

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