

The Manner Beginning Teachers are mentored to Enhance Pedagogical Skills in Selected Government Secondary Schools in Rukwa Region, Tanzania



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ABSTRACT: The primary objective of this study was to investigate the manner beginning teachers are mentored to enhance pedagogical skills in selected government secondary schools in Rukwa region, Tanzania. Specifically, the study explored: i) the manner through which mentoring activities were organised in schools, ii) identification and prioritisation of key areas for mentorship in schools, and iii) the professional support services provided to beginning teachers in schools. The study was guided by socio-cultural theory. Moreover, the study employed a qualitative exploratory approach and case study design in exploring teachers' experiences on the manner beginning teachers were mentored. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews and Focus Group Discussion and were thematically analyzed. Findings show that mentoring practices involved attaching beginning teachers to experienced teachers in one to one form, peer mentoring networking formation among beginning teachers and team mentoring. Further, the identified areas for mentorship included: the subject content masteries, the teaching and learning materials preparation, the teaching and learning methods application, and the students' assessment and feedback giving. The professional supports provided to beginning teachers were schemes of work and lesson plans templates, lesson notes, online links and text and reference books. The study concluded that the manner mentorship was practiced in government secondary schools enhanced beginning teachers' pedagogical skills as one the prerequisite teaching profession skills and personality and hence, be able to effectively implement teaching activities. The study recommended that ministries responsible for education should institutionalise mentoring in schools by enacting laws and providing circulars and guidelines to enforce implementation sustainable mentorship in schools.

KEY WORDS: manner, beginning teachers, mentored, enhance, pedagogical skills, government secondary schools

1.0 INTRODUCTION

The provision of mentorship for beginning teachers is globally recognized as a cost-effective and sustainable professional support service. Typically delivered within the work environment, mentorship aims to address the professional challenges faced by beginning teachers in their initial year of employment, enhance retention and job performance, and keep them informed about the evolving teaching and learning needs (Alam, 2018; Chikoyo et al., 2019; Dachi, 2018; Faruki et al., 2019; Floody, 2021; Wasonga et al., 2015). Consequently, education systems worldwide view mentorship as a crucial tool to improve beginning teachers' pedagogical skills, ultimately enhancing their teaching performance and students' learning outcomes (Alam, 2018; Dachi, 2018; Faruki et al., 2019; Wasonga et al., 2015).

As a rationale for establishing mentorship services in schools particularly in Tanzania, it has become evident that beginning teachers, once assigned to teach in schools, rarely have opportunities for in-service training due to various reasons. These reasons include limited budgets (Anney, 2013; Ishumi, 2013; Komba & Nkumbi, 2008; Oulo, Adhiambo & Gikuhi, 2019). Anney (2013) further reports a study by Laddunuri (2012), revealing that 77 percent of teachers in the study did not attend any in-service training related to academic and pedagogical knowledge. Ishumi (2013) similarly noted a significant decline in in-service training, with approximately 52 percent of government sector schools and 58 percent of non-government sector schools experiencing this drop. Overall, only 6.4% of the teaching force in the public sector underwent any in-service professional development in the last five years.

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The absence of in-service training for beginning teachers' post-appointment means that they do not update their pedagogical skills. Consequently, their teaching heavily relies on what they learned in teacher colleges or universities. Even when in-service training is available, it often fails to help teachers acquire sufficient pedagogical knowledge, as it tends to focus solely on one selected theme area for training (Bashir et al., 2018; UNESCO, 2014). This lack of regular in-service training outside schools reinforces the need to implement mentorship services in schools, utilizing the expertise of long-serving, knowledgeable teachers to mentor and coach beginning teachers in acquiring essential pedagogical skills. Magidanga (2017), in investigating impediments to enhancing Pedagogy Content Knowledge (PCK) among secondary school teachers in Tanzania, found that limited school-based and teacher resource centre-based professional development, along with scarce school-based professional development programs like mentorship, hindered PCK development among beginning teachers in schools.

Scholars such as Bashir et al. (2018), Heeralal (2014), Kavenuke (2013), Keilwitz (2014), Malisa (2015), Mgaiwa (2018), Namamba, and Rao (2017) confirm that no initial teacher education course can adequately prepare a teacher for a 30- or 40-year career due to continuous changes and innovations in the education system resulting from developments in science and technology. Therefore, beginning teachers need opportunities to update and acquire new knowledge and skills, including mentorship services in the workplace.

1.1 Development of Beginning Teachers Mentoring in Schools

The term "mentoring" finds its roots in Greek mythology, with the first recorded use in literature dating back to 700 BC. In this ancient context, Odysseus, preparing for the Trojan War, entrusted his son Telemachus to his friend Mentor for guidance and care during his absence (Green-Powell, 2012). Mentor served as a sponsor, counsellor, coach, and advisor, overseeing Telemachus' physical, mental, spiritual, and emotional development. Green-Powell (2012) emphasizes that the initial mentor was an older, experienced individual actively involved in shaping a younger person's life and career in every aspect (p.100), defining mentoring as a process where an older person guides a younger person in various life spheres.

While mentoring originated as a relationship with a known and trusted individual, it has evolved into diverse programs and practices. In developed countries, adults are recruited and trained to become mentors, offering significant guidance, support, and learning for personal and professional growth. According to Green-Powell (2012), mentors often guide, teach, and coach their mentees, with age no longer the sole criterion for mentorship; rather, it is based on knowledge, skills, and experience. In academia, a mentor is any person responsible for guiding and nurturing individuals early in their careers, adapting their roles to meet the needs of mentees (Dziczkowski, 2013).

Dziczkowski (2013) notes that key mentoring terms such as "mentor" and "mentee" gained widespread usage in the United States, particularly in various workplaces, including education in the latter half of the 20th century (1980s). From the mid-1990s, terms like networking and role model also gained common application. Since the 1980s, mentoring in education has emerged as a rapidly growing field globally (Mullen, 2012). Educational mentoring programs typically aim to address challenges faced by beginning teachers, such as isolation, frustration, and fear, in the ever-changing school environment (Kayombo, 2019). Mentors provide personal and professional support, guiding beginning teachers in their transition to the role of educators (Hudson, 2012), helping them acclimate to the school environment and building on their prior experiences (Dziczkowski, 2013).

1.2 Mentoring Beginning Teachers in Developed Countries

A study by Ally and Mabagala (2022) presents evidence that teacher mentoring programs are mandatory in many developed countries, including the United States, Australia, France, Greece, Israel, Italy, Japan, Korea, New Zealand, and Switzerland. In these countries, mentoring is systematically conducted with dedicated time for beginning teachers and mentors to participate in coaching, induction activities, and training. Additionally, in countries like Denmark, Finland, Hungary, Italy, Norway, Switzerland, and Flemish Belgium, schools allocate substantial time for regular collaboration among teachers on instruction and student management during teaching and learning processes. For instance, teachers in Finnish schools meet weekly to plan and develop curriculum collaboratively (Leedham & Parsloe, 2017; Wasonga et al., 2015). Ally and Mabagala (2022) also report that in Scandinavian countries like Sweden, Norway, and Denmark, teachers convene at the district centre for reflective practice groups twice a month, facilitated by an experienced teacher, to discuss common challenges faced by beginning teachers.

1.3 Mentoring Beginning Teachers in Developing Countries and Sub-Saharan Africa

As many countries in Sub-Saharan Africa struggle with severe shortages of qualified teachers for their rapidly expanding secondary education, the significance of beginning teachers' exposure to mentoring is gaining wider acknowledgment (Abugre & Kpinpuo, 2017). However, Fulgence (2023) reports that many beginning teachers in sub-Saharan Africa do not adequately benefit from meaningful mentoring that can enhance their pedagogical skills. Abugre and Kpinpuo (2017) and Fulgence (2023) noted that the

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challenges beginning teachers face in the initial teaching attempts are inadequate content mastery, lack of pedagogical skills, and large classes. These researchers concurrently argue that well-designed beginning teacher mentorship and support programmes have been documented to be both an effective and cost-effective form of enhancing pedagogical skills. Beginning teacher mentorship programmes exist across countries in sub-Saharan Africa but there is inadequate evidence on their sustainability and efficiency, especially for beginning teachers at the secondary-school level.

For this case, the initiative to enhance pedagogical skills among beginning teachers in African schools can be traced back to the 1990 World Declaration on Education for All. This declaration emphasized the importance of basic education in situating a child within their environment, enabling them to develop skills fully to respond appropriately to the opportunities, constraints, and inconsistencies of their surroundings (Wanjohi, 2011). Beyond expanding access to education, policymakers are urged to contextualize, simplify, and democratize school curricula and teaching methods. The major reforms implemented by numerous African governments include increasing access to education at all levels, developing school infrastructure, and employing new teachers (UNESCO, 2014).

Scholars such as Hardman et al., (2015) and Namamba and Congman (2017) highlight that the expansion of school populations has resulted in qualified teacher shortages in primary and secondary schools across many African countries. Pre-service teacher education, where available, often lacks quality and fails to align with current trends. The need to address shortages by employing untrained teachers underscores the necessity for continuous professional development in areas such as content mastery, pedagogical skills, and managing large classes. In-service teacher mentorship, involving experienced teachers guiding their peers, is considered a sustainable option (Dachi, 2018). Several studies describing mentorship practices have been conducted in African countries, including Malawi, Mozambique, South Africa, Uganda, Kenya, and Zimbabwe. Scholars like Komba and Nkumbi (2008) and Kunje (2002) found that teacher mentoring experiences in Malawi and Mozambique involved senior teachers visiting classrooms where beginning teachers taught, providing constructive feedback to enhance pedagogical skills.

Scholars such as Atieno and Ong'ondo (2021) also report on informal induction/mentorship programs in Kenya's government schools that designed to help beginning teachers acquire professional competencies related to the teaching career. Experienced teachers support beginning teachers in acclimatizing to the teaching environment, understanding school policies and regulations, and provide coaching, guidance, simulated teaching, and classroom visits. Roundtable discussions enable beginning teachers to reflect on their teaching, and advice is offered on areas for improvement. School administrations also provide instructional materials and necessary supplies, including stationery and teacher's guides, to support beginning teachers in their classroom activities. In Uganda, Okumu et al. (2021) reported the existence of a school-based mentoring practice for beginning teachers during their six-month probation period in the Acholi sub-region of northern Uganda. Principals and senior teachers assumed mentoring responsibilities based on their extensive working experience and administrative roles. Both principals and senior teachers, acting as mentor teachers, supported beginning teachers in various aspects of the teaching profession, including career and personal development. Interactive discussions through face-to-face meetings and classroom visits were common practices.

Similar instructional induction and mentoring practices were observed in South Africa, where the University of South Africa (UNISA) sent student teachers to be attached to experienced teachers during Teaching Practice (TP), guiding and coaching them in activities related to pedagogical skills (Mukeredzi et al., 2016). On the other hand, Heeralal (2014) identified the greatest needs of student teachers, including lesson preparation (84%), assessment (82. %), classroom management (79.5%), and lesson presentation (79%). The study also highlighted additional areas where student teachers required assistance, such as time management, extra and co-curricular activities. South African student-teachers reported gaining more from school-based mentors than university lecturers, emphasizing the importance of mentor training and assistance for student-teachers.

DeRosa (2005) further report that school-mentoring practices for newly qualified teachers in Zambian secondary schools are still at the infant stage, still unorganized and mentors are not professionally trained to carry out mentoring services in secondary schools so that teachers can confidently teach, stay and enjoy teaching. Furthermore, Mtitu (2014) in his study reports that in Zambia, currently, there is ample evidence that most teachers have not received mentorship because mentorship programmes for newly qualified teachers were virtually non-existent in Zambian schools. Koda (2006) also exposed the in-service school-based training programmes in Kenya which was offered through mentoring, coaching, classroom observations, collaborative planning and team teaching which has shown the greatest impact on classroom practices and students' academic performance. Indoshi (2003) using qualitative method of study of new graduate school teachers in Kisumu District in Nyanza Province of Kenya during their first 2 years in teaching (probation period) discovered that beginning teachers wished to learn school organization, curriculum, teaching methods, student discipline management, interpersonal relationships, school rules and regulations, and school vision and mission.

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1.4 Empirical Studies on Mentoring Beginning Teachers in Tanzania

In Tanzania, a series of studies have explored the teaching performance of beginning teachers after employment. These studies noted weaknesses in areas such as lesson planning, preparation of teaching and learning materials, application of participatory teaching methods, maintaining discipline in the classroom, managing time, and student assessments (Ali, 2017; Ally & Mabagala, 2022; Kafyulilo et al., 2016; Kasuga, 2019; Kayombo, 2019; Kitta & Fussy, 2013; Mgaiwa, 2018). In response to these challenges, scholars such as Agunloye (2013), Caspersen and Raaen (2014), Heeralal (2014), and Kim and Roth (2011) emphasize the importance of professional support from experienced teachers, particularly through mentorship. Education systems are urged to enhance the teaching performance of beginning teachers through mentorship, providing both academic and professional support for their growth.

To address these needs, Tanzania implemented mentoring initiatives for beginning teachers in 2004, including a mentoring program for licensed teachers designed by the Teacher Education Programme (TEP) through the Tanzania Institute of Education (TIE). This program aimed to support licensed teachers' professional growth in secondary schools but faced challenges in distribution and mentor training. New teachers were often left in the care of school heads, who were not universally equipped with mentoring skills, struggled to help them gain pedagogical skills at their own pace (Ally & Mabagala, 2022).

Another initiative in Tanzania targeted the mentoring of diploma student-teachers posted to teach in secondary schools between 2004 and 2007. While student-teachers spent one year in college learning the theoretical part of the teaching course, their second year involved practical application in secondary schools. The expectation was that these student-teachers would be assisted by experienced teachers serving as mentors. However, this initiative faced challenges, including a shortage of teachers in some schools, resulting in inadequate mentorship for student-teachers (Ally & Mabagala, 2022; Bhalalusesa et al., 2011).

The government of Tanzania, through its Education and Training Policy (ETP) of 2014, underscores the importance of in-service training and re-training for teachers, aiming to make them capable of conducting effective teaching and learning processes. This commitment extends to the implementation of the National Framework for Teacher Continuous Professional Development (NF-TCPD) of 2019, emphasizing school-based mentoring practices as a vital element for lifelong teacher professional development (MoEST, 2019). Through TCPD, teachers can engage in mentoring as a lifelong learning practice, fostering collaborative learning at the school level and regular meetings at teacher centers to enhance teaching skills and develop into competent and effective practitioners.

Despite these initiatives, there is a need for further research to explore the experiences of teachers in government secondary schools regarding the manner beginning teachers are mentored to enhance their pedagogical skills. Limited empirical evidence exists on this subject. Scholars like Mgaiwa and Kapinga (2021) emphasize that well-designed teacher mentorship and support programs are effective and cost-effective for professional development. However, there is inadequate evidence on the sustainability and efficiency of these programs, particularly for secondary school teachers in Tanzania.

1.5 Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study was to investigate on the manner beginning teachers were mentored in schools to enhance their pedagogical skills.

1.5.1 Specific objectives

Specifically, the study explored: i) the manner through which mentoring activities were organised in schools, ii) identification and prioritisation of key areas for mentorship in schools, and iii) the professional support services provided to beginning teachers in schools.

2.0 STUDY METHODOLOGY

Basing on the study methodology, theoretically, the study adopted socio-cultural theory which describes school based mentoring as a demanding social interaction in communities of learning to enhance pedagogical skills (Rogers et al., 2019). Whilst, the application of the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) theory as described by Bhowmik, et al., (2013) and Kamarudin, et al., (2020), suited this study because it showed the role of experienced teachers (more knowledgeable ones) in mentoring beginning teachers to enhance pedagogical skills. This study was a qualitative inquiry which presumed the participants' personal constructs and interpretation of the phenomena under investigation (Creswell, 2014; Yin, 2016), hence the exploration of the participants' experiences, perspectives and views in their natural contexts (Silverman, 2013). The study was conducted in Rukwa region specifically in Sumbawanga Municipality and Nkasi District. The study covered seven government secondary schools; where schools 1, 2, 3 and 4 were found in Sumbawanga Municipality and schools 5, 6 and 7 was found in Nkasi District. A total of 63 equivalents to 97% out of 65 planned participants participated in the study. The participants were categorised as follows:

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experienced teachers (28), beginning teachers (15), heads of departments (11), heads of schools (7), and District Secondary Education Officers (2).

The study administered Focus Group discussions to experienced teachers, who responded to obtain the perspectives and acceptance in the manners of mentoring beginning teachers in schools. This is because experienced teachers were best positioned to provide situations and experiences how they mentored beginning teachers, hence they built a foundation of interviewing the rest of participants. Nevertheless, during the interviews with the beginning teachers, heads of departments, heads of schools and DSEOs directed the interviews to what they found important and expressed the meaning they attached to concepts (Taylor et al., 2016). The information collected through interviews and FGD was digital recorded and note-taking was done simultaneously. All the interviews and discussions were conducted in a mix of English and Kiswahili languages and direct quotations were translated into English by the researcher and reviewed by the two supervisors. An average time for individual interviews took between 40 and 60 minutes respectively while the time for FGD was approximate to 1hour and 20 minutes. All participants who participated in the study gave informed consent and agreed to provide information about the study.

More importantly, the criteria for examining the rigour in the study have traditionally been internal and external validity, reliability and objectivity (Creswell, 2014; Golafshani, 2003). Gall et al. (2007) pose out that the term trustworthiness is appropriate for judging the quality of study in qualitative paradigms. The elements of the criteria in trustworthiness include: credibility, dependability (consistency), transferability (applicability) and conformability (neutrality). These elements were employed alongside with other strategies to ensure the quality of this particular study. Credibility is parallel to internal validity (Cohen et al., 2011; Creswell, 2014). This was achieved, first, through the use of multiple instruments of data collection (individual in-depth interviews and FGD) to collect data. Second, peer reviewers were used to ensure credibility, where fellow researchers were given the tentative data and findings for their reviews and comments. Dependability corresponds to the reliability of the findings in quantitative study (Cohen et al., 2011; Creswell, 2014). Dependability of the conclusions was guaranteed by asking clear questions, triangulating the data, reducing biasness and subjectivity during the data collection, peer reviews, audit trail, and reporting the study process and the findings transparently. In the conformability, parallel to objectivity criteria in the quantitative approach (Cohen et al., 2011), the researcher confirmed the study results and findings and grounded them in raw data evidence. The integrity of raw data was maintained by using participants' words, including quotes, liberally which were all verbatim recorded. Further, transferability of the findings was equivalent to generalization of the findings in the quantitative study (Cohen et al., 2011; Creswell, 2014). Although the location of the study might be similar to other places in Tanzania, the researcher's aim was not to generalize the findings of the study; instead, it was to explore the manner in which beginning teachers were mentored in schools to enhance pedagogical skills. However, if readers would find sufficient similarities between their contexts and the context of the study, then it would be reasonable for them to transfer the findings to their individual contexts. Finally, the data collected were analysed using the principles of thematic analysis. The approach involves six steps: familiarisation with the data, generation of tentative codes, elucidation of themes, review of themes, delineation of themes and production of the written report as presented by Bricki and Green (2007). From questionnaires, interviews and documentary reviews three themes were inductively developed as per study objectives. Prior to the implementation of interview FGD, the researcher described the purpose and benefits of the study and steps to be taken to maintain confidentiality and anonymity. In addition, the researcher assured the participants that the information collected were for research purpose only, and in addition, the names of the participants and school names were not mentioned in the report of the study.

3.0 FINDINGS

3.1 The Manner Mentorship was Organised in Schools

The findings from beginning teachers indicated that the practice of attaching beginning teachers to experienced teachers for mentoring was highly prevalent in the schools examined by the study. Specifically, the study found that school administrations actively attached beginning teachers to experienced ones for mentorship purposes. In this context, one beginning teacher shared their experience:

"When I reported to my working station, I was attached to an experienced teacher with whom mentorship was planned for the beginning teacher's attachment to work with an experienced teacher. We also made plans on how to share teaching and learning materials for better teaching" (Beginning Teacher 1, 2020).

Implicitly, it was a school-based program for beginning teachers to be attached to experienced teachers. The findings underscore that, on a broad scale, beginning teachers were attached to experienced teachers for mentorship in schools. Moreover, these mentorship initiatives were promptly initiated after the attachment occurred, starting with the formulation of mentorship plans and strategies for the beneficial sharing of resources in schools.

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The study by Wang et al. (2009) also emphasizes the substantial benefits of beginning teachers' attachment to experienced teachers in terms of mentorship. Teacher mentoring within schools was found to be advantageous for schools, teachers, and students alike. The attachment of beginning teachers for mentoring programs not only increased job satisfaction but also facilitated the emergence of teachers as leaders within their schools, positively impacting student achievement and engagement. Similarly, Mukeredzi and Manwa (2019) emphasized the critical nature of planned meetings between experienced and beginning teachers during teaching practice. These meetings significantly contributed to the success of the entire mentoring process and the positive accomplishment of the practicum. Findings from their study indicated that regular planned meetings fostered good relationships between beginning teachers and experienced teachers, occurring weekly, fortnightly, or monthly. These meetings focused on supporting both beginning and experienced teachers in enhancing their general pedagogical knowledge, pedagogical content knowledge, curriculum knowledge, knowledge of learners, and knowledge of educational contexts.

The study also revealed that experienced-beginning teachers' meetings were highly beneficial, with almost all participants acknowledging that these meetings were voluntarily convened to a large extent. Despite being based on voluntary arrangements, participants reported these meetings as beneficial for enhancing pedagogical practices. This is in contrast to a study by Heikkinen et al. (2018), which reported that planned meetings were not practiced at high frequencies in schools. Consequently, beginning teachers in Heikkinen et al.'s (2018) study experienced ineffective mentoring, leading to limited benefits from the mentoring process and the practicum. The findings noted that beginning teachers with limited mentor-mentee planned meetings showed limited knowledge of what to teach, how to teach the content, and appropriate strategies for teaching specific topics.

However, in this study, majority of participants yielded similar results by appraising the attachment of beginning teachers to experienced teachers, that this mentoring approach was the most widely practiced in their respective schools following to its benefits. In this context, one participant stated:

The attachment of beginning teachers to experienced teacher mentoring is a prevalent practice in our school, fostering the formation of friendships between novice and seasoned educators. This approach allows beginning teachers the freedom to pose questions related to the subjects they teach (Head of Department 7, 2020).

This statement suggests that beginning teachers are closely connected to experienced mentors through direct, face-to-face relationships. Furthermore, the findings indicate that this attachment facilitates a sense of freedom for both parties, fostering a stronger bond and collaborative working culture in mentorships. This aligns with the socio-cultural theory, emphasizing that human learning occurs through interaction in a defined context.

Furthermore, the statements from school heads reinforce the notion that attaching beginning teachers to experienced mentors enhances opportunities arising from close interactions. One head of school articulated the purpose behind this practice:

"It is worth noting why we attach beginning teachers with experienced teachers. This provides beginning teachers with chances to utilize the opportunities of exploring the knowledge and skills gaps from experienced teachers following daily direct interactions that exist between them" (Head of School 3, 2020).

This one-to-one mentoring is structured through individualized contracts and plans agreed upon by both beginning and experienced teachers, aiming to improve teaching skills. The study highlights that this mentoring approach is common due to its promotion of openness and a sense of honour. Additionally, it accommodates the nature of tasks that often necessitate face-to-face meetings between the two groups.

3.2 Identification and prioritisation of key areas for mentorship in schools

In the identification and prioritisation of key areas for mentorship in schools, the study found out that beginning teachers were mentored in areas relating to the implementation of the subject matter masteries. There were major areas raised for mentorship in the mastery of the subject contents, geared towards ensuring that beginning teachers were clearly setting the teaching and learning competences based on the new curriculum requirement. Head of school stated;

The logbook was filled in generically; he did not make it clear how he made the progress of the classroom activities. You know approving the teaching practices require the teacher to be specific in determination of the classroom activities undertaken that specify the competences gain during the teaching process, the follow up process was necessary to ensure that beginning teachers fill in the logbooks accordingly, by identifying clearly the topics taught classroom activities as per subject syllabus (Head of school 5, 2020).

This statement signifies that beginning teachers initially were presenting the generic contents of the teaching and learning practices. They were not being able to set clearly the flow of classroom activities and fill in the logbooks the specific teaching and

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learning competences covered. Further findings show that beginning teachers were mentored to acquire teaching and learning materials preparation skills. One head of department stated that:

At the department level, we urge experienced teachers to mentor beginning teachers on the proper preparation and preservation of specimen to ensure a high quality of specimen which can bring the expected results in the laboratories (Head of department 6, 2020).

The statement provided implies that under the arrangement of the department offices, beginning teachers were mentored how to properly prepare and preserve specimen in order to increase the quality of information the specimen contain. These findings are in line with the study findings conducted by Namamba and Rao (2017) who reported that the practice of training beginning teachers in proper preparation and preservation of specimens was significant and quite fundamental, where both beginning and experienced teachers benefitted from specimen conservation consistency. In addition, finding show that beginning teachers were mentored in the teaching and learning methods application skills. Evidence regarding to this inference included a typical statement provided by beginning teacher from school 7:

Following the big number (over 120 students) I had in a classroom, coupled with huge workload (4 to 8 periods per day), I could not properly engage every student attentiveness in the learning process, in many occasions I applied much the lecture teaching method, but it turned outdated when students were getting much more jaded with the teaching progress and I had to change the teaching style to classroom discussions and presentations. Again this probed problems in the implementation due to students overcrowding in the classroom and limited time which was assigned for a given subject period ...I had to seek support from experienced Teachers. (Beginning teacher, 14, 2020).

The quotation provided above signifies that there were a number of reasons to which beginning teachers failed to actively apply participatory teaching methods on of them being overcrowding of students in classrooms. This is in line with the study findings done by Kafyulilo, et al., (2013) who revealed that teachers in government secondary schools were not capable of applying learner-centred teaching methods which is a prerequisite of competence- based curriculum. Finally, beginning teachers were mentored in the students' assessment and feedback giving in schools. The participant stated that:

The beginning teacher was less competent in designing learning activities and setting tests/examination questions as inputs for assessment, marking and awarding scores, hence for effective students' assessment, marking and awarding scores mentoring was the better options as remedy for enhancing pedagogical skills and general teacher professional development (Head of department 8, 2020).

The statement provided implies that experienced teachers incorporated beginning teachers in the academic activities such as marking school-based and mock examinations and collaboratively engaged them on how to provide feedback to students.

3.3 The professional support services provided to beginning teachers in schools

In the professional support services offered to beginning teachers in schools, findings show that beginning teachers were offered some materials and non-materials professional support services in schools during the mentorship practices. The professional supports included the provision of the textbooks, reference books, lesson notes and online links with the aim of empowering beginning teachers to enhance pedagogical skills. In textbooks support one participant reported:

The school had no physics textbooks in the library. I talked to a friend whom I knew earlier before my placement to this school. She supported me with the textbook and I produced a photocopy. You know this book was so much important to me as it provided the organized units of work in the form of topics and competences to be achieved (Beginning teacher 7, 2020).

The statement shows that there was limited textbooks in the school libraries. The findings show that beginning teachers had to make some personal initiatives to source the materials since the textbooks were helpful in interacting with subject topics and designing of the lesson notes. Further, findings show that beginning teachers similarly sourced textbooks from peers on their own initiatives. In the case of reference books, findings show that experienced teachers provided beginning teachers with reference books or online links where beginning teachers were coached to search for relevant materials. Text and reference books were useful for preparing lesson notes effectively. On the other hand, beginning teachers reported to have sourced reference books from fellow teachers from the within and the nearby schools. One beginning teacher reported:

As this school is remotely located, it took me some personal resources to get to friends in town who had some reference books so that I produced photocopies to keep for my own references in lesson notes making (Beginning teacher 11, 2020).

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The statement provided indicates that due to remoteness of the school, beginning teachers had to make some initiatives to source reference books, hence the findings show that reference books in the respective schools were limited in supply, and therefore, beginning teachers had to work out on their own initiatives to get the reference books in order to produce the quality lesson notes. Findings on lesson notes show that experienced teachers provided beginning teachers with readymade lesson notes which acted as helping tools, so that beginning teachers could go through and see how best lesson notes could be modified and prepared for classrooms. One head of school stated:

The good thing with the beginning teacher was because we are teaching the same subject (Mathematics). I could not be such mean to him knowing he was a new comer. I just supported him with everything including my own personal lesson notes, so that he could catch up so fast with the pace I set in Mathematics teaching in this school (Head of school 6, 2020).

This implies that the beginning teachers were provided with the readymade lesson notes to support them with the exposure to the structures and details of the notes, and to easily cope up with the teaching prerequisite to competent based curriculum. Basing on the online links, findings show that experienced teachers supported beginning teachers with the website-based education links which contained useful information concerning subject contents, videos, animations and so many illustrations depending on what the teacher needed. Thus the experienced teachers coached, demonstrated and mentored beginning teachers on how to search for relevant information regarding the topics stipulated in the syllabus. One DSEO stated:

At the Ward Education Week, I always coached beginning teachers on how to identify and use official sites containing the genuine contents of the curriculum (DSEO 1, 2020).

This statement indicates that the DSEOs used online services in mentoring beginning teachers, hence the finding show that the DSEOs coached teachers on the use of ICT and integrating ICT in the teaching and learning processes.

4.0 CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the study findings, the study make the following conclusion; first, the beginning teachers had attachments to experienced teachers for mentorship, it was voluntary and was conducted in an informal arrangement between the experienced and the beginning teachers; second, mentorship in schools involved peer networking and consultation with peers, where beginning and experienced teachers interacted from within and across the departments, in private and or in schools' arrangements to enhance pedagogical skills; third, beginning and experienced teachers mentored one another through team teachings, in which they conducted classroom observations, demonstrations, enquiries and discussions in teaching pedagogy; fourth, key areas identified and prioritized for mentoring in schools involved subject matter masteries, teaching and learning materials preparation, teaching and learning methods application and students' assessment and feedback giving skills implementation in schools; and fifth, beginning teachers were supported with professional documents by experienced teachers, these included templates of schemes of work, lesson plans, lesson notes and some reliable academic online links which were supportive in replication and production of standardized teaching and learning documents. Hence the manner beginning teachers were mentored involved through organizing mentoring arrangements, identifying key areas for mentorships and provision of the schools' based readymade professional documents.

Based on these findings therefore, the following recommendations are made:

In consideration to the importance of schools' based mentorships, the study recommends that it is vital for the ministries responsible for education to institutionalise schools' based mentorships by releasing policies, enacting laws, producing and supplying circulars and guidelines to enforce schools implement mentoring in a specific and systematic procedures which could stand as best practices in the education system instead of depending on personal desires and commitment.

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