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CONTEXTUAL-SPECIFIC DYNAMICS ON COLLEGIALITY AND RECIPROCITY IN MENTORING RELATIONSHIPS: ETHICAL IMPLICATIONS IN THE GHANAIAN CONTEXT

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ABSTRACT: *This qualitative ethnographic case study, adopted a socio-cultural theoretical perspective and interpretive qualitative analysis techniques, to investigate five mentoring relationships from five mentors and mentees involved in the innovative Cooperative-Reflective mentoring model of teacher professional learning in mentoring relationships at the University of Education, Winneba, (UEW), Ghana. This model is underpinned by the concepts of collegiality, reciprocity of learning, collaborative activities and critical reflection by the mentoring dyad. The data were collected from interviews, observations and document analysis. Trustworthiness of the study was ensured through the multiple sources of data, peer review, member checks, as well as the description of themes in the participants' own words. The study revealed that although the involvement of classroom teachers in the professional training of student teachers is a novelty in teacher education in Ghana, and a great departure from the old teaching practice, the programme has some conceptual and implementation challenges. First, the old conception of a hierarchical relationship between mentor and mentee persists contrary to the concepts of collegiality, collaboration, reciprocity and critical reflection. This is attributable, partly, to the inherent power of the mentor and, partly, to the professional culture of the teaching profession. Second, the collegial relationships which are to result in this mentoring relationship model are theoretically well intended but practically problematic because of the social structure of the Ghanaian society and the professional culture of the teaching profession in Ghana. Again, reciprocity of learning through critical reflection by both mentor and mentee in this model of teacher professional learning concept also appears to have been theoretically well intended but practically problematic because of the same reasons for forging collegial relationships. This seemingly lack of sensitivity to the socio-cultural and professional contexts in which the model is being implemented is a major setback to the arguably innovative move towards school-based teacher training and the greater involvement of practising teachers in the professional training and development of student teachers as well as in the life-long learning of practising teachers. We, therefore, propose a re-conceptualisation of the mentoring model to take into account the socio-cultural and professional contexts within the context of implementation since theoretical positions alone cannot provide sufficient basis or framework for the development of a mentoring programme. It is the interaction between particular mentors and particular mentees in their particular contexts that determines the type of relationship to be established and the type of professional learning that will result.*

KEYWORDS*: **Mentoring relationships, collegiality, collaboration, reciprocity, critical reflection and professional learning***

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INTRODUCTION

For a long time, teaching practice has been considered as an important pre-service learning component. That is, the student teaching experience is often thought to be the most important part of teacher education programmes. It is viewed as critical to the development of pre-service teachers' pedagogical skills, socialisation into the teaching profession, and as the most effective preparation for teaching and learning the professional role of a teacher (Cruickshank & Armalin, 1986; Holmes Group, 1986; Zeichner, 1980).

Despite this generally held view of the centrality of the practicum in teacher education programmes, and the consistent research findings indicating that students generally regard the practicum component of their preparation as the most important (Lewin & Stuart, 2003; Caires & Almeda, 2005), undergraduate teacher education in Ghana for the past four decades had been based on the traditional model in which the student teacher spent more than 90% of the period of training on the theoretical aspect of teaching on campus and less than 10% on teaching practice. In fact, student teachers had just 4-6 weeks' teaching practice experience in a 3-year pre-tertiary and 4-year tertiary teacher education programmes. Thus, students did not have enough exposure to the real demands of teaching.

Apart from the short duration for the teaching practice, its objective was to evaluate student teachers' teaching skills instead of it being an opportunity to help them develop appropriate teaching skills and techniques in context and develop positive attitudes and dispositions in real school contexts over time (Akyeampong, 2001; Akyeampong & Stephens, 2000). This was also seen in the summative nature of teaching practice supervision. Thus, the traditional model of teaching practice remained for many students a threatening, confusing, frustrating, and disappointing experience.

CURRENT PRACTICE

A review of literature on current practice in teacher education world-wide reveals a shift towards the internship model of teacher preparation. The internship model supported by school-university partnerships is meant to help student teachers come to terms with the reality of the classroom, with reflection and experimentation as the major tools of learning to teach. In fact, the importance of effective partnerships in pre-service teacher education between schools and universities has long been advocated (Darling-Hammond, 2002). For Erau, (2000:564-565), the school-based component of learning to teach is "vital". According to him, "seeing other teachers teach and getting support and advice from them is important for the student…".

Thus, the development of school-based teacher education models is an international development (Geert, Dam, & Blom, 2006), with countries such as USA, Canada, Britain and Netherlands having developed strong school-university partnership models for the preparation of pre-service teachers (Edwards, Gilroy, & Hartley, 2002). In Portugal, for example, their five year Initial Teacher Education programme for secondary school teachers has a one year teaching practice component (Caires & Almeida, 2005). Cobb (1999) reports that student teachers in Germany do two full years of internship, which include seminar and classroom experiences.

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The assumptions that underlie the school-based model of teacher education are that (a) it will ensure attention to the theoretical as well as the practical aspects of teaching through the coming together of the school and the university, (b) this mode of preparing teachers 'create learning opportunities that are both different from and richer than the opportunities either the school or the university can provide alone' (Cochrane-Smith, 1991:109), (c) such collaborative efforts hold the promise of achieving simultaneous change and renewal in both schools and universities (Rice, 2002). These views are also shared by Berk, Howard & Long (1999) who see teacher learning as involving far more than just acquiring content knowledge of a particular subject, or classroom management techniques. To them, the skills and strategies that pre-service teachers need are exhibited in the everyday actions of practising teachers. Therefore, it is they who are able to give insights into the cultural context of the classroom and how to apply appropriate pedagogical techniques befitting a situation.

In light of the above, the University of Education, Winneba (UEW), which has a mandate to train teachers for Ghana's pre-tertiary education, restructured its teacher education programmes and adopted, in 2002/2003 academic year, a year-long internship model of teacher preparation as the final segment of a four-year Bachelor of Education (B.Ed.) teacher preparation programme. This component is school-based and also involves practicing teachers (mentors) in the training of its student teachers. The mentoring model is a Cooperative-Reflective one, which is a hybrid that fuses the models of collaborative relationships, reflective teaching/learning, and cooperative learning. This model is underpinned by collegiality, reciprocity and critical reflection among the mentoring dyad.

THE CONCEPT OF MENTORING

Arguably, two dominant conceptualisations of mentoring relationships exist in the literature: the traditional or apprenticeship or transmission (Wang & Odell, 2007) and the reciprocal model (Barrett, 2000; Higgins & Kram, 2001; Ragins & Kram, 2007).

The traditional model of mentoring relationship

This is a relationship between and old, experienced, mentor and a young, inexperienced mentee (Levinson, 1978; Anderson & Shannon, 1988; Healey & Welchert, 1990).The assumption of a significant difference between mentor and mentee in terms of age, experience, knowledge, wisdom, skills and influence is typical of this model of relationship. The relationship is hierarchical in nature and there is a hierarchical transfer of knowledge and information.

The reciprocal mentoring relationship

Unlike the traditional relationship, this one emphasises collaboration, collegiality and reciprocity (Russel & Adams, 1997; Barrett, 2000 Higgins &Kram, 2001; Ragins & Kram, 2007). This relationship is supposed to offer learning opportunities for both mentor and mentee. In other words, the one-way flow of knowledge, information and expertise has been reconceptualised as an interdependent relationship of mutual benefit.

The choice of the Cooperative –Reflective Model

The hierarchical transfer of knowledge and information from an older, more experienced person to a younger, less experienced person may no longer be the prevailing mentoring paradigm, especially in the context of tertiary teacher education in Ghana where a large number of older and more experienced teachers choose to pursue further training after their initial

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training, as pertains in UEW, and may find themselves paired with a younger inexperienced teacher during the internship experience. In fact, more recent suggestions for sources of mentoring include peers, groups, and even subordinates (Russell & Adams, 1997; Higgins & Kram (2001). So, for mentees who are already experienced teachers, negotiating the mentoring relationship with their younger mentors may be problematic.

While Healy and Welchert (1990) and Barrett (2000) see the mentoring relationship as offering learning opportunities for both mentor and mentee, Anderson and Shannon (1988) and even Levinson (1978) see it as a one-way relationship in which only the mentee benefits. In the UEW mentoring programme, however, both mentor and mentee are supposed to grow personally and professionally through collaboration, collegiality, reciprocity and reflection in the relationship.

REFLECTIVE QUESTIONS

Questions that engaged our minds about this model were, do mentoring relationships take on the same developmental importance in Ghanaian educational contexts as has been reported in research about developed countries? Does this novelty in teacher preparation hold any potential for transforming teacher development in Ghana for the better? These are critical issues that, in our view, had to be investigated to guide policy makers, implementers and educational researchers in developing countries.

THE SOCIO-CULTURAL CONTEXT

Ghanaian society tends to be hierarchical. People are respected because of their age, experience, wealth and/or position. The elderly are deemed to be very wise and are rarely challenged by anyone except someone of the same age group or even older (Quainoo, 2000). There is the notion that, with age come experience and wisdom. This is generally the opposite of western societies, which appear to be lateral. For example, the practice of calling an older person by their first name where even children call adults directly by their first names, just as they would call their friends, will be unacceptable in Ghanaian culture. In western societies, therefore, the lines between adult and peer appears blurred (to the child). In contrast, in Ghanaian society the boundaries are sharper. For example, the creation of the institution of the Council of State in Ghana and the criteria for its membership (loosely based on age and accomplishments) is meant to reflect the ideals of this 'Elder Respect' system (Geest, 2002).

Invariably, the Ghanaian teaching profession embedded in this socio-cultural context where the career progression structure is based on years of experience and indirectly linked to age, can come under similar influences of age, seniority and deference. In other words, teacher identity and professionalism can hardly escape from this strong socio-cultural influence, and may be significant in explaining teacher behaviour in the context of mentoring relationships. The conjecture of the thesis is that, because the cooperative - reflective mentoring model, which is underpinned by collaboration, collegiality, reflection and reciprocal learning, operates in this socio-cultural context, research which analyses the professional relationships should explore the extent and nature of such influences, if indeed these are prominent.

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METHODOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK

Epistemologically, we adopted the position of interpretivist constructivism (Denzin and Lincoln, 1994). This perspective is concerned with subjective knowledge and understanding which is personally experienced and, therefore, unique to the individual. The emphasis in this study is the interpretation and understanding of mentors' and mentees' lived experiences, their actions and the contexts in which they are acting. The common themes of the interpretivist constructivist assumptions are that knowledge is constructed by individuals through interactions in the social context (Pope, 1982), and that there is much to be learned from identifying and analysing people's perceptions of their experiences and the meanings they give to them.

In respect of ontology, the interpretive ontological assumption is that social reality is contextually and specifically constructed (Lincoln & Guba, 2000). The existence of social reality depends upon human perception (Patton, 2002). This means that there are multiple realities, socially constructed by individuals. Ontologically, we consider a mentoring relationship as a phenomenon or experience which is contextually constructed by each mentor and mentee, and that each mentor may recount a different experience (reality) of the same phenomenon (mentoring relationship) from the other, depending on the context of their experience.

Design and methods

In order to study mentoring relationships to understand how they evolve, develop and contribute to teacher professional development, it was necessary to adopt a research design that would give us access to information about the relationships from the people involved in the relationships. Apart from this, we also had to ensure congruity between research methods and techniques and the substantive focus of the research (Tesch, 1990). With these in mind, we chose a qualitative ethnographic case study approach (Yin, 2003) to explore and understand the nature of the mentoring relationships.

Selecting the participants

We selected five pairs of mentor/mentees, using the purposive (Merriam, 1998) sampling method to select participants who match the focus of the study. This enabled us to get what we term 'information-rich' cases to study (Patton, 1990). In this study, inclusion criteria required that (a) mentors must have been trained by the University (equipped with knowledge, and skills, of mentoring, as well as a positive disposition towards mentoring), (b) mentors must have had, at least, two years' mentoring experience, (c) mentors must have taught for, at least, two years, (d) one of the mentees has more teaching experience than the mentor, (e) one of the mentees is older age-wise than the mentor, (f) there is a same sex and cross sex mentoring relationship.

Using the selection criteria indicated above, we got the following pairings from the mentors and mentees in the school.

1. A male-female pair, with the mentor older and more experienced than the mentee
2. A male-female pair with the mentor older and more experienced than the mentee
3. A male-male pair with the mentor older and more experienced than the mentee
4. A female-female pair with the mentor younger and less experienced than the mentee.
5. A female-male pair with the mentor younger and less experienced than the mentee

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The table below is a summary of the profiles of the participants.

Case	Participants*	Gender	Age	Teaching Experience	Characteristics	Mentoring Experience
Traditional 1	Frank	Male	59	40	Older mentor; Opposite sex; Large experience gap	5
	Hannah	Female	30	9		N/A
Traditional 2	Elvis	Male	42	15	Older mentor; Opposite sex; Moderate experience gap	5
	Edna	Female	33	5		N/A
Traditional 3	Kingsley	Male	51	26	Older Mentor; Same sex; Little experience gap	2
	Hanson	Male	43	20		N/A
Non-Traditional 4	Olivia	Female	30	10	Younger mentor; Same sex; Large experience gap	3
	Naomi	Female	42	27		N/A
Non-Traditional 5	Lily	Female	33	11	Young mentor; Opposite sex; Moderate experience gap	4
	Eric	Male	42	20		N/A

Table 1: Mentor-Mentee Profile
***Not real names**

The profile revealed two relationship types; a traditional mentoring relationship of an older more experienced mentor and a younger less experienced mentee, and an emerging relationship of a younger less experienced mentor and an older more experienced mentee. The age and experience mix is to allow for the possible exhibition of different or diverse relationship characteristics among the participants.

The process of data collection

Interview

We prepared an interview protocol or guide to ensure that basically, the same information was obtained. We audio taped all the interviews and later transcribed verbatim.

Observation

In order to gain a deeper impression about the mentoring relationship, we developed an observation guide to capture the interactions (verbal and non-verbal) between mentors and mentees in the research setting. Although Dunne, Yates, & Pryor (2005: 68) argue that it is reductive and exclusionary, it helped focus the observation, while at the same time we made room for flexibility in its use depending on the circumstances. We noted our observations and thoughts in the process in our reflective journals

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The process of data management and analysis

Qualitative research, as is normally the case, produces a huge amount of data characterised by what might be termed 'thick description' (Geertz, 2000) to convey the richness and depth of evidence. Data analysis was ongoing; occurring both during data collection and after all the data had been gathered (Neumann: 2004). It consisted of transcribing, reading, re-reading, analysing and synthesising information to generate patterns and themes (Gay & Airasian, 2000). Three types of data were generated and analysed: (a) communicative data made up of interview data (b) observational data derived from field notes in our reflective journals (c) documentary data from mentors' supervisory notes.

Transcribing data

We listened carefully to each interview and typed verbatim the statements made. We then asked a colleague to cross check again for the accuracy of the transcription text. For verifiability, we asked a colleague to send the transcribed data back to the mentors and mentees for them to check whether the verbatim transcripts captured accurately what they said and offer them the opportunity to clarify or refine what had been attributed to them.

Data reading, synthesis and analysis

Satisfied that we had captured the interview data accurately, we proceeded to critically read the statements made by the participants during the interview, the field notes in our reflective journals, and the mentors' written comments. We read and re-read the data to identify the processes in the data and marked out with markers (highlighters) significant statements that bordered on any aspect of the relationship to identify substantive codes such as 'cordiality', 'caring', 'sister', 'father'. As we said earlier, we took each pair as a single case and studied their transcripts. Each pair had a unique story of two individuals in a relationship. We later compared codes across the cases to identify common codes that may form cross case themes. In the process of reading and synthesizing statements and written notes, we identified the following themes under which we organised the analysis.

1. Mentor-mentee profile
2. Perception of mentoring and mentoring roles
3. How the relationships were developed, established and sustained
4. The general health of the relationships in relation to professional learning
5. Mentoring processes or strategies
6. Professional learning and identity formation

ISSUES ARISING ACCROSS CASES

Perceptions of mentoring and mentoring roles relative to UEWs model

Generally, two problematic conceptions of mentoring relationships emerged from the analysis, the first being the conception of mentoring as an apprenticeship learning relationship that occurs between an experienced teacher and a student teacher (Frank & Hannah). This relationship was based on the notion of a mentee as an 'empty' vessel to be filled by the mentor (Levinson, 1978; Zey, 1984; Wang & Odell, 2007). The problem with this conception is that it ignores the fact that all the mentees in the cases came with some prior teaching experience. Instead, the relationship focused on transmission of expert knowledge from the mentor. In Frank and Hanna's relationship, Frank, the Mentor, remarked,

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During our time, (his own teacher training) teaching practice was teaching practice. Student teachers feared their supervisors. They took whatever instructions they gave them. They knew they were still students and therefore learning how to teach. There was that respect for the supervisor's knowledge. This new thing won't make them learn.

This is surprising given that the concept of mentoring as transmission is inconsistent with UEWs model which seeks to promote collaboration, collegiality and reciprocal learning between mentor and mentee, and where the mentee also plays an active part in the construction of professional knowledge and the acquisition of teaching skills (Barrett, 2000; SIH, 2009). The mentee's own view of the mentor also confirmed this,

My mentor is very experienced, forty years' teaching experience. I don't think I know anything that he doesn't know. 'How can I teach my headmaster and father how to teach? This will be difficult for me'.

Another relational conception that emerged from the case studies, which appeared cosmetic, was one characterised by some amount of collegiality, collaboration and mutual learning (Elvis & Edna). Although there were instances of cordiality and respect among mentors and mentees, collegiality in terms of sharing and tackling teaching challenges as co-learners rarely occurred as in the spirit of the UEW model. Although some mentees (Edna, Hanson, Naomi and Eric) described their relationship with their mentors as collaborative and collegial, there was evidence that in practice they kept a distance and held back from critical dialogue. Listen to Edna, a mentee for, example,

He was somebody who taught me some skills in Physical Education at the university so he was not a stranger to me, but I can't call him by his name. He's older than me and he's my mentor. I have to give him that respect.

A major factor that may account for this situation is the lack of sensitivity to the professional and socio-cultural context in which the model is being implemented. It appears UEW is applying mentoring conceptions that are too theoretically driven and alien to Ghanaian culture. In the Ghanaian teaching profession, for example, professional ethics, normally, include respect for rank and social distance. It is, therefore, impracticable for teachers of lower ranks to relate with those in the higher ranks as equals. The problem may also be interpreted within the general culture of Ghanaian society. Ghanaian society, as indicated earlier, is hierarchical. Age is equated with experience, respect, reverence and wisdom (Quainoo, 2000). The culture of respect for age and authority poses a great challenge to collegial mentoring relationships.

Another setback to the collegiality concept which the programme seems not to have taken into account is the inherent power of mentors (Foucault, 1980; Townley, 1994). An in-depth examination of the power relations that exist between mentor and mentee within mentoring relationships is missing. For example, the mentor's role as an assessor appeared to have restricted opportunities for collegiality and reciprocity. In the UEW model the mentor is a formative as well as a summative assessor whose marks constitute 70% of the mentee's final assessment, while the remaining 30% is allocated by the University supervisor. This alone is enough to put a lot of power in the hands of the mentor. This came out vividly when Edna, a mentee revealed to us:

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Most of his prescriptions (teaching strategies) are well known to me and I was reluctant to question some of his prescriptions because he has the final say in my grading.

Relationship types

Apart from the problems associated with the perceptions of mentoring and the roles of the mentor and mentee, the types of relationships established also presented problems. Three relationship types emerged from the study. As stated earlier, one was the traditional relationship between an older and more experienced mentor and a younger less experienced mentee (Levinson, 1978; Zey, 1984) as was found in the relationship between Frank and Hannah, Elvis and Edna. The second was what we call the emerging (non-traditional) relationship between a younger and less experienced mentor and an older more experienced mentee (Levinson, 1978) found in the relationship between Olivia and Naomi and Lily and Eric, while the third was the relationship between Kingsley and Hanson where Hanson, the mentee was pursuing a higher academic and professional degree than the mentor was. This we describe as an anomalous relationship. Each of these three relationship types presented unique challenges to the mentoring dyad.

With the first type, as discussed earlier, the vast age difference (29 years) between Frank and Hannah seemed to have created a psychological distance between mentor and mentee. This confirms Levinson's (1978) claim that if a mentor is much older than the mentee, the relationship may become that of a parent and child relationship as played out in their father-daughter relationship. The mentee did not hide this as she said,

To me because my mentor is the head of school and far advanced in age than me, our relationship even though cordial is not friendly. I describe it as an official relationship. I see other teachers sharing jokes with him, but I cannot do it. I am not close to him. I consider him a father, so I have a limit to what I should have discussed with him as a mentor. If the age difference were to be say five years, I would not have had any problem with that.

In the emerging relationships, the evidence suggested that the mentors had initial difficulties negotiating the relationships such as Olivia indicated.

Initially, there was that challenge of identifying how I was going to work with my intern. My intern is older and more experienced than I am. Earlier I saw signs that the age difference might disturb the mentoring relationship so I worked that out. A few times, she made remarks during interactions with her to indicate that some interns like her have had many years' teaching experience already and often referred to her rank in the Ghana Education Service. Initially, she was reluctant to make any enquiries about the internship from me.

In these relationships extra caution, diplomacy and tact was needed in handling the mentees. Mentees in these relationships were also not comfortable in them. It was evident that the ego and self-esteem of such mentees were at play. Naomi, for instance, questioned why they should be humiliated by matching them with younger and less experienced mentees.

But Sir, why do you want people like us to come for this internship? We're already experienced. I'm not learning any new thing. It's a waste of time.

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It is considered a reversal of Ghanaian traditional social roles where a more experienced person 'mentors' the youth. Kanan's & Baker's (2002) argument that a mentee's acceptance of a mentor equal or junior in age carries the implicit acknowledgement of one's inferior competence is worth noting. Here, again, is yet more evidence pointing to the UEW mentoring programme's lack of cultural sensitivity and clear guidelines in terms of mentor- mentee matching. As pointed out, this has the potential to affect the kind of professional learning that will take place in the relationship.

We refer to the third relationship (Kingsley's & Hanson's) as 'anomalous' in that academically the mentee seems to be more knowledgeable than the mentor. The evidence suggested that this knowledge gap between mentor and mentee presented relationship dynamics such as anxiety, and a feeling of inadequacy. These were reflected in a comment that Kingsley, a mentor with a lower teachers' qualification, made to Hanson, his mentee:

You see, you're an undergraduate student and, therefore, more knowledgeable and competent than I am. So I'm going to learn from you.

Furthermore, this type of relationship was missing from the mentoring literature. In fact, Berliner (2000) argues that good mentoring practices require that the mentor should be an expert with rich content, practical and pedagogical knowledge. Mentors are, therefore, regarded as sources of knowledge for the mentee (Roberts, 2000). Apart from the lack of social sensitivity, it appears the UEW programme lacks a well-research based knowledge to inform the practice of mentoring. What this type of relationship seems to point out is that apart from professional experience, the social and academic standing of mentors and mentees may have to be considered when matching mentors and mentees to ensure maximum learning for each.

What these three relationship types seem to suggest is that the concept of collegiality and reciprocal learning in mentoring relations as envisaged in UEW's mentoring model and supported in the literature presents great challenges to the mentoring dyad because of the peculiar social-cultural context in which the concept is being practiced. Establishing a professional relationship is considered a vital aspect of the internship experience and critical to the learning that occurs within it (Ferrier-Kerr, 2009). Because of this, any conceptual confusions or gaps in policy and practice may lead to the establishment of relationships that may not meet the goals of the mentoring programme.

Perception of mentoring relationship experiences relative to personal and professional learning

The reciprocal learning concept (Healy & Welchert, 1990; Barrett, 2000) which underpins UEW's mentoring model that the relationship will offer opportunities for meaningful professional development for both mentees and mentor teachers (CETDAR, 2009) also appears to have been theoretically well intended but practically problematic because of the types of relationships established. The model recognises both mentors and mentees as co-constructors of professional knowledge. The master-apprentice relationship such as that between Frank and Hannah considered the mentor as a repository of academic and professional expertise. The mentee is to study the mentor's teaching style and imitate it. This type of relationship serves to perpetuate existing teaching practices and norms which consist mainly of didactic strategies

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instead of transforming existing teaching culture and practice (Wang & Odell, 2007) to embrace participatory methods.

Another factor that emerged from the study as militating against the reciprocal learning concept was the matching of mentees with mentors who are nearing retirement as was the case of Frank (59 years; close to retirement age 60). As the evidence showed, at this stage in one's career, one appears not to be interested in any further professional learning. For instance, since Frank was retiring from active service the following year, it appeared he did not find the relationship mutually beneficial because when his attention was drawn to the fact that his frequent absences might not enable him to benefit from the internship experience, he remarked *...it's those who have more years to do who need this kind of experience.* It appears not much attention was given to issues of mentor selection and matching.

It can be argued from this study that theoretical positions alone cannot provide sufficient basis for the development of mentoring programmes. It must be based on the socio-cultural factors within the context of implementation as it is the interaction between particular mentors and particular mentees that determine the type of relationship to be established and the type of professional learning that will result. Because the designers seem not to have taken the cultural context into consideration, the relationships that resulted could not provide opportunities for collaborative strategies and reflection which could have resulted in self-evaluation, renewal and identity transformation.

Recommendation for policy

In the design of any teacher mentoring programme, critical consideration must be given to the professional culture as well as the general culture of the people by policy makers. There should be greater consultation and dialogue among stakeholders for a consensus on the model that can accommodate the dynamics of the social and professional milieus.

Recommendations for practice

i. For mentoring to be an effective approach for teacher professional development for both teacher mentors and student teachers, specific guidelines must be provided for the selection and matching of mentors and mentees. For example, all trained and prospective mentors as well as prospective mentees must be made to provide some information about their professional standing and personal data using a questionnaire. The information will constitute a data base that can inform the selection and matching of mentors with mentees. This will help close the age and professional experience gap between the dyad to enable them develop near collegial relationships.

ii. Regular mentor training, seminars and conferences which expose mentors to the dynamics of and processes of mentoring relationships and mentoring outcomes, and offer opportunities for review activities should be an on-going component of the teacher mentoring programme.

iii. The reflective practice format that currently engages only the mentee must be redesigned to involve both the mentor and the mentee. Thus, the mentor and mentee will be guided to reflect and critique the experience of professional learning. This can ensure collaboration and help achieve identity formation or transformation for both.

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