Mentoring during school practicum: Mentor-mentee relationship, roles assumed, and focus of feedback

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This study scrutinized the relationship between mentor and mentee; how this affects the roles mentors assume, the focus of mentors' feedback, and the factors that affect mentoring practice. The study employed a qualitative case study design. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews with mentors and mentees. The data were analyzed using thematic analysis, in which themes emerged from the identified data. The results revealed that the mentors exercised hierarchical relationships and took on the role of knowledge providers during mentoring. Mentors focused on tasks and individuals in their feedback. Mentors' lack of training, time, and space were the prevailing factors that dictated their relationship with their mentees and impacted feedback. The findings of this study illuminate the interconnectedness between mentoring relationships, roles of mentors, and the focus of feedback they provide. It highlights the importance of preparing mentors for their roles to enhance student teachers' learning from practicum.

Keywords: School practicum, mentoring, mentoring relationship, feedback, teacher education

The world of work is complex, unpredictable, and vague (Ferns et al., 2019; Oliver, 2015). The complexity is increased by the absence of a body of reliable knowledge and a set of guidelines for all professional practices (Schon, 1983). In reference to the teaching profession, teachers cannot solve all their practical problems by repeating solutions they learned from their teachers and through their readings (Bognar & Krumes, 2017). In order to manage dynamic and uncertain classroom conditions, teachers need "professional artistry" (Schon, 1987, p. 22). As a result, one of the hallmarks of teacher education is placing student teachers in practicum schools where they interact with learners in schools under the guidance of experienced teachers. Practicum integrates real classroom teaching into teacher education, providing a rich environment for work-integrated learning (WIL). WIL offers real-world learning experiences, in which student teachers integrate theory and practice in classroom contexts (Clarke et al., 2014; Zegwaard et al., 2019).

Optimizing student teachers' outcomes from school placements necessitates offering well-planned mentoring support (Grudnoff, 2011; Ulvik et al., 2018). Mentoring is a reciprocal relationship between mentor and mentee that creates an environment for effective feedback and lays the foundation for mentees' development of various skills (LeeKeenan, 2020; Lichtenberger-Majzikne & Fischer, 2017). The hierarchical relationship of traditional mentoring, in which mentors are knowledge providers and mentees are passive receivers (Hoffman et al., 2015), is a barrier to the cooperative relationship between mentors and mentees. Thus, LeeKeenan suggested considering the social positions of mentors and mentees to provide equity in position and power. This repositioning builds a trusting and communicative relationship between the mentor and mentee and serves as a threshold for field placement (Stanulis & Russell, 2000). This relationship is significant because it inspires mentees to take responsibility and be innovative. Meaningful reflection occurs in an environment premised on partnership and trust (Chan et al., 2014; Siebert & Walsh, 2013). Chan et al. (2014) discussed that mentors must trust that student teachers will respond to the feedback, and student teachers must trust

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that their mentors provide feedback intended to move their learning forward rather than focus on their failures.

Constructive feedback on the mentees' performance while on practicum is an essential component of the work-based experience, and a major task for mentors. Feedback shapes the relationship between the mentor and mentee. To facilitate student teachers' professional growth, mentors should address the needs of student teachers through their feedback. To achieve this purpose, mentors should provide good quality feedback (Brandt, 2008; Clarke et al., 2014; McGraw & Davis, 2017). A quality of effective feedback is its provision for dialogue between teachers and peers (Laurillard, 2002; Nicol & Macfarlane-Dick, 2006). To provide quality feedback, mentors should be clear about their roles and responsibilities in the mentoring relationship. Hoffman et al. (2015) stated that mentors who are unclear about their mentoring roles tend to use non-dialogic and evaluative feedback and tell mentees directly what is to be improved.

Therefore, mentees' learning from practicum is based on the relationship with their mentors, the roles mentors adopt, and the focus of the mentors' feedback. Consequently, there is a need to examine mentoring relationships, mentors' roles, and the focus of feedback during mentoring interactions. Specifically, this study attempts to answer the following research questions:

1. How do mentors approach their mentees while giving feedback on the practicum activities?
2. How does the mentors' approach affect the roles they assume and the focus of their feedback during practicum?
3. What are the factors that affect the mentors' approach and the focus of their feedback during practicum?

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The social constructivism theory served as the foundation for this study's design. According to social constructivism, learning is a social activity in which students construct their knowledge (Vygotsky, 1978). Because the relationship between mentors and mentees was the main focus of this study, this theory was the best fit. During school practicum, social contact is determined by the dialogic atmosphere created by mentors. Additionally, social contact controls the extent to which mentees learn from their circumstances. In a socially embedded situation, interacting with others is a source of learning (Vygotsky, 1978). Vygotsky introduced the zone of proximal development (ZPD), which refers to the difference between the actual development level established by autonomous problem-solving and the level of prospective development. Feedback from mentors helps student teachers determine where their performance falls short of expectations. Additionally, feedback aims to direct learners through probing, remarking, and scaffolding (Savvidou, 2018).

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

In traditional mentoring, there is a hierarchical relationship between mentors and mentees. In this relationship, there is an expert-novice divide, and the mentors are experts who take directive and evaluative stands. This is a relationship in which mentors give direction, introduce topics for discussion, and use more speaking time during feedback (Hoffman et al., 2015). Alternatively, in a practice-based, reflective model of teacher education, there is a dialogic interaction between mentors and mentees, where mentors take the role of reflective coaches, and mentees (student teachers) get more opportunities to explore and reflect (Kroeger et al., 2009; Nilsson & van Driel, 2010).

Establishing a collaborative relationship is one of the roles and important qualities of mentors. Collaborator mentors use open-ended Socratic questions and active listening skills, never impose their thinking on student teachers, and encourage student teachers to open up during facilitation dialogue. They allow and stimulate ideas at deeper levels and establish reciprocal relationships (Foong et al., 2018). Moreover, collaborative mentors use a team approach and involve mentees in identifying needs and constructing knowledge (Ambrosetti et al., 2014). These mentors collaborate with mentees during planning and teaching. Thus, they are identified as co-planners, co-teachers, co-thinkers, and co-learners (Orland-Barak & Wang, 2021). Therefore, their motto is: "We are all in the same boat, let us work it out" (Foong et al., 2018, p. 9).

The type of mentor-mentee relationship and the roles mentors assume affect the nature of feedback that mentors provide to mentees. Collaborative mentors do not focus on tasks and never instruct what to do; they use a non-directive style of mentoring (Hennissen et al., 2008). Furthermore, these mentors allow mentees to talk about their practice, develop alternative approaches, and regulate their learning. These practices help student teachers engage in self-assessment of their practice. According to Hattie and Timperleys' (2007) classification of feedback, the feedback given by collaborative mentors belongs to feedback at the self-regulation level.

Contrary to collaborators, mentors who assume an instructive role use closed questions and fixed instructional targets (Foong et al., 2018). These mentors lead student teachers' conversations and provide feedback based on the established targets. Mentors who assume the position of a master provide technical and procedural feedback, and their communication with student teachers is direct and evaluative (Hoffman et al., 2015). Mentors with directive skills are imperators and advisors who speak for a long time during the dialogue, providing advice and instruction on the practice (Hennissen et al., 2008, p. 177). These mentors use predetermined criteria to evaluate progress and give feedback on guiding mentees toward a clearly stated goal (Nahmad-Williams & Taylor, 2015). Moreover, instructive mentors focus on right and wrong practices and attend to the alignment of mentees' teaching with standards rather than guiding to current understanding and concerns (Hoffman et al., 2015).

A review of the mentoring literature indicates that most mentor-mentee dialogues are mentor-dominated. Hennissen et al. (2008) reviewed studies on mentoring to describe mentors' supervisory behavior during mentoring dialogues. The results of the study revealed that mentors mainly used a directive supervisory approach or played an imperator role in which they introduced a topic of discussion and used directive supervisory skills in which they told the mentors what to do directly. Mentors use much of the dialogue time to give directions and speak. Furthermore, the results showed that instructional and organizational aspects were the focus of the dialogue.

Analysis of mentor-mentee relationships using different analytical models showed that mentors dominate the relationship and use directive supervisory skills. Mena et al. (2017) investigated the influence of mentoring in developing pre-service teachers' professional knowledge of teaching. The researchers used the mentor-teacher role in dialogue (MERID) model developed by Hennissen et al. (2008). The study's findings showed that the mentor-mentee relationship was dominated by the mentor; mentors dominated the conversation and adopted a more directive mentoring style. Similarly, Merket (2022) analyzed the roles of mentors and mentees in a pre-service teacher education program. Merket examined mentoring as a pedagogical practice, using the analytical concepts of framing and classification introduced by Bernstein (2000). In this study, strong framing denotes the mentor's dominance during communication and weak framing indicates the mentee's control over the communication between the mentor and mentee. On the other hand, classification was used to describe

the relationship between mentors and mentees and their respective roles. The results of the study revealed that mentors exercised control over communication, were active in dialogue, and used directive skills to provide feedback.

Akcan and Tatar (2010) investigated the nature of the feedback given to pre-service English language teachers during their practicum experience. The findings of the study showed that mentors usually focused on the effectiveness and appropriateness of activities in each classroom and classroom management, and provided direct suggestions on what mentees should do to improve the next lesson without allowing mentees to think and reflect on their performance. The results of the study showed that there was no interactive environment between mentors and mentees and that there was little opportunity for mentees to speak during the post-lesson conference.

Collaboration among stakeholders is key to successful learning from work placements. In teacher education, stakeholders require greater collaboration, cooperation, and consultation to provide a more holistic, significant, and comprehensive educational experience through school placements (Ferns et al., 2023). Preparing competent teachers is the result of a collaborative partnership characterized by trust, a balance of autonomy, and an understanding of the roles and responsibilities of partners (Ferns et al., 2019). Ferns et al. (2019) discussed that providing authentic learning experiences, performance feedback to students, building the capacity of stakeholders, and a sense of responsibility are consequences of collaborative partnerships. However, a study by Ferns and colleagues (2019) revealed that the vague roles and responsibilities of stakeholders in partnerships are barriers to WIL. Practicum supervisors, mentors, and student teachers are stakeholders in the partnership and should have clear roles and responsibilities during practicum.

Mentors are significant actors in practicum implementations. Mentors' understanding of their roles is decisive for practicum effectiveness. As part of practicum planning, teacher-education programs should focus on preparing mentors for their roles. Teachers require training in mentoring skills and the roles expected of them. This is because mentoring requires professional skills in addition to teaching (Feiman-Nemser, 2001; Garza Harter, 2016). Mentors who were untrained in mentoring could not provide appropriate professional support to their mentees. Hennissen et al. (2008) reported that untrained mentors use directive supervisory skills, such as assessing, appraising, instructing, confirming, expressing one's own opinion, offering strategies, and giving feedback. Moreover, mentors who are untrained in mentoring are compelled to depend on their experience during teacher education (Clarke et al., 2014; Hoffman et al., 2015). However, the practices of teacher education institutions do not give significant consideration to the quality of mentors during the practicum (Darling-Hammond, 2006; Hudson, 2013). Zeichner (2010) argued that attempts to help mentors learn about mentoring dispositions, skills, and understanding are inadequate. Therefore, the lack of mentor training is one of the prevailing problems in teacher education that compromises the value of mentoring and may not create an ideal situation for mentees' learning.

During practicum planning, coordinators should consider the time and space required for mentor-mentee conversations and reflections. For effective mentoring services, mentors need more time with their mentees and facilities (Muyengwa & Jitai, 2021). A practicum environment with reserved time and place encourages student teachers to talk and write about practice (Farrell, 2013). Maxwell (2009, as cited in Danbi & Tadesse, 2019) argued that reflection on practice requires a reserved place and an organized time. However, the results of Muyengwa and Jitai's study on the contexts of WIL in schools for pre-service teachers, revealed that mentors held informal mentoring sessions with their mentees due to a lack of time and place. Maxwell proclaimed that a busy and disorganized schedule does not

promote student teachers' professional learning. During the practicum, mentors and mentees discuss lessons before and after teaching sessions. To facilitate such discussions, schools should reset classroom schedules for practicing student teachers.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Research Design

This study examined the mentoring approaches and the focus of mentors' feedback during practicum for student teachers. A case study design using a qualitative research method was employed to achieve the purpose. Stake (1995) identified two types of case studies: intrinsic and instrumental. An intrinsic case study focuses on learning from the case; the subject is the primary focus. An instrumental case study focuses on learning about the issue of research questions. The case study employed in this research was instrumental. Accordingly, this study focused on the phenomenon of mentoring roles and the focus of mentors' feedback during practicum.

Context of the Study and Research Participants

This study was carried out during a school practicum known as independent teaching at Hawassa town, Ethiopia. In the practicum, student teachers were placed in a primary school for four weeks. The hosting primary schools assigned mentors (teachers teaching in the primary school) to each student teacher. The number of student teachers assigned to one mentor depends on the number of mentees placed in a school and the number of teachers available per department.

In the first week, student teachers observe practices in the practicum school, including the classroom teaching of their mentor. Student teachers borrow lesson plans from mentors to review and assess prior to observing the mentors teach. They talk to their mentors about any concerns they have regarding the lesson plan and clarify the purpose and benefits of various approaches. They then go into the classroom to observe the mentors teach. During the post-observation conference with mentors, mentees raise any observations that they want to discuss. In the remaining three weeks, the mentees teach lessons under the supervision of the mentor and a tutor (teacher educator assigned to support and evaluate the mentee). The tutors and mentors provide mentees with professional support and evaluate their performance.

A checklist is developed to guide and assess mentees' performance while on practicum. The checklist consists of how the objective of a lesson is stated, communicated, and achieved; the organization and pace of activities; the design and implementation of assessments; how mentees demonstrate knowledge of the subject matter and relate to relevant examples; interaction with students; students' interest and engagement in the lesson; preparation and organization; and the relevance and quality of instructional materials. The college distributes the checklist to mentors and mentees at the beginning of the practicum. The checklist uses a rating scale of 1-5 (1. Poor, 2. Fair, 3. Good, 4. Very Good, 5. Excellent). Mentees plan lessons using the checklist as a guide, and the mentors observe the classroom teaching of the mentees and give feedback based on the checklist. Tutors are responsible for 70% of the evaluation, and mentors are accountable for 30%.

Data Collection Tools

Semi-structured interviews were used as a data collection instrument. The purpose of the interview questions was to collect data on (1) mentors' approach to mentees during feedback; (2) the aspects of

teaching and learning they focus on in their feedback; and (3) the factors that affected their mentoring roles and the focus of feedback.

Data Collection Process

Three student teachers (two males and one female, coded as ST1, ST2, and ST3) were selected for the study. Three primary school teachers (two males and one female, coded as MT1, MT2, and MT3) teaching the subjects in the practicum primary school were selected for the study. The teachers had work experience ranging from 5 to 9 years as primary school teachers.

Furthermore, three tutors (all males, coded PS1, PS2, and PS3) who were assigned to supervise the selected student teachers were selected for the study. The tutors had work experience ranging from four to 11 years as teacher educators. The participants were selected through purposive sampling because of their insights and experience with mentoring student teachers. Yin (2018) discussed that purposive sampling is an appropriate technique for selecting participants for a qualitative case study design. Research outcomes are strengthened with the inclusion of participants who can discover, understand, and gain deep insights into the issue under exploration.

Tutors observed the mentees classroom teaching and provided feedback at the conclusion of the second and third practicum weeks. Mentor-mentee conferences were not held in the first week (observation week) or the last week (evaluation week). The interviews for this study were conducted with mentors, tutors, and mentees after the feedback conference in the third week. Interviews lasted for 45 minutes on average, were conducted in Amharic, and audio-recorded to provide an accurate account of the responses.

Data Analysis

Interviews were transcribed and translated into English for analysis. Interview transcriptions were read and reread to get a sense of the data collectively before detailed analysis.

The data files were put into MAXQDA2020 data analysis software and coded. Interim codes were established based on the previous research on the area, the research questions of the study, and topics emerging from the interviews. The interim codes helped to develop inductive codes. From the codes, the final themes were identified.

The authors obtained ethical approval for their work from Hawassa College of Teacher Education Research Ethical Committee with reference no. HCTEREC- 014/2022.

RESULTS

From the analysis of semi-structured interviews, the following themes were identified: mentoring relationship, mentoring role as experts and masters, mentors' feedback focusing on the task and mentees, factors affecting mentoring practice (lack of training, lack of support and cooperation among mentors and tutors, time constraints, timetable arrangement for mentee classroom teaching, and reserved place for mentoring conference). Each theme is described in detail below.

Mentors Dominated Mentoring Relationship

During practicum activities, there was a hierarchical relationship between mentors and mentees where the relationship was dominated by mentors. During feedback provision, mentors dominated the

feedback conversation. After classroom observation, the mentors provided feedback and explained what they observed, what was good, and what should be improved based on the checklist. Mentors took much of the feedback time to directly explain the gaps in student teachers' performance and what should be done to address them. The mentors indicated that the purpose of the discussion after lesson observation was to provide feedback based on their observations. As a result, they were taking much of the mentoring time to explain the gaps they observed in mentees' performance. The mentees also reported their mentors' active role during a feedback conversation. In the words of ST3:

> My mentor identified my mistakes and told me to correct them. I was not asked for a reason why I practiced in such a way. He (the mentor) told me what I must do next. I accepted what he advised me, no more talking to him.

Mentors expressed their doubts about the ability of the mentees to reflect on their teaching, identify what good teaching is, and address their weaknesses. For example, MT2 stated:

> They are in 'training'; they do not know what good and bad teaching is at this level. Thus, they will not be able to make such judgment on their teaching. Furthermore, there is no time to ask them such questions and attend to their extended explanations.

Likewise, MT1 contended that she did not give sufficient time to her mentees for self-evaluation because she had no confidence in the mentees' ability to identify their weaknesses and suggest how to improve.

Mentoring Role as Experts and Masters

The data from the interview showed that the expert-novice approach dominated the mentoring relationship. The mentors took on the role of experts (masters) who fix standards and demand that student teachers act accordingly. Among the mentors, MT2 stated that his role was facilitating the practicum practices of the mentees and checking that the student teachers were performing appropriately. The mentors took the position of experts to lead the mentees. In the words of MT1:

> I demonstrated the teaching and learning strategies that I think important to them (mentees); planning, the following stages of a lesson (starter activity, main activity, and concluding activity), using active learning strategies, and using continuous assessment during and after a lesson. I hope the demonstrated strategies were essential, and my mentees were trying to use them in their teaching.

MT3 explained that the first week of the practicum was intended for mentees to observe their mentors' demonstration on appropriate teaching and learning practices during classroom teaching. Accordingly, her mentees observed her classroom teaching, so they adopted the practices as a model for their own teaching. She stressed that they must manage the classroom using the strategies she demonstrated. She further contended that they (mentees) are in training; they do not know the practical way of teaching and managing the classroom. Thus, modeling appropriate ways of teaching and managing was important.

Mentees who participated in interviews backed up their mentors' explanations of the procedures. They claimed that they were expected to adhere to and master the teaching strategies they would use in the classroom. Demonstrations are helpful in assisting student instructors in visualizing effective teaching techniques, but viewing mentors as experts in their field and trying to imitate their methods

compromises the mentor-mentee connection and hinders mentees' learning from the practicum. In relation to this, ST2 said:

> First, as a novice practitioner, I need the demonstration of my mentor. The demonstration gives an image of classroom teaching and approaching classroom students. Second, my mentor evaluates my practice by comparing it with what he demonstrated to me. Thus, I have to practice as much as possible following his demonstration.

Mentors did not take time to co-plan with their mentees. Furthermore, they were not expecting to learn from their interaction with the mentees. MT2 contended that he was not sure whether he was expected to co-plan with his mentees or not. In his own words: "My task is evaluating the lessons planned by the mentee and identifying points for improvement so that they (his mentees) learn how to plan, but I am not sure whether I have to plan with them or not."

Mentors' Feedback

The checklist served as criteria for the mentors' feedback to the mentees. The focus of the mentors' observations and input was on the tasks listed on the checklist (such as lesson planning, teaching, and learning activities, and evaluation). The mentors stated that they focused on assessing the performance of the student teachers on tasks using the checklist rating scale. Mentors concentrated on how student teachers performed the tasks during their observation and provided feedback and advice on how to improve inadequate performance because the student teachers need to address gaps in their practices. Following observation, mentors provided their mentees with instructions and advice on how to enhance the task for which they demonstrated poor performance (on the scale).

Mentors reported that when observations reveal areas for improvement, they highlight these to mentees. MT2 stated that "I tell them directly what their weakness is and what they have to improve." The mentors used phrases like 'your objectives are ---,' 'the instructional material you prepared is---,' and 'the activities you plan are ---.' These expressions indicate the mentees' understanding and performance of the task. However, the mentors did not give further suggestions on how to improve teaching practices. Furthermore, when the mentees performed well, mentors acknowledged their excellent practice. MT2 reported, "When they do something good, I appreciate them because this encourages them to work more." The mentors explained that 'wonderful' and 'you are doing well' are some of the phrases used to express their appreciation during feedback. These phrases are evaluative, focusing on the mentees' personal self, but such phrases have little impact on strengthening student teachers' expertise and repertoire of teaching skills.

Factors Affecting Mentor Approach and Focus of Feedback

Mentors reported that they had "no training on mentoring" (MT1) and feedback provision during the practicum. The mentors stated that they were not familiar with the concept of mentoring, and had no training on how to mentor student teachers. MT1 did acknowledge that the knowledge and skills gained from professional training on their subject area did assist with the mentoring process.

Furthermore, there was no communication between mentor and tutor. The mentors contended that, though both mentor and tutor are assigned to supervise the same mentee, they had "no communication with the college instructors (practicum supervisors) who evaluate my mentees. There is no trend toward working together. He evaluates the mentees in his schedule, and I evaluate them in my own schedule" (MT2). Similarly, MT3 stated that he did not know who the tutor was at all.

Tutors agreed that they were not working in collaboration with mentors to support mentees. The tutors expected the mentors to come and work with them but did not take the initiative to collaborate and share information about the mentee. Related to this, SP2 said, "When I went to the classroom for observation, no mentor came and observed the student teachers with me." Similarly, SP3 blamed the mentors for their unavailability during his observation of the mentees.

Tutors mentioned time constraints as a barrier to collaboration with mentors and student teachers. They stated that they were assigned to supervise many students in different schools, and have no time for discussion with mentors and mentees. For example, PS1 was mentoring nine students across six schools, and was running from school to school with a very busy schedule.

The timetable was one of the factors affecting mentoring practice. Mentees need time before and after a lesson to discuss the lesson plan and delivery with their mentors. Mentees were placed in their mentor's classroom for practicum. As a result, they were given timetables that had been prepared for the mentors. Accordingly, mentees reported that mentors' schedules made it difficult to meet them regularly. ST1 did not have a discussion with her mentor prior to the classroom observation. ST1 attested that the mentor's schedule was inflexible and busy, thereby preventing the opportunity to meet before the classroom observation.

Similarly, mentors and mentees complained that there was no space reserved in practicum schools for discussion and feedback. The mentors reported that they used tree sheds, the corridor of school buildings, and empty classrooms (during the break and at the end of class) to provide feedback to their mentees. Due to this problem, the mentors explained that they were forced to delay their feedback due to lack of an appropriate space for a discussion.

DISCUSSION

This study examined mentoring practices during school practicum. The study explored mentor-mentee relationships, the roles mentors assume, the focus of mentors' feedback, and factors affecting mentoring practice. The findings affirmed an expert-novice hierarchical relationship between mentors and mentees, mentors' domination during feedback sessions, and the mentors' offer of feedback at the task level during the practicum. Furthermore, lack of training in mentoring and lack of organized time and place for mentor-mentee discussions were factors identified by the study as affecting the mentoring process.

There was a mentor-dominated relationship during mentoring. During the practicum, mentors took the approach of experts and demonstrated best practices so that mentees could observe and practice approaches in their teaching. Consequently, an expert-novice hierarchical relationship was observed between mentors and mentees. This result is consistent with the findings of other researchers, including Clarke et al. (2014), Duckworth and Maxwell (2014), Mena et al. (2017), and Merket (2022).

The study also confirmed that mentors assess mentees' development and provide feedback based on predetermined criteria. The mentors evaluated their mentees' performance using checklists and a rating scale, with an emphasis on whether the tasks had been carried out correctly or incorrectly. As a result, mentors did not highlight gaps in the student teacher's practice or how they could improve for future professional practice, allowing no room for mentee improvisation. According to Hattie and Timperley (2007), this indicates feedback at the task level, focusing on the task or the product and whether the task is performed correctly or not. This type of feedback is called corrective feedback or knowledge of results, and it relates the performed task to certain criteria such as correctness, neatness,

or behavior. The feedback at the task level would contribute to the student's learning if the feedback providers explained why the task was right or wrong and what should be done to make it right (Arts et al., 2016). This finding is consistent with those of Nahmad-Williams and Taylor (2015) and Hoffman et al. (2015).

The results showed that mentors did not provide timely feedback to mentees on their practice before and after lessons. Due to a lack of time before lessons, student teachers went to classrooms with no discussion about the lesson plan or feedback on potential improvements, and due to a lack of time after the classroom, they repeated the same lesson in the next class without receiving feedback on their previous performance. Thus, they missed the opportunity to improve their practice by receiving feedback. Furthermore, even in the case of delayed feedback, mentors and mentees did not take sufficient time for discussion because of a lack of designated space appropriate for discussion. This outcome was consistent with the conclusions of Muyengwa and Jitai (2021).

This study affirmed that mentors were not trained in their roles. Mentors employed their experience and training in their respective subject areas to support mentees. They were unsure of their mentoring roles and, as a result, they were instructive in their feedback. This result is in agreement with those of other studies, such as Clarke et al. (2014), Hennissen et al. (2008), Hoffman et al. (2015), and Valencia et al. (2009).

There was no collaboration among the stakeholders. The mentors and tutors assigned to support the same student teacher never communicated the process of their support or the progress of the student teacher working under their guidance. The College of Teacher Education did not collaborate with the practicum school on the selection and training of mentors or on arranging a time and place for mentoring. The results indicated the importance of establishing shared responsibility among stakeholders to facilitate the learning of student teachers from practicum. This result is consistent with the discussion by Ferns et al. (2019) that partnerships are essential for delivering real-world learning opportunities, giving students critical feedback on their performance, creating opportunities for both parties to grow their capacities, and sharing responsibility for graduates' workforce preparation.

CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

The purpose of this study was to examine mentors' approaches while giving feedback to mentees during practicum, the effect of their approach on the roles they assume, the focus of their feedback, and identify the factors affecting mentors' approaches and feedback. Data were collected from mentees, mentors, and tutors using semi-structured interviews. From the results of the study, it was concluded that there is a hierarchical relationship between mentors and mentees. As a result, mentors adopt the role of experts in the mentoring practices. Furthermore, mentoring practices were compromised with a lack of training for mentors in their mentoring roles, lack of communication between mentors and tutors, and difficulty scheduling a time and place for mentoring conferences.

Student teachers' learning is at the core of the practicum. Facilitating practicum tasks is the collaborative work of the College of Teacher Education and Practicum schools. It demands careful planning and support for student teachers to learn from practitioners in the real-world. Mentoring student teachers using predetermined checklist criteria that may not always be effective does not prepare them for the world of work. Furthermore, student teachers were placed in practicum schools to learn from all the stakeholders. Thus, cooperation among stakeholders in preparing mentors for their roles, facilitating an environment for effective mentoring, and enhancing student teachers' learning through practicum is imperative. To provide student teachers with professional and relevant

feedback, and enable access to high-quality role models and mentoring, partnerships were found to be crucial (Hodges, 2009, as cited in Ferns et al., 2019). Teacher education institutions should establish meaningful collaboration with practicum schools using viable frameworks for collaboration, such as a collaborative framework for enhancing graduate employability (Ferns et al., 2019).

This study is a case study with a small sample of respondents, and involvement of one practicum school. This limits the generalizability of the findings to all teacher education institutions. Further research using a larger sample from diverse school settings would enhance the credibility of findings. During school practicum, student teachers work with their peers and receive feedback from each other. This peer feedback complements mentors' feedback and contributes to professional development of mentees during practicum. However, the value of peer feedback was not considered in the present study. Research that explores the impact of peer feedback on student teachers' efficacy and development of professional teaching skills has the potential to strengthen teacher education programs.

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About the Journal

The International Journal of Work-Integrated Learning (IJWIL) publishes double-blind peer-reviewed original research and topical issues related to Work-Integrated Learning (WIL). IJWIL first published in 2000 under the name of Asia-Pacific Journal of Cooperative Education (APJCE).

In this Journal, WIL is defined as " *An educational approach involving three parties – the student, educational institution, and an external stakeholder – consisting of authentic work-focused experiences as an intentional component of the curriculum. Students learn through active engagement in purposeful work tasks, which enable the integration of theory with meaningful practice that is relevant to the students' discipline of study and/or professional development"* (Zegwaard et al., 2023, p. 38*). Examples of practice include off-campus workplace immersion activities such as work placements, internships, practicum, service learning, and cooperative education (co-op), and on-campus activities such as work-related projects/competitions, entrepreneurships, student-led enterprise, student consultancies, etc. WIL is related to, and overlaps with, the fields of experiential learning, work-based learning, and vocational education and training.

The Journal's aim is to enable specialists working in WIL to disseminate research findings and share knowledge to the benefit of institutions, students, WIL practitioners, curricular designers, and researchers. The Journal encourages quality research and explorative critical discussion that leads to the advancement of quality practices, development of further understanding of WIL, and promote further research.

The Journal is financially supported by the Work-Integrated Learning New Zealand (WILNZ; www.wilnz.nz), and the University of Waikato, New Zealand, and receives periodic sponsorship from the Australian Collaborative Education Network (ACEN), University of Waterloo, and the World Association of Cooperative Education (WACE).

Types of Manuscripts Sought by the Journal

Types of manuscripts sought by IJWIL is of two forms: 1) *research publications* describing research into aspects of work-integrated learning and, 2) *topical discussion* articles that review relevant literature and provide critical explorative discussion around a topical issue. The journal will, on occasions, consider good practice submissions.

Research publications should contain; an introduction that describes relevant literature and sets the context of the inquiry. A detailed description and justification for the methodology employed. A description of the research findings - tabulated as appropriate, a discussion of the importance of the findings including their significance to current established literature, implications for practitioners and researchers, whilst remaining mindful of the limitations of the data, and a conclusion preferably including suggestions for further research.

Topical discussion articles should contain a clear statement of the topic or issue under discussion, reference to relevant literature, critical and scholarly discussion on the importance of the issues, critical insights to how to advance the issue further, and implications for other researchers and practitioners.

Good practice and program description papers. On occasions, the Journal seeks manuscripts describing a practice of WIL as an example of good practice, however, only if it presents a particularly unique or innovative practice or was situated in an unusual context. There must be a clear contribution of new knowledge to the established literature. Manuscripts describing what is essentially 'typical', 'common' or 'known' practices will be encouraged to rewrite the focus of the manuscript to a significant educational issue or will be encouraged to publish their work via another avenue that seeks such content.

By negotiation with the Editor-in-Chief, the Journal also accepts a small number of *Book Reviews* of relevant and recently published books.

* Zegwaard, K. E., Pretti, T. J., Rowe, A. D., & Ferns, S. J. (2023). Defining work-integrated learning. In K. E. Zegwaard & T. J. Pretti (Eds.), *The Routledge international handbook of work-integrated learning* (3rd ed., pp. 29-48). Routledge.

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