The Teacher Trainees' Viewpoints on Demonstration/Modelling as A Mentoring Tool

Makotoka Kahaka[1]   Trust Nhete[2]   Baamphatlha Dinama[3]*
University of Botswana, P/Bag 0022, Gaborone, Botswana

Abstract

This study analyses the perceptions of teacher trainees in relation to the assistance they receive specifically through modelling by their mentors during teaching practice. A questionnaire survey was conducted among one hundred and twenty (120) teacher trainees by using the five point Likert scale. Respondents were asked to evaluate statements on mentors' modelling by giving it a quantitative value. The results provides sufficient evidence that school based mentors use modelling as one of the mentoring tools to assist University of Botswana teacher trainees when on teaching practice. The use of modelling in conjunction with other mentoring tools provides student teachers with adequate skills they need in order to work independently in any environment where they will not be constantly supervised as they develop in their professions. According to this study, while most teacher trainees receive adequate demonstration from their mentors on several dimensions of teaching a minority of students did not benefit from the use of modelling as a mentoring tool by their mentors. It is evident that modelling is an important ingredient in any mentoring programme, and that teacher-trainees can internalise some of the positive qualities they observe from their mentors, and in that way become better teachers upon completion of their teacher training programme.

Keywords: teacher trainees, modelling, demonstration, mentors

1. Introduction

It is without doubt that effective mentoring is pivotal to the development and success of teacher trainees in the teaching profession and it cannot be left to chance (Hascher, Yves & Moser, 2004). Mentoring has a range of potential benefits and that school mentors who are inspired enough could provide student teachers with work integrated learning skills of a high standard, (Simpson, Hastings, & Hill, (2007); Hargreaves, & Fullan, (2000)). One of the main aims of mentoring is to provide support to teacher trainees in terms of helping them to adapt to norms, standards and what is expected of them as they become part of the school community (Hobson, Ashby, Malderez & Tomlinson, 2009) as well as to satisfactorily conduct lessons while increasing their self-esteem in the meanwhile (Hascher, Yves & Moser, 2004). The ability by the mentors to demonstrate effective teaching for diverse learners has been identified as one of the essential components of quality mentoring (Moir & Gless, 2001); Santoro, 2009); Achinstein & Athanases, 2005). Furthermore, one of the key areas of knowledge, skills and dispositions needed for effective mentoring is the ability to demonstrate professional leadership and understanding of the potentiality of effective teaching to influence equitable outcomes for learners (Eller, Lev, & Feurer, 2014), Azer, (2005). A good mentor exhibits personal attributes associated mainly with teaching that are needed to be successful in the field. By showing the teacher trainees what it takes to be productive and successful, the mentors are demonstrating the specific behaviours and actions required to succeed in the field.

2. Problem

Although the University of Botswana through its Teaching Practice unit assigns each of its pre-service teacher trainees to a mentor teacher during the teaching practice period, the views of both the mentors and the teacher trainees on this arrangement have not been sought or established through research locally. Furthermore, it has not been ascertained whether modelling, which is one of the main mentoring factors outlined in the literature, (see Bird, 2012); Hudson, Skamp, & Brooks 2005), forms part of the mentoring tools or skills that are employed by local mentors to guide student teachers develop and grow in their profession. Therefore, this research specifically surveys the perspectives of the teacher trainees regarding the use of modelling by mentors, with a view to establish its use, significance and limitation as one of the mentoring tools during the teaching practice.

3. Key Research Questions

Two research questions guided this study, namely:
1. To what extent do mentors use modelling as a mentoring tool in teacher trainees' professional development during the practicum?
2. What is the significance of modelling as a mentoring tool in teacher trainees' development during the practicum?

4. Literature Review

Zanting, VerloopJan and Vermunt (2001) observed that literature in the area of mentoring, including some

research work done by Maynard and Furlong (1994), presents roughly three models of mentoring, and these are; the apprenticeship model, the competency model, and the reflective model. The specific model that mentors and teacher educators use to interpret the role of the mentors is usually determined by their convictions and beliefs about how teacher trainees learn during the teaching practice exercise (Hascher, Yves & Moser, 2004); Zanting, VerloopJan, & Vermunt, 2001). Mentors and other educators who believe that teacher trainees learn to teach by observing experienced teachers and gaining that experience under their guidance will ascribe to the apprenticeship model. According to this model, as teacher trainees observe their mentors teach and carry out other related duties in the classroom, they form ideas about the process of teaching and acquire some teaching strategies (Zanting, VerloopJan & Vermunt 2001). When making reference to the apprentice model in question, Hascher et al (2004: 625-626) pointed out that "student teachers consider their mentors as experts and they are eager to learn to act like them". The result is that if a certain classroom teaching and learning situation works in the experts' practice, it is embraced by the student teacher without any question or much reflection.

However, those who hold the view that teacher trainees learn to teach by systematically practising teaching skills and techniques have been placed under the competency model. Zanting, VerloopJan and Vermunt (2001) explained that under this model mentors observe the teacher trainees and provide feedback. Under the last model, which is the reflective model, it is assumed that student teachers learn by critically thinking about different ways of teaching. In this model, teacher trainees do not only develop their teaching skills and competencies further, but also develop a deeper understanding of the process of learning and teaching. Zanting, VerloopJan and Vermunt (2001) further observed that in the reflective model both mentors and teacher trainees explore and learn together. Mentors are only expected to support their mentees, and the feedback they give to the mentees only serves as one part of a cluster of impressions about the teaching setting (Hascher, Yves & Moser, 2004). It is expected that once the teacher trainee receives feedback from not only the mentor, but sometimes from the pupils as well, he or she is expected to reflect on it by taking cognisance of his or her teaching situation as well as individual learning processes. Concurring with Zanting, VerloopJan and Vermunt (2001) that both students and teachers are perceived as learners under the reflective model, Hascher et al, (2004) asserted that the personal or unique learning experiences for both teacher trainees and mentors are reflected upon, and professional development is understood as life-long learning process for both parties. However, it is the apprenticeship model that is more relevant to this discussion in that it focuses on the idea that mentors demonstrate their knowledge and skills by actually carrying out certain teaching activities while their mentees observe. A number of scholars including Hudson, Skamp and Brooks (2005), Barab and Hay, (2001); and Galvez-Hjoernevik, (1986) have described mentors as experts who model practice. The above description of mentors is based on the view expressed by a number of scholars including Whitebook and Bellm, (1996), and Carlson and Gooden, (1999), that the best way to successfully transfer abilities, positive attitudes and competencies from the mentor to the mentee is through modelling. Furthermore, Hudson, Skamp and Brooks (2005) have shown that teacher trainees regard their mentors as models to develop a better understanding of their own strong and weak points regarding their professional lives. They further demonstrated that relevant literature is instructive because apart from displaying enthusiasm for teaching, mentors need to model a number of other professional teaching activities such as; having a rapport with their students, lesson planning; using syllabus language, having hands-on lessons; and good classroom management. Thus this study uses the above modelling framework composed by Hudson, Skamp and Brooks (2005) and adapted by Bird, (2012), to explore teacher trainees' views on the extent to which the mentors demonstrate or model as part of their duties to guide their teacher trainees.

5. Methodology

In 2016, some Business Education teacher trainees at the University of Botswana who had undertaken teaching practice were asked to participate in a quantitative survey on the mentorship they received as part of the support and learning processes they underwent during the practicum. The purpose of this study was to get teacher trainees' perceptions of the current local mentoring system, with particular focus on modelling as one of the mentoring tools that mentors were expected to have used. Thus by seeking the student teachers' views on modelling provided by the mentors, this quantitative methodology aimed to determine the impact of mentoring in general on the professional growth and development of teacher trainees from the University of Botswana.

Mentoring workshops were conducted for teacher mentors and student teacher trainees before the teaching practicum started. Therefore, both mentors and teacher trainees were taken through what was expected of them during this crucial time of the latter's professional development. Upon conclusion of their teaching practice during the 2016 practicum, some University of Botswana teacher trainees were invited to complete the survey questionnaire on teacher trainees' perception on mentoring. An adapted questionnaire from Bird (2012) was used for purposes of collecting data on teacher trainees' perception on mentoring. A total number of 55 teacher trainees responded to 34 statements, using a five-point Likert scale, consisting of "Strongly Disagree, Disagree, Neutral, Agree, and Strongly Agree" which was compressed into "Agree, Disagree and Neutral for ease of understanding the data. Out of the 34 statements that teacher trainees responded to, 9 were focused on modelling

as one of the mentoring tools. It is the teacher trainees' responses on the 9 statements on modelling that this paper aims to present, discuss and analyse in the sections that follow below. In responding to the questions, teacher trainees also stated their demographic variables in the first section that included age, gender, year of study, program of study, the number of mentors one has been involved with, the level or form taught, the number of lessons taught, the type of school taught at and its location. In the second section of the survey, the teacher trainees circled their response to 34 Likert scale statements. Survey questions were collected immediately after the teacher trainees indicated that they had filled in the forms. The data collected through the questionnaire were captured and analysed using SPSS version 20.0. For purposes of clarity and accuracy in interpretation and presentation, some of the data relevant to this discussion were transformed into graphs using Microsoft Excel 2010 and also into statistical data through using measures of dispersion.

6. Results
6.1 Did the mentor demonstrate how to teach while you observed?
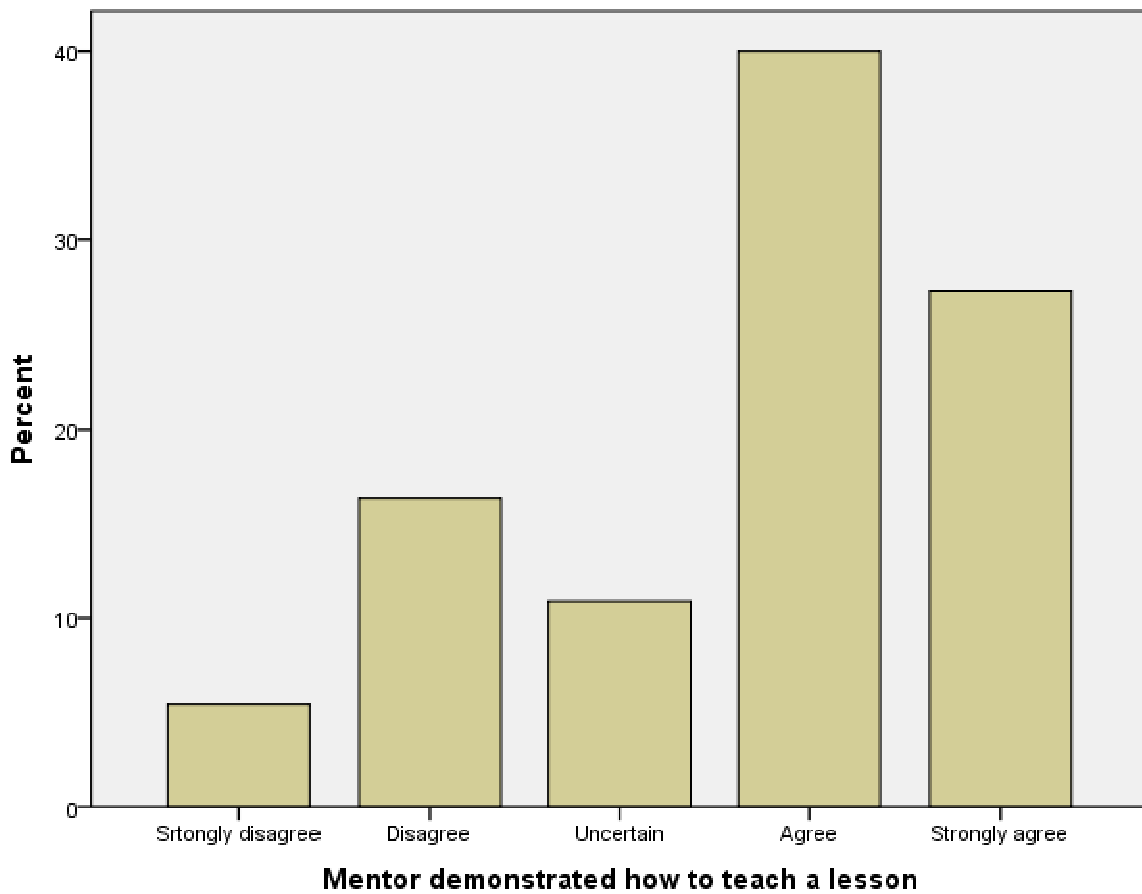

Figure 1
DA   7.2%   U   9.1%   A   83.6%
Data shows that most of the teacher trainees were given a chance by their mentors to observe them while they taught as evidenced by 83.6% of the participants who agreed that their mentors demonstrated how they wanted them to teach. This view can be established against 16.3% which represents a combined figure of those who were uncertain and those who disagreed with the suggestion that mentors demonstrated how they wanted them to teach while they observed.

6.2 Did mentor demonstrate how best to manage classroom when teaching?
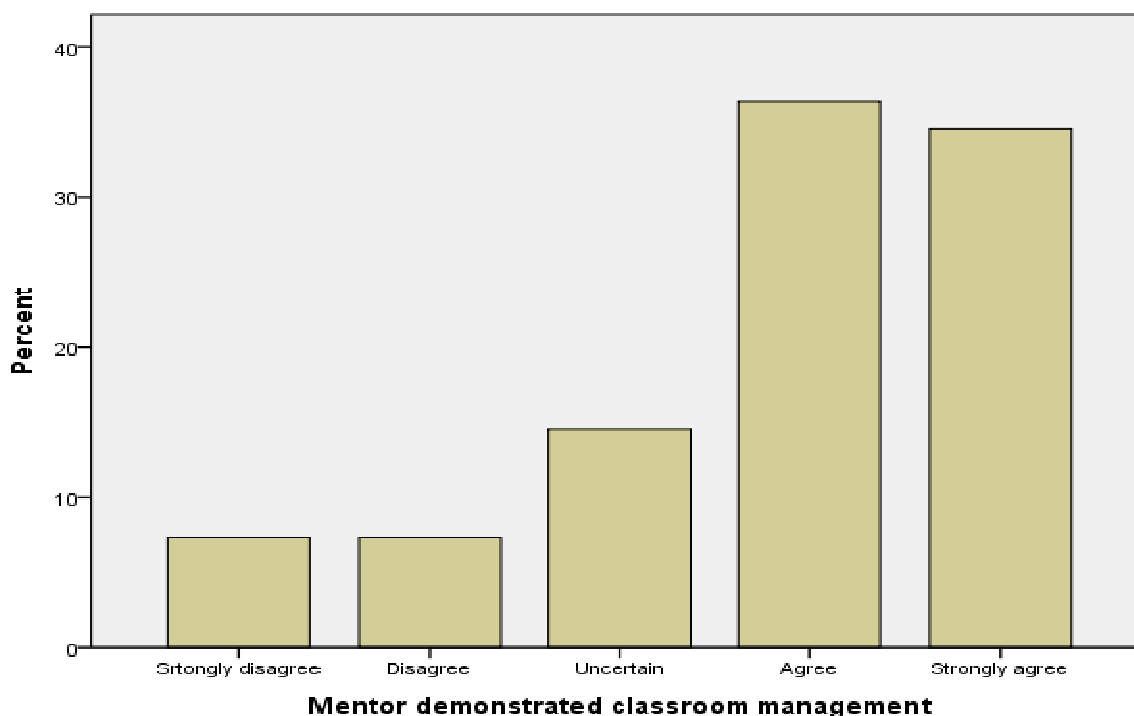

Figure 2

DA   14.6%   U   14.5%   A   70.9%

The results show that the majority of mentors demonstrated how best to manage classroom activities when teaching as shown by 70.9% of the teacher trainees who pointed that their mentors showed them the best way to manage classroom when teaching. This is against 39.1% of teacher trainees who either disagreed or were uncertain about whether mentors demonstrated how best to manage classroom when teaching or not.
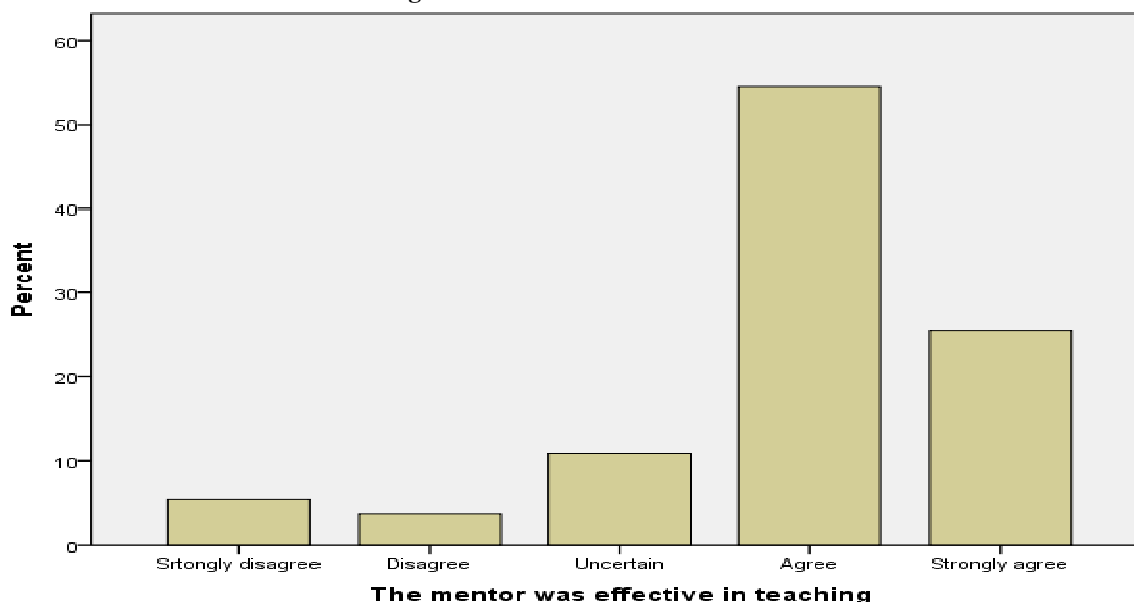
6.3 Was the mentor effective in teaching?

Figure 3

DA   9.1%   U   10.9%   A   80%

Data shows that most of the teacher trainees thought that their mentors were effective in teaching as evidenced by 80% of the former who held this view. This view can be established against a figure of 20% which represents a combined figure of those who were uncertain and those who disagreed with the suggestion that their mentors were effective in teaching.

6.4 Did the mentor have well designed activities for the students?
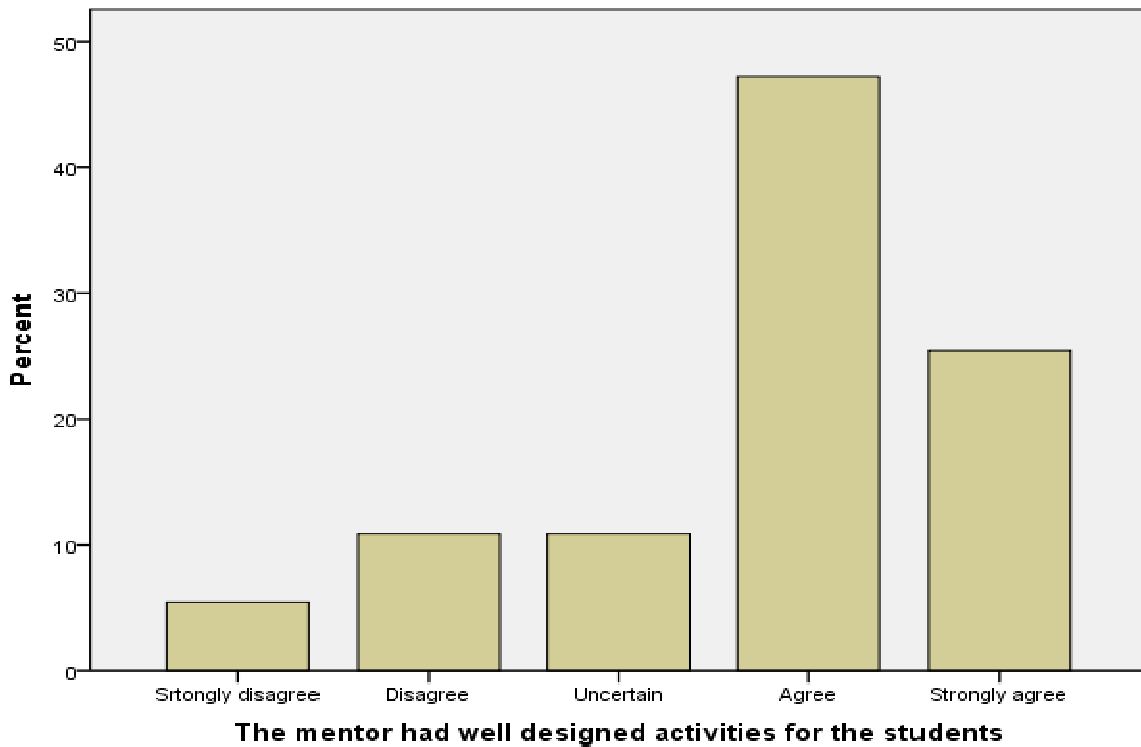

Figure 4

DA   16.4%   U   10.9%   A   72.8%

The results show that the majority of mentors had well designed activities for the students as demonstrated by 72.8 % of the teacher trainees who pointed that the mentors had well designed activities for the students. This is against a combined figure of 27.7% representing respondents who either disagreed or were uncertain about whether mentors had well designed activities for their students.

6.5 Did the mentor show me how to assess students' learning?
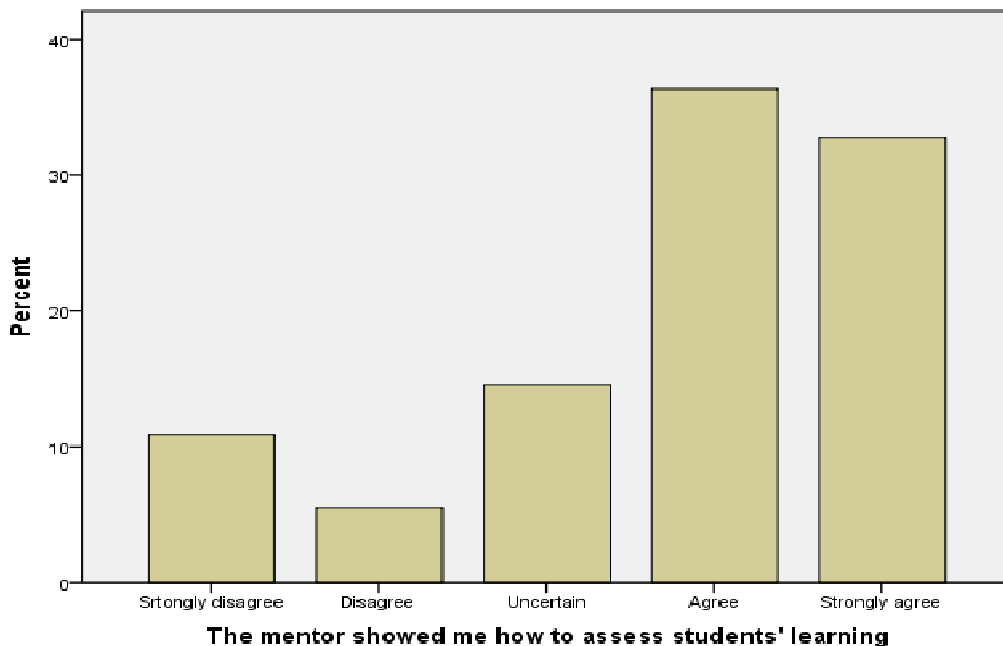

Figure 5

DA   16.4%   U   14.5%   A   69.1%

Data shows that most of the teacher trainees were shown how to assess students learning by their mentors as evidenced by 69.1% of the respondents who agreed and strongly agreed in response to the question. This view can be established against 30.9 % which represents a combined figure of those who either disagreed or were

uncertain about the suggestion that mentors demonstrated to teacher trainees how to assess students' learning.

6.6 Did the mentor have a good rapport with the students?
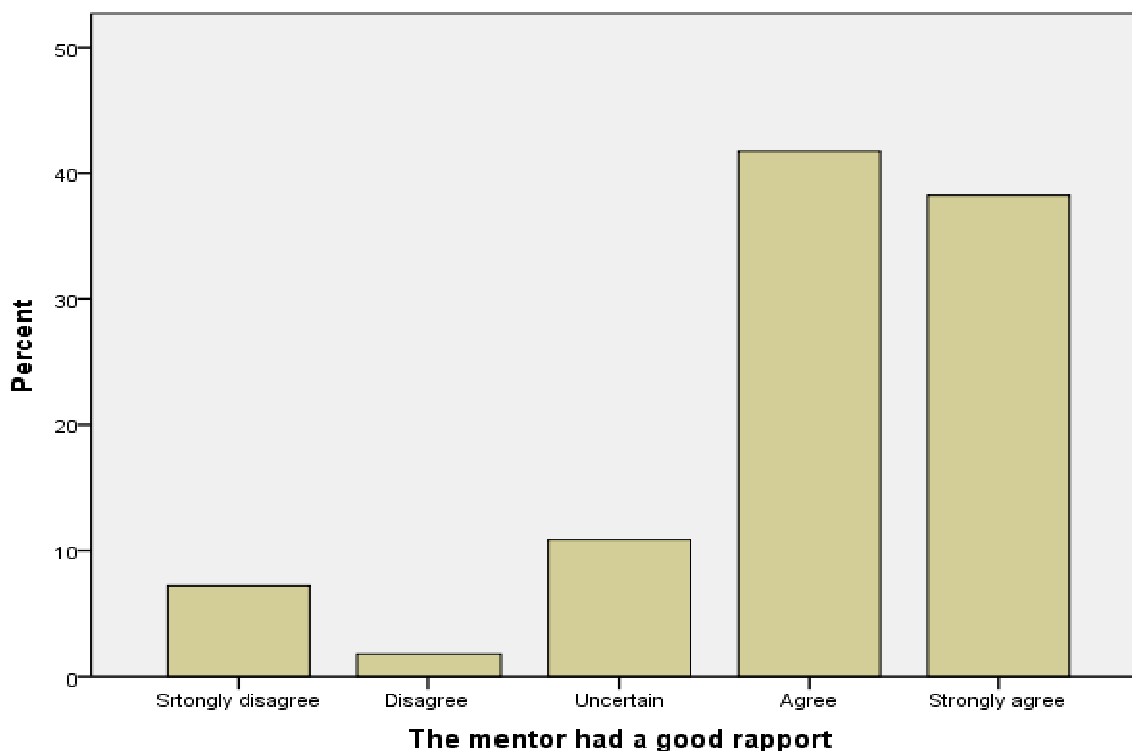

Figure 5
DA   9.1%   U   10.9%   A   80%

The results shows that the majority of mentors showed good rapport with the learners when teaching as demonstrated by 80% of the teacher trainees who laid claim to this view. This is against 9.1% of teacher trainees who denied that mentors demonstrated good rapport when teaching and 10.9% of those who were uncertain.

6.7 Did the mentor use hands-on materials for teaching?
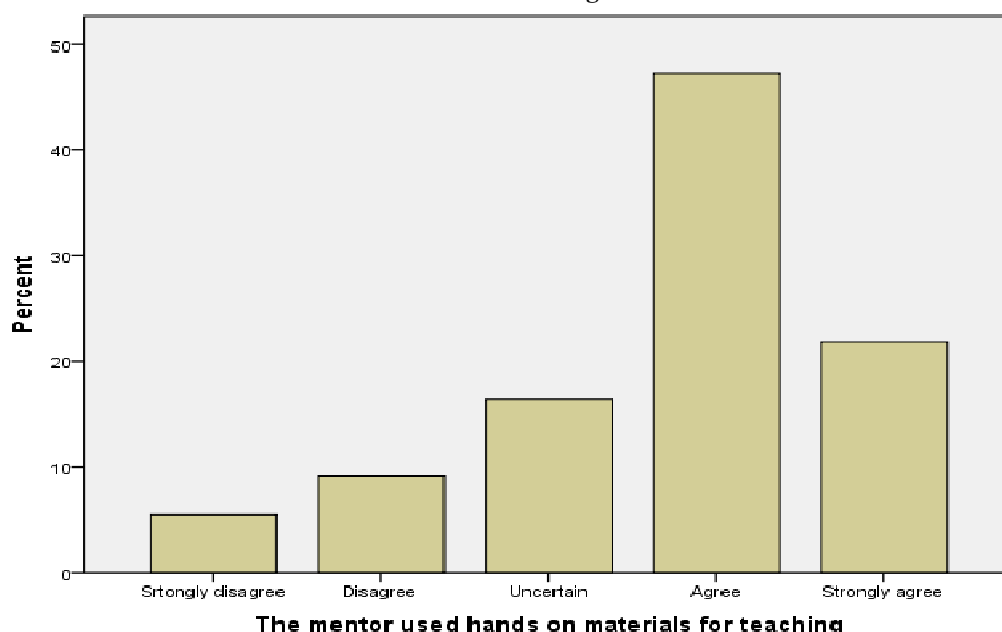

Figure 6
DA   14.6%   U   16.4%   A   69.1%

The results show that the majority of mentors used hands-on materials for teaching as demonstrated by 69.1% of the teacher trainees who laid claim to this view. This is against 14.6% of mentees who denied that mentors used

hands-on materials for teaching and 16.4% of those who were uncertain.

6.8 Did the mentor display enthusiasm when teaching?
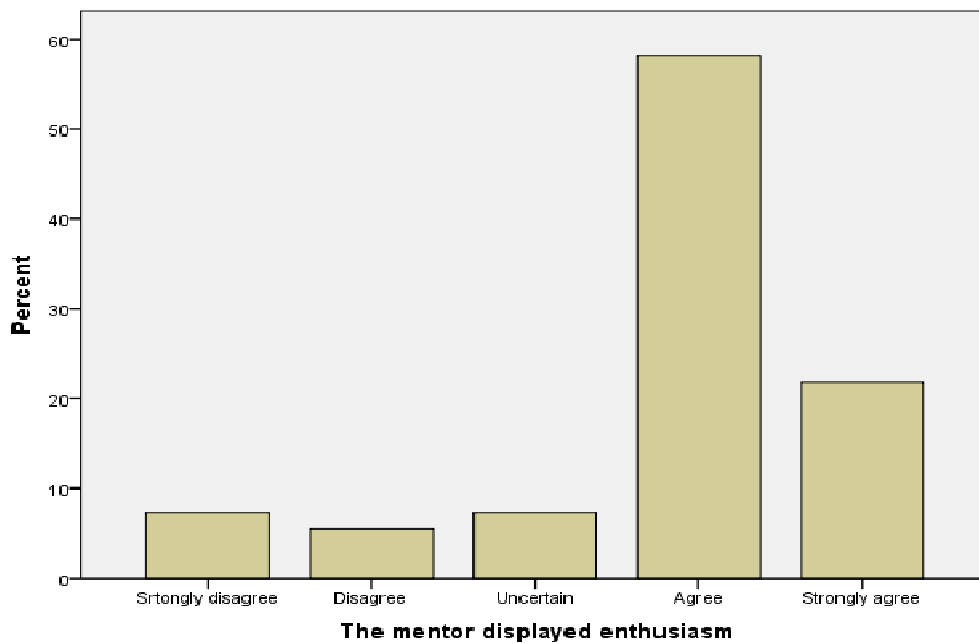

Figure 7

DA   12.8%   U   7.3%   A   80%

From the results above, it is clear that the majority of mentors displayed enthusiasm when teaching as demonstrated by 80% of the teacher trainees who laid claim to this view. This is against 12.8% of teacher trainees who denied that mentors displayed enthusiasm when teaching and 7.3% of those who were uncertain.

6.9 Did the mentor use curriculum language from the state standard?
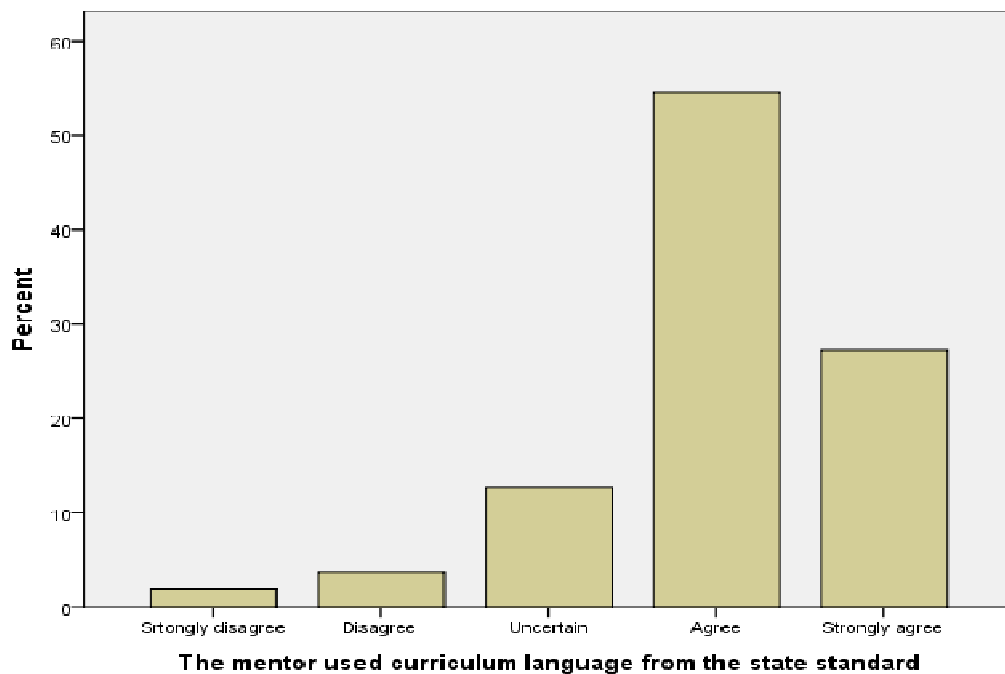

Figure 8

DA   5.4%   U   12.7%   A   82%

From the results above, it is evident that the majority of mentors used curriculum language from the state standard when teaching as demonstrated by 82% of the teacher trainees who laid claim to this view. This is against 5.4% of teacher trainees who disagreed that mentors used curriculum language from the state standard when teaching and 7.3% of them were uncertain.

7. Discussion

7.1 The extent to which mentors use modelling as a mentoring tool during the practicum

The modelling factor received greater than a 60% agreement response on all measurable items. This means that on the whole, student teachers pointed out that a majority of mentors modelled teaching practices. An analysis of the results show that demonstrating how to teach while students observed and using curricular language when teaching, were considered to be the most illustrative of the mentors' modelling practices at 83.6% and 82% respectively. This is followed by the mentors' effectiveness in teaching; mentors' display of enthusiasm; and mentors' ability to have good rapport with learners, all at 80% and followed by mentors' modelling of classroom management and well-designed lesson plans at 70.9% and 72.8% respectively. Comparartively, the lowest score within the modelling factor pertains to the mentors' demonstration of how to assess students' learning and mentors' use of hands on materials for teaching, both at 69.1%.

7.2 The significance of modelling as a mentoring tool in teacher trainees' professional development

The fact that mentors found the need to transfer their expertise not only through verbal feedback and guidance but also through actual demonstration of their knowledge and expertise for the teacher trainees to learn is commendable. This is because such approach to mentoring remains recommended and supported by a number of scholars and research findings including the Cambridge Professional Development Qualifications; A guide for Mentors (2015). According to Bird (2012) modelling or demonstration is part of the traditional models of student teaching where the teacher trainee is first allowed to observe the experienced teacher plan and teach. The latter then provides assistance and guidance to the teacher trainee who gradually takes over by carrying out planning and teaching by himself or herself. "When the student teachers first entered the classroom, they were expected, essentially, to emulate the classroom teacher" (Bird 2012: 20). According to the Cambridge Professional Development Qualifications guide for Mentors (2015), the cooperating teacher does not even have to be the object of observation by the teacher trainee. Another experienced practitioner, that is, a colleague who has professional attributes and expertise that a teacher trainee wants to develop, may be chosen by the mentor for the latter to observe in order to acquire specific skills that both the mentor and teacher trainee have agreed upon beforehand.

It can be noted that even though novice teacher trainees appreciated the role played by the teaching practice program in familiarising them with what the teaching profession entails, they also indicated an inconsistency between their expectations of the teaching practice including the mentoring component and the reality they experienced at schools (Bird, 2012; Evans-Andris, Kyle, & Carini, 2006). Such inconsistency may not be ruled out in the student teaching programme under study as they are many teacher trainees who were generally negative in their responses, even though their numbers were relatively lower than those who were positive in their responses. This may be indicative of their disparity between theory, expectation and reality at schools.

8. Conclusion

The study provides sufficient evidence that school based mentors use modelling as one of the mentoring tools to assist University of Botswana teacher trainees when on teaching practice. Evidence from literature suggest that the use of modelling in conjunction with other mentoring tools can equip student teachers with adequate skills that they may need to work independently in any environment where they will not be constantly supervised as they grow in their professions. Even though teacher trainees' responses are positive in most cases, suggesting that demonstration as a mentoring tool is ably done during the practicum, the fewer negative responses of those who disagreed and those who were uncertain cannot be completely ignored. This is because such responses probably signifies that there are still some challenges that teacher trainees encounter in teaching practice in general, and in relation to mentors' ability to use modelling as a mentoring tool. Therefore, there is need for further inquiry into the issue at hand where most players who are normally involved in the teaching practice will be consulted, and possibly empower or equip further the mentors in order to improve on the efficiency of mentorship especially in area modelling.

References

Achinstein, B., & Athanases, S. (2005). Focusing new teachers on diversity and equity: Toward a knowledge base for mentors. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 21, 843-862

Azer, S. A. (2005). The qualities of a good teacher: how can they be acquired and sustained? *Journal of the Royal Society of Medicine*, *98*(2), 67–69.

Cambridge Professional Development Qualifications; A guide for Mentors (2015) [Online] Available: http://www.cie.org.uk/images/304230-a-guide-for-mentors.pdf. (16 July, 2017)

Barab, S. A., & Hay, K. E. (2001). Doing science at the elbows of experts: Issues related to the science apprenticeship camp. *Journal of Research in Science Teaching*,38(1), 70-102.

Bird, Lori Kay, (2012). "Student Teacher Perceptions of the Impact of Mentoring on Student Teaching" Theses,

Dissertations, and Other Capstone Projects. Paper 82.

Carlson, R. D., & Gooden, J. S. (1999). Mentoring pre-service teachers for technology skills acquisition. 7p.; In: SITE 99: Society for Information Technology & Teacher Education International Conference (10th, SanAntonio, TX, February 28-March 4, 1999); Reports-Research (143) - Speeches/Meeting Papers (150).

Eller, L. S., Lev, E. L., & Feurer, A. (2014). Key components of an effective mentoring relationship: a qualitative study. *Nurse Education Today*, *34*(5), 815–820. http://doi.org/10.1016/j.nedt.2013.07.020 (15, June, 2017)

Evans-Andris, M., Kyle, D. W., & Carini, R. M. (2006). Is mentoring enough? An examination of the mentoring relationship in the pilot two-year Kentucky teacher internship program. *The New Educator*, *2*(4), 289-309.

Galvez-Hjornevik, C. (1986). Mentoring among teachers: A review of the literature. *Journal of Teacher Education,* 37(1), 6-11.

Hargreaves, A., & Fullan, M. (2000). Mentoring in the new millennium. *Theory into practice*, *39*(1), 50-56.

Hascher, T., Cocard, Y., & Moser, P. (2004). Forget about theory - Practice is all? Student teachers' learning in practicum, *Teachers & Teaching*, 10(6), 623-637.

Hobson, A.J., Ashby, P., Malderez, A., & Tomlinson, P.D. (2009). Mentoring beginning teachers: what we know and what we don't. *Teaching and Teacher Education,* 25, 207-216.

Hudson, P., Skamp, K., & Brooks, L. (2005). Development of an instrument: Mentoring for effective primary science teaching, *Science Education*, *89*(4), 657-674.

Maynard, T., & Furlong, J. (1994). Leaming to teach and models of mentoring 1n D. Mclntyre, H. Hagger and M. Wilkin (Eds.), *Mentoring: Perspectives on school-based teacher education* (pp. 69-85). London: Kogan Page.

Moir, E., & Gless, J. (2001). Quality induction: An investment in teachers. *Teacher Education Quarterly*, 109-114.

Santoro, N. (2009). Teaching in culturally diverse contexts: What knowledge about 'self'and 'others' do teachers need?. *Journal of Education for Teaching*, *35*(1), 33-45.

Simpson, T., Hastings, W., & Hill, B. (2007). 'I knew that she was watching me': the professional benefits of mentoring. *Teachers and Teaching: theory and practice*, *13*(5), 481-498.

Whitebook, M & Bellm, D. (1996). Mentoring for early childhood teachers and providers: Building upon and extending tradition. *Young Children*, 52 (1), 59-64.

Zanting, A., Verloop, N., & Vermunt, J. D. (2001). Student teachers' beliefs about mentoring and learning to teach during teaching practice. *British Journal of Educational Psychology*, *71*(1), 57-80.