Can the Mentoring and Socialization
of Pre-Service Teachers Improve Teacher Education?

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The goal of this study was to determine whether the processes of mentoring and socialization that take place during block teaching practice (BTP) in Tanzania can improve the quality of teacher education. In this essay, "mentoring" refers to all activities geared toward guiding, counseling, monitoring, supervising, and supporting teacher trainees involved in BTP. Teacher trainees were asked in a survey to rate their experiences with mentors and state whether pre-service mentoring programs could improve quality education in school classrooms and in teacher preparation colleges. The findings indicate that mentoring practices benefitted all individuals involved in BTP. Teacher trainees benefitted from mentors' models of lesson planning and collaborative teaching, which additionally provided social support. Mentoring strengthened teacher trainees' confidence, self-control, lesson preparation, and classroom presentations. The study also revealed several challenges that students, teachers, and their mentors experience during BTP.
Keywords: Mentoring, socialization, teaching practice, BTP, hope theory, quality education, collaboration.

Introduction

This study examined perspectives on mentoring and socialization practices of pre-service teachers to determine whether ongoing collaborative professional field experiences between university teacher educators, school supervising teachers, and teacher trainees improve the quality of teacher education. The study was conducted in northern Tanzania in 2014 and 2015 using a cross-sectional research survey design in which a questionnaire was the primary instrument for data collection. Document analysis, classroom observations, and field notes were purposefully collected from pre-service teachers who participated in BTP.

Researchers explored *block teaching practice* (BTP) insofar as it provides training opportunities to beginning teachers who become socialized into the teaching profession (Furlong & Hirst, 1988). In Tanzania, BTP is designed as

an integral component of teacher training and thus, student teachers are obliged to engage with experienced teachers who guide and monitor their teaching practice as part of their training program (Hardman, Abd-Kadir, & Tibuhinda, 2012). The overall intent of BTP is to expose student teachers to classroom teaching and learning environments in order to challenge the development of teaching skills through a framework of socialization into the profession (Lukanga, 2011). Since teaching practice requires hands-on teaching, there is broad agreement on the importance of incorporating field experiential learning into teacher education programs (Wang, Coleman, Coley, & Phelps, 2003) even though the requirements vary widely across countries (Ronfeldt & Reininger, 2012).

In this article, a "pre-service teacher" is defined as a person who is still enrolled in a teaching degree and is not yet a qualified teacher. In the context of pre-service teacher education, mentoring is utilized during the field

professional experience whereby a pre-service teacher (mentee) is placed with a classroom teacher (mentor) in order to learn how to teach. The field teaching placement is considered a valuable opportunity for pre-service teachers to make links between theory and practice (Turner, 2011; Zeichner, 2012). Mentors are responsible for and usually oversee the pre-service teachers and their practical development during professional field placements.

There is broad consensus that initial preparation of teachers in teachers' colleges in most countries emphasizes courses and experiences that address subject content without or with limited pedagogy or practice (Bekalo & Welford, 1999; Ben-Peretz, 1995; Cobb, 1999; Villegas-Reimers, 1998). These colleges that train teachers are not likely to offer student teachers ample opportunity to experience a period of block teaching (i.e., teaching practice) under supervision, and if provided, the time is extremely short and, consequently, leads to poor performance when the novice teacher is hired to teach (Bekalo and Welford, 1999).

Providing teachers with adequate subject knowledge and practical teaching skills based on current learner-centered teaching methods is a major challenge that stands in the way of achieving quality teacher education in Tanzania and other African countries. Subject matter alone cannot guarantee quality education either in school classrooms or in teacher education. In a study of quality education in Tanzania, Malekela (2004) argued that when quality of education is measured in terms of national examinations, results show poor performance. However, Chale (1983) claimed that students' underachievement in national examinations cannot be improved by simply revamping classroom content alone. In fact, the underlying factor, Chale concluded, is the unfortunate plight of most teachers not being well trained, and therefore lacking general academic preparation and pedagogical skills.

A report of the National Commission on Teaching and America's Future (cited in Darling-Hammond, 1998) confirmed that "what teachers know and can do makes the crucial difference in what teachers can accomplish. New courses, tests, and curriculum reforms are important, but they are meaningless if teachers

cannot utilize them productively" (p. 5). Albanese and Mitchell (1993) suggested that preparing knowledgeable teachers requires carefully developing course work and field experiences in content areas in order to model good instruction and to link theory and practice. Pre-service teacher education therefore plays a critical role in the preparation of teachers, since this is when the student teachers are provided with subject matter as well as pedagogical knowledge, which are invariably referred to as theory and practice in education (Argyis & Schon, 1974; Kolb, 1984).

In Tanzania, mentoring in the pre-service teacher context is a formally arranged relationship whereby pre-service teachers are placed with mentors with whom they have no prior experience or acquaintance. Malekela (2000) explains that placement is intended to be task-oriented, and the mentor teacher, on behalf of the tertiary institution (i.e., teachers' college or university), assesses the pre-service teacher's performance. Sometimes, assessment combines evaluation by the mentor teacher and supervisor or coordinator of teaching practice. While the field placement generally occurs for a limited period of 5–8 weeks, placements are organized as a *block placement* (Lukanga, 2011). During BTP, it is expected that pre-service teachers engage in activities such as observing and reflecting as well as planning and teaching (Ambrosetti and Dekkers, 2010; Ishumi, 2009; Walkington, 2004).

Though not uniform across countries, pre-service activities typically consist of:

1. observing mentor teachers and watching them teach; interacting with students, parents, and other staff; organizing and managing the classroom and students;

2. developing learning experiences for students that are implemented within the field placement classroom;

3. experimenting with teaching strategies and approaches;

4. interacting with students within the classroom;

5. engaging in discussions that focus on teaching strategies, students in the classroom, and feedback; and

6. reflecting on learning experience implementation (Ambrosetti et al., 2014).

Furthermore, even with considerable attention given to mentoring of teachers in Tanzania in the 1970s and 1980s in order to prepare Universal Primary Education (UPE) teachers, many challenges persisted then and continue today (URT, 1995). A short description of teaching practice in the UPE era by Galabawa (2001) revealed that back then, little was known about mentor-mentee relationships, novice teachers' overall perceptions, cooperating teachers' workload regarding *assessment,* or even how assessment affects the quality of teaching itself. The role of mentoring as an essential form of learning was not considered part of BTP during the UPE period (Dennis & Stahley, 2005). Thus, first-year teachers were expected to perform and be just as effective as their more experienced colleagues; however, some of the novice teachers did not have the experience or opportunity to gain the useful skills needed to manage a classroom of students. This void of support left the teacher trainees with a sense of isolation and frustration.

Assumptions about Mentoring

In this discussion, mentoring signifies a personal relationship in which a more experienced (usually older) teacher or professional acts as a guide, role model, coach, and sponsor of a less experienced (usually younger) student teacher, novice, or junior professional. Generally, a mentor provides the mentee knowledge, advice, challenge, counsel, and support in the pre-service teacher's pursuit of becoming a full member of the teaching profession (Clark, Harden, & Johnson, 2000; Maria-Monica & Alina, 2011).

The underlying assumption of these tasks and roles of the mentor is that the field-teaching practicum requirement is based on arguments claiming that effective teaching practice can be achieved by employing teachers who have extensive teaching experience in schools or who can mentor and provide student teachers with more practical approaches to teaching (Graham, 2006). Therefore, during teaching practice sessions, student teachers are exposed to the authentic context of the teaching profession

whereby student teachers become socialized to the profession (Marais & Meier, 2004).

Concurrently, there are assumptions that claim that the process of socialization and mentoring benefits teachers, schools, and students or improves the quality of teacher education (Rivkin, Hanushek, & Kain, 2005). Socialization of the student teacher is a role-learning process that results in the situational adjustment of the individual to the culture of the teaching profession (Battersby, 1983; Kocoglu, 2008). The socialization of student teachers is appraised to be a unique academic mentoring process that calls for learning adjustments, including job proficiency, goals, values, school culture, interpersonal relationships, historic rules, and role language (Calderhead & Robson, 1991; Deng & Yuen, 2011). This process informs and influences a teacher's professional rules, reflective practice, teacher culture, and school environment (Killeavy & Moloney, 2010).

Other benefits of mentoring and socialization include teacher retention and consistency among educators (LoSciuto, Rajala, Townsend, & Taylor, 1996; Schwille, 2008). For instance, educators claim that mentoring programs not only increase job satisfaction or help new employees become acclimated to their jobs but also have a positive effect on student achievement and engagement (McPartland & Nettles, 1991). Thus, teacher education programs can influence pre-service teachers' pedagogical knowledge and skills, which in turn become reflected in students' classroom learning outcomes (Dembele & Lefoka, 2007), and strong teacher education programs can pave the way for quality education (Bowman, 2014; Chediel, 2004; Nzilano, 2013; Lauwerier & Akkari, 2015). The present study examines these assumptions in Tanzania's pre-service teachers' preparation programs.

Statement of Problem and Context

Two pre-service programs are implemented in teachers' colleges in Tanzania, namely, Grade "A" Teaching Certificate courses and Diploma in Secondary Education (URT, 2009). It takes two years to complete the teaching program, during which pre-service teachers are expected

to become competent in teaching subjects in primary and secondary schools (Bowman, 2014; Chediel, 2004; URT, 1995). The teaching process during the two-year academic period is divided into two sessions: (a) a theoretical session, which is characterized by residential teaching sessions at teachers' colleges or universities; and (b) field teaching practice (BTP), which sometimes lasts 5–8 weeks (Nzilano, 2013).

In the majority of teachers' colleges in Tanzania, including private universities, theoretical teaching has tended to dominate (Nzilano, 2013; URT, 2009). To some extent, this experience has resulted in producing less prepared pre-service teachers who cannot meet the needs of their students (Lau & Bates, 2004). In order to match the required theoretical skills, knowledge, and skills acquired at the university, pre-service teachers are sent out for teaching practice. During this period, pre-service teachers teach their respective subjects of specialization (Chediel, 2004). Also, they practice other skills like management by engaging in activities such as taking the roles of teachers on duty, class teachers, and other responsibilities as directed by the host schools. Therefore, the pre-service training period is viewed by many educators as the best opportunity to acquire knowledge, attitudes, behaviors, and skills that teachers need to perform their teaching tasks effectively in classrooms (Smith & Ingersoll, 2004).

Educators have observed that despite the growing support for mentoring in the area of pre-service teacher education, the conceptualization of mentoring in the pre-service teacher education context needs further development (Walkington, 2005). This observation is not entirely baseless for Tanzania. To date, mentoring has been developed in a haphazard way, as clarity about the nature of mentoring varies widely, and there is no particular mentoring structure being used across the sector; rather, the structure depends on individual classroom teachers across East Africa (Ambrosetti, 2010). Evidence of this situation can be found in the use of different terminology within the literature. In particular, as observed by Ambrosetti (2012) and other educators, the term *mentoring* has been intertwined and interchangeably used with terms such as

supervising and *coaching* (Koç, 2011; Sundli, 2007), and few researchers describe how mentoring occurs within the specific context of pre-service teacher education. In addition, mentoring differs from country to country.

Accordingly, the conceptualization of mentoring in the pre-service teacher context has been problematic, with many mentors using supervisory strategies rather than mentoring strategies (Aladejana, Aladejana, & Ehindero, 2006; Hobson, Ashby, Malderez, & Tomlinson, 2009). However, it has been noted by Ambrosetti, Knight, and Dekkers (2014) that in the pre-service teacher education context, the mentor teacher is often considered both a mentor and supervisor, and they take on such roles accordingly. Nevertheless, Ambrosetti and her colleagues perceived distinct differences between mentoring and supervising. They argued that supervision refers to a hierarchical relationship whereby specific skills and roles of the job are taught and assessed.

In contrast, mentoring concerns the use of a supportive and more reciprocal relationship between mentors and mentees whereby professional and personal growth occurs through reflective processes that include developmental and contextual factors (Ambrosetti & Dekkers, 2010; Walkington, 2005). Interestingly, within the pre-service teacher education context in Tanzania, the mentor teacher is sometimes asked to assess and assign a grade on the pre-service teacher's performance during the professional placement (URT, 2009).

In Tanzania, another assumption that needs to be examined concerns the timing of the field placements during the two-year teaching program. Apparently, education planners believe that college-based studies and student teaching components of teacher education courses are more beneficial when they are integrated with coursework over the entire period of the pre-service preparation. This is in contrast to cramming them into a limited period during the last few weeks of the last year of teacher preparation, which is frequently the case for many institutions in East Africa (Chediel, 2004; Nzilano, 2013; URT, 2009). According to Ware (1992), student teachers need to experience the reality of the classroom as soon as, and as

frequently as, possible (see also Eick, Ware, & Williams, 2003).

Besides, the premise that mentoring also provides instructional assistance and promotes socialization between novice teachers and the rest of the staff is widely assumed to benefit novice teachers in Tanzania (Chediel, 2004; Nzilano, 2013). For example, Stanulis & Floden (2009) found that new teachers who received intensive mentoring remained in the profession, exhibiting a retention rate that far exceeded the national average. In spite of these positive claims about the benefits of mentoring programs that take place in teacher preparation, little research has been conducted in Tanzania to substantiate such benefits one way or another. And that was the quest of the present study.

Mentoring and the Socialization Process during Teaching Practice

In Tanzania as well as elsewhere in Africa and beyond, educators perceive BTP to be part of the mentoring process (Nzilano, 2013; Sieborger & Quick, 2005) in addition to an opportunity for pre-service teachers to become *socialized* into the teaching profession (Ganser, 1996). BTP is understood to be a major component of the preparation efforts of the next generation of teachers (Nzilano, 2013; URT, 1995). While some educators see the pre-service teaching experience as a necessary precursor for a strong teacher education program that paves the way for quality education (Bhalalusesa, Westbrook, & Lussier, 2011; Fischer & van Andel, 2002), other scholars perceive BTP as a culminating event which enables the pre-service teacher to become an exceptional educator.

The implementation of BTP depends on the setup for each country. The amount of time set aside for this exercise has been a subject of debate for many countries depending on where the emphasis is placed by the individual country—content or pedagogy? In the 1990s, this debate led Tanzania to introduce a curriculum that focused on teaching content only (Lukanga, 2011), but in 2005 the curriculum was changed to address both content and pedagogy (practical training). The changes in the approach from content/teacher-centred approach to competency/ learner-centred approach needed

in-service as well as pre-service training for teacher educators to be able to manage classes in the new approach. Since the approach was new, it was inevitable that new and old teacher educators get trained on the new skills. The *practical* teaching component is now compulsory for all teacher training institutions in Tanzania (URT, 2009).

However, challenges persist, particularly in the ways in which BTP is organized and conducted. Experience with schools shows that most teacher training institutions send their teacher trainees to schools for BTP without concrete means of addressing issues of support, advice, or counselling, and without a close follow-up that ensures pertinent skills and experiences have been achieved. The assumption is, however, that teacher education can make a difference in teachers' pedagogical knowledge and skills, which in turn are reflected in students' learning outcomes (Bhalalusesa et al, 2011).

Pre-Service Mentoring in the Framework of Teaching Practicum

In Tanzania, mentoring of student teachers is an old idea but has relevance and meaning in today's education sector (Galbraith & Malin-Ostrowski, 2000). The mentoring practice has evolved in Tanzania over the years since the colonial administration ended in 1961 to the current teaching practicum which has become compulsory in teacher education (Chediel, 2004). In fact, historically, the socialization of first-year teachers dates back to the chronicles of Greek mythology (Hall & Sandler, 1983, p. 4), which captured the relationships between mentors and mentees; master and apprentice; teachers and learners; and advisor and advisee.

Although modern writers admit that the definition of mentoring is imprecise (Bogat & Redner, 1985; Merriam, 1983), most scholars agree that the term *mentor* generally specifies teacher, adviser, sponsor, counselor, and role model (Jacobi, 1991; Kram, 1985; Levinson et al., 1978). Merriam (1983) described mentoring as "a powerful emotional interaction between an older and younger person, in a relationship in which the older mentor is trusted, loving, and experienced in the guidance of the younger" (p.

162). Kram (1985) wrote that the mentor "supports, guides, and counsels a young adult as he or she accomplishes mastery of the adult world or the world of work" (p. 2). In spite of these long historical connections with mentoring, and the fact that mentoring practices are well-known phenomena in many countries of the world, the quality of mentoring continues to be an obscure and less formally regulated activity.

In practice, supervisors of the teaching profession from training institutions are expected to visit student teachers in order to assess their performance, as well as to guide, advise, and assist them in the acquisition of the intended teaching skills. According to Komba and Kira (2013), the institutions from which the supervisors come do not seem to emphasize such support, and therefore it is not henceforth given.

However, Bhalalusesa et al. (2011) point out that student teachers are left largely on their own to accumulate teaching survival skills. Possible reasons why lecturers rush through the supervision activity include financial constraints on the department of the institution that commissions the supervisors, lack of proper orientation regarding supervisory roles, and the overall location of student teachers to supervisors (who have only a limited amount of time for proper supervision). These factors may render the "Teaching Practice" effort futile and ineffective.

In viewing BTP as a culminating event, mentors provide guidance in curriculum and lesson planning and offer critique and feedback on teaching methods (Inman & Marlow, 2004; Kopkowski, 2008). When BTP is taken as a culminating event, however, it must be considered a major component of the teacher education program (not an option), and it becomes an integral part of teacher training (Feiman-Nemser, 2001) from the beginning of the teacher preparation process (Nzilano, 2013; URT, 1995). However, this distinction between the two types of BTP—one that is a culminating event, offered towards the end of the teacher training and the other offered as an integral part of teacher training throughout the teacher training program—these orientations are rarely underscored in research of teaching practice.

Sometimes, mentors can also provide additional support such as classroom management to pre-service and first-year teachers (Algozzine, Gretes, Queen, & Cowan-Hathcock, 2007); Inman & Marlow, 2004). In a study of 14 school systems and over 1,300 teachers, Algozzine et al. (2007) found that new teachers need support and guidance in all facets of their job even in the simple tasks of being a teacher such as grading, keeping attendance, and parent telephone calls.

Therefore, in Tanzania, the unrelenting hurdle that persists suggests that because secondary schools and private and public academic institutions differ in their organizational structure and culture, and because mentoring activities are unregulated, quality experience cannot be predicted or guaranteed. And hence, the central quest of the present study is: Does mentoring and socialization in Block Teaching Practice enhance the quality of teacher education? The intent here is to shed light on the relationships among the different mentoring actors and whether solutions have been contemplated to augment the persisting hurdles.

Socialization of Pre-service Teachers

Professional socialization occurs during the time that a pre-service teacher spends in an undergraduate teacher education program. Experiences in teacher education programs include course study, early fieldwork, and student teaching, all of which have a large influence on perceptions of students in education programs (McMahon, & MacPhail, 2007). A common goal of per-service teacher education programs is to encourage each student to develop beliefs and understand the basic culture of the subject, which often challenges preconceived notions when entering the undergraduate program (Hushman, 2009).

As they experience pre-service teacher education, new teachers engage in the process of gathering knowledge and constructing such knowledge in a social context. The gathering of knowledge is often acquired formally through an educational process or informally by interaction with other people (Hushman, 2009). In part, a pre-service teacher goes through a socialization process where beliefs, attitudes, behaviors, and

teaching philosophies are imparted. It is widely known that while teacher education has long adopted the apprenticeship model in the teaching practicum, mentoring includes emotional support and professional *socialization* in addition to its pedagogical guidance (Hawkey, 2006; Schwille, 2008). In other words, an effective mentoring program not only grooms pre-service teachers for classroom instruction but also "enhances their self-efficacy and prepares them for the potential shattered dreams of impeccable professional 'performance' during their first year of teaching" (Friedman, 2000, p. 595).

Teacher training involves generally the planned/scheduled academic programs including teaching practice, which means also that colleges and universities do exert strong socialization effects on pre-service teachers. Moreover, Killeavy and Moloney (2010) and Ward and McCotter (2004) further suggest that pre-service teacher interactions with mentor teachers, peer student teachers, and students in practice schools can significantly influence the outcome of socialization.

Therefore, socialization of student teachers is an important step in the professional development of teachers in Tanzania. The role of mentor teachers is that of a key player in launching students into the teaching profession. Mentor teachers are known for their practical knowledge of the teaching profession, which complements theoretical knowledge that novice teachers acquire from the university or Teacher Training Colleges. The persisting question should be: How do mentor teachers perceive and understand their roles as they prepare student teachers for teaching careers during the teaching practice sessions? There is a genuine quest to understand the complex socialization processes that pre-service teachers experience in Tanzania while building teaching skills, academic knowledge, and social relationships.

Theoretical Considerations

In the quest for theories that inform and support the study of mentoring and socialization of pre-service teachers, two models come to mind. The models hinge upon the tenets of basic classroom activities, namely communicative practices and collaborative teaching. As discussed previously, the socialization process of the pre-service teachers is subsumed under the tutelage of the classroom teacher, who provides the specific forms of support that keep pre-service teachers in the mentor's school before the first year of teaching or after graduation.

Mentorship of the Classroom Teacher

Traditionally a learner was considered to be an empty vessel to be filled with knowledge or a bank account to which the teacher must deposit knowledge (Freire, 1968). In this context a teacher was considered a pivotal deliverer of knowledge. The introduction of the competency-based curricula by the Tanzania Institute of Education in 2005 was a shift of paradigm that reflected world-wide changes aimed at concentrating on the teaching and learning process that emphasized the real-world application of respective course content materials. The new paradigm insisted on the re-orientation of education to focus on promotion of practical knowledge or required competencies (Mkonongwa, 2012).

With the emergence of such learning theories as constructivism, the paradigm shifted from a content / teacher-centered to a competence / learner-centered approach. While different mentoring models offer a variety of ways to build on the quality of mentor-mentee communication and the overall quality of teacher education experience, it is challenging for mentors to "cross the borders" (Giroux, 2005) and focus on their own strengths and assets as well as those of their mentees.

Recent research revealed that there is a "culture of isolation" caused by mentor teachers' lack of know-how in communicating their teaching beliefs to others (Bradbury and Koballa (2008). That is, without adequate communication between mentor teachers and pre-service teachers regarding teaching expectations and beliefs, pre-service teachers leave teacher education programs less prepared to negotiate potential conflict between their beliefs and the reality of teaching, leading to dissonance and resistance to adaptation of new educational reforms.

Also, researchers have found that first-year teachers often possess "unrealistic optimism," which sometimes leads to the loss of motivation and passion for teaching or the decision to leave the teaching field altogether (Weinstein, 1988)). Mentoring in teacher education, therefore, is much more than the apprenticeship of instructional pedagogy. Pre-service teachers need to be guided in their application of proper content knowledge, pedagogical knowledge (i.e., curriculum and teaching standards), and content pedagogical knowledge, (i.e., discipline-specific content), the negotiation of their own teaching beliefs and resilience in maintaining their motivation for teaching. Much of the success that a first-year teacher experiences is therefore tied to quality mentoring experiences that promote positive professional identity, resilience, and the belief that their efforts as teachers can make a difference.

Communicative Abilities and Collaborative Teaching

While suggesting a mentoring model that could encompass the quality mentoring experiences and facilitate communication between mentor teachers and pre-service teachers, and at the same time a model that enhances teacher resilience through mentoring, He (2009) introduced a strength-based mentoring model to consider in teacher education. The strength-based model promoted a perspective for schools and teachers that moves away from IQ and cultural-deficit orientations and promotes achievement for all students, and thus enhances quality education (Villegas & Lucas, 2002).

He (2009) rightly argued that it is the focus on individuals' positive experiences and strengths, as opposed to their problems and shortcomings that distinguish the strength-based approach from the deficit-based model. Derived from positive psychology and social cognitive psychology theories, various strength-based approaches have been developed and applied to early grades and secondary school settings to develop and build upon individuals' strengths to enable optimal student performance (Lopez, 2006; Seligman, 2000). These strength-based approaches focus on the articulation of the teacher's strengths and assets as identified by examining past positive experiences, encouragement of hope and optimism for the future, and development of emotional satisfaction with the present (Seligman, 2002).

The strengths-development theories can be traced back to Donald Clifton (1924-2003), famously known in the field of psychology as the "father" of *strength-based psychology* and "grandfather" of positive psychology (Asplund, Lopez, Hodges, & Harter, 2007). In 1998, Clifton along with Tom Rath and a team of scientists at Gallup, where Clifton was chairman, created the online Clifton Strengths Finder assessment (Clifton & Anderson, 2002). The focus of the Strengths-Quest program developed by Clifton was to help individuals discover and build upon their natural talents to maximize their potential for strengths (Louis, 2011).

The premise of Strengths-Quest theory is the understanding that an individual may experience three sequential stages of strength development: talent identification, talent ownership, and behavioral change (Clifton & Harter, 2003). Based on the Strengths-Quest theory, one's talent is different from one's strength. Talent is "a naturally recurring pattern of thought, feeling and behavior that can be productively applied," while strength is "the ability to provide consistent, near-perfect performance in a given activity" (Hodges & Harter, 2005, pp. 190–191).

Subsequent research and application of the Strengths-Quest program in teacher education mentoring to facilitate both mentors and mentees in identifying their talents and strengths, especially at the beginning of the mentoring relationship, was found useful and focused on their own strengths, as well as the strengths of each other. Therefore, Clifton's Strengths-Quest approach reflects one such theory that mentors and mentees can rely on to discover and build their natural talents to maximize their talents for teaching.

Hope and Optimism for the Future: Hope Theory

The second theory that was identified to inform and illuminate the mentor-mentorship relationship is based on *hope* and *optimism*.

Hoy, Tarter, and Hoy (2006) argue that instead of focusing on strengths identified through past experiences, it is possible to engage in goal setting and self-efficacy instead, to promote future development. Both theories—hope and optimism–are closely related to Bandura's (1982) self-efficacy theory, Scheier and Carver's (1985) optimism theory, and Covington's (2000) goal theory.

Hope theory involves a motivational model that emphasizes both the "will and the way" in which individuals reach their goals (Snyder, 1995). Snyder defines hope as "the process of thinking about one's goals, along with the motivation to move toward those goals (agency), and the ways to achieve those goals (pathways)" (p. 355). In other words, in order to reach the goals, one needs to have the motivation for both approaching the goals and seeking alternative strategies to achieve them. The assumption is that the identification and confirmation of agency and pathways as two separate constructs advance the understanding of goal setting, allowing educators not only to measure factors related to hope but also to design and provide interventions to enhance hope.

In our context, therefore, the strength-based approach can garner power for mentoring in teacher education, and the insights derived are relevant to mentoring and socialization in teacher education. Equally, hope theory brings understanding of the pathways and strategies mentors and mentees use to reach their goals in teacher education. Thus, strength-based mentoring should be closely aligned with educative mentoring, in which both mentors and mentees are engaged in continued professional growth (Feiman-Nemser, 2001).

In professional educative mentoring, which is grounded in Dewey's (1938) model of educative experience and influenced by theories of socially constructed cognition (Tharp & Gallimore, 1988; Vygotsky, 1978), the learning of the mentors and mentees occurs through meaningful social communication, interactions, and practice in reaching co-constructed knowledge and academic goals. The strength-based approaches reviewed in this section could be integrated in a mentoring model to engage teacher educators, supervising teachers, and

pre-service teachers in the educative mentoring experience where they individually seek their own strengths and collaboratively discover their hopes and optimism.

Even though the Strengths-Quest instruments and strategies have been used sporadically in education and mentoring practices outside Tanzania, the gap does not preclude its educational programs nor render them useless or fruitless. Clearly, a systematic model for adapting and applying these theories to pre-service teachers would greatly support teacher educators and supervising teachers in enhancing pre-service teachers' resilience by introducing ways to identify one's strengths and assets; co-constructing goals and establishing motivation, and developing strategies to achieve goals; and self-monitoring one's growth, optimism, and resilience as a teacher. In understanding both their own and others' strengths, mentors and mentees would benefit from enhanced self-knowledge, goal setting, strategies for development, and interactions for learning.

Research Methods

In this cross-sectional research survey design, teachers' perceptions of mentoring practices and the quality of teacher education were explored. A survey instrument consisting of 12 questions was sent to 63 participants who were involved previously in pre-service teaching in secondary schools in northern Tanzania. Classroom observations and school-related documents were analyzed. Participants were taken from schools that have partnered with a university that trains student teachers. The mentees and mentors (i.e., monitors, supervisors, and classroom cooperating teachers and administrators) in this study specialized in secondary school education. They varied in age and gender. The selected participants for the study were currently teaching or supervising student teachers in secondary schools.

The research questions aimed to identify the various reasons that teacher mentoring within secondary schools was beneficial for schools, teachers, and students. The assumption that mentoring and socialization

within schools promote teacher retention and consistency among educators was examined. The questions posed in the survey were developed to adequately address the central issues of the study. Occasionally, researchers used follow-up questions in order to probe responses that fully examined mentoring and professional socialization. Some questions, in turn, aimed to identify BTP actors' strengths and assets in the mentoring of pre-service students; e.g., how goals of mentoring were co-constructed by mentor and mentee in the socialization process; what struggles mentor and mentee teams encountered to establish motivation or strategies to achieve goals; and how self-monitoring of one's growth, optimism, and resilience as a student teacher was dealt with. These questions sought to inform the assumption that mentoring programs not only increase job satisfaction and help teachers to emerge as leaders within schools, but also have a positive effect on student achievement and engagement.

In addition, social background and demographic information of the BTP actors in surveyed school districts were sought. The survey data were used to assess information about the teachers' educational backgrounds, teacher preparation programs, and educational collaboration. Another data source comprised school-related documents on the school districts that were obtained through public records. The data consisted of documentation of the functions and purpose of the mentoring program. The documents that were analyzed—mentoring guidelines, mentoring records, supervision guidelines, and teacher training materials— provided background information about BTP and how the school district and schools were implementing block teaching practice.

Findings

Researchers were interested to find out whether the processes of mentoring and socialization that took place during BTP in Tanzania can improve the quality of teacher education. Mentors and mentees were asked to discuss their mentoring experiences during teaching practicum and state whether pre-service mentoring programs can improve quality education in school classrooms and in teacher preparation colleges. To do this, they sought opinions of 63 participants involved in BTP.

The questionnaire consisting of 12 questions was divided into seven parts:

1. Background information
2. Teacher trainees' perception of the strengths and assets in the mentoring and guidance available in BTP;
3. Teacher trainees' perceptions of the guidance, support from BTP supervisors;
4. Teacher trainees' perceptions of the guidance, support, and assistance from BTP monitors;
5. Teacher trainees' perceptions, guidance, support, and assistance by subject teachers (cooperating teachers);
6. Teacher trainees' perceptions of supervision procedures; and
7. Challenges teacher trainees experience during BTP.

Background Information

The data show that the BTP operation involved cooperating teachers, supervisors, and monitors who had served for more than one year. Out of 18 monitors, 13 (72.2%) were from government schools while 45 supervisors were from private secondary schools. Both monitors and supervisors had the experience of working at their schools between two and five years. The teacher trainees expressed interest to teach or expect to teach in government schools more than private schools when they graduate. The gender of BTP actors was 60% male and 40% female. More than two-thirds of teacher trainees were in their third year of studies, and only 10 (33.3%) were in their second year. Tables 1 and 2 summarize the demographic data.

Table 1. Background information of the monitors and supervisors

Variables	Monitors		Supervisors	
	Frequency n	Percentage %	Frequency n	Percentage %
Type of school you teach				
Government-public	13	72.2	1	10
Private	5	27.8	9	90
Duration of working on intuition				
1 year	2	11.1	1	10
2-5 years	8	44.4	7	70
6-9 years	6	33.4	2	20
≥10 years	2	11.1	0	0
Education level				
Teacher training diploma	0	0	0	0
B.ED Science	9	50.0	0	0
B.ED Arts	6	33.3	0	0
Master of education	3	16.7	8	80
Others	0	0	2	20
Number of years participating				
1 year	2	11.1	1	10
2-5 years	8	44.4	7	70
6-9 years	6	33.3	2	20
≥10 years	2	11.1	0	0
Time used to mentor teacher trainees				
1 year	0	0	0	0
2-5 years	6	42.8	5	71.4
6-9 years	6	42.8	2	28.6
≥10 years	2	14.4	0	0

Table 2. Education Background of teacher trainees involved in BTP

Variables	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Education level		
Bachelors	30	100
Masters	0	0
Type of school you teach/ will teach		
Government-public	21	70
Private	9	30
Gender		
Male	18	60
Female	12	40
Level of current study		
Second year	10	33.3
Third year	20	66.7

General Understanding of the Mentoring Process of Student Teachers

Figure 1 summarizes the distribution of the responses of the participants on whether they agree or disagree with statements regarding their perceptions of strengths and assets available to student teachers in mentoring and guidance activities. The results show that about 64% of monitors were said to be knowledgeable about the activities of teaching practice and monitoring, even though it was observed that monitors cooperate less (45%) with subject teachers.
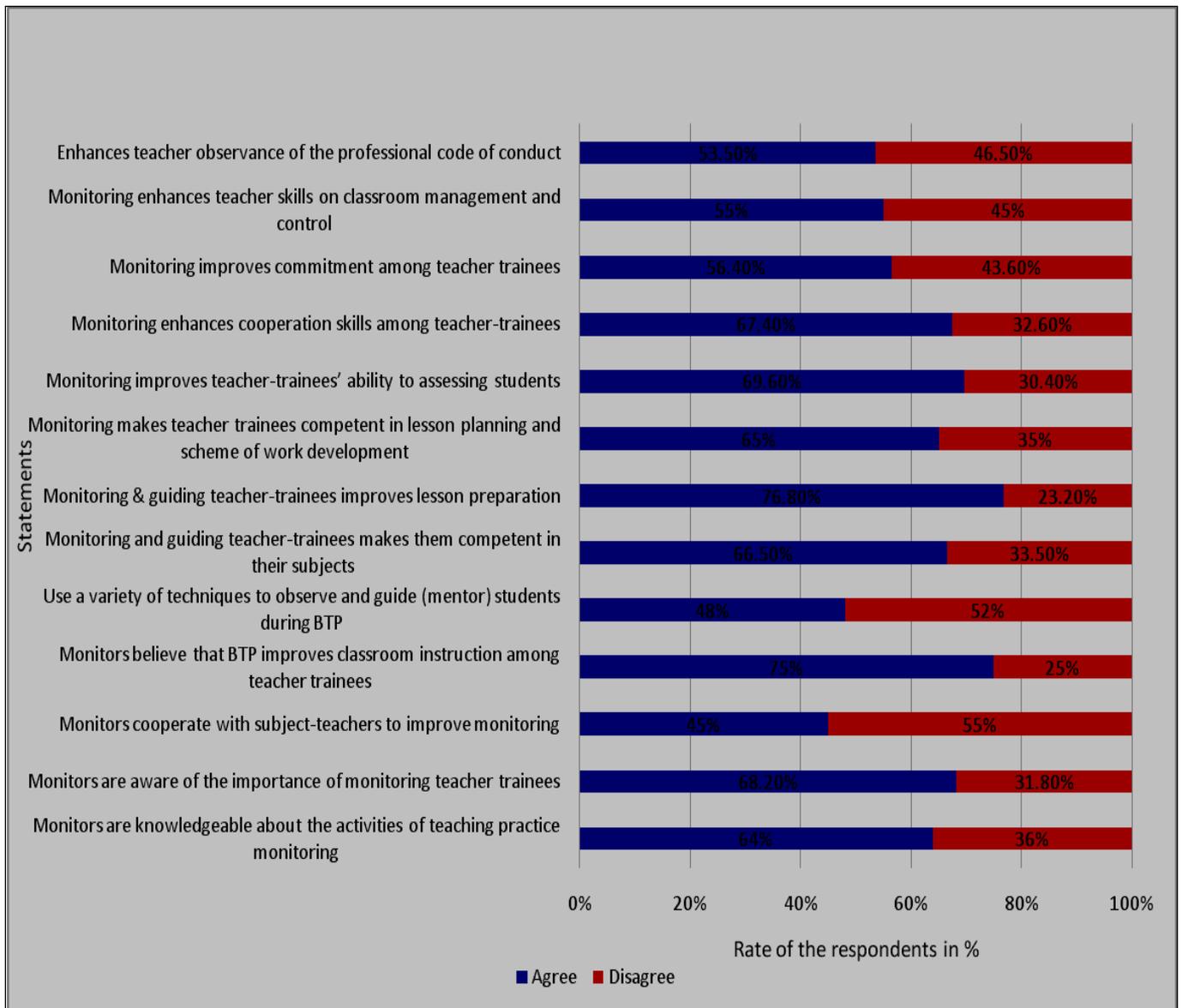
Figure 1: Understanding of mentoring of student-teachers.

Regarding the extent to which supervision, monitoring, and classroom teachers' guidance during BTP contributed to teacher training, the results showed that the participants perceived and believed that BTP improves classroom instruction among teacher trainees. About 75% use a variety of techniques to observe and guide (mentor) students during BTP. Less than half (48%) think that monitoring and guidance make teacher trainees competent in their subjects while more than three quarters agreed that monitoring and guiding teacher trainees improves lesson preparation. Other qualities like commitment, teachers' skills, and professional code of conduct of monitors were supported by more than 50% of the participants.

Teacher Trainees' Perceptions of the Strengths and assets in the Mentoring and Guidance Available during BTP

The perceptions of teacher trainees have been demonstrated using the Likert scale indicating how much BTP contributes to teacher trainees' development. Participants were asked to rate between (1) very much; (2) reasonably good; (3) minimal; and (4) not at all. The results, with a reliability of 97%, show that the statements with at least an average (mean) of 3 indicate that mentoring and guidance contribute very much toward strengthening teacher trainees (students); developing teacher trainees' confidence and self-control; focusing on lesson preparation and presentation; creating positive attitudes toward learners; and selecting appropriate teaching techniques. When asked to indicate other ways BTP supervision can contribute to quality of instruction, participants rated this item as "good." Table 3 summarizes the results as measured by the Likert scale.

Table 3: Teacher trainees' perceptions of the strengths and assets in mentoring during BTP

Questions	Number	Min	Max	Mean	Std Dev	2nd Quartile	3rd Quartile
• Whether BTP contributes to becoming competent teacher	30	1	4	2.97	1.02	1	3
• Whether BTP contributes to improve the acquisition of teaching skills	30	1	4	2.42	1.02	2	4
• Whether BTP contributes to guide teacher trainees to adhere to teachers code of professional conduct	30	1	4	2.32	1.13	2	3
• Whether BTP contributes to improve teacher trainees' interpersonal skills	30	1	4	2.67	1.11	2	3
• Whether BTP contributes to developing teacher trainees' confidence and self-control	30	1	4	3.98	0.12	3	4
• Whether BTP contributes to focusing on lesson preparation and presentation	30	1	4	3.12	0.96	2	3
• Whether BTP contributes to creating positive attitudes toward learners (students)	30	1	4	3.40	1.11	1	3
• Whether BTP contributes to identifying and selecting appropriate teaching material	30	1	4	2.45	1.20	2	3

• Whether BTP contributes to emphasizing teacher trainees' sense of time management for each lesson	30	1	4	2.13	1.21	2	3
• Whether BTP contributes to teacher trainees' managing the classroom and controlling misbehavior	30	1	4	2.21	1.11	1	4
• Whether BTP contributes to selecting appropriate teaching techniques	30	1	4	3.56	0.84	2	4
• Whether BTP contributes to promoting teacher retention in college (eliminates reasons to drop out)	30	1	4	2.23	1.19	2	3
• Whether BTP contributes to indicating other ways BTP supervision can contribute to quality instruction	30	1	4	3.01	1.06	2	4

Reliability Coefficient = 0.973

BTP Socialization for Teacher Trainees into the Teaching Profession

Figure 2 shows that 37% of the participants' comments suggest that BTP helps teacher trainees by strengthening cooperation among subject teachers, students, and school administrators by creating teamwork connections that ensure positive effects on learners. About 27% suggested that BTP socialization improves teacher trainees' participatory learning and teaching techniques. Some 27 (90%) of the participants responded positively in the way BTP socializes teacher trainees into the teaching profession.
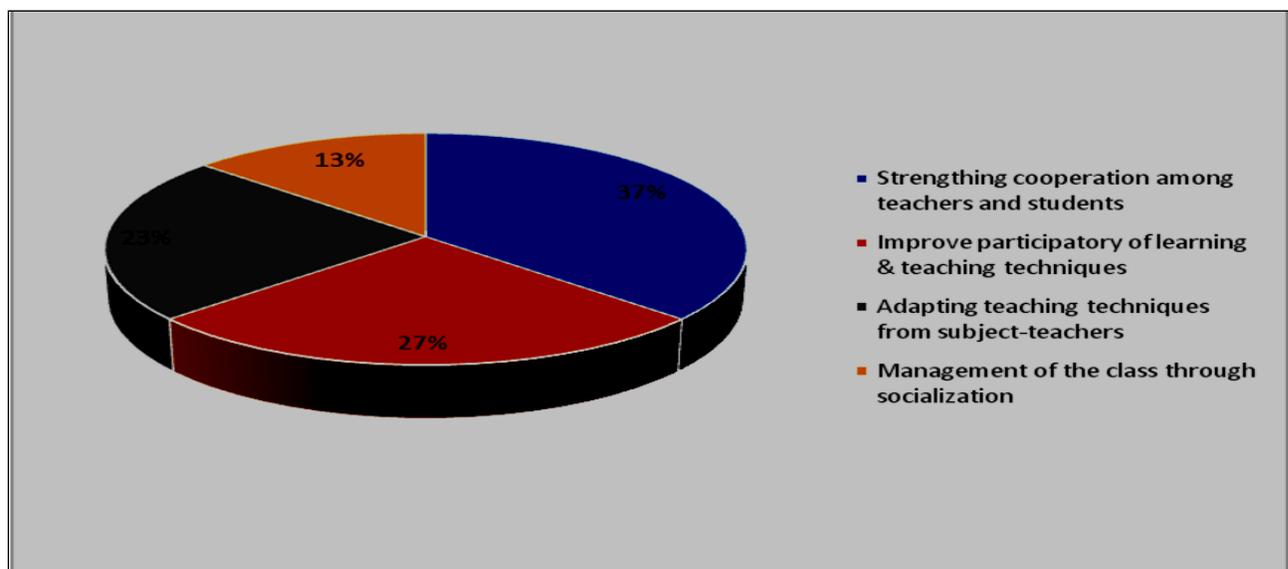
Figure 2: BTP socialization for teacher trainees into the teaching profession

Some of the ways trainees are socialized in BTP included professional exposure to the teaching profession through interactions with the school administration. In addition, 23% indicated that teacher trainees can adapt to different teaching techniques from subject teachers, monitors, and supervisors who happen to be the principal guides for the BTP experience. Another 13% of teacher trainees indicated that BTP provides them with opportunities to learn how to manage classrooms. See Figure 3.
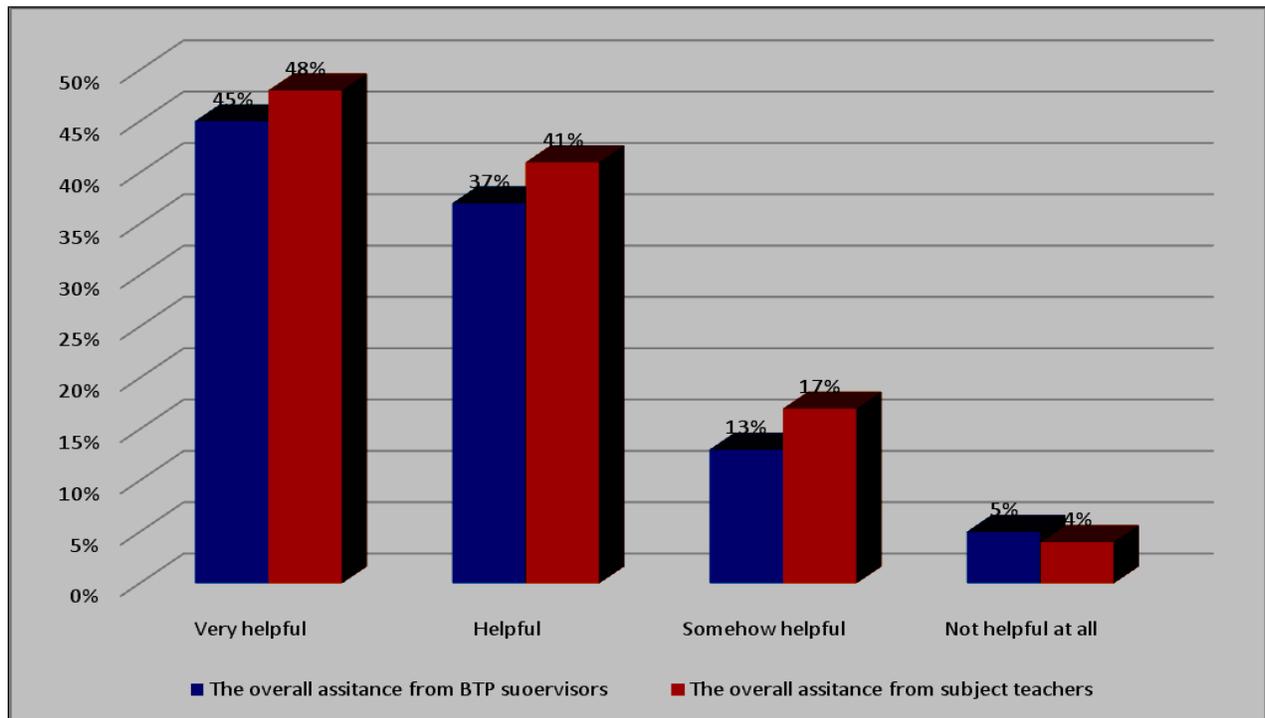

Figure 3. Distribution of overall assistance from BTP supervisors and subject teachers reported by teacher trainees

Teacher Trainees' Perceptions of the Guidance, Support, and Assistance by BTP Monitors and Subject Teachers (Cooperating Teachers)

The researchers wanted to know to what extent BTP monitors and subject teachers (cooperating teachers) were perceived as supportive of teacher trainees. Participants were given four choices to register their perception: "very helpful," "reasonably helpful," "minimally helpful," and "not at all helpful." The results show that out of 30 teacher-trainees, 45% perceived the BTP supervisors and 48% perceived subject teachers to be very helpful, while 37% perceived supervisors and 41% perceived subject teachers (cooperating teachers) as helpful (see Table 4). A small number (5%) perceived supervisors and 4%

perceived the subject teachers to be "not helpful at all." More than three quarters strongly agreed that supervisors were useful to teacher trainees—they encourage them to become confident and learn self-control, as well as adhere to teachers' code of professional conduct and model how to select appropriate teaching techniques.

When the participants were asked to elaborate their responses, the majority explained that supervisors are particularly helpful in creating in them confidence, increasing competence, and how to develop self-control during the learning and teaching processes, and also how to face the challenges related to the teaching profession. In particular, teacher trainees perceived subject teachers (cooperating teachers) to be very helpful in lesson

preparation, class presentations, creating positive interest toward teaching, selecting appropriate teaching materials, and managing the classroom especially to control misbehavior.

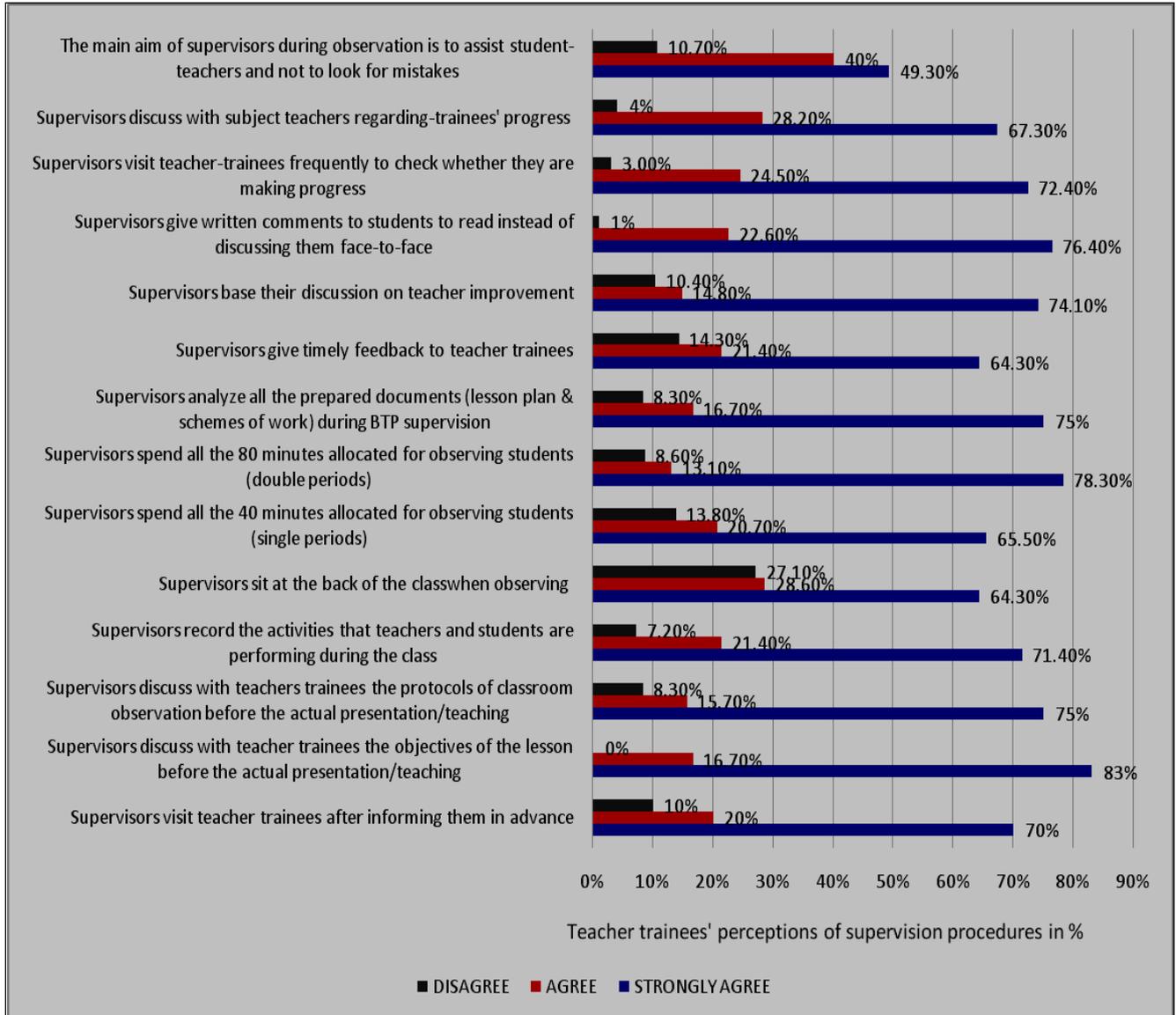Figure 4 compares supervisors' and subject teachers' rate of helpfulness toward teacher trainees.

Figure 4. Teacher trainees' perceptions of supervision procedures during BTP

Table 4: Teacher trainees' perceptions of the guidance, support, and assistance by BTP monitors and subject teachers (cooperating teachers)

BTP monitors/ subjects teachers Are helpful in:	BTP monitors			Subject teachers		
	Very much	**Reasonably helpful**	**Minimal helpful**	**Very much**	**Reasonably helpful**	**Minimal helpful**
Acquiring teaching skills	70%	20%	10%	64%	22.6%	13.4%
Adhering to teachers' code of professional conduct	83%	16.7%	0%	67%	23.7%	8.3%
Improving interpersonal skills	75%	15.7%	8.3%	55%	32.8%	12.2%
Becoming confident and self-controlled	71.4%	21.4	7.2%	80%	18%	2%
Lesson preparation and presentation	64.3	28.6%	27.1%	84%	15.2%	0.8%
Creating positive interest toward teaching	78.3%	13.1%	8.6%	66%	22.1%	11.9%
Having positive attitudes toward students	75%	16.7%	8.3%	56%	30.2%	13.8%
Selecting appropriate teaching materials	64.3%	21.4%	14.3%	76%	18.7%	5.3%
Managing time well for each lesson	74.1%	14.8%	10.4%	67%	22.5%	10.5%
Managing the classroom and controlling misbehavior	65.5%	20.7%	13.8%	75%	19.1%	5.9%
Selecting appropriate teaching techniques	73.1%	16.2%	10.7%	78%	13.4%	8.6%

Teacher Trainees' Perceptions of Supervision Procedures

Supervision procedures are mostly perceived as positive in this study even though there seems to be a slight variation in perceptions. Figure 5 presents the majority of the teacher trainees as having positive perceptions regarding all the procedures conducted by supervisors during BTP. More than half of the respondents strongly agreed with the statement that the supervision

procedures were followed correctly. About 49.3% of respondents indicated that the main task of supervisors during BTP is to assist student teachers and not look for mistakes. One percent of the respondents said that supervisors do not give written comments to student teachers to read but instead they discussed comments with them face-to-face. Figure 5 illustrates the various comments and their distribution.
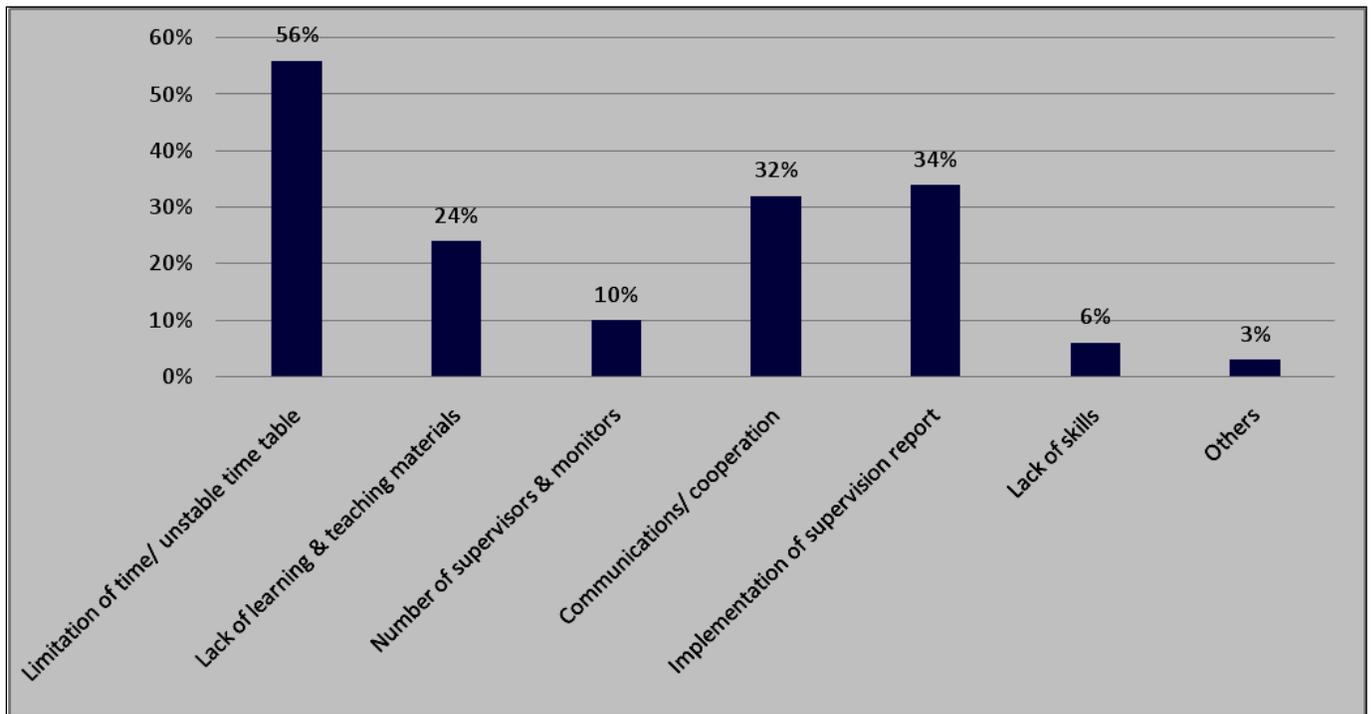

Figure 5: Distribution of other mentioned challenges

Challenges Teacher Trainees Experience during BTP

The researchers wanted to know the extent to which teacher trainees perceived challenges to quality of instruction and hence quality of teacher education. Participants had the choice to respond by indicating whether they perceived:

major challenges, minor challenges, or none at all. Table 5 shows responses from teacher trainees: Mentors were too few to cover all the selected schools; they lacked motivation and work incentives; monitors' and other mentors' workloads were disproportionate to the time available to monitor teacher trainees during BTP.

Table 5. Challenges mentors experience during BTP

Challenges	Number	Min	Max	Mean	Std Dev	2nd Quartile	3rd Quartile
1. Whether mentors are inept and unskilled to assist teacher trainees	25	1	3	2.24	0.25	1	3
2. Whether mentors have been trained to do their job as mentors, supervisors, subject teachers	25	1	3	2.42	0.34	1	3
3. Whether mentors' workloads are disproportionate to their time to monitor	25	1	3	1.52	0.42	1	3
4. Whether teacher trainees are not serious with teaching practice	25	1	3	2.67	0.21	1	3
5. Whether subject teachers are not willing to assist and guide teacher trainees	25	1	3	2.01	0.32	1	3
6. Whether mentors look for mistakes in the classroom instead of guiding subject teachers	25	1	3	2.12	0.56	1	3
7. Whether mentors are too few to cover all the selected schools	25	1	3	1.57	0.21	1	3
8. Whether there is difficulty in reaching remote schools in rural areas	25	1	3	2.11	0.23	1	3
9. Whether there is a lack of motivation and work incentives for monitors	25	1	3	1.02	0.32	1	3
10. Whether mentors do not foster job satisfaction	25	1	3	1.96	0.22	1	3

Reliability Coefficient = 0.982

Other challenges exist, as suggested by participants who indicated poor school management, misbehavior of some teacher trainees, and frequent interruptions of the school routine, all of which interfere with the mentoring procedures. In addition, there is a lack of

learning and teaching materials especially for science subjects, isolation of teacher trainees from the staff, occasional ignoring of academic materials from former teachers, and limitation of time during BTP. Also, there is no feedback to follow-up on reports of poor implementation of procedures, in particular, problems raised during BTP sessions. See Table 6.

Table 6: Other challenges and suggestions mentioned by teacher trainees, monitors, and supervisors

Challenges mentioned	Suggestions by teacher trainees	Percentage (%)	Suggestions by supervisors and monitors	Percentage (%)
Limitation of time/ unstable timetable	-More time should be added for BTP -at least two sessions per year of study	55.5%	School timetable should be regulated	44.5%
Lack of learning & teaching materials	More school facilities should be added	58.2%	More school facilities should be added	41.8%
Number of supervisors & monitors	More supervisors /monitors are needed	65%	More teachers should participate as monitors	35%
Communications/ cooperation	-Good communication to all -Subject teachers should assist students	56.3%	Good relationship & communication	43.7%
Lack of skills	Teacher trainees should be informed of their errors after presentation	45.4%	Management skills should be clearly taught	54.6%
Implementation of supervision report			Implementation should be taken effectively	100%

Mentoring and socialization can improve teacher education through expanding the time for more practicals in schools during BTP sessions, as suggested by 56% of the participants; 32% of the participants in this study said there should be good communication among supervisors, teacher trainees, and monitors found at schools, such as subject teachers. Also, about 12% of the teacher trainees indicated that there should be more availability of learning and teaching materials in schools.

The suggestions mentioned by monitors and supervisors are as follows. The majority suggested that more teachers should be engaged as BTP actors to monitor all students in schools, and supervisors should be increased; 24% said there should be seminars or orientation workshops for BTP actors, to guide and update them with effective techniques for guiding, monitoring, counselling, and supporting teacher trainees; and 16.2% indicated that "management skills" should be part of the training that teacher trainees get.

Discussion

The goal of the present study was to determine whether the processes of mentoring and socialization that take place during block teaching practice (BTP) in Tanzania can improve the quality of teacher education. In this instance, mentoring refers to all activities geared toward guiding, counseling, monitoring, supervising, and supporting teacher trainees involved in BTP. Teacher trainees were asked to rate their mentoring experiences with mentors and express their sentiments on the level to which they agree with statements intended to gauge the quality of the BTP experience and mentors' activities of guiding, counseling, monitoring, supervising, and supporting of teacher trainees. Some of the main findings of the study were:

1. The general perception is that mentoring and guidance of mentors are useful practices and boost teacher trainees' confidence, self-control, lesson preparation, and classroom presentation. By extension, BTP generally creates positive attitudes toward learners in classrooms, promotes appropriate teaching techniques, and contributes to the quality of instruction.

2. Teacher trainees have positive perceptions about BTP and believe that BTP socializes teacher trainees to become competent and professional teachers by exposing them to professional interactions with school administrators; encourage cooperation with subject teachers through creating teamwork connections and providing emotional support. Equally, BTP gives teacher trainees the opportunity to learn from different teaching techniques modelled by cooperating teachers, monitors, and supervisors.

3. Teacher trainees were not unanimous in their perceptions about the usefulness of monitors and cooperating classroom teachers in BTP, particularly in providing guidance, support, and assistance. They were split between those who felt that mentors were very useful and those who thought monitors and classroom teachers were fairly helpful. A minority of about 5% perceived supervisors and 4% perceived subject teachers to be "not helpful at all." However, more than three quarters strongly agreed that supervisors were useful to teacher trainees in encouraging them to become confident in selecting appropriate teaching techniques and adhering to teachers' code of professional conduct.

4. Several challenges to quality of instruction were identified that impact the quality of teacher education. Participants identified these areas as problematic:
   (a) poor school management,
   (b) misbehavior of some teacher trainees,
   (c) frequent interruptions of school sessions which then interfered with BTP,
   (d) lack of learning and teaching materials especially for science subjects, and
   (e) too few mentors to cover all the selected schools during BTP.

Overall, these findings paint a positive picture that demonstrates a vibrant BTP program of student teachers gainfully engaged in mentoring and professional socialization activities. There is a general understanding that benefits drawn from BTP far outweigh the challenges that emerged, which could be summed up in two categories: structural and programmatic.

Conclusion

This study examined the processes of mentoring and socialization that take place during block teaching practice (BTP) in Tanzania in order to determine if these efforts can improve the quality of teacher education. Mentoring encompassed all activities geared toward guiding, counseling, monitoring, supervising, and supporting teacher trainees involved in BTP. To determine the processes, structure, and benefits accruing from BTP, the study analyzed sentiments and perceptions of teacher trainees to understand the following questions: first, teacher trainees' perceptions of the strengths and assets available in BTP to deliver successful mentoring and professional guidance; second, perceptions of the extent of guidance, support, and assistance from actors of BTP (supervisors, monitors, cooperating subject teachers, and the supervision procedures); and third, perceptions of challenges that teacher trainees experience during BTP. These questions sought to inform the belief that mentoring programs not only increase job satisfaction and help teachers to emerge as leaders within their schools, but also have a positive effect on student achievement and engagement.

Overall, the study revealed that participants perceived benefits derived from BTP. BTP and the mentoring and professional socialization activities that take place at the teachers' college or university have a trickle-down effect on the quality of teacher education, and trainees perceive a satisfying feeling when they participate in BTP. Equally, the study exposed a unique but complex network of dedicated actors that bring diverse qualities to the mentoring and professional socialization of the next-generation cadre of African teachers. The structure of BTP, including the organization of monitors, supervisors, and classroom teachers, is in and of itself a complicated operation. The planning and selection of participating secondary schools within which classrooms teacher trainees conduct their teaching practice are equally complex. To appreciate these complexities, this study realizes that the data have only scratched the surface of big pedagogical, sociological, and organizational problems that need extensive study. Since the findings of the study are not generalizable due to small sample size, and though not definitive, the issue of quality education needs to be undertaken in future studies to ascertain some of the claims raised by participants of this study.

The initial question that drove this study was specifically to determine whether mentoring and professional socialization of novice teachers make a difference regarding the quality of education in school classrooms and in teacher education colleges. The assumption that mentoring and professional socialization within schools promote teacher retention and consistency among educators was not examined. However, the perceptions revealed by the teacher trainees seem to indicate that there is a strong sense of goal-setting on the part of monitors, supervisors, and classroom cooperating teachers. In other words, in order to manage the complex organization of BTP and to reach the set goals, one needs to have the motivation for both approaching the goals and seeking alternative strategies to achieve them.

The assumption is that the identification and confirmation of agency and pathways as two separate constructs advance the understanding of goal-setting in BTP, allowing mentors and mentees not only to measure factors related to hope of better, stronger, and dedicated African teachers but also to design and provide interventions to enhance this hope of having a new cadre of teachers.

In our context therefore, the strength-based approach discussed previously (Snyder, 1995) can garner power for mentoring in BTP, and the insights find relevance to mentoring and socialization in teacher education elsewhere. Equally, in this case, hope theory brings understanding of the pathways and strategies BTP actors and teacher trainees use to reach their goals in pre-service teaching practice.

The issues discussed in this article raise more questions than answers. They also open up the space to discuss pre-service training and the actors involved the processes and assumptions that surround relationships between universities and schools, as well as graduates and later professional development efforts spearheaded by universities. However, the question as to whether BTP mentors could gain anything from the mentoring and professional socialization of

student teachers besides monetary remunerations was not fully explored. Perhaps the notion of strength-based mentoring could be explored further and even closely aligned with reciprocal educative mentoring, a scenario in which both mentors and student teachers are engaged in continued professional growth (Feiman-Nemser, 2001).

Professional educative mentoring, as proposed by Feiman-Nemser, is grounded in Dewey's (1938) model of educative experience and influenced by theories of socially constructed cognition (Tharp & Gallimore, 1988; Vygotsky, 1978). Thus, the learning of the mentors and mentees occurs through meaningful social communication, interactions, and practice in reaching co-constructed knowledge and academic goals. The strength-based approaches reviewed previously could explain what is going on between mentors and mentees, classroom cooperating teacher and novice teacher. Insights from this approach can be integrated in a mentoring model to engage teacher educators, supervising teachers, and pre-service teachers in the educative mentoring experience where they individually seek their own strengths and collaboratively discover their hopes and optimism.

In sum, the findings of this study have triggered a complex issue in African education and can give researchers the impetus to pursue this line of study further. For example, regarding an in-depth study of classroom teachers' assumptions about professional socialization: How do they set their goals of mentoring and of teaching? Are they contradictory? Exploring these questions would shed light on why some teachers readily accept mentoring novice teachers while others decline. Future studies should also consider expanding the mentoring study nationally to examine the divergence of opinions about matching mentors with teacher trainees.

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