



# Understanding the Benefits and Barriers of School-Based Mentoring in South Africa

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## ABSTRACT

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The aim of this study was to investigate the reasons behind the limited practice of mentoring in South African schools, despite the many benefits it offers. The research questions explored the personal, systemic and social constraints that hinder mentoring in primary and secondary schools. These findings provide valuable information for educational leaders to implement mentoring strategies.

Employing a pragmatic, mixed-methods approach to gather data from 154 teachers in South African primary and secondary schools. Utilizing quantitative and qualitative questionnaire provided a comprehensive view of current mentoring practices, using an online platform for its ease of use and efficient statistical compilation. The analysis identified key themes, including challenges experienced in organizational, resourcing, and cultural barriers. The study aligns with existing literature which reflects not only South African, but also global mentoring practices.

The survey revealed significant personal, systemic, and social constraints in mentoring. Noteworthy results included 42.9% of respondents claiming lack of interest in mentoring as a significant barrier. Other barriers included time constraints, cultural and language barriers, and a lack of accountability. Prominent systemic constraints included administrative burdens and resource limitations, specifically financial constraints (53.2%) and lack of funding and training (47.4%). Social constraints that were highlighted include societal attitudes that undervalue teaching, and dynamics such as age, gender, and racial barriers.

This research provides valuable contributions to the field of educational mentoring, in South Africa and globally, complimenting existing research. It offers specific insights into the constraints of mentoring, which can be used for practical application. These findings are valuable for future research as a framework for more nuanced studies in similar contexts. The research further highlights the importance of mentorship in addressing issues such as novice teacher attrition and experienced teachers retiring. The broad range of respondents from across South Africa adds depth to the study, revealing the complexities of mentoring at different career stages. This research potentially contributes to the global dialogue on educational mentoring. By fostering a supportive mentoring culture, this research may lead to improved teacher satisfaction and effectiveness, with the potential to transform the educational landscape in South Africa.

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Key words: mentoring, constraints, novice teachers, professional development, teacher attrition, South African education

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## **1 INTRODUCTION**

### **1.1 Background**

Globally, research has shown that both experienced and novice teachers benefit from mentoring and supportive relationships. Novice teachers often enter their teaching careers with fresh pedagogical insights and technological knowledge, excitement, and vision, but find themselves quickly overwhelmed by the practical challenges of teaching. Experienced teachers, on the other hand, find new inspiration and knowledge in the mentoring situation (R. J. N. Botha & Hugo, 2021, 66, 78; Iancu-Haddad & Oplatka, 2009, 48).

I had the unique privilege of being mentored by the principal of my school, who generously offered practical guidance, encouragement, emotional support, and leadership, drawing from her extensive experience to help me navigate challenges with learners and parents. As a novice teacher, I contributed my technological knowledge and skills, fostering a mutually beneficial relationship. However, through my own experiences and conversations with colleagues, it has become evident that this kind of mentoring relationship is uncommon in South African schools. This realization spurred my interest in exploring and understanding the reasons behind this apparent deficiency in mentoring within the South African educational system.

### **1.2 Problem statement and significance of study**

Novice teachers leave their tertiary institutions ill-prepared for the hard reality of being a full-time teacher. This results in disillusioned teachers leaving the field of education within a few years (R. J. N. Botha & Hugo, 2021, 64). South Africa is training too few new teachers to replace retirees (Molver, 2022), and if we cannot retain those already trained, we increase the shortage (Simkins, 2015, 4, 20).

These studies predict that a crisis is unfolding in South African education as experienced teachers are retiring and leaving the teaching profession at a higher rate than the enrolment of student teachers in South African universities. Additionally, South Africa experiences high teacher attrition rates, partly because novice teachers, upon leaving university, often discover that they are not adequately prepared, both practically and emotionally, for the realities of full-time teaching.

However, there are experienced teachers who can share intrinsic knowledge, which cannot be learned from textbooks, that will help novice teachers in their learning curve to overcome the real hardships that teachers face daily (E. A. Smith, 2001, 311; C. Y. I. Smith, 2015, 117).

There may be a variety of reasons why mentoring, despite its benefits, is not taking place in South African schools. These reasons may be personal, systemic, and social. Only by analysing the reasons why, will we be able to address the perceived lack of mentoring. Therefore, this research will seek the reasons why mentoring is not taking place as a norm in South African schools. Using the personalised information and insights gained, schools may be better enabled to motivate mentorship in South African schools.

### **1.3 Research objective and questions**

This thesis investigates the underlying reasons for the perceived lack of mentoring in South African primary and secondary schools, examining personal, systemic, and social constraints that hinder effective mentorship. By identifying these barriers, the study aims to provide insights and recommendations that could enable schools to foster more robust mentorship practices, ultimately enhancing the professional development and retention of novice teachers and contributing to the overall improvement of the South African education system.

The following research questions are addressed in this study:

1. What are personal constraints that hamper mentoring?
2. What are systemic constraints that hamper mentoring?

### 3. What are social constraints that hamper mentoring?

#### 1.4 Scope and demarcations

In this study, we define 'novice teachers' as educators with less than five years of teaching experience, contrasting with 'experienced teachers' who have been in the profession for over five years. This distinction is significant, as research shows that more experienced teachers typically spend more time on direct teaching and learning activities (OECD, 2018). Additionally, for the benefit of international readers, the study categorizes schools within the South African context as 'primary schools' and 'secondary schools'. In South Africa, primary schools encompass Grade 1 to Grade 7, serving younger students, while secondary schools, also referred to as high schools, cover Grade 8 to Grade 12, catering to older students preparing for tertiary education (*Education System of South Africa*, n.d.). These definitions are important for understanding the teaching environments and the developmental stages of students that novice and experienced teachers encounter. This work covers only teachers in South African primary and secondary schools.

The literature review in this thesis provides an in-depth exploration of mentoring, both globally and within the South African educational context. It focuses on the impact of mentoring on novice teachers, the institutional benefits, and the advantages for mentors themselves. The review methodically unfolds, starting with the challenges faced by novice teachers globally, such as classroom management and emotional stress. It then examines specific additional issues within the South African educational landscape specifically, including cultural diversity and classroom overcrowding. A detailed analysis of mentoring follows, encompassing its definition, types, and functions. The review progresses to assess the benefits of mentoring for mentees (novice teachers), educational institutions, and mentors, illustrating its multifaceted impact and mutual benefits. This structured approach provides a comprehensive view of the mentoring ecosystem, highlighting its importance and diverse advantages within the South African schools.



Recommendations will be provided based on the analysed results of the survey to be completed by experienced and novice teachers in South African primary and secondary schools. This work does not intend to propose a program or model for mentoring but examines the practical situation of teachers in primary and secondary schools regarding the perceived lack of mentoring.

## **1.5 Structure of the thesis**

The thesis is divided into five chapters, namely an introduction, literature study, research methodology, results, and conclusions.

In Chapter One the topic is introduced, problem statement made, research questions and objectives presented, together with the thesis statement. Further to these limitations, definitions and assumptions are outlined, and the significance of the study discussed.

Chapter Two lays a theoretical foundational background with a literature study of international and especially national research regarding mentoring of novice teachers by experienced teachers.

Chapter Three addresses the research methodology namely the research design to collect qualitative and quantitative data using questionnaires. This chapter includes the limitations and ethical considerations of this study.

The result of the research is reported in Chapter Four. The data is analysed for trends, patterns, numbers, and findings which allows for making sub-conclusions.

Chapter Five concludes with a discussion of the findings, conclusions and recommendations, limitations of the study and a personal reflection.

## **2 LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **2.1 Typical challenges novice teachers face globally**

Novice teachers are those who have completed their teacher training and are in their first five years of teaching (OECD, 2019, 117). The Commission of the European Communities (2007) acknowledges that the career of teaching is growing increasingly intricate. Teachers face escalating demands and challenges. They operate in environments that are progressively demanding, a statement that resonates with educators both domestically and globally (European Commission, 2007, 2). Britton, Paine, and Raizen (2003) state that in countries such as France, Japan, China, New Zealand, and Switzerland, educators face challenges including classroom management, motivating students, addressing diverse needs among learners, evaluating student work, and managing relationships with parents (Britton et al., 2003, 327). Veenman (1984) found that beginner teachers face the same challenges, and that it remains the same in era and education systems internationally (Veenman, 1984, 143-178). Various other authors confirm that novice teachers in South Africa identify with the above problems (Bertram, 2023, 11-14; Mphojane, 2019, 142-143; R. J. N. Botha & Hugo, 2021, 64-81).

#### **2.1.1 Reality shock**

Research confirms that mostly all teachers leave their training institution with high expectations and dreams of making a difference in the lives of people (Manuel & Hughes, 2006, 20). However, when they start to teach, they face a reality shock, that fills many with “severe disillusionment” (Gaede, 1978, 405). Botha and Rens (2018) and Petersen (2017) observed in their studies that several participants struggled to adjust to the reality when transitioning from student to an active teacher: They doubted their career choices, and although they had a sense of calling to teach, there is a clear discrepancy between their expectations of teach-

ing and the realities they encountered. These participants also voiced the inadequate preparation from the lecturers and teaching practices to prevent this reality shock, an issue that needs to be address in tertiary education in South Africa. (Petersen, 2017, 1-2; C. S. Botha & Rens, 2018, 1).

### **2.1.2 Classroom management**

Management of classrooms is a severe challenge for both novice and experienced teachers, although more noticeable with the novice teachers who still need to develop discipline management skills. The struggle is real for South African teachers, but also internationally (Arends & Phurutse, 2015, 2-3; Dias-Lacy & Guirguis, 2017, 268-267). Novice teachers in South Africa report they feel ill-prepared, despite their practical training, to handle the difficulties of large numbers of undisciplined children and an extensive curriculum to cover in limited time (Petersen, 2017, 1-2).

### **2.1.3 Identity as authoritative teacher**

Novice teachers struggle with the transition from student identity to teacher identity in their early years as they develop the skills of putting theory into practice in a challenging environment (Joseph & Heading, 2010, 75). They must develop their own teaching styles and gain authority in the classroom.

Role models of possible teaching styles allow them to experiment in their own classrooms to incorporate their own ideas (Burger et al., 2021, 7). Self-reflection with mentors and colleagues on their success (or lack thereof), lead to adjustments and gives experience of what works in their particular setting of learners. This in turn leads to self-confidence, autonomy and building of authority (Jooste, 2019, 117). A culture of mentoring and collaboration has a positive influence on the development of new teachers where there is meaningful support for personal development is practiced (Flores & Day, 2006, 230).

#### **2.1.4 Mental health**

Teaching is a demanding profession, requiring many skills, stamina and perseverance. Corrente, Ferguson and Bourgeault (2022) state that research on teacher's mental health, worsened by the Covid pandemic, is now some of the most prevalent research (Corrente et al., 2022, 25). Constant work-related stress such as workload, frustration, multiple demands, emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and reduced personal accomplishment leads to distress, job-dissatisfaction, a lack of energy and eventually depression and burnout. This is one result of teacher attrition (Madigan & Kim, 2021, 5, 25-26).

High levels of stress that lead to dysfunctional teachers is not of concern for the teacher only, but also for the learners, who have their own stressors to handle. Teachers categorized under high stress, high burnout, and low coping classes were linked to the least favourable student outcomes (Herman, Hickmon-Rosa & Reinke, 2017, 96-97).

A study conducted by Agyapong (2022) in South African schools revealed that burnout rates varied between 25.12% and 74%, stress levels ranged from 8.3% to 87.1%, anxiety was observed in 38% to 41.2% of cases, and depression was found in a range from 4% to 77% (Agyapong et al., 2022, 7-9). Given that mental health is often not regarded as a significant concern, even frowned upon, very little attention, or even discussion, is given to it in schools (Mental Health amongst... 2023). It is therefore little wonder that South African teachers tend to feel isolated, unsupported, overwhelmed.

## **2.2 The South African landscape**

South African novice (and experienced teachers) must deal with challenges that are specific to the South African landscape. This includes the multi-cultural classes, different education levels of learners, curriculum and expected methods of

teaching. In South Africa there are various other stressors. Various authors confirm that teachers, on top of personal factors, often face systemic problems, even worse in rural areas than in cities, that they are not able to do anything about. This includes heavy workloads beyond normal schoolwork, a demanding curriculum that changes frequently and violence in and around their schools. Add to that extremely large class size, lack of infrastructure and teaching materials (Du Plessis & Letshwene, 2020, 69-91; Mouton, Louw & Strydom, 2012, 34-36).

### **2.2.1 Demanding national curriculum**

The National Curriculum has been changed five times since 1996 (Marishane, 2014, 367-368), and is about to change again in 2024 (Government Finalising New... 2023). Moodley reports that South African teachers have difficulty understanding and implementing the continuously changing curriculum, which in turn has led to the implementation of high-stake assessments, the need for additional training, additional resources, policy changes and an increased workload (Moodley, 2013, 88-91).

One of the reasons teachers are not coping with the fast-changing curriculum is the lack of training and support to implement the changes for effective teaching according to what the curriculum expects. Teachers interviewed by Marishane (2014) reported that those who teach multiple grades (e.g. English teachers) are overloaded with teaching an outcomes-based curriculum not suited for South Africa, that burdens them with administrative tasks, and then have to take teaching time to attend last minute training by the Department of Education, who use facilitators who are inexperienced in the profession (Marishane, 2014, 369). Moodley (2013) found that teachers understood the policies of the curriculum, but that theory and practice were far apart (Moodley, 2013, 89).

Novice teachers felt overwhelmed. They reported that they hardly had time to become proficient, when the curriculum changed yet again. Even experienced teachers in rural schools felt that they could not keep up with the number of

changes, which in their opinion did a disservice to the learners (Education Portfolio Committee, 2000).

Marishane (2014) concludes that appointing administrative helpers and assistant teachers in the classroom could make a difference, not only in the workload, but in bettering the quality of education. However, this is not practiced in South Africa (Marishane, 2014,373).

### **2.2.2 Multicultural landscape**

Novice teachers frequently lack awareness of the practical implications of language barriers and the effects thereof on learning (Du Plessis & Letshwene, 2020, 77-78). The South African National Department of Education's language policy is that children should receive education in their home language, of which there are eleven official languages. However, after Grade 4 most children receive instruction in English (Howie, Venter & van Staden, 2008,4) and this may not be their second, but third or fourth language.

There are several reasons why this happens. The multi-language policy was good, but in practice very difficult to implement by government. Most parents feel that their children will have more opportunities if they are fluent in English, e.g. Grade 12 English language marks above 45% is needed to join the military, even though the applicant may have 70% in their home language. They would also have more business and university opportunities both locally and internationally. Because indigenous language instruction is associated with pre-1994 Apartheid government, it has "a bad image", and the perception is that English education is superior (Swingler, 2022).

The implications in the classroom are serious. Teachers report that even though learners are able to read English, they do not comprehend the language. Being instructed in English therefore means that in all other subjects, limited education is taking place, and especially so in Mathematics and Science (Du Plessis & Letshwene, 2020, 78).

### **2.2.3 Low educational levels of learners**

Taking into account the above factors, the low educational levels should not be a surprise for teachers, yet novice teachers have unmet expectations of learners' abilities.

Teachers interviewed by Du Plessis and Letshwene (2020) ascribe the low levels of education to the policy of the Department of Basic Education who they feel is more concerned with statistics than education. In this policy learners are by all means progressed to the next grade, even though basic understanding of subjects is lacking. Teachers also pointed out that in the Foundation Phase, children are progressed without readiness for the next phase (Du Plessis & Letshwene, 2020, 77).

Petersen (2017) identifies one of the great challenges for novice teachers in how they view the learners as accomplished students for the grade, and then find they are not. Researching novice foundation phase teachers, she found that the responsibility came as a shock when they encounter a sizable group of typical grade one learners who do not know how to function in a formal educational setting and they were expected to meet the diverse needs of ill-prepared learners (Petersen, 2017, 6).

### **2.2.4 Overcrowded classrooms**

Overcrowded classrooms are a reality in the government education system. The reason for this is a lack of infrastructure, an ever-increasing number of learners and a decrease in the number of teachers.

According to Sterne (2021), South Africa has close to 13 000 000 learners, 400 000 teachers and nearly 26 000 schools. 85% of learners attend public schools that are poorly resourced, overcrowded and dysfunctional. Some 20 000

schools have no laboratory, some 18 000 have no library, 16 897 have no internet. Furthermore, basics such as electricity (239 schools) and sanitation facilities (37 schools) are missing (Sterne, 2021 Article). In 2013, reports indicated that in KwaZulu-Natal, 42 schools had over 90 students per classroom, 254 schools had an average of 60 learners per classroom, and 934 schools maintained an average of 55 students in each classroom (West & Meier, 2020, 1-2).

Overcrowding, defined by the learner-to-teacher ratio, continues to be a major issue in South Africa, particularly in rural and township schools. This is because it impacts the effectiveness of curriculum delivery, as class size is closely linked to student performance (Bakasa, 2011, 32). Teachers said that their greatest challenge is overcrowded classrooms. They feel that the CAPS Curriculum is ill-suited for the large number of learners who need personal attention in class, which in turn leads to poor academic outcomes, but also poor discipline (Du Plessis & Letshwene, 2020,77).

The number of teachers is decreasing while learner numbers are on the increase. Ongoing research by Research on Socio-Economic Policy (RESEP) (2022) in Stellenbosch University, released the following figures in 2022: Forty-nine percent of South Africans employed by the State were age 50+ years in 2021. This will lead to a huge wave of teacher retirements within the next ten years. In fact, in 2013, 7800 public educators retired, and an expected 17 300 are expected to retire in 2029. Since learner numbers are increasing, the workforce would need to increase with 280 000 over next ten years to reach a learner-educator ratio of 30:1 (the national average in 2022). This figure is projected considering teacher attrition and based on the school-age population expected increase of 5.6% (Research on Socioeconomic Policy (RESEP), 2022, 1-3).

### **2.2.5 Talk-and-chalk methods of teaching**

Novice teachers leave the training institute with high expectations to make a difference in the lives of their learners, to find fulfilment by putting into practice learner-centred teaching. The reality is quite different in South African schools.



Teachers reported that even in Grade 12, they were expected to do talk-and-chalk methods of teaching, feeling that they had to continually spoon-feed learners who did not take responsibility for their own learning (Du Plessis & Letshwene, 2020, 77). The outcome of this is that learners are passive. They do not take ownership of their own education, lack curiosity, cannot do research and are not critical independent thinkers. They show lack initiative and are weak in problem-solving skills (Blane, 2015, 2) this is problematic for the student, but also for any country that needs leaders (Antwi & Fredua-Kwarteng, 2022).

## **2.3 What is mentoring?**

### **2.3.1 Definition**

A generally accepted definition is that mentoring is cooperative, altruistic, one-on-one, or group, relational activity where a less experienced person, the mentee, accepts the guidance of an experienced person (mentor) who is willing to share knowledge, values, experience and wisdom to guide, advise and support the mentee in personal and professional growth in a specific profession (Tynjälä & Heikkinen, 2011, 23-24; Johnson, 2006, 3-4; Hobson et al., 2009, 207).

According to the OECD TALIS Report (2019), an experienced teacher, often referred to as a mentor, is a lower secondary teacher with over five years of teaching experience. Research indicates that it typically takes between 3 to 7 years for a new teacher to attain a high level of qualification and become experienced (OECD, 2019, 117).

### **2.3.2 Types of mentoring**

Kemmis et al. (2014) describe mentoring as being connected to deliberate outcomes, which include supervision, support, and collaborative self-improvement. While supervision is more of an administrative activity, the other two may overlap.

Mentorship should therefore be a strategic pedagogical activity, carefully considering what both the mentor and mentee want to achieve (Kemmis et al., 2014, 154-155).

The mentoring relationship can be formal or informal. Informal mentoring typically spills over into non-work situations where the mentor makes the mentee part of their professional and social network, influencing the progression of the mentee's career. Formalized mentoring relationships may or may not be initiated by management as part of a program. Formal mentorship agreements are strategic: Responsibilities, expectations, durations, frequency of meetings and outcomes are clearly defined (Inzer & Crawford, 2005, 35-37).

Mentors in formal programs were reported as less motivated, their mentees were less satisfied, and relationships generally short-lived (Okurame, 2008, 526). While formal mentoring has been shown to be less effective than informal mentoring, the hope is for formal mentoring to evolve into informal mentoring relationships throughout the organization. When the value of mentoring is understood and valued, a mentoring culture within the organization can ensue (Inzer & Crawford, 2005, 16).

Where mentoring relationships happen more spontaneously and voluntarily, they tend to be more successful (Garvey & Alred, 2000, 216-222). Therefore, potential mentors need to be motivated to step forward voluntarily, if possible.

The benefits of mentoring are too significant to forego its formal integration into an organization, though informal mentoring will inevitably happen as well.

### **2.3.3 Functions of mentoring**

Mentors take on a wide range of roles and responsibilities, which can include offering support from behind, leading as guides, engaging in direct and interactive discussions with students, and ultimately standing alongside them as companions, allies, and fellow learners (Hansman, 2002, 21, 24).

Kram (1983) categorizes mentoring functions into two overarching domains, namely "career functions" and "psychosocial functions." Career functions encompass aspects of mentorship that facilitate the acquisition of essential skills and knowledge required for career progression and success within an organization. In contrast, psychosocial functions encompass elements of mentorship that contribute to the development of a sense of competence, clarity of professional identity, and effectiveness in one's professional role. Psychosocial functions, as elucidated by Kram (1983), encompass role-modelling, counselling, friendship, acceptance, and confirmation. Both career mentoring and psychosocial mentoring are crucial in providing mentees with access to influential power structures and fostering an understanding of the cultural dynamics of the organisation (Kram, 1983, 613-617).

Kemmis et al. (2014) contends that when the words 'supervision', 'professional support' or 'collaborative self-development' are used for mentoring actions, mentees will cultivate and respond in kind. Supervision carries the character of compliance with rules, policies and procedures. Professional support will develop mentees who guide and support colleagues with on-going professional and life-long learning. Finally, when mentoring is framed as collaborative self-development, mentor-mentee pairs are likely to nurture dispositions that encourage active engagement within a professional community committed to both individual and collective self-improvement (Kemmis et al., 2014, 154-164).

Wang and Hu (2012) agree that the role of a mentor in the educational context encompasses several key responsibilities. Mentors are expected to offer multifaceted support to novice teachers, including psychological encouragement, technical curriculum guidance, and advice on adhering to local educational regulations and policies. Within the framework of "educative mentoring," mentors play a pivotal role in aiding novice teachers in deciphering student behaviours and interpretations, thereby facilitating their learning process (Wang & Hu, 2012, 69-71).

Successful mentoring relationships facilitates not only personal growth of both mentor and mentee, but also enhances the organisation and the profession (Iancu-Haddad & Oplatka, 2009, 59; Mukeredzi et al., 2015; Eisenschmidt & Oder, 2018).

#### **2.3.4 When mentoring is harmful**

The literature review will not be balanced without recognizing that certain circumstances or dynamics within a mentoring relationship can lead to harmful or have disadvantageous outcomes for the mentee, mentor, or both. Various scholars have researched the potential risks and negative consequences associated with mentoring, highlighting specific scenarios where these challenges may arise (Hobson et al., 2009, 207-216; Iancu-Haddad & Oplatka, 2009, 61; Tomlinson, Hobson & Malderez, 2010, 14).

Scandura (1998) was among the early scholars to characterize negative mentoring experiences as "dysfunctional mentoring," that has emotional and career implications. She outlined that mentors who engage in bullying behaviours towards their protégés are viewed as having negative intent, primarily affecting the emotional or psychosocial aspects. On the other hand, mentors lacking the necessary skills or resources to assist their mentees in their career endeavours were seen as having positive intent, with their actions primarily impacting the mentees' career advancement (Scandura, 1998, 452-462).

Building on the above information, Eby, McManus, Simon and Russell (2000) did empirical research aimed to explore mentees' perspectives on negative mentoring experiences. While it was previously believed that such experiences were rare, more than half of the participants in this study indicated that they had experienced at least one unfavourable mentoring relationship throughout their careers. These negative experiences ranged from issues like mentor self-absorption and neglect, to incompatibility, sabotage, and deception. These findings align with social psychology research, which emphasizes that focusing solely on positive relationship aspects can create an unrealistic view and obscure the normalcy of negative experiences in relationships (Eby et al., 2000, 11-15).

This study also found that proteges were more likely to experience negative mentoring when they perceived differences in attitudes, values, and beliefs with their mentors. Background differences or having a mentor who also served as a supervisor did not significantly affect the occurrence of negative mentoring experiences. This indicates that the perceived differences in nature between the mentor and protégé is a crucial factor in understanding these negative experiences. Future research could benefit from examining the similarity of attitudes, values, and beliefs between mentors and proteges from both perspectives and over time to better understand the impact of these experiences on perceived similarity (Eby et al., 2000, 15-17).

Training mentors effectively to establish and maintain mentoring relationships has been proposed as a method to enhance mentoring programs (Sosik & Godshalk, 2000, 365-390). Evertson and Smithey's (2000) study examined the impact of mentor training on the teaching practices of new teachers, indicating that prepared mentors were more effective in supporting their protégés (Evertson & Smithey, 2000, 294-304).

Research also addresses the demands of mentoring on the mentor. It includes that the investment of time, energy, and emotional resources can lead to mentor burnout and reduced support for the mentee. It stresses the importance of mentors maintaining a healthy balance and setting appropriate boundaries to sustain the quality of the mentoring relationship (Hansman, 2002, 38-48).

## **2.4 Benefits of mentoring for mentees**

### **2.4.1 Transitioning from student to teacher**

Despite their sense of calling and ideological motivation, many beginner teachers soon become disillusioned with the harsh reality of the difficulties of integrating their learning into a disciplined classroom, together with creating new relationships, understanding the culture of the school, and handling an enormous workload (Petersen, 2017, 1-2; C. S. Botha & Rens, 201).

The stress experienced by a novice teacher can be significantly reduced through collaboration and team teaching with a mentor (Stanulis & Floden, 2009, 112-122). Moreover, mentoring can assist novice teachers adjust to their new workload and complex work environment, ensuring a smoother transition into the teaching profession and to become accomplished teachers who have good learners' achievements (Mukeredzi, Mthiyane & Bertram, 2015, 1-9). Mentorship empowers the mentee through support, guidance, observation, discussions, opportunity for discussion and planning to evolve professionally to meet the demands within the educational setting (Mphojane, 2019, 29; Fragoulis, 2014, 53).

Personal mentorship contributes significantly to the formation of a professional identity among novice teachers to develop a strong sense of self and cultivation of authoritative self-confidence as a dedicated educator who enjoys teaching and being part of the organisation (Iancu-Haddad & Oplatka, 2009, 3; Devos, 2010, 1219-1223).

#### **2.4.2 Pedagogical knowledge and expertise**

One of the primary and widely recognized benefits of mentorship is the transfer of pedagogical knowledge and expertise from experienced educators to novices when experienced mentors introduce novices to novel tried-and-tested teaching strategies. Studies have underscored the positive correlation between mentorship and improved teaching practices (Mathur, Gehrke & Kim, 2013, 154-162). In most of the studies examined by Ingersoll and Strong (2011), it was discovered that when new teachers received induction mentoring, they experienced positive teaching outcomes (Ingersoll & Strong, 2011, 201-233).

Mentoring of novice teachers has a positive effect on teaching performance and classroom management, ultimately resulting in improved academic achievements for students (Bowman, 2014, 47-51). Productivity and performance are enhanced and increased as the novice becomes professional in their teaching

applications and take time with mentors to reflect on their efficiency (Iancu-Haddad & Oplatka, 2009, 45-65).

When it came to classroom instructional practices, research confirms that most novice teachers who engaged in some form of induction mentoring showed improved performance in various aspects of teaching. These improvements encompassed keeping students engaged, utilizing effective questioning techniques, adapting classroom activities to match students' interests, sustaining a positive classroom atmosphere, and effectively managing the classroom. As for student achievement, nearly all the studies demonstrated that learners taught by novice teachers who had undergone induction mentoring scored higher on standardized tests or displayed greater academic progress (Ingersoll & Strong, 2011, 201-233).

Mahwire (2021) and Hansman (2002) concur that after a mentoring program they studied, mentees exhibited improved classroom management skills (Mahwire, 2021, 94-95; Hansman, 2002, 32-35). Stanulis and Floden (2009) reports that mentoring led to outstanding classroom management. This included creating engaging and thoughtfully structured routines throughout the day, such as morning meetings, transitions, and procedures for both group and independent work. These routines fostered environments that sparked curiosity and kept learners deeply engaged in their tasks. Additionally, effective time management and pacing for student learning were well-planned. Lessons also incorporated closure, and ample time was allocated for interaction, questioning, and discussion (Stanulis & Floden, 2009, 112-122).

Mentorship can foster a culture of teamwork by sharing knowledge and practices that breaks the traditional isolation felt by novice teachers. It confronts the outdated notion that teachers should sink or swim in their own classrooms and resolve challenges on their own. Instead, mentoring promotes a collaborative and process-focused approach, which yields advantages for all parties: mentees, mentors, learners, and the organization (Bowman, 2014, 47-51; Smith, 2001, 311-321).

Mentorship can facilitate cultural competence, a lesser explored, yet crucial aspect of teacher development. Novice teachers mentored by experienced educators from diverse backgrounds gain valuable insights into navigating culturally diverse classrooms, thereby enhancing their capacity to establish inclusive learning environments (Kimmel, Lachlan & Guiden, 2021, 8-37; Zozakiewicz, 2010, 137-151).

### **2.4.3 Emotional resilience**

The emotional challenges faced by beginner teachers, including high job expectations, inadequate preparation, isolation, and the contrast between their idealistic expectations and the realities of teaching, highlight the importance of mentorship. Mentorship provides essential emotional support, aiding novice teachers in navigating the demands and stresses of the teaching profession (Tait, 2008, 57-75). Mentoring provides valuable support, fostering reflection, professional development, supportive relationships, and collaboration opportunities that contribute to resilience, personal efficacy, and emotional intelligence, all of which are instrumental in the success of novice teachers (Gordon, 2019, 51-81; Roberson, 2005, 60-67).

Novice teachers can develop emotional resilience through reflective and confidential discussions with mentors (Kaplan, 2022, 15-18; Kimmel et al., 2021, 8-37). To enhance their resilience, deliberate efforts should be made to adopt mentoring approaches aimed at fostering positive and community-oriented initiatives that boost the sense of connection, teamwork, camaraderie, and chances for developing resilience among new professionals in flourishing educational environments (Doney, 2010, 54-115; Kutsyuruba, Godden & Bosica, 2019, 205-309).

Personal efficacy plays a vital role in teachers' effort, goal setting, persistence, and overall commitment to their profession. This belief in their abilities typically takes root early in their careers and remains relatively stable over time (Bandura, 1977, 191-215). Personal efficacy is influenced by four sources: repeated suc-



successful experiences, observing competent models, receiving encouraging feedback, and experiencing positive emotional states while teaching (Artino Jr., 2012, 76-85).

Beliefs in personal efficacy have a significant impact on multiple facets of teaching, encompassing effort, setting goals, persevering through challenges, resilience, openness to trying innovative methods, enthusiasm, organizational skills, planning ability, fairness, and dedication to the teaching profession (Tait, 2008, 57-75; Tschannen-Moran, Hoy & Hoy, 1998, 202–248; Payne-van Staden, 2015, 122-224).

Providing novice teachers with positive feedback, guidance, and encouragement from a range of individuals, including students, fellow educators, administrators, parents, and the broader community, can elevate their self-belief and confidence (OECD, 2019, 3-4; Talley, 2017, 103-109). Mahwire (2021) found that mentoring programs can boost teachers' confidence, instill a sense of ownership, and positively impact emotional qualities such as motivation, self-assurance, and a commitment to ongoing growth (Mahwire, 2021, 94-95).

Emotional intelligence, encompassing various interpersonal and intrapersonal skills, plays a pivotal role in teachers' success due to the inherently social nature of teaching (Valente, Lourenço & Dominguez-Lara, 2022, 1-2). Teachers need emotional intelligence to establish trust with students, cultivate positive relationships, and navigate the emotional complexities of teaching (Van Wyk, 2006, 66-83). Teaching is inherently an emotional practice, involving the management of feelings for both teachers and students. It goes beyond instruction to encompass caring for and forming bonds with students. Emotional intelligence is crucial for both teachers and students in this context, as it influences their interactions and experiences in the classroom (Spilt et al., 2011, 457–477; Valente et al., 2022, 9).

#### **2.4.4 Socialisation and networking**

Mentoring plays a pivotal role in promoting collaborative relationships and reducing the experience of isolation that teachers often face. Mentors provide guidance, emotional support and constructive feedback, helping novice teachers navigate challenges and fostering a sense of belonging. Mentors help novice teachers acclimate to the school culture, including collaborative norms and expectations (Hobson et al., 2009, 207-216).

Mentoring helps the novice teacher build relationships with co-workers, an understanding of the school's unique culture and support in resolving the inevitable issues with learners and parents as they arise (Mphojane, 2019, 126; Fragoulis, 2014, 58).

Mentorship provides guidance in teaching and aids in integrating new teachers with the existing school staff. They facilitate networking and relationship-building that integrates them into the professional teaching community, providing a platform for them to interact with colleagues and gain insights into educational practices. Furthermore, engaging with experienced educators exposes them to valuable networks (Ingersoll & Strong, 2011, 201-233).

#### **2.4.5 Retention and job satisfaction**

Mentorship programs are associated with increased teacher retention rates. Studies have shown that mentoring programs expedite the professional development of new teachers, making them more competent more quickly, which in turn enhances student learning outcomes and reduces the turnover rate among novice educators (Ingersoll & Strong, 2011, 201-233).

Teachers who engage in mentoring experiences generally report greater job satisfaction and commitment to their profession (Richter et al., 2013, 166-175) and corroborated by (Ingersoll & Strong, 2011, 201-233).

This mentoring support bolsters their emotional and professional needs by an experienced guide during the critical early phases of their careers, thereby promoting a smoother passage with feelings of being more able to cope with the stresses of becoming a proficient teacher (Richter et al., 2013, 166-175). This support and guidance provided by mentors enhance job satisfaction, reducing the attrition of novice teachers (Shuls & Flores, 2020, 2-16).

Mentorship programs have been linked to increased teacher retention rates, primarily through the provision of mentor guidance, which enhances job satisfaction and diminishes the attrition of novice educators (Johnson, 2006, 6-11; E. A. Smith, 2001, 311-321). Through continual guidance and discourse, novice teachers not only acquire pedagogical skills but also cultivate a robust sense of themselves as educators, a fundamental aspect for their enduring commitment to the teaching profession, reducing attrition rates (Feiman-Nemser, 2001, 17-30).

## **2.5 Benefits to organisations**

### **2.5.1 Retention and job satisfaction**

Retaining teachers has a stabilizing influence on the entire organization. Schools in South Africa, as internationally, face the problem that there are not enough teachers for the growing number of learners. The Baby Boomer generation is retiring in waves (Burmeister & Deller, 2016, 87-104). This creates a loss of experience and tacit knowledge at a time that the country can least afford it (Rambe & Mbeo, 2017, 189–206). Add to this the worldwide phenomenon, that as a result of their disillusionment with the harsh reality, almost half of beginner teachers quit not only their jobs, but the profession within their first five years (Manuel & Hughes, 2006, 5-24; Shaw & Newton, 2014, 101-106).

Teacher turnover has large cost implications. The monetary value placed on the loss of teachers in 2007 is estimated by The National Commission on Teaching and America's Future (NCTAF) to cost the USA \$7 billion per annum (Spears, 2007, 3). Scholars, however, contend that teacher turnover has more than just

monetary costs. The real cost of replacing staff also comes with implications of time needed to find replacement staff, the disruption of continuity in learner's education programs and rifts in the school culture. Teachers, learners, and parents have to constantly get to know new teachers, causing a loss of sense of community and cohesion. Ultimately learner's achievements are influenced as new teachers need time to adapt (Sorensen & Ladd, 2020, 13-14; Watlington et al., 2010, 22-27; Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2019, 3-4). It is therefore imperative to recognize that retaining teachers is as crucial as the initial hiring process.

Effective mentorship can significantly enhance teacher retention rates by providing new teachers with the support and improved working conditions they need. Stanulis and Floden's (2009) research states that novice teachers who underwent effective mentoring, showed retention rates higher than the national average (Stanulis & Floden, 2009, 112-122; Mathur et al., 2013, 154-162).

### **2.5.2 Mentally healthy teachers**

The mental health of beginner teachers is a critical issue with implications for both educators and students. Research consistently shows that early-career teachers face high levels of stress and emotional exhaustion, leading to lower efficacy and job dissatisfaction (Richter et al., 2013, 166-177). This stress contributes to burn-out, prompting some to contemplate leaving the profession (McCallum, 2021, 717-718). Beyond individual well-being, the exodus of teachers negatively impacts schools, leading to understaffing that increases the demands on teachers (Agyapong et al., 2022, 1-42; Herman et al., 2018, 90-100; Suutari, 2021, 39-69).

Recognizing that teacher well-being is not only crucial for educators but also significantly influences student outcomes is vital. Teachers with higher well-being tend to exhibit greater commitment and job satisfaction, positively correlating with improved student academic achievements (R. J. N. Botha & Hugo, 2021, 64-81; McCallum et al., 2017, 2-3). Therefore, addressing the mental health of beginner

teachers is essential for both individual and systemic well-being, ensuring the provision of quality education and positive outcomes for students.

Mentoring has emerged as a powerful tool to address the mental health and job satisfaction issues faced by beginner teachers. Effective mentoring can provide psychosocial support and facilitate career development, which can enhance overall job satisfaction (R. J. N. Botha & Hugo, 2021, 64-81; Bowman, 2014, 47-51). Mentoring offers various psychological benefits to beginner teachers. It reduces feelings of loneliness, boosts self-esteem, fosters professional development, and enhances problem-solving abilities (Hobson et al., 2009, 207-216). Emotional, psychological and practical support from mentors contributes significantly to novice teachers' confidence and morale, which in turn positively affects job satisfaction (Hugo, 2018, 184-194; Iancu-Haddad & Oplatka, 2009, 3).

Novice teachers who are provided with mentoring support often report higher levels of job satisfaction and a stronger commitment to their profession (Ingersoll & Strong, 2011, 201-233). Mentoring support improves their support system, as they have an experienced guide during the crucial initial phases of their careers, leading to increased productivity and job fulfilment (Richter et al., 2013, 166-177).

### **2.5.3 Creating a learning organisation**

Mentoring is instrumental in fostering collaborative environments, ensuring novice teachers integrate into the school community and contribute to the organization's success. Recognizing the importance of collaboration and mentoring is essential for creating a thriving educational ecosystem that benefits teachers, students, and the institution alike. As education continues to evolve, embracing collaborative practices and mentoring will remain vital for the development and success of educators and students (Schleifer, Rinehart & Yanisch, 2017, 3-21).

Research confirms that novice teachers who were mentored for five years displayed greater cooperation for collaborative teaching practices, which led to collegiality and learning communities (Eisenschmidt & Oder, 2018, 7-23). The ideal

is to have mentoring as part of a school's embedded culture. Embedding mentoring in the school's culture will establish ownership and shared responsibility, maximizes resources, maintains integrity, facilitates knowledge utilization, and creates openness to learning through mentoring. The added value of such a culture is as much for the organization as for the individual (Zachary, 2005; 15-30).

While teaching was traditionally often viewed as an isolated profession, with educators addressing challenges on their own, this approach is changing, and collaboration is now recognized as essential in education (Bowman, 2014, 47-51; Hargreaves, 1994, 423-436; De Jong et al., 2019, 2-12). In modern education, collaboration, defined as teachers' co-operative actions within a professional context has become a critical component for both novice and experienced teachers. While some educators may still prefer working in isolation, the benefits of collaboration, especially in the form of mentoring, have been well-established. (De Lima, 2003, 197-217; Kelchtermans, 2006, 221-234 ).

Collegiality may develop in a school where collaboration and mentoring are part of the school's embedded culture. Collegiality refers to a sense of community and mutual respect among colleagues, characterized by cooperation, shared goals, and supportive relationships. When collaboration and mentoring are integral to the school's culture, collegiality tends to flourish in several ways namely common goals, worthwhile interaction, knowledge sharing, peer support, collective problem-solving, reflective practice, innovation, reduced feelings of isolation (Kelchtermans, 2006, 221-234; Löfgren & Karlsson, 2016, 270-280). This creates a thriving learning ecosystem that benefits teachers, students, and institutions alike.

Peter Senge (2000) popularized the strategy where individual mastery, cognitive models, collective goals, collaborative learning, and systems-thinking developed life-long learning organizations (Senge, 2000, 92-159). Out of collegiality and interdependent collaboration, a "professional learning community" develops where a certain standard of excellence in a school becomes the collaborative norm in the organization, to the benefit of teachers' practices and their learners' performance (Hughes & Kritsonis, 2006, 1-12). A learning organisation facilitates cross-

generational learning where younger educators bring new perspectives and technological skills, while veteran teachers share their wisdom and experience. Seasoned educators impart institutional values to new teachers, ensuring continuity, while novices bring fresh perspectives that can lead to positive evolution in the organisation (Hobson et al., 2009, 207-216).

#### **2.5.4 Retention of tacit knowledge**

Organizations have both tacit (implicit) and explicit knowledge that is particular to the sector and organization. Explicit knowledge is well-known, expressed, formulated, documented, easily accessible, for example a school's policies and procedures. Tacit knowledge, on the other hand, is based on years of experience, cultural and institutional, and is not easily verbalized. Tacit knowledge is practical, embedded skills and experience, not easily expressed, akin to intuition. Many older people do not even realize that they have valuable knowledge, skills and solutions to share with novices. When experienced employees leave, retire, or are ignored, a wealth of tacit knowledge is lost (Hansen et al., 1999; E. A. Smith, 2001, 311-321).

A successful mentoring and collaboration culture in a school encompasses both individual and organizational aspects. It plays a crucial role in contributing explicit, but specifically implicit knowledge for the overall health, longevity, and positive development of the organisation, and its broader impact on the community. Mentoring ensures the preservation of the school's culture by enabling experienced educators to impart institutional values and traditions to new teachers. This continuity helps maintain a sense of identity and consistency within the school (Hobson et al., 2009, 207-216).

When the individual is empowered with solutions through tacit knowledge transfer, based on their personal knowledge gaps, it will positively impact overall organizational productivity and performance. It also gives an organization a competitive edge in an ever-changing world (Huie, Cassaberry & Rivera, 2020, 34-39)

Organizations benefit their growth and longevity when new employees learn from experienced employees in the organization of past failures and successes, without having to reinvent the wheel, thereby creating, and retaining institutional or organizational memory (Liebowitz, 2008, 7-14).

## **2.6 Benefits to mentors**

### **2.6.1 Professional development**

Professional growth is regarded as a critical means to improve educators' expertise in their respective subjects, as well as their instructional methods (Smit & du Toit, 2016, 1-10). Scholars show that mentoring programs yield positive effects for both the mentee and the mentor, helping both to grow professionally (Hansman, 2002, 32-35; Iancu-Haddad & Oplatka, 2009, 45-65; C. Y. I. Smith, 2015, 40-41).

Teachers, in general, are expected to stay updated with current professional practices and motivate new teachers to do the same. When mentors exemplify and demonstrate relevant instructional behaviours, it provides opportunities for training and reflection. Mentors can demonstrate their personal techniques for self-assessment and evaluation of their teaching methods as a part of their professional development journey (Gordon, 2019, 74-80; Ingersoll & Strong, 2011, 201-233; Roehrig et al., 2008, 684-702).

Mentoring is not a one-way process. Professional growth happens when mentees introduce new ideas and mentors begin to consider opportunities for improvement, as they challenge their insight into their own way of teaching, evaluating on where reform and renewal could be applied (Gordon, 2019, 74-80; Mukeredzi et al., 2015, 1-8). Fuelled by their mentees' enthusiasm for the teaching profession, this positive influence motivates mentors to improve their own teaching skills, resulting in personal development of both mentors and mentees, as the individuals



adapt to change, challenge their own assumptions and perspectives, and cultivate critical, integrative, reflective thinking (Hansman, 2002, 32-35; Schwan et al., 2020, 200).

### **2.6.2 Leadership development**

Mentoring is not necessarily an inherent skill; therefore, being an effective teacher doesn't guarantee being an effective mentor (Ambrosetti, 2014, 30-40). However, mentoring skills, like leadership skills, can be acquired and honed with practice (Crasborn et al., 2011, 320-331).

Serving as a mentor cultivates leadership skills. According to Ayoobzadeh and Boies (2020) mentoring demands the same skill set as leadership, including the ability to connect with others, uphold commitments, expand social connections, possess cognitive and strategic planning abilities, communicate effectively, solve problems, provide feedback, and more. In their research they found that the group who took on mentoring duties, experienced more positive changes in leader identity and leader self-efficacy, when compared to the non-mentoring group (Ayoobzadeh & Boies, 2020, 497-511). Many scholars agree that mentors grow personally and improve their skills which align with their own leadership development. Therefore, taking on a mentoring role means application of fundamental management and team leadership skills, thus equipping the mentor for higher leadership positions (Gul et al., 2019, 209-228; Kim, 2007, 181-194; Lockwood et al., 2008, 233-236; Pickett, 2022, 1-43).

### **2.6.3 Lifelong learning**

Lifelong learning and mentoring are intricately linked, fostering continuous personal and professional development. Lifelong learning, as defined by Richardson (1978), involves individuals consistently nurturing their knowledge, skills, and interests while embracing opportunities for learning throughout their lives (Richardson, 1978, 1-3). The mentoring relationship encourages the seeking of new

knowledge and skills beyond their current expertise, thus fostering continuous growth (Braumoh, 2008, 17). The involvement of mentors in collaborative endeavours such as university research projects or teacher research, while working with novice educators, can result in a valuable combination of mentoring and research (Huling & Resta, 2001,3-4).

Mentors play a role in creating nurturing environments of lifelong learning when they provide opportunities for their mentees to engage in learning experiences that enhance their knowledge and skills (Braumoh, 2008, 16-24). Mentors serve as catalysts for encouraging exploration, fostering diverse perspectives, and nurturing critical thinking skills, all of which contribute to the mentee's lifelong learning journey, but also their own (Mukeredzi et al., 2015).

Blake-Beard, Shapiro and Ingols (2021) explain that mentors need a certain vulnerability to acknowledge their own areas where they need training to improve as mentors. One such area for example is the need to develop better communication skills for providing constructive feedback and facilitating open dialogue with their mentees. Mentors also contend with the decision of whether they are willing to step out of their comfort zones to explore new strategies, perspectives, information, and adopt new practices. Acknowledging that they need to expand their skill set through embracing new knowledge necessitates a certain level of vulnerability. This vulnerability significantly influences their ability to engage in self-reflection and utilize standardized assessments. This willingness to keep on improving their personal skill sets makes them valuable leaders in any organisation (Blake-Beard, Shapiro & Ingols, 2021,1-13).

#### **2.6.4 Career advancement**

Being a mentor can significantly contribute to career advancement. Mentorship equips individuals with essential skills required for successful management and leadership positions. This will naturally result in mentors gaining recognition for their valuable skills and knowledge, opening up new career prospects for them in

various leadership positions within the school or district (Blake-Beard et al., 2021, 8-9; Huling & Resta, 2001,3; Koki, 1997, 5).

A meta-analysis investigated the impact of different types of mentoring support (career, psychosocial, and role modelling mentoring) on subjective career outcomes for mentors and found that career mentoring was most strongly associated with career success among mentors. This implies that mentors who receive support and guidance related to their career development are more likely to experience success in their careers (Ghosh, 2014, 367-384). Additionally, research indicates that career mentoring is significantly and positively related to promotion rates for managers, and psychosocial support plays a crucial role in increasing managers' salary levels. This highlights the tangible benefits of mentorship for career progression (Ghosh & Reio, 2013, 108).

Sometimes mentors are offered unsolicited positions because of their successful mentoring experiences, and often positions that build upon the skills and insights they gained during their mentorship roles. This can include roles that combine elements of mentoring and teaching, showcasing the developmental strengths of the mentor and solidifying their reputation as leaders (Huling & Resta, 2001, 3). Huling and Resta (2001) also cite Freiberg's study, which discovered that by the conclusion of their mentorship tenure, all mentors involved were proactively presented with job opportunities due to their experience in the mentoring program. These offered roles allowed them to expand upon their learnings as mentors or to blend aspects of mentoring and teaching (Huling & Resta, 2001, 3).

Leavitt's (2011) study shows significant and positive associations between different types of mentoring support and tangible career outcomes for managers. The study found that career mentoring had a significant and positive relationship with managers' promotion rates. This implies that managers who received career mentoring were more likely to be promoted within their organizations. Additionally, the study showed a significant and positive correlation between psychosocial support and the salary levels of managers. This indicates that managers who received psychosocial support from their mentors experienced higher salary levels. Psychosocial support may involve emotional and interpersonal support, and

the study suggests that this type of support can have a tangible impact on managers' financial rewards (Leavitt, 2011, 10).

Hansman's (2002) study highlights the importance of mentorship in the career development of women at different stages of their professional lives. In their early career women rely on interpersonal relationships and informal support systems to facilitate their learning and professional growth. Women who had advanced further in their careers acknowledged the significance of mentoring in their own development and learning. These women also tended to volunteer as mentors to others. This suggests that as women progress in their careers, they recognize the value of mentorship and may actively take on mentorship roles to support and guide other women in their professional journeys (Hansman, 2002, 46).

In conclusion, mentorship serves as a stepping stone for career advancement within the education sector. It equips individuals with leadership skills, leads to promotions, increases job satisfaction, and enhances the level of professionalism in the field of education. By participating in mentorship, educators not only enhance their own careers but also play a vital role in improving the quality of education and fostering a culture of continuous learning and improvement.

### **2.6.5 Existential meaning**

In their research, Allen, Poteet and Burroughs (1997) identified two primary motivators driving mentors: a focus on others and a focus on the self. They outlined thirteen dimensions that fell under these two categories. The dimensions associated with an "other-focused" approach included the aspiration to share knowledge with others, cultivate a skilled workforce, aid others, support the success of others, contribute to the organization, and assist minorities and women in advancing through the organizational hierarchy (Allen, Poteet & Burroughs, 1997, 77, 82-83).

On the other hand, the dimensions falling under the "self-focused" category comprised satisfaction derived from witnessing the growth of others, availability of

free time for personal pursuits, a personal inclination to collaborate with others, personal learning opportunities, pride, a desire to exert influence, and recognition from others (Allen et al., 1997, 70-89).

Mentors often characterize their involvement in mentoring as a means of contributing back to the teaching profession (Boreen et al., 2009, 2-3). Experienced teachers nearing the end of their careers may perceive mentoring as a valuable avenue to make meaningful contributions to the profession and to shape the future of the organization (Iancu-Haddad & Oplatka, 2009, 48). This is especially true when mentoring is approached as a collaborative avenue not only for personal development, but to nurture a culture of active involvement within a professional community (Kennett & Lomas, 2015, 3-17). As individuals benefit from mentoring, the organisation benefits to ensure the continuity of effective teaching practices and the preservation of institutional knowledge. In this manner a legacy of the mentor is left (Inzer & Crawford, 2005, 31-36; Zachary, 2005, 60).

A prevalent finding in research is that mentors derive a deep sense of satisfaction and personal fulfilment from their involvement in their mentoring experience when they help to nurture and shape the next generation of leaders. This insight implies that serving as mentors offers leaders the opportunity to embrace generativity over stagnation (Blake-Beard et al., 2021, 8).

Johnson and Ridley (2018) concur that mentors who find fulfilment in their role, express a profound personal joy and contentment in witnessing their mentees evolve and thrive. The authors also highlight that imparting their skills and wisdom to others not only provides deep personal, existential meaning but also underscores the possibility that many mentors perceive their multi-generational work with mentees as their most significant legacy (Inzer & Crawford, 2005, 36; Johnson & Ridley, 2018, 272).

Research confirms that mentoring has proved to be beneficial to parties regarding self-realization (English, 2000, 36). Mentoring has been shown to contribute to the improvement of mentors' self-esteem and providing them with a sense of significance in the profession (Carger, 1996, 29). Public recognition of their expertise

by being asked to mentor, especially in mid-career, enhances self-esteem and can further reinforce their role and value within the educational community. Additionally, being asked to share personal values, knowledge, wisdom and expertise with the next generation may be experienced as validation of the mentor's status, re-enforcing their personal sense of worth and value (Hansman, 2002, 32-35; Iancu-Haddad & Oplatka, 2009, 48).

### **3 METHODOLOGY**

#### **3.1 Research design theory and methods**

The chapter clarifies the research design and methodology, detailing research instruments, data collection methods, and data analysis techniques. It also discusses study limitations and ethical considerations. Examining these elements provides a comprehensive understanding of the study's framework (Hofstee, 2006,112), offering insights into the reliability, strength, and validity of the research findings.

While AI cannot replace the human processes like personal observation, research, literature reviews, critical evaluation of research material, structuring of and developing an academic thesis, Chat GPT-4 was helpful in organising ideas, suggested synonyms and alternative wording to refine my use of the English language, thereby enhancing the quality of my writing.

A pragmatic worldview shaped the mixed-methods approach of this study, as it allowed flexibility in methods, techniques, and procedures. It supported the use of quantitative and qualitative approaches in adapting to the context with the aim for comprehensive insights. This approach, which included a postmodern turn, accommodated diverse perspectives and methodologies, which recognized the social, historical, and political contexts of the research (Creswell, 2023,32).

The researcher used an online survey to collect data from many respondents in an efficient way and for ease of statistical analysis. However, this method may yield superficial data and concerns regarding respondent engagement and the relevance of the responses can be raised. Generally, surveys provide reliable but less detailed information compared to qualitative methods (Moilanen et al., 2022, 155).

## **3.2 Methodology**

### **3.2.1 Research instruments**

#### **Literature study: a theoretical framework**

Cresswell (2023) notes that a literature review serves several important functions in research. It connects research to existing studies; it highlights unexplored areas and establishes the study's significance. The literature review aids in comparing research results with other studies and guides the methodological approach from broad to specific issues. This section in research proposals transitions from the general problem to the specific research focus (Creswell, 2023, 45).

The literature review in this thesis played an important role in shaping the study. Initially, it established the foundational context by addressing the common challenges faced by novice teachers in South Africa (and globally), such as classroom management and emotional stress. The review then delved into specific issues within the South African educational system, for example multicultural classrooms and large class sizes, which emphasised the unique context where mentoring is particularly beneficial.

The review progressed to provide a detailed examination of mentoring, defining its various types and functions. This helped in forming a clear conceptual framework for the study, making it easier to engage with subsequent discussions in a more informed manner.

The review was structured to gradually shift from the immediate benefits of mentoring for novice teachers to the broader impact on educational institutions. This progression underscored that mentoring not only aids individual teachers, but significantly contribute to the health and growth of educational organizations.

Finally, the review focused on the mentors themselves, completing the narrative by illustrating the reciprocal and mutually beneficial nature of mentoring. This



comprehensive approach ensured a holistic understanding of the mentoring ecosystem and highlighted its importance in South African education. This structure laid the groundwork for this study by underlining the multifaceted role of mentoring to enhance the educational landscape.

### **The questionnaire: design and implementation**

In this thesis, the questionnaire (Appendix 1) was a vital instrument to investigate the prevalence of limited mentoring in South African schools. The primary goal of the questionnaire was to gather direct feedback from teachers, with the focus on their understanding, experiences, and perceptions of mentoring. Furthermore, it aimed to identify barriers - personal, systemic, and social - that may hinder the establishment and effectiveness of mentoring programs, including factors that could motivate educators to participate in mentoring relationships. The overarching objective was to gather comprehensive data to inform, and shape strategies to promote and support the implementation of mentoring programs within the educational landscape of South Africa.

The design of the questionnaire was guided by the principles and guidelines laid out by Moilanen, Ritalahti and Ojassalo (2022) to ensure a robust and effective research tool (Moilanen et al., 2022, 155-157, 162-169). It comprised of various question types, which include Likert scale, multiple choice, and open-ended questions. This variety was intended to capture a blend of both quantitative and qualitative data. The initial section of the questionnaire collected demographic and background information, such as teaching experience, gender, school type and location. This data was essential to contextualise the responses and understand the diverse perspectives on mentoring.

Following this, the questionnaire included sections on familiarity with mentoring and personal involvement in mentoring programs. These sections aimed to gather insights into the respondents' hands-on knowledge and direct experiences with mentoring. Subsequent questions focused on perceptions and beliefs about

mentoring, exploring attitudes towards its benefits and the role of school management in these programs.

A key aspect of the questionnaire was to identify potential obstacles to mentoring. The questions in this section were carefully crafted to uncover various barriers that align with the research objective of understanding why mentoring is not more prevalent in South African schools. The final part of the questionnaire delved into the motivations behind mentoring, seeking to understand what drives teachers to participate in mentoring relationships. This information was essential for proposing actionable strategies for effective mentoring programs.

Ensuring the reliability and validity of the questionnaire was a critical aspect of its design. To enhance reliability, the questionnaire included structured and standardized questions. The inclusion of Likert scales was particularly beneficial in promoting consistency in responses. However, the presence of open-ended questions meant that a pilot study was necessary to address potential subjectivity and interpretive variability. This pilot study, conducted with fellow students, played a pivotal role in refining the questionnaire, thus bolstering its reliability. For validity, aligning the questionnaire with the literature review ensured content validity, confirming that the questions were grounded in established research and theories about mentoring. Input from the pilot study further affirmed the construct validity of the questionnaire, guaranteeing that it effectively measured its intended subject matter (Moilanen et al., 2022, 164-166).

The questionnaire was distributed via Google Forms, chosen for its accessibility, ease of use, cost-effectiveness, and the ability to collect data in real time (Zaindanu & Taufik Ihsan, 2021, 60-61). While Google Forms has several advantages, it also posed challenges, such as potential sample bias and limitations due to the digital divide (*The Digital Divide in South Africa*, 2022). To counter these challenges, physical copies of the questionnaire were distributed at a rural school, ensuring broader participation.

The distribution strategy primarily relied on the researcher's personal networks and social media channels. To ensure anonymity and encourage honest responses, settings on Google Forms were adjusted to prevent the collection of email addresses. However, this meant that tracking the spread of the questionnaire was limited to general information like provinces and types of schools.

The sampling methods used, convenience and snowball sampling, as described by Emerson (2015), were practical for achieving the desired participant count. However, these methods introduced potential biases, as participants often shared similar geographic locations, socio-economic backgrounds, or ethnicities (Emerson, 2015,166). Although these methods led to a substantial number of respondents (154), they did impose limits on the study's conclusions, particularly in terms of the demographic distribution across different provinces.

### **3.2.2 Data**

The dataset used in this study, obtained from a survey on mentoring in South African schools, exhibits a range of strengths, weaknesses, and limitations (Hofstee, 2006, 117). One of its key strengths lies in its diversity, capturing a wide array of viewpoints from educators at various stages of their careers. This variety offers a multifaceted view of the mentoring landscape and yields a nuanced understanding of the subject. Additionally, the dataset's combination of quantitative and qualitative data provides a holistic perspective. Quantitative data sheds light on demographics, awareness, and practices in mentoring, while qualitative responses delve into personal experiences and cultural nuances, enriching the study with deeper insights. Inclusion of specific anecdotes and examples from respondents further contextualizes and enhances the quantitative analysis. Moreover, the gender distribution and the representation of educators from both public and independent schools reflect national trends, thereby bolstering the credibility and generalizability of the study's findings.

However, the dataset has limitations. The sample size, though diverse, is small relative to South Africa's entire teaching workforce, potentially limiting the study's

generalizability. The depth of qualitative responses varies, affecting the analysis's comprehensiveness. Additionally, the regional distribution of respondents does not fully represent South Africa's teaching force, affecting the findings' regional applicability. These factors necessitate cautious interpretation and acknowledgment of limitations in conclusions.

Assessing the data's sufficiency for conclusions about mentoring in South African schools involves considering the data's quantity and quality. The diverse responses provide a solid foundation for analysis. The qualitative insights' richness and quantitative data's alignment with national trends underscore the data's robustness, supporting informed conclusions about mentoring in the education sector.

However, it's important to approach these conclusions cautiously. Recognizing the dataset's limitations, such as sample representativeness, potential response biases, and regional disparities, is vital for maintaining the conclusions' integrity and reliability. While the dataset's diversity and depth are strengths, framing conclusions within the context of these limitations ensures accuracy and relevance.

### **3.2.3 Analysis**

The analysis of the data collected from the survey on mentoring in South African schools was a comprehensive process that integrated both quantitative and qualitative methods. For the quantitative aspect, Google Forms was utilized to its full capacity. The platform's functionality allowed for the automatic generation of statistical data, which included analysing response trends, calculating averages, and identifying patterns in the demographic and multiple-choice questions. This quantitative analysis provided a foundational understanding of the broader trends and general patterns within the data.

Once the quantitative data was analysed, the focus shifted to the qualitative data from the open-ended questions. All qualitative responses were first compiled from Google Forms into a spreadsheet, meticulously organized to facilitate an in-depth

examination. The next phase of the analysis involved thematic coding, where I read through each response to identify common themes, patterns, and unique insights. This process categorized the responses into themes such as challenges in mentoring, cultural influences, and personal mentoring experiences, forming the basis for the detailed analysis in subsequent chapters.

To enhance the analysis, ChatGPT-4 was employed. For each thematic category, I prompted ChatGPT-4 with: "Highlight key themes, patterns, or insights from the following open-ended question: [insert question here]," and fed all the relevant responses into the system. ChatGPT-4 assisted in identifying patterns and summarizing key themes, which were then critically reviewed and refined by me for accuracy and contextual relevance.

An important aspect of the analysis was cross-examining these qualitative findings with the quantitative data. This step helped validate the qualitative insights against statistical trends and vice versa, offering a more comprehensive understanding by merging personal narratives with broader patterns.

The findings from the thematic analysis were then contextualized within the broader educational and societal context of South Africa. This step ensured the analysis was relevant and reflective of the current educational landscape.

Finally, the insights from the thematic analysis were synthesized into a coherent narrative, summarizing key findings, drawing connections between different themes, and highlighting significant insights. This comprehensive approach to analysing both qualitative and quantitative data ensured that the study's findings were grounded, reliable, and reflective of the complexities within the South African educational sector.

### **3.3 Limitations of the study**

In the thesis examining the lack of mentoring in South African schools, a deliberate focus on the private and public sectors of primary and secondary education

and the exclusion for tertiary institutions, sets the stage for specific research limitations. These limitations, reflective of the study's intentional scope, are evident across the methodology, literature review, and respondent data.

In terms of methodology, the study's reliance on convenience and snowball sampling, though practical for the targeted educational levels, introduces biases. This non-random participant selection impacts the representativeness of the sample, thereby affecting the generalizability of the findings to the wider educational context. The geographic focus on South African primary and secondary schools, both private and public, limits the diversity of experiences and viewpoints. This limitation is crucial as it potentially leads to results that may not fully capture the variations in mentoring practices that could be present in different educational settings within the country.

The literature review, while thorough in its exploration of mentoring within the specified educational context, reflects the limitations inherent in its geographical and sectoral focus. Concentrating on primary and secondary education in South Africa provides valuable regional insights but may not encapsulate the entire spectrum of mentoring experiences. The reviewed literature's emphasis on challenges faced by novice teachers and mentoring dynamics in these schools might overlook aspects prevalent in other educational settings, including broader pedagogical trends or mentoring practices outside the specified sectors, for example the mentoring of student teachers by their experienced lecturers while they study.

Regarding the data collected from respondents, the researcher's decision to focus on a specific segment of South Africa's educational landscape informs the study's insights. While the sample size offers a diverse range of perspectives from primary and secondary education sectors, it may not fully represent the wider educational context in South Africa. This limitation is compounded by the potential for response bias in the survey data and the uneven regional representation of respondents. Additionally, the variability in the depth of qualitative responses restricts the breadth of insights that can be drawn, particularly in relation to the broader scope of mentoring across various educational settings.

In conclusion, the limitations of the study, spanning from methodological considerations to the specific focus of the literature review and respondent data, are crucial in understanding the context of mentoring in South African primary and secondary schools. Acknowledging these limitations adds depth to the thesis and highlights areas for potential future research, which could expand the understanding of mentoring practices in South Africa's diverse educational landscape.

### **3.4 Ethical considerations**

This research applied the South African Council for Educators' (SACE) ethical guidelines throughout the process. These ethical practices ensured the well-being and rights of the participants throughout the research process.

The research maintained a professional conduct, establishing a respectful and professional relationship with participants and employing appropriate and formal communication.

Voluntary participation was ensured, with all participants willingly choosing to take part without coercion or incentives. Informed consent was obtained from participants, providing them with comprehensive information about the research and obtaining their written consent for the utilization and publication of their data. Participants were informed of their right to withdraw from the research at any time, without consequences or the need to provide reasons. Confidentiality measures were implemented to protect participants' identities and keep their personal information anonymous or unidentifiable as required. (SACE, 2022,8) A detailed Survey Consent Statement was set out for the participants to read and agree to before starting the survey (Appendix 1).

Accurate reporting was upheld, presenting data without bias and properly attributing sources through references and citations.

The researcher also upheld the ethical guidelines provided by Tampere University of Applied Sciences (TAMK) which is supplied in the university's intranet.

## 4 RESULTS

### 4.1 Quantitative Results

This section of the study provides a comprehensive analysis of the quantitative results from the survey sent to South African teachers, beginning with a detailed look at the demographic and teaching background of the respondents. It includes a diverse range of teaching experiences, with a significant presence of both novice and highly experienced educators. The gender distribution of the respondents aligns with national trends in South African education, predominantly female, reflecting the broader gender dynamics within the sector.

The study also compares the respondents' backgrounds with the national distribution of public and independent fee-paying schools, demonstrating a close alignment and underscoring the representativeness of the sample within the South African educational landscape.

Key aspects of mentoring in primary and secondary schools are explored, including the familiarity with the concept among educators, the extent of their involvement in formal and informal mentoring programs, and their beliefs about the impact of mentoring on the education system.

The role of school management in mentoring is critically analysed, focusing on the establishment of programs, resource allocation, and fostering a supportive mentoring culture. The section also delves into the primary challenges faced in implementing successful mentoring programs, highlighting issues such as time constraints, funding limitations, and cultural barriers.

Finally, the section examines the motivational factors driving educators to mentor novice teachers, revealing a blend of personal, professional, and altruistic reasons that influence their willingness to engage in mentoring activities.



Overall, the work offers insightful perspectives on mentoring in South African schools, providing a nuanced understanding of the challenges, motivations, and the broader context of mentoring in the educational system.

#### **4.1.1 Demographic and Teaching Background Information**

The analysis of the respondent demographics shows that the sample comprises of a diverse range of teaching levels experience. In Figure 1 it is notable that a significant proportion of the respondents (39 respondents, representing 25,3%) reported having less than 5 years of teaching experience. This finding emphasises the inclusion of novice teachers within the sample, suggesting a valuable perspective from this group.

Additionally, the second-largest group of respondents (41 respondents, representing 26,6%) have teaching experience ranging from 5 to 10 years. This pattern indicates a relatively balanced presence of both novice and mid-career teachers within the survey pool. Furthermore, a smaller subgroup of participants (27 respondents, representing 17,5%) reported having accrued 10 to 20 years of teaching experience, indicating the inclusion of educators with a more extensive career history.

Significantly, a substantial portion of participants (47 respondents, representing 30,5%) have 20 or more years of teaching experience, reflecting the inclusion of highly experienced teachers in the study's sample. This diversity of teaching experience within the respondent pool enhances the research by encompassing viewpoints from educators at various career junctures, which may yield to a multifaceted understanding of the research topic.

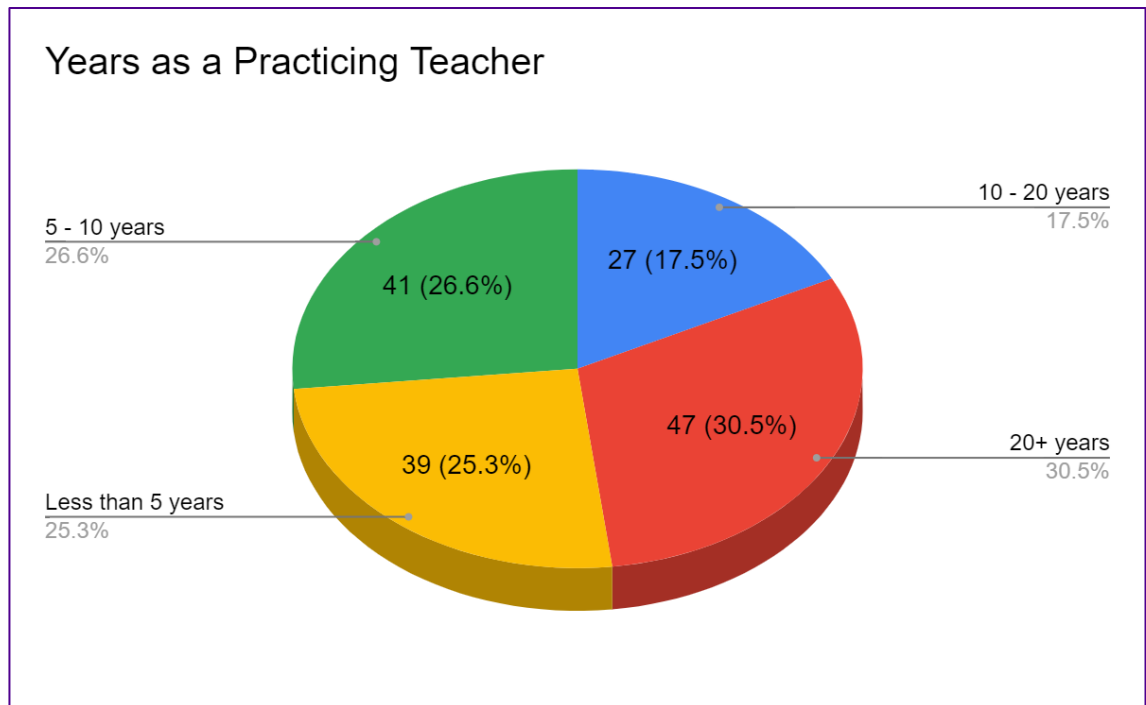


FIGURE 1. Years of teaching experience from respondents.

In 2021, the demographic composition of educators in South Africa showed a significant gender imbalance with women constituting the majority, representing roughly 70% of the educational workforce (Wills & Bohmer, 2023,2). Within the context of this study, which surveyed a group of participants within the education sector, the gender distribution among the respondents was also examined. As Figure 2 indicates, a substantial portion of the respondents (132 individuals, comprising 85,7% of the sample) identified as female, while a smaller portion (22 individuals, constituting 14,3% of the sample) identified as male. This alignment with the broader gender distribution within the education sector contributes an additional layer of context to the study's demographic profile, emphasizing the prevalence of female educators, both nationally and within the surveyed sample.

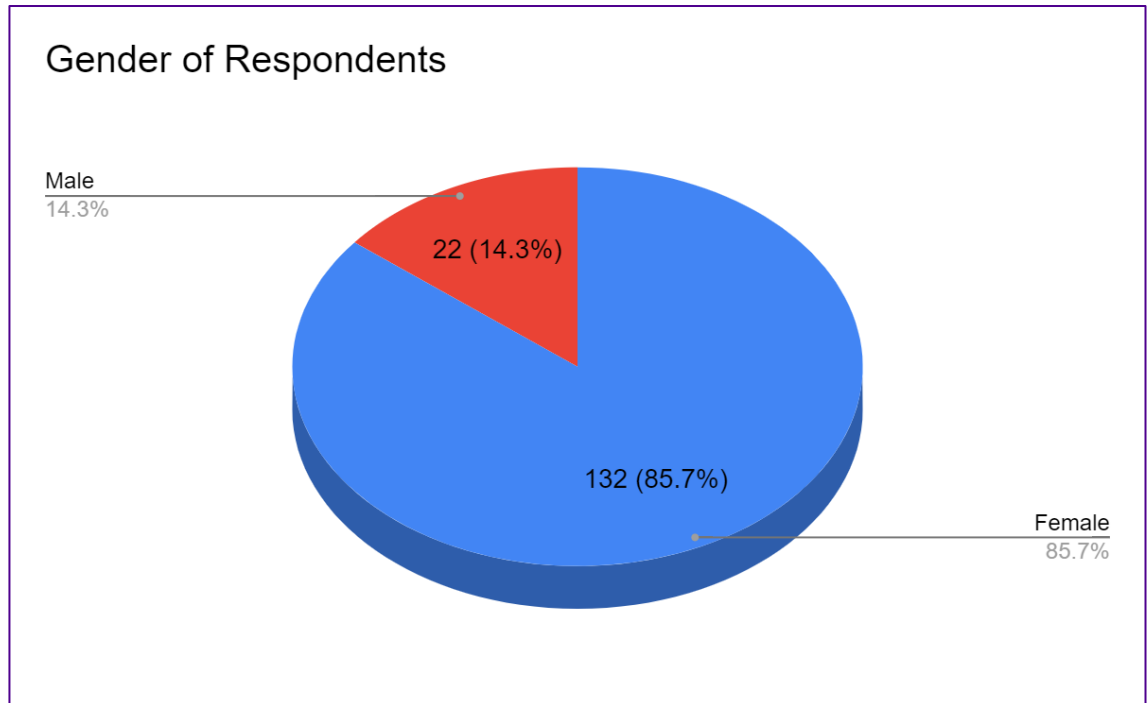


FIGURE 2. Gender of respondents

In comparing the survey results with statistics of public and independent (private) schools in South Africa, Figure 3 shows that the composition of respondents aligns closely with the distribution of schools in South Africa. As of 2022, the national landscape indicated that the majority of schools, approximately 90.8%, were publicly funded institutions. This observation reflects the survey findings, where a significant portion of respondents identified as educators in public schools, constituting 86.4% of the sample. Conversely, the data also indicates the relatively smaller presence of independent educational institutions, which accounted for 13.6% of the survey's respondent pool, consistent with the 2,282 independent schools reported in the broader context (Cowling, 2023). This alignment between survey demographics and national statistics enhances the study's credibility by demonstrating that the composition of the surveyed sample corresponds effectively with the educational landscape in South Africa, thus providing valuable context for the analysis and interpretation of research findings.

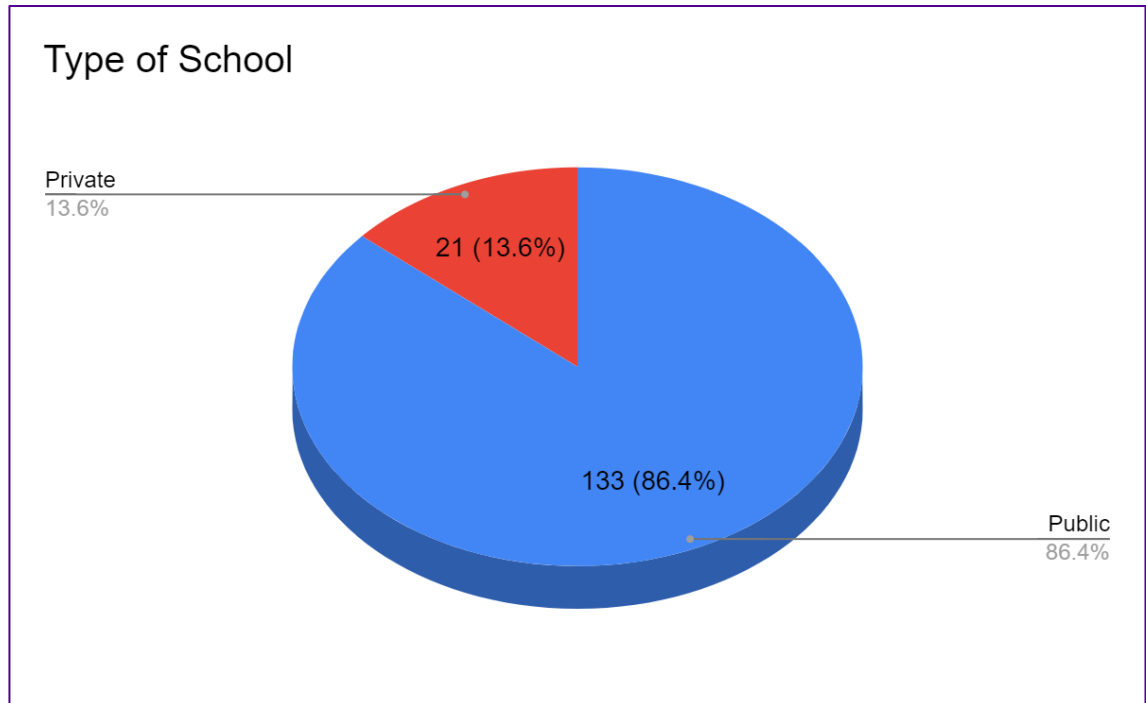


FIGURE 3. Type of school where respondents are teaching.

A comparison between the number of respondents per province (Figure 4) in the survey and the actual teaching force per province (Figures 5 and 6) reveals interesting insights into the representativeness. By leveraging personal networks to distribute surveys, the research team collected responses from a diverse range of provinces within South Africa. The survey's representation of certain provinces deviates from their respective proportions in the actual teaching force (Figure 5). As an illustration, in Figure 4 Gauteng province received the highest number of responses (53.9 %), whereas its actual teaching force constitutes a mere 20.7% of the entire national teaching force. North West is the only province that comes close, with a survey response rate of 6.5%, which is marginally higher than its national teaching force share of 6.4% (Figure 6). These comparisons highlight variations in the distribution of respondents across provinces, suggesting potential limitations in the survey's regional coverage and warranting a cautious interpretation of findings. Moreover, when considering the overall sample size in relation to the total teaching force in South Africa, the survey's reach constitutes a mere 0.034%, underlining the importance of acknowledging the limited scope and generalizability of the findings to the broader teaching population.

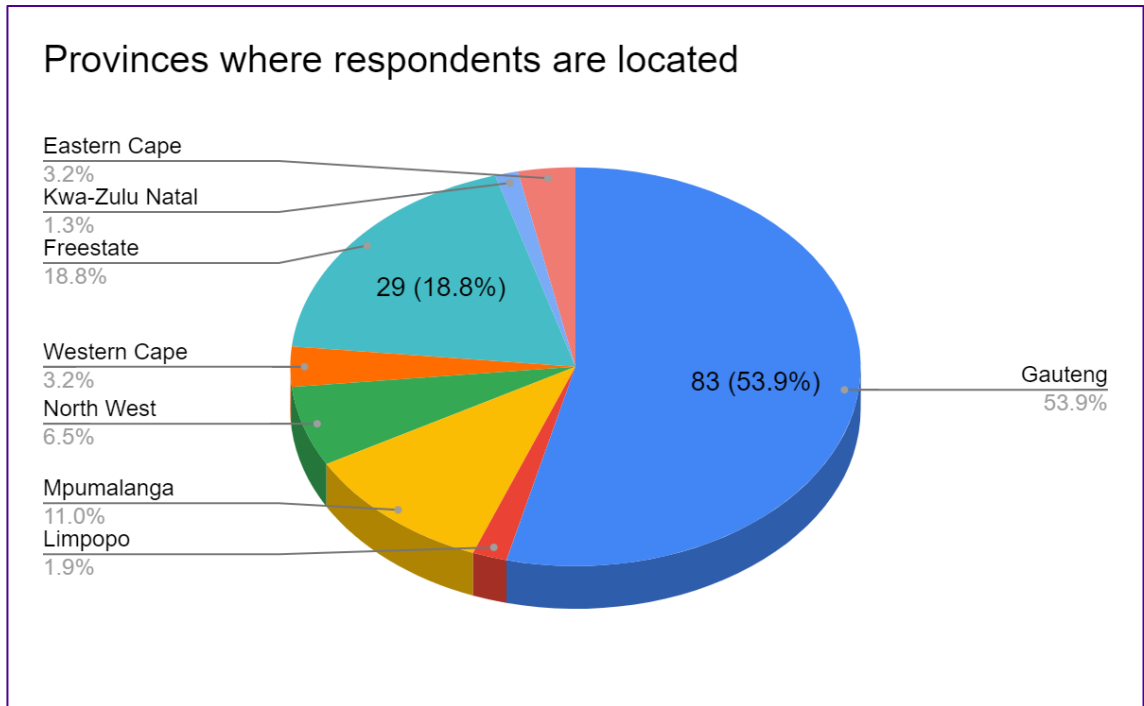


FIGURE 4. Provinces where respondents are teaching.

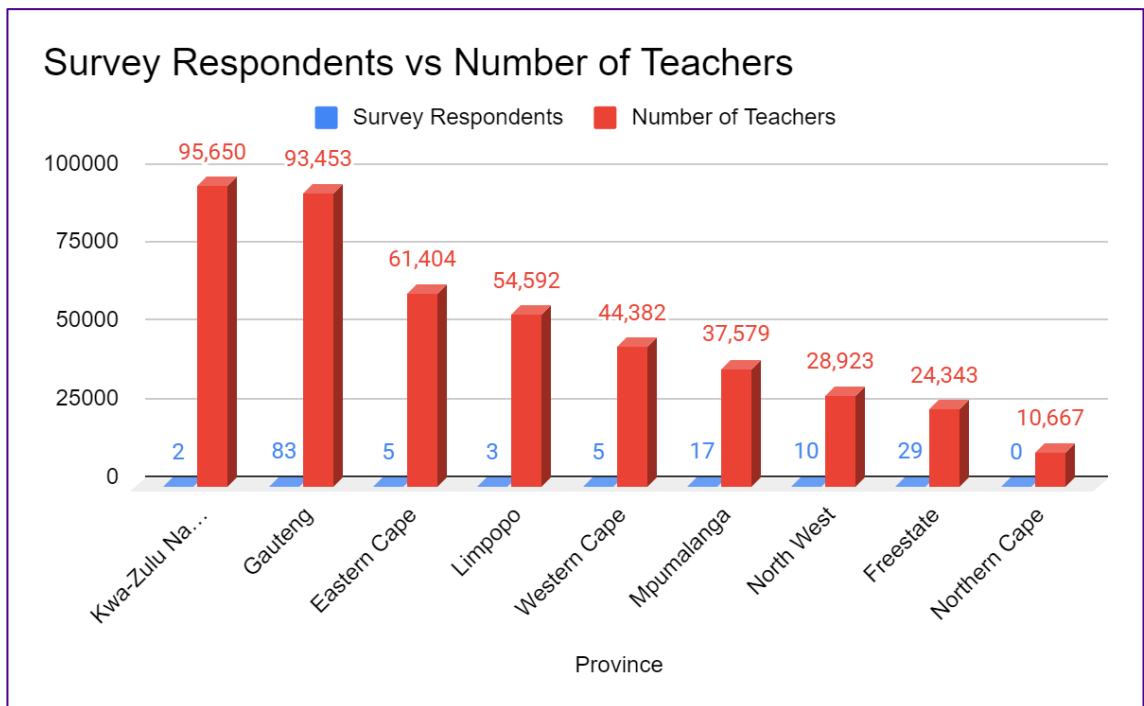


FIGURE 5. Survey results compared to actual teaching force. (Cowling, 2023)

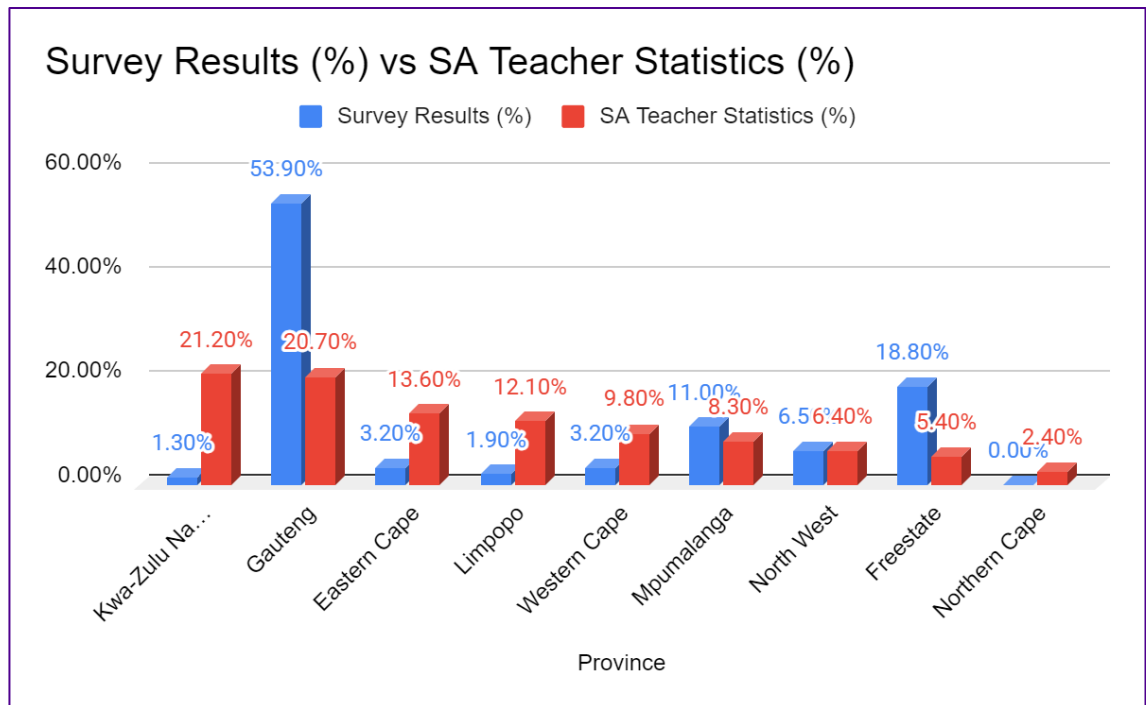
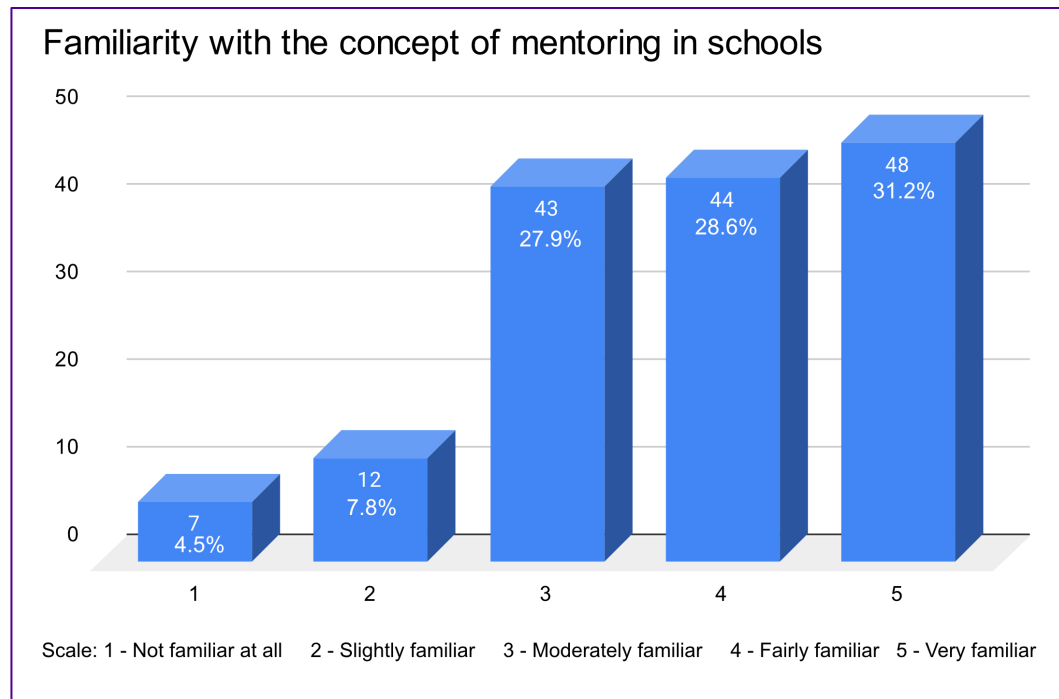


FIGURE 6. Graph representing Survey results vs Actual teaching force per province as percentage.

#### 4.1.2 Experience, views, and beliefs regarding mentoring

In the survey conducted to assess the familiarity with the concept of mentoring in schools, the results indicate a broad spectrum of awareness among the respondents. In Figure 7, a significant proportion of the participants reported a high level of familiarity with the concept on a five-point scale. Notably, 31.2% (48 respondents) claimed to be 'Very familiar' (scale 5), followed closely by 28.6% (44 respondents) who felt 'Fairly familiar' (scale 4). This suggests that over half of the respondents (59.8%) possess a substantial understanding of mentoring in educational settings. In contrast, only a small fraction of the survey population demonstrated low familiarity, with 4.5% (7 respondents) being 'Not familiar at all' (scale 1) and 7.8% (12 respondents) considering themselves 'Slightly familiar' (scale 2). The 'Moderately familiar' category (scale 3) encompassed 27.9% (43 respondents), indicating a moderate level of awareness. These results highlight a predominant recognition and understanding of the concept of mentoring in schools among the surveyed individuals, suggesting that mentoring is a well-known and acknowledged practice in educational contexts.



**FIGURE 7.** Results showing familiarity with mentoring.

The survey aimed to gauge the extent of participation in formal or informal mentoring programs within South African schools. In Figure 8 it shows that out of 154 respondents, precisely half (50%, 77 respondents) indicated their involvement in mentoring programs, highlighting a significant level of engagement in such initiatives. This response emphasizes the significant impact that mentoring has on educational environments in South Africa.

However, the nature of this involvement varied. A distinct preference for informal mentoring was observed, with 33.1% (51 respondents) indicating their participation in informal programs compared to 22.1% (34 respondents) who were involved in formal mentoring setups. This disparity suggests that informal mentoring, which may offer more flexibility and personalization, is more prevalent or accessible than formal programs in these educational environments. Conversely, 35.7% (55 respondents) reported no involvement in either type of mentoring program. This sizeable proportion reflects an opportunity for growth in mentoring initiatives within South African schools, potentially indicating areas where such programs are either unavailable or underutilized. The survey results collectively provide valuable insights into the current landscape of mentoring in South African schools, highlighting the prevalence of informal mentoring and underscoring the

need to enhance the reach and effectiveness of both formal and informal mentoring programs.

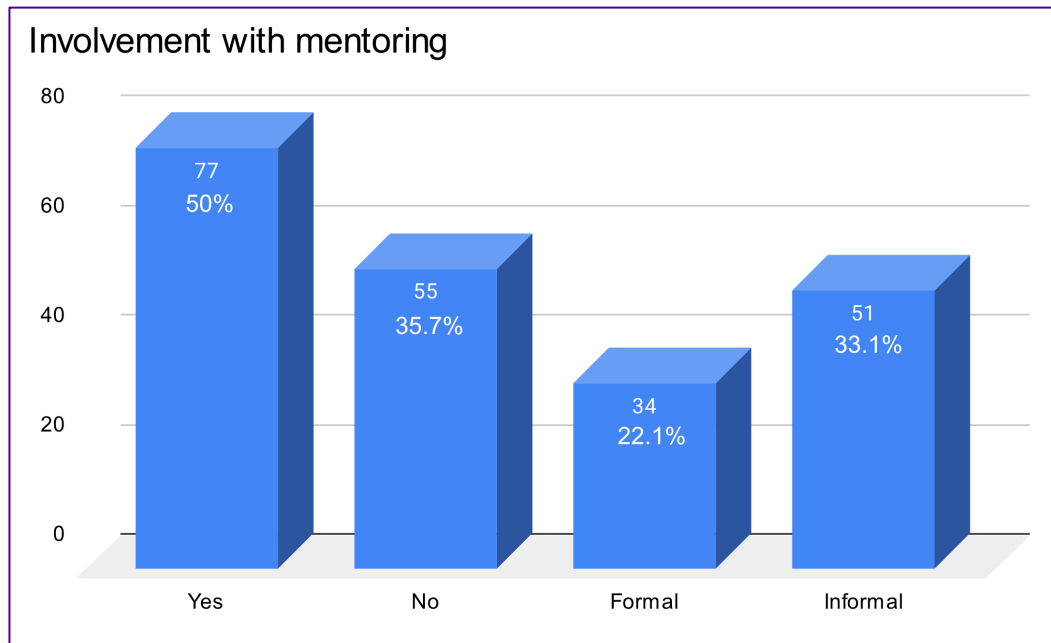


FIGURE 8. Results showing involvement with mentoring.

The next survey question focused on gauging perceptions regarding the potential positive impact of mentoring on the education system in South Africa. In Figure 9 the overwhelming majority of respondents, 96.1% (148 out of 154), expressed a belief that mentoring can positively influence the educational landscape. This near-unanimous agreement underscores a strong conviction among the participants about the efficacy and value of mentoring in enhancing educational outcomes. Only a minuscule fraction, 0.6% (1 respondent), disagreed with this view, while a small segment of 3.2% (5 respondents) remained uncertain. The high level of consensus signals a widespread acknowledgment and confidence in mentoring as a tool for educational improvement in South Africa. These results suggest that mentoring is widely regarded as a key strategy for fostering educational growth and development in the South African context.



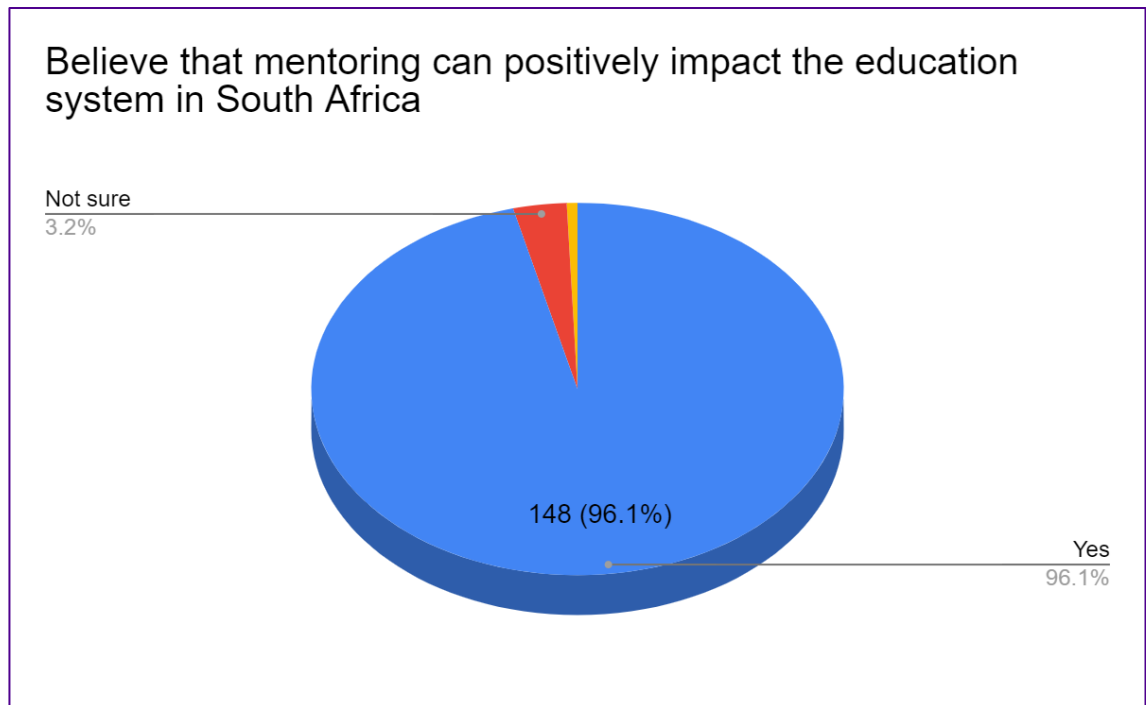


FIGURE 9. Results showing belief in mentoring.

#### 4.1.3 The perceived role of school management in mentoring

The survey results emphatically underscore the perceived critical role of school management in supporting mentoring programs within educational settings. A predominant majority of respondents (110) in Figure 10 deem the establishment of a mentoring program in schools as 'Extremely important', reflecting a broad consensus on the foundational role of school management in initiating such initiatives. This sentiment extends to the provision of funding and resources, with a significant number (88 respondents) considering it 'Extremely important' and another 35 viewing it as 'Somewhat important', highlighting the necessity of tangible support for the sustainability and effectiveness of these programs.

In terms of personnel management within these programs, the identification and assignment of suitable mentors to mentees is seen as a crucial task, with 105 respondents rating it as 'Extremely important'. This indicates a recognition of the need for thoughtful and strategic matching in mentoring relationships to ensure their efficacy. Additionally, the monitoring and evaluation of these programs are

viewed as key components, with 92 respondents considering it 'Extremely important' and 39 as 'Somewhat important'. This underscores the importance placed on accountability and the continuous improvement of mentoring initiatives.

The involvement of teachers is another focal point, with 101 respondents deeming it 'Extremely important' to encourage teacher participation in mentoring. This suggests that the active engagement of teachers is crucial to the success and integration of mentoring programs within the school environment. Alongside this, fostering a school environment that promotes and values mentoring is seen as imperative, with 102 rating it 'Extremely important', reflecting an understanding that a nurturing environment is essential for the flourishing of mentoring practices.

Lastly, while still valued, the coordination with external organizations or mentors received slightly less emphasis but is nonetheless considered important, with 79 respondents rating it 'Extremely important'. This may indicate a preference for internally managed mentoring programs, while also acknowledging the benefits that external partnerships can bring.

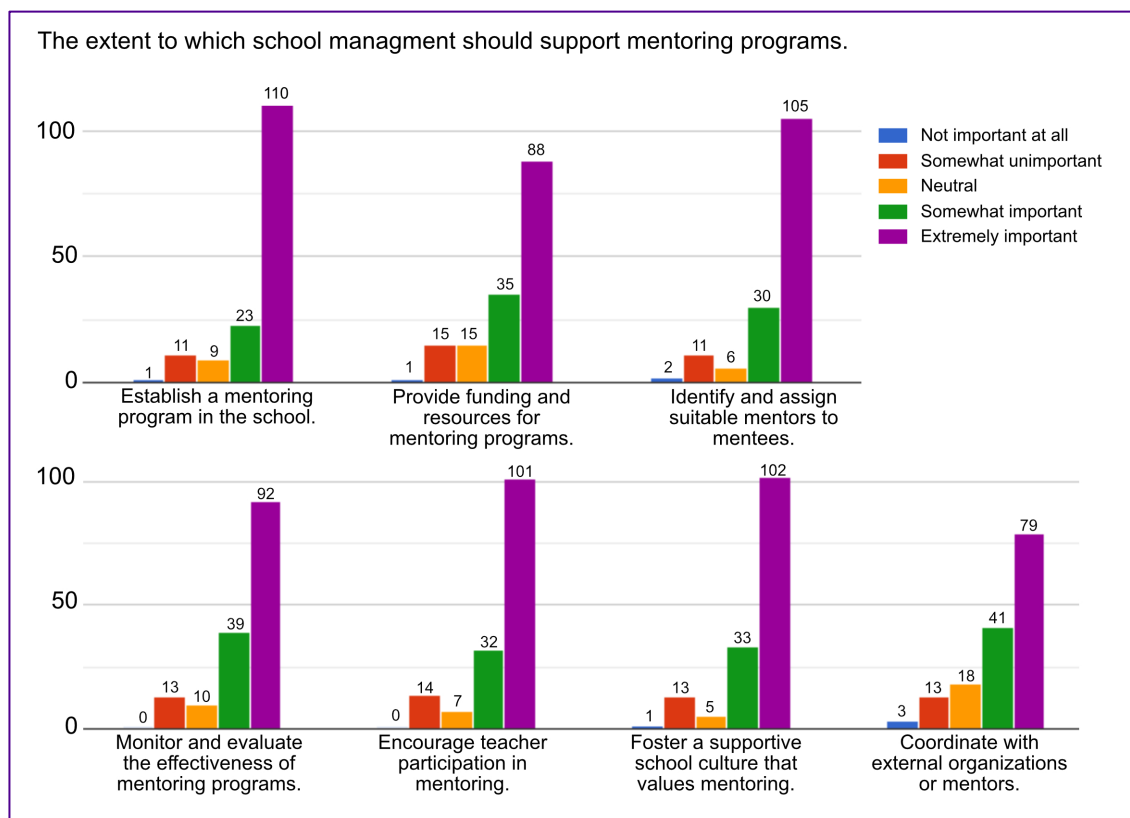


FIGURE 10. Survey results showing perceived role of school management in mentoring.

Overall, these responses highlight a strong conviction among the participants in the vital role of school management in supporting, funding, guiding, and nurturing mentoring programs, underscoring their perceived importance in enhancing the educational landscape.

#### **4.1.4 The perceived challenges preventing mentoring**

The survey responses regarding the primary obstacles or challenges to establishing or ensuring the success of mentoring programs in South African schools reveal a multifaceted array of issues, both systemic and cultural. The most prominent challenge in Figure 11, as identified by 72.1% (111 respondents), is time constraints. This suggests that the demanding schedules within the educational sector leave limited room for the effective implementation and operation of mentoring programs.

Lack of funding, highlighted by 53.2% (82 respondents), and lack of training, indicated by 47.4% (73 respondents), are also significant barriers. These responses point towards the need for more substantial financial support and professional development opportunities to facilitate the initiation and sustenance of mentoring programs. The issue of lack of interest, noted by 42.9% (66 respondents), implies a potential disengagement or apathy towards mentoring, either due to a lack of awareness of its benefits or competing priorities.

Cultural barriers, as identified by 21.4% (33 respondents), suggest the presence of social or organizational norms and practices that may hinder the adoption and effectiveness of mentoring within schools.

The 'Other' responses provided by survey participants offer deeper insights into the challenges faced. These include concerns about lack of educator accountability and absenteeism, a perception that some teachers are motivated more by salaries than a genuine interest in mentoring, issues with school culture and unity, and a lack of knowledge about effective mentoring practices. Administrative bur-

dens are a recurring theme, with respondents indicating that excessive paperwork and administrative tasks limit the time available for mentoring activities. Additionally, the quality of the presenters in training programs, lack of personnel in schools, and young teachers' reluctance towards mentoring are cited as contributing factors. The responses also highlight systemic issues such as weak government vision and lack of integrity in fund allocation, suggesting that broader structural changes may be necessary for the successful implementation of mentoring programs.

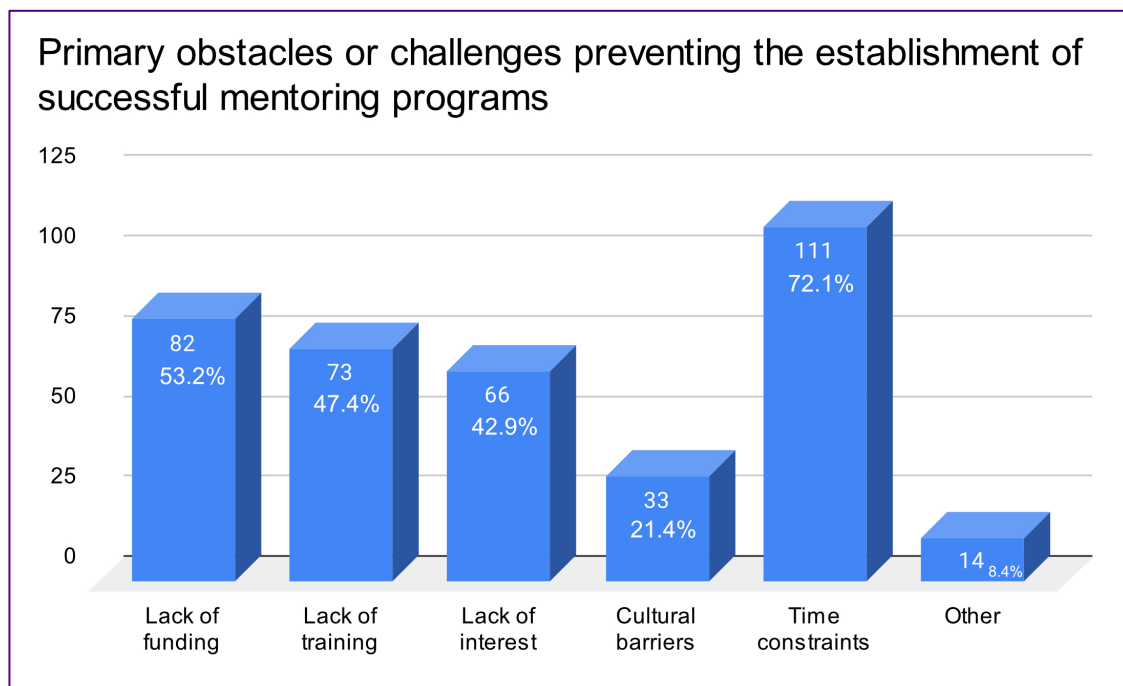


FIGURE 11. Survey results of obstacles and challenges that prevent mentoring.

Overall, these responses reflect a complex interplay of factors, including resource limitations, cultural attitudes, administrative challenges, and systemic issues, all of which need to be addressed to facilitate the effective establishment and operation of mentoring programs in South African schools.

#### 4.1.5 Motivational factors to mentor novice teachers

This part of the survey aimed to identify the factors that would motivate educators to mentor beginner teachers, revealing a range of motivations with varying degrees of importance assigned by the respondents.

One compelling motivator, as indicated by 111 respondents on Figure 12, is the prospect of professional growth and development, underscoring a recognition that mentoring can enhance the mentor's own skills and knowledge. Similarly, leadership development and career advancement were seen as highly important by 102 respondents, suggesting that mentoring is perceived as a pathway to professional progression.

Personal fulfilment in helping others succeed emerged as a primary motivator, with 121 respondents rating it as 'Extremely important'. This indicates a strong intrinsic motivation among educators to contribute to the success of their colleagues. The concept of a lifelong learning journey was also highly valued, with 117 respondents viewing it as crucial, reflecting a commitment to continuous professional development.

Mentorship training was deemed 'Extremely important' by 100 respondents, highlighting a need for structured guidance in how to effectively mentor. Similarly, 121 respondents saw making a meaningful contribution to the profession as a key motivator, aligning with a sense of professional responsibility and commitment to the broader educational community.

Collaboration with colleagues was another significant factor, with 113 respondents rating it as 'Extremely important', suggesting that mentoring is seen as a means to foster teamwork and shared practices. The smooth transition for new teachers was deemed highly important by 122 respondents, indicating an awareness of the challenges faced by beginner teachers and a desire to support them.

Consistency in the school's teaching practices, rated highly by 117 respondents, and improved learner outcomes, viewed as crucial by 124 respondents, reflect a

focus on the broader impact of mentoring on the educational environment and student success.

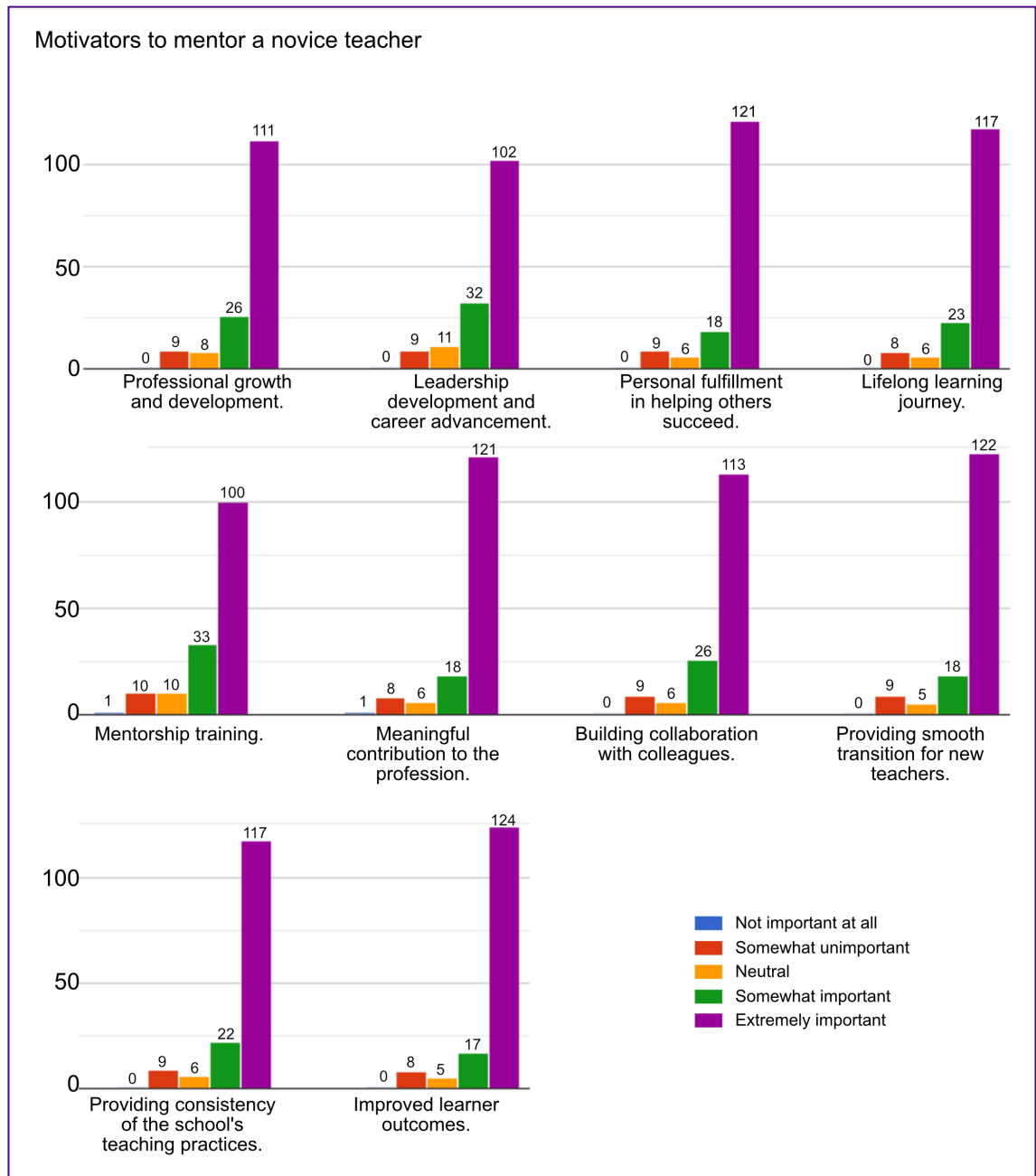


FIGURE 12. Survey results showing the motivators to mentor novice teachers.

Overall, these responses highlight a multifaceted perspective on what motivates educators to engage in mentoring, encompassing personal, professional, and altruistic factors. They suggest that motivations for mentoring are deeply rooted in both individual growth and a commitment to enhancing the quality of education and support for new teachers within the educational system.

## 4.2 Qualitative Results

In this section of the thesis, we explore the varied experiences and perspectives on mentoring in South African schools, drawing from qualitative responses of educators. The findings reveal a spectrum of mentoring practices, from structured formal programs to more adaptive, informal approaches. Educators highlight the importance of these programs in their professional development, citing both positive experiences and challenges due to the absence of organized mentoring systems.

Expectations surrounding mentoring are high, with educators foreseeing improvements in teaching quality, support for novice teachers, and enhanced student outcomes. The role of school management teams in facilitating these initiatives is acknowledged, though responses indicate a mix of engagement levels and challenges in implementation.

Success stories, such as the Jakes Gerwel Fellowship, illustrate the transformative potential of mentoring in the educational sector. However, a notable number of educators are unaware of such programs, indicating a gap in communication and implementation. The negative impact of insufficient mentoring is also evident, with issues ranging from poor teaching quality to challenges in professional growth and learner engagement.

Cultural and societal factors, including governmental attitudes, time constraints, and internal school dynamics, are identified as significant influences on the efficacy of mentoring programs. The final thoughts of respondents underscore the value of mentoring in personal and professional development, suggesting a need for more structured, collaborative, and effective mentoring practices within the South African educational system. This comprehensive overview of mentoring experiences offers insights into its complexities and highlights areas for improvement and further research.

### 4.2.1 Experiences in mentoring

The responses from the mentoring survey paint a multifaceted picture of mentoring experiences in the educational context, characterized by a mix of positive encounters and challenges. Many educators spoke highly of their experiences with formal mentoring programs. For instance, one respondent shared, “I have been the mentee when I first started teaching (formal mentoring program). I have also mentored quite a few new teachers (formal mentoring program).” This reflects the structured and appreciated nature of such programs, highlighting their importance in professional development.

Informal or ad-hoc mentoring also featured prominently in the responses. Some educators, such as department heads, engaged in mentoring as and when needed. “As the departmental head, I do informal mentoring whenever I see the need,” one respondent noted, suggesting that mentoring often arises organically and is woven into daily interactions. This type of mentoring, while less structured, is crucial in providing timely support and guidance.

However, the absence of a structured mentoring system was a significant challenge for some. A respondent vividly described their plight: “Unfortunately, there was no system implemented by the management of the school to mentor me during my first 2 years.” This lack of support underscores the importance of having structured mentoring for new teachers.

Mentoring in education is not confined to general teaching practices but extends to specific areas such as setting exam papers and providing subject advice. “HOD had a session where I was mentored on setting exam papers,” a respondent mentioned, indicating the targeted nature of some mentoring experiences. Mentoring student teachers was also a recurrent theme, with numerous educators sharing their experiences in guiding students through their practical teaching. One educator mentioned, “I was the mentor for student teachers at our school,” highlighting this aspect's prevalence.



The quality and effectiveness of mentoring experiences varied. Some found it to be “very educational and developing,” while others faced moderate or challenging experiences. This variation suggests that the success of mentoring depends on the program's organization and the mentor's skills.

Mentoring also encompassed broader areas such as teenage pregnancy and discipline strategies. “Mentoring teen girls on teenage pregnancy,” shared by one educator, shows the extensive scope of mentoring in education.

Many educators acknowledged the positive impact of mentoring on their professional growth. “It helped me to develop in my own teaching goals and career,” one respondent reflected, underlining mentoring's significance in career development. Nonetheless, not all experiences were positive. Some respondents faced stress and disorganization, as highlighted by one educator: “I was the mentee and it was quite stressful as my mentor wasn't organized and helpful.”

Peer mentoring and collaboration were also featured in the responses, indicating a horizontal approach to mentoring. “Help from colleagues when asked or needed, given by more experienced educators,” illustrates this peer-to-peer support system, fostering a collaborative and supportive teaching environment.

In conclusion, the survey responses offer valuable insights into the varied mentoring experiences of educators. They underscore the importance of structured, effective mentoring programs and highlight the role of mentoring in professional growth and development in the educational sector.

#### **4.2.2 Expectations of mentoring**

Upon examination of the responses to the question about expected benefits or outcomes from successful mentoring programs in South African schools, it becomes evident that educators have high hopes for the impact of these programs. The expectations range from immediate classroom benefits to long-term professional development.

One of the primary expectations is an improvement in teaching quality and effectiveness. Respondents believe that mentoring can lead to “capable teachers who are well trained” and “more productive teachers and a reduced turnover of educators.” These outcomes are seen as essential for enhancing the overall quality of education. As one respondent put it, mentoring leads to “better retention of newly qualified teachers in their early years of working in education, a greater understanding of our learners and practices that have been successful.”

The role of mentoring in supporting new or novice teachers is heavily emphasized. Educators expect that through mentoring, “novice teachers will be able to adapt easier and they will be able to achieve success sooner.” This support is not just about imparting teaching skills but also about helping new teachers navigate the broader responsibilities of their role, as one respondent described: “That students can walk into a work environment with enough knowledge to know the expectations of being a teacher...and how to manage extra-curricular activities with the responsibilities of teaching.”

Another significant expectation is the improvement of student outcomes, such as “improved pass rate and academic performance.” Educators see mentoring as a way to create a more effective learning environment that directly benefits students. There's also an expectation that mentoring will lead to more equitable educational experiences, as noted by one respondent: “All children will be on the same level educated.”

The development of specific skills and competencies among teachers is another anticipated benefit. Respondents expect that through mentoring, teachers will gain “knowledge of classroom management, effective teaching strategies,” and “good teaching methodology.” This expectation extends to personal development, with educators hoping to be “more emotionally prepared for all the challenges in the education system,” especially in areas like discipline and classroom management.

A key theme is the collaborative and supportive nature of mentoring. Educators anticipate that mentoring programs will foster an environment where “teachers helping one another to become better teachers” and “sharing of ideas, materials, learning apparatus etc.” This collaborative approach is seen as vital for the continuous development of teaching practices and for creating a supportive community within schools.

Moreover, there's an understanding that mentoring can facilitate a smoother transition for new teachers from their training to the practical realities of the classroom. As one educator put it, mentoring can lead to a “smoother transition from student teacher to the workspace,” helping new teachers acclimate to the school culture and the practical demands of the job.

In summary, the expectations from mentoring programs in South African schools are multifaceted, focusing on improving teaching quality, supporting novice teachers, enhancing student outcomes, and fostering a collaborative and supportive teaching community. These expectations reflect a deep understanding of the challenges within the educational sector and a strong belief in the power of mentoring to address these challenges.

#### **4.2.3 The role of school management in mentoring initiatives**

The survey responses regarding school management teams (SMTs) and mentoring initiatives in South African schools present a multifaceted picture. On one hand, there's an acknowledgment of the potential benefits and importance of mentoring. On the other, the responses indicate varying levels of understanding and engagement with the role of SMTs in these initiatives.

A significant theme in the responses is the recognition of the value of mentoring in supporting educators and students. For instance, one educator emphasized, “Mentors are there for the teachers and children in a school... To guide them support them and to make sure that all is safe and educated for the right reasons.” This highlights the perceived role of mentors as crucial in the educational setting.

However, there are notable challenges regarding the implementation and effectiveness of mentoring programs. Responses such as “With the lack of accountability, the amount of educator absenteeism as well as current workload of educators, it is very difficult for SMT and PL1 educators to conduct successful mentoring programs,” suggest that while mentoring is valued, its practical execution faces significant obstacles.

Some responses directly addressed the role of SMTs in mentoring, indicating an understanding of the question's focus. For example, “SMT plays a pivotal role in mentoring in schools,” clearly relates to the involvement of school management in mentoring activities. These responses show an awareness of the importance of SMTs in supporting and facilitating mentoring programs.

Conversely, other responses focused more generally on mentoring in schools, rather than specifically on the role of SMTs. For instance, “Need experienced people to be mentors” discusses the general need for mentoring in education. This variation could be due to different interpretations of the question, influenced by personal experiences and perspectives.

The number of “No” or “N/A” responses is significant and could indicate a gap in awareness or engagement with these programs. This suggests that for some educators, the concept of SMT involvement in mentoring activities is either not a familiar aspect of their experience or is not deemed relevant to their current roles.

In summary, while there is an understanding among some educators of the role of SMTs in mentoring activities, the responses also reflect a broader focus on mentoring in general. The challenges cited, along with the varied understanding of the question, point to the need for clearer communication and more consistent implementation of SMT-led mentoring initiatives across schools.

#### 4.2.4 Success stories of mentoring in South African schools

An analysis of the responses to the inquiry regarding success stories or examples of mentoring programs in South African schools reveals a duality of awareness. While a notable portion of the respondents are not cognizant of formal mentoring programs, there exist positive narratives and specific instances illustrating the efficacy of such initiatives.

A notable example of a successful mentoring program mentioned by a respondent is the Jakes Gerwel Fellowship, described as “a wonderful mentoring program for newly qualified teachers and actively works to retain young teachers within the education system of South Africa.” This showcases a structured approach to supporting educators at the start of their careers.

Personal success stories provide compelling evidence of the positive impact of mentoring. One educator shared a particularly inspiring journey: “I was mentored at the start of my career. Within 5 years after starting at my new school, I was appointed Departmental Head.” This highlights how effective mentoring can significantly enhance career progression and professional growth.

Another educator detailed their personal experience, offering insight into the long-term benefits of mentoring: “I can share my own success story. I started as a student teacher at Laerskool G\*\*\*\*p. I received mentorship for 4 years from various different teachers. That made me realize what type of teacher I want to be.” Such accounts underscore the role of mentoring in shaping educators' professional identities and skills.

In some instances, mentoring led to tangible outcomes in schools. For example, one response stated, “Our school has many success stories in mentoring students and new teachers... This year 2023 the school received about 20 students. This is mainly because students are receiving the best mentoring at our school...” This suggests that effective mentoring can enhance a school's reputation and attract more students.

Other responses highlighted the impact of mentoring on teachers' confidence and willingness to engage in the mentoring process themselves. An educator remarked, "Teachers who are mentored, are confident and willing to improve. When they gain experience, they're willing to continue with the process of mentoring."

Additionally, some responses reflected on the value of mentoring for teachers returning to the profession: "I once mentored an experienced teacher that felt totally lost after returning to teaching... She was forever grateful and was one of the best educators."

Despite these positive examples, a significant number of respondents either responded with "No" or indicated a lack of awareness of any successful mentoring programs. This dichotomy suggests that while there are impactful mentoring initiatives and personal mentoring experiences, they are not universally known or experienced across South African schools.

In summary, the responses reveal that there are indeed success stories and effective mentoring programs within the South African education system, as illustrated by the Jakes Gerwel Fellowship and personal accounts from educators. However, the awareness and impact of such programs appear to be limited, indicating a potential area for improvement in communication and implementation of mentoring initiatives across the education sector.

#### **4.2.5 Personal experiences and observations related to the lack of mentoring in South African schools**

The responses to the inquiry about personal experiences or observations related to the lack of mentoring in South African schools offer a critical perspective on the state of mentorship in education. These insights, collected from 108 out of 154 respondents, reflect various challenges and deficiencies associated with the absence of effective mentoring programs.

Several respondents highlighted the detrimental impact of insufficient mentoring on teaching quality and learner outcomes. One educator poignantly noted, “Learners are misbehaving, not taking their education seriously,” suggesting a correlation between the lack of mentoring and classroom management issues. Another respondent observed that “Grade 1 teachers' pronunciation of English words are not always correct,” pointing to the need for professional development and support in language instruction, which effective mentoring could provide.

The personal toll on teachers due to the absence of mentoring is also evident. One educator shared a compelling account: “I have left a position at a school because the lack of mentorship meant that I was not growing within my position.” This testimony underscores how the absence of mentoring can lead to stagnation in professional growth and even result in teachers leaving the profession.

Time constraints and lack of accountability were cited as significant barriers to effective mentoring. “Mentors struggle to find time and lack accountability to complete the program,” one respondent explained, highlighting structural challenges within the system. This is compounded by the high educator turnover, as another respondent pointed out, “leading to educators not coping in the public school system.”

The responses also reveal a sense of unpreparedness and isolation experienced by new teachers due to the lack of mentoring. One educator recounted, “My first 18 months of teaching was hell due to a lack of mentoring.” Such experiences suggest that the absence of mentoring can lead to feelings of discouragement and thoughts of abandoning the profession.

There is an indication that when mentoring does occur, it can be transformative. As one teacher reflected, “I was once mentored and it meant a lot. Somebody willing to guide me. I can give back what I received.” However, the lack of a standardized approach or clarity in mentoring roles often hinders its effectiveness.

“Teachers who mentor do not know what is expected of them towards the mentee,” one educator observed.

Furthermore, the responses highlight systemic issues such as the lack of resources and training, which impede effective mentoring. “I have noted that in South Africa probably due to financial constraints the mentees are not receiving enough teaching and learning resources,” a respondent mentioned, pointing to broader institutional challenges.

In summary, the lack of mentoring in South African schools is depicted as a critical issue with far-reaching consequences. It affects not only the professional development and retention of teachers but also the quality of education provided to learners. The responses underscore the need for structured, accountable, and resource-supported mentoring programs to address these challenges and enhance the overall educational landscape in South Africa.

#### **4.2.6 Cultural and societal factors influencing mentoring in South African schools**

The responses to the query about cultural or societal factors influencing the lack of mentoring in South African schools reveal a complex interplay of elements, ranging from governmental attitudes to personal and institutional challenges. These insights provide a multifaceted understanding of the barriers to effective mentoring in the educational context.

A prevalent theme in the responses is the perceived lack of government interest in education, particularly in mentoring. One respondent stated, “Our government doesn't care about South African education no mentoring in our schools,” reflecting a sentiment of governmental neglect which may contribute to the absence of structured mentoring programs.

Time constraints were frequently mentioned, indicative of the demanding nature of the teaching profession in South Africa. “Lack of time” was a succinct yet telling



response, suggesting that the high workload and administrative duties leave little room for mentoring activities.

Competitiveness and reluctance to share knowledge among educators are also cited as hindrances. One educator noted, "There exists a huge barrier in terms of competitiveness...teachers are reluctant to mentor." This underscores a cultural aspect within the teaching community where sharing knowledge and mentoring new teachers is perceived as a threat to personal job security or growth.

Cultural and language barriers within the diverse South African context were identified as significant challenges. For instance, "If you teach in a school with a different culture to your own, the mentor might not understand why you are struggling with certain things that are more normalised in their culture," captures the complexities arising from cultural differences. Language barriers further compound these challenges, as another respondent highlighted, "Language barrier."

Societal attitudes towards the teaching profession and mentorship were mentioned as influencing factors. An educator stated, "A lack of understanding and respect for the occupations in South African culture in general...it causes discouragement," suggesting societal undervaluing of the teaching profession affects the implementation of mentoring.

The responses also indicate an internal culture within schools where experienced teachers are either unwilling or unable to mentor effectively. "Teachers and Mentors that are racist and don't think about all the different cultures that is in a school environment" points to deeper issues of prejudice affecting mentorship. Furthermore, "Sometimes experienced teachers don't want to share their knowledge and skills with mentees" reflects a lack of collaborative spirit essential for mentoring.

Gender and age dynamics within the school environment were also mentioned as barriers. "Old mentees do not normally want to learn from young mentors," and "in some culture male mentees do not want their mentors to be female irrespective of experience," illustrate how societal norms and biases can impede mentoring relationships.

In conclusion, the lack of mentoring in South African schools appears to be influenced by a confluence of governmental, cultural, societal, and institutional factors. These include governmental apathy towards education, time constraints due to heavy workloads, competitive attitudes among teachers, cultural and language barriers, societal undervaluing of the teaching profession, internal school dynamics, and prevalent biases and prejudices. Addressing these multifaceted challenges requires a holistic approach that encompasses policy reforms, cultural sensitivity training, and institutional support to foster a more conducive environment for mentoring.

#### **4.2.7 Final thoughts from the respondents**

The responses to the final open-ended question in the survey, which solicited additional comments and feedback from educators, provide valuable insights into their perceptions of mentoring in the South African educational context. Out of 154 respondents, 38 provided varied perspectives, ranging from personal experiences to suggestions for improving mentoring practices.

A common theme among the responses is the recognition of mentoring as a crucial element for personal and professional development in education. One respondent highlighted this, stating, "Personal fulfilment, we mustn't be greedy and not help others; let's share the little information that we have, then we will improve learners' outcomes." This sentiment underscores the belief that mentoring is not just beneficial for the mentee but also contributes positively to the broader educational community.

The potential for mentorship to alleviate the challenges faced by new teachers was frequently noted. For example, "Many new teachers feel overwhelmed, but with the right mentoring system, it wouldn't have to be that way," reflects the perceived capability of mentoring to ease the transition into the teaching profession and enhance teacher effectiveness.

Several responses emphasize the collaborative nature of mentoring and its broader impact on the school environment. As one educator mentioned, “If the mentors support you and guide you through the school environments, wouldn't all schools be better, but it is not just up to them... It is up to all pupils from headmaster even the parents e.g.” This response highlights mentoring as a holistic approach that involves various stakeholders in the educational ecosystem, including students and parents.

The ongoing nature of mentoring and its applicability throughout one's career is another point raised. “Receiving guidance from a mentor as a young teacher definitely shaped me to become successful in my career. It is an ongoing process, and you are never too old to learn,” one respondent shared, illustrating that mentoring is not only for newcomers to the profession but is a continual process of learning and development.

The idea of mentoring contributing to the quality of education was also echoed. “Mentoring can make a big difference in the quality of education,” stated a respondent, indicating that effective mentoring can lead to improved educational outcomes. This is further supported by the notion that mentoring helps in establishing a culture of important skills and disciplines.

Some respondents suggested that the mentoring process could be enhanced by external support, such as private companies providing mentoring services to schools. This indicates a recognition of the need for additional resources and expertise in the mentoring process.

In conclusion, the responses to this survey question reflect a widespread acknowledgment of the value of mentoring in the South African educational context. The educators' feedback highlights mentoring as a key factor in personal and professional development, a means to support new teachers, a collaborative effort involving various stakeholders, and a contributor to the overall quality of education. These insights suggest that there is an appetite for more structured, supported, and effective mentoring practices within the South African educational system.

## **5 DISCUSSION**

### **5.1 Research questions**

The aim of this thesis was to comprehensively examine the benefits and barriers associated with mentoring in South African schools. The central research question driving this study was: "Why is there a perceived lack of mentoring in South African schools, despite the well-documented benefits?" To address this overarching question, the research was structured around three key sub-questions that delved into the personal, systemic, and social constraints hindering the effective implementation of mentoring. These sub-questions were integrated into the literature review, providing a conceptual framework for the study. This research endeavour was motivated by the pressing challenges faced by the education sector, both in South Africa and globally. As experienced teachers approach retirement, the need for effective mentorship of novice teachers becomes increasingly evident. Novice teachers, in particular, struggle with the practicalities of the teaching profession, while the knowledge of experienced teachers is lost to the profession. To gain a comprehensive understanding of the multifaceted issues surrounding mentoring, a mixed methods research approach was employed. A questionnaire was designed, encompassing both quantitative and qualitative inquiries, and distributed to educators across the country. This mixed-method approach aimed to capture a diverse range of perspectives and experiences, contributing to a thorough exploration of the research topic.

#### **5.1.1 Personal Constraints**

The finding that 42.9% of respondents show a lack of interest in mentoring presents a stark contrast to the literature review, which predominantly highlights the positive aspects of mentoring. This discrepancy points to a significant gap between the theoretical understanding of the benefits of mentoring and the actual engagement of educators in the process. Such a divide suggests potential disengagement or apathy towards mentoring among a substantial portion of educators,

a concern that scholars like Hardy (2009) and Hobson et al. (2009) have addressed (Hardy, 1999, 113; Hobson et al., 2009, 210). This situation underscores the need to bridge the gap between theory and practice in the realm of educational mentoring, ensuring that the recognized benefits are effectively translated into active, meaningful participation by educators.

The research findings on cultural and language barriers resonate with the issues identified as challenges teachers face in the South African educational landscape, especially as discussed by Du Plessis & Letshwene (2020). This correlation is particularly evident in a poignant observation from one of the study's respondents: "If you teach in a school with a different culture to your own, the mentor might not understand why you are struggling with certain things that are more normalized in their culture." This statement underscores the complexities and nuances arising from cultural differences in the mentoring process. It highlights a critical aspect of mentoring in diverse educational settings, where understanding and bridging cultural and linguistic gaps are essential for effective mentor-mentee relationships.

The study's findings, highlighting challenges such as time constraints and limited resources, reflect the broader systemic difficulties faced by educators, as noted in the literature by Corrente, Ferguson, and Bourgeault (2022). These authors discuss the demanding nature of the teaching profession, including the impact of external stressors. This aligns with the specific issues identified in the study, where one educator poignantly remarked, "Mentors struggle to find time and lack accountability to complete the program." This quote encapsulates the practical challenges in implementing mentoring in educational settings, highlighting time management and resource allocation as significant obstacles, despite the clear recognition of mentoring's benefits.

### **5.1.2 Systemic constraints**

The survey results uncover that 53.2% of respondents identify a lack of funding and 47.4% point out insufficient training as major barriers to effective mentoring,

echoing systemic challenges within the South African educational system. Research by Evertson and Smithey (2000) explains the importance of mentor training. This connection emphasizes a crucial resource and support gap in mentoring, consistent with broader systemic issues such as heavy workloads and evolving curricula highlighted by Marishane (2014). An educator's candid admission, "Unfortunately, there was no system implemented by the management of the school to mentor me during my first 2 years," starkly exemplifies the absence of structured support. Another respondent's observation, "In South Africa probably due to financial constraints the mentees are not receiving enough teaching and learning resources," further underscores the impact of financial limitations on mentoring efficacy. Compounding these challenges, respondents also cite administrative burdens, such as excessive paperwork, as a significant hindrance, limiting the time available for mentoring activities. This additional layer of administrative obstacles aligns with the literature's broader narrative of systemic constraints, painting a comprehensive picture of the various factors impeding the successful implementation and operation of mentoring programs in South African schools.

### **5.1.3 Social constraints**

In the context of mentoring within South African schools, the societal and internal dynamics revealed by the research findings align with and expand upon the cultural challenges highlighted in the literature review by Du Plessis & Letshwene (2020). The educator's observation, "A lack of understanding and respect for the occupations in South African culture in general...it causes discouragement," not only echoes the cultural and linguistic barriers discussed in the literature but also points to a broader societal issue where the teaching profession is undervalued (*Where Have All Our Teachers Gone?*, 2023). This societal attitude can significantly hinder the effectiveness of mentoring programs, as it affects the perception and receptiveness of such initiatives.

Internal prejudices within schools, as indicated by the respondent's comment, "Teachers and Mentors that are racist and don't think about all the different cultures that is in a school environment," reveal a layer of complexity in mentoring relationships. Additional research shows that there is little to no training on anti-racism and racial sensitivity in schools, the Department of Education expects teachers to understand diversity as it is built into the curriculum (Davis, 2017). These prejudices and biases, which are inextricably linked to the broader societal and cultural context outlined in the literature, can create significant barriers to forming effective mentoring relationships, particularly in a multicultural educational setting.

The challenge of generational dynamics in mentoring, highlighted by the finding that "Old mentees do not normally want to learn from young mentors," further complements the literature's focus on cultural diversity. It is the norm for an older mentor to be paired with a younger mentee, but this is changing as people follow multiple career paths and similar-age or reverse-age mentoring can be considered (Finkelstein, Allen & Rhoton, 2003, 249-250). This aspect underscores the need for sensitivity and adaptability in mentoring approaches, acknowledging the diverse backgrounds and experiences of educators in South Africa.

In summary, the research findings, in conjunction with the literature review, paint a comprehensive picture of the social constraints in mentoring within South African schools. They emphasize the importance of addressing cultural sensitivity, societal appreciation of teaching, and dismantling prejudices to cultivate effective, inclusive, and respectful mentoring practices in a diverse educational landscape.

## **5.2 Additional findings**

The research findings indicate a notable preference for informal mentoring among South African educators, with 33.1% participating in informal programs as opposed to 22.1% involved in formal mentoring structures. This trend towards informal mentoring is in line with Garvey and Alred (2000), who argue that informal mentoring relationships are often more successful and meaningful than their

formal counterparts. The preference for informal mentoring within the study suggests potential systemic constraints in the formal mentoring frameworks of South African schools. It appears that educators find greater value and effectiveness in the flexibility and adaptability of informal mentoring. This inclination challenges certain prevailing perspectives in the literature advocating formalized mentoring programs (Hobson et al., 2009, 213), highlighting the possibility that, within the South African educational context, informal mentoring might be more efficacious in meeting the specific challenges and needs of educators. The findings emphasize the significance of acknowledging and enhancing these informal mentoring relationships as they offer a more responsive and personally relevant form of professional development for educators in the region.

A survey of 154 educators conducted to understand the motivations behind mentoring has revealed significant insights. A substantial number of respondents, 111, identified professional development as a primary motivator for engaging in mentoring. This perspective aligns with the findings of Hansman (2002), Iancu-Haddad & Oplatka (2009) and C. Y. I. Smith (2015), who underscore the benefits of mentoring in enhancing the mentor's own skills and knowledge. Further, 102 respondents view mentoring as a pathway to leadership and career advancement, emphasizing its role in professional progression as discussed by Ayoobzadeh and Boies (2020).

Additionally, personal fulfilment stands out as a critical motivator, with 121 respondents rating it as 'Extremely important'. This finding resonates with Blake-Beard et al. (2021), who observed that mentors derive deep satisfaction and fulfilment from their role, particularly in shaping the next generation of leaders. This suggests that mentoring provides an opportunity for mentors to experience generativity and avoid stagnation. The emphasis on lifelong learning, deemed crucial by 117 respondents, further supports the idea that mentoring is not just a tool for immediate development but a part of a continuous journey of professional growth as discussed by Braimoh (2008).

However, these strong motivations for mentoring are contrasted by practical challenges in the real-world implementation of mentoring programs. While there is a



clear recognition of the theoretical benefits of mentoring, as shown by the respondents' emphasis on personal and professional growth, a gap exists between this theoretical understanding and the practical application of mentoring in South African schools. This disparity highlights the need for supportive structures and resources to effectively bridge the gap between the potential and the actual practice of mentoring in educational settings.

### **5.3 Conclusions and recommendations**

In response to the need for improved mentoring in South African schools, establishing structured and tailored mentoring programs is essential. These programs should cater specifically to novice teachers, focusing on practical teaching aspects like classroom management and pedagogical strategies. Their design needs to be inclusive, addressing the unique challenges and needs identified in the study, and flexible enough to meet the varying needs of participants. This approach ensures that new teachers receive the necessary support to develop their skills and confidence in their early career stages.

Comprehensive training for mentors is also a significant requirement. Experienced teachers need training that equips them with the skills to mentor effectively, focusing on areas such as effective communication, providing constructive feedback, and nurturing positive mentoring relationships. Enhancing the skills of mentors is important to improve the quality and impact of these relationships, thus positively affecting the overall educational experience.

The role of policymakers in the success of mentoring programs is central. They should concentrate on implementing supportive policies that encourage mentoring in educational settings. This includes allocating resources for mentoring initiatives, recognizing and rewarding the efforts of mentors, and integrating mentoring into the professional development frameworks of educators, as expressed by study respondents. These policy measures are foundational for establishing effective mentoring practices within the educational system.

Fostering a supportive school culture is equally vital. School management teams should aim to create an environment that values mentoring. This can be achieved by promoting collaboration among staff, providing designated time and spaces for mentoring activities, and acknowledging the critical role of mentoring in teacher development. A culture supportive of mentoring benefits not only novice teachers but also contributes to a more collaborative and dynamic educational environment.

Investigating successful programs like the Jakes Gerwel program, as mentioned by study respondents, can offer valuable insights. Research focusing on comparing various active mentoring programs in South Africa and assessing their impact on teachers, learners, and the broader society can uncover best practices and effective models for mentoring.

Addressing cultural sensitivity and systemic issues is important. The study underscores the need for mentoring practices to be culturally responsive, recognizing the diverse cultural landscape of South Africa. Additionally, addressing systemic challenges like funding constraints, inadequate training, and administrative burdens is necessary for the success of mentoring programs.

Aligning mentoring approaches with educators' preferences and motivations is important. The preference for informal mentoring in the South African context suggests that more flexible and adaptable approaches might be more effective. Understanding educators' motivations, such as professional development and personal fulfilment, can guide the development of mentoring programs that are more aligned with their aspirations.

Lastly, bridging the gap between the theoretical understanding of mentoring benefits and its practical application is essential. There is a need for structures and resources that make mentoring more actionable and impactful in South African schools, with potential implications for other educational settings facing similar challenges. These insights can inform the development of more effective mentoring programs, policies, and practices, benefiting not just South Africa but potentially other educational contexts globally.

#### 5.4 Limitations of the study

This study has several limitations that impact its scope and implications. These limitations encompass various aspects, including methodology, geographical coverage, literature review, and data collection.

Methodological limitations include the use of convenience and snowball sampling methods. While practical for specific educational levels, these methods introduce biases and affect the generalizability of the findings. Non-random participant selection impacts sample representativeness, limiting the study's broader applicability.

Geographical limitations arise from the survey's coverage of eight out of nine South African provinces. The absence of responses from the Northern Cape, a sparsely populated area, and the overrepresentation of Gauteng, a densely populated region (*The Nine Provinces of South Africa*, n.d.), may skew the results toward urban settings.

Study demarcation focused on primary and secondary schools, both public and private, excluding tertiary institutions, administrative personnel, and students. This sectoral concentration means that findings do not encompass mentoring practices in these excluded institutions.

Data collection and respondent limitations stem from the study's specific focus on a segment of South Africa's educational landscape. While the sample size offers diverse perspectives from primary and secondary education sectors, it may not fully represent the broader educational context. Response bias in survey data and variability in the depth of qualitative responses further limit insights. Additionally, the regional representation of respondents does not align with the actual distribution of teachers in South Africa, affecting regional representativeness and applicability.

In summary, this study acknowledges limitations related to methodology, geography, study demarcation, and data collection. These limitations are important to consider when interpreting the study's findings and their broader implications.

## **5.5 Personal reflection**

This thesis draws its inspiration from a deeply personal experience rooted in my own journey through informal mentoring. My relationship with a compassionate mentor, who selflessly encouraged my success without feeling threatened, profoundly shaped my understanding of the power of mentorship. This dynamic was reciprocal; I had the opportunity to aid my mentor in mastering new technological skills. Witnessing her triumph in this area, an accomplishment she achieved without succumbing to pride or reluctance to seek help, was incredibly fulfilling. This exchange not only fostered my professional growth but also instilled a sense of mutual accomplishment.

My observations of the challenges faced by teachers in South Africa, as depicted in social media and news reports, further fuelled my passion for this study. Daily accounts of teachers struggling with discipline issues, administrative burdens, and ineffective management underscore the dire need for support systems within the education sector. I am convinced that a well-structured, yet flexible, mentoring program, tailored to the unique needs of each institution and mentoring relationship, can be immensely beneficial. Such a program would provide invaluable support not just for novice teachers but also for their more experienced counterparts.

In envisioning the potential impact of mentoring, I see the creation of "safe spaces" as essential. These are environments where teachers can freely ask questions, learn, experiment, and achieve success without the fear of ridicule or reprimand from management. The core belief driving this thesis is that effective mentoring can create these nurturing environments, fostering a culture of continuous learning and mutual support.

The aspiration of this study is two-fold: Firstly, to bring recognition to the systemic issues within the educational framework that are within the power of school management teams to change. Secondly, to encourage these teams to actively engage with and experiment with mentoring practices that resonate with their institution's unique context and needs. My hope is that the insights provided by this research will not only highlight the current challenges within the educational sector but also offer a beacon of change, guiding school management towards practices that nurture and empower both educators and learners.

In essence, this thesis reflects my personal journey, my observation of a broader societal challenge, and my hopeful vision for the future of education in South Africa. Through the lens of mentoring, it seeks to address critical gaps and provide meaningful solutions that can transform the educational landscape for the better.

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## APPENDICES

### Appendix 1. Understanding the lack of mentoring questionnaire



## *Understanding the Lack of Mentoring in South African Schools*

Welcome to the '*Understanding the Lack of Mentoring in South African Schools*' survey. Your insights are vital in uncovering the reasons behind the perceived absence of mentoring programs in South African educational institutions. Your participation will contribute to valuable research aimed at enhancing the educational landscape. Thank you for taking part.

### Definitions for clarification:

#### ***What is mentoring?***

Mentoring is a helpful and kind relationship in which a teacher with more experience (the mentor) helps a teacher with less experience (the mentee) learn and grow. The mentor helps, advises, and guides the mentee in his or her personal and professional growth. The goal is to improve the mentee's growth, knowledge, and skills, which will eventually make the mentee a more productive and successful teacher.

#### ***What is formal mentoring?***

Formal mentoring refers to a structured mentoring relationship that is often initiated by management as part of a program. It involves clear definitions of responsibilities, expectations, durations, frequency of meetings, and outcomes. Formal mentoring is a strategic pedagogical activity designed to support the professional development of the mentee within a specific framework.

#### ***What is informal mentoring?***

Informal mentoring occurs more spontaneously and voluntarily, extending beyond work situations into the mentor's professional and social network. In this type of mentoring, the mentor takes the mentee under their wing without a formal program. Informal mentoring relationships tend to be more successful when both parties are motivated to participate voluntarily, as they are driven by a genuine desire to share knowledge and support the mentee.

### **Survey Consent Statement**

**Introduction:** Thank you for considering participation in this research study, conducted in accordance with the ethical guidelines provided by the South African Council for Educators (SACE) and under the auspices of Tampere University of Applied Sciences (TAMK), Finland. The purpose of this survey is to gather information about the factors contributing to the lack of mentoring in South African schools. Your participation in this study is entirely voluntary.

**Your Consent:** By continuing with this survey, you are indicating your voluntary agreement to participate. You have the right to withdraw from the survey at any time without penalty.

**Confidentiality:** Your responses in this survey will remain strictly confidential. No personally identifiable information will be shared in any reports or publications resulting from this research. All data will be anonymized.

**Use of Data:** The data collected from this survey will be used solely for research purposes, specifically for the completion of a Master's thesis at Tampere University of Applied Sciences (TAMK), Finland. It will be conducted in accordance with the ethical guidelines provided by the South African Council for Educators (SACE). Your data will not be used for commercial purposes.

**Duration:** The survey should take approximately 7-10 minutes to complete.

**Questions:** If you have any questions or concerns about this survey or your participation in it, please contact the researcher, Lynette Botha, at [lynette.botha@tuni.fi](mailto:lynette.botha@tuni.fi).

**Voluntary Participation:** Participation in this survey is entirely voluntary. If you decide not to participate or to withdraw from the survey, it will not affect your relationship with the researcher or any associated institution.

**Acknowledgment:** By ticking "I agree" below, you acknowledge that you have read and understood the information provided in this consent statement and voluntarily agree to participate in this research study, which is conducted in accordance with the ethical guidelines of the South African Council for Educators (SACE) and under the auspices of Tampere University of Applied Sciences (TAMK).

I Agree

**Section A: Teaching Background and Demographics**

These questions help to place your mentoring experience (or lack of mentoring) within the South African educational landscape.

1. How long have you been a practicing teacher?

*Mark only one oval.*

- Less than 5 years
- 5 - 10 years
- 10 - 20 years
- 20+ years

2. Gender

*Mark only one oval.*

- Female
- Male
- Prefer not to say

3. Type of school

*Mark only one oval.*

- Public
- Private

4. In which province is your school located?

*Mark only one oval.*

- Gauteng
- North West
- Mpumalanga
- Limpopo
- Kwa-Zulu Natal
- Freestate
- Western Cape
- Eastern Cape
- Northern Cape

**Section B: Familiarity and experience with mentoring in South African schools**

Please describe your mentoring experiences in schools in as much detail as possible.

5. On a scale from 1 to 5, how familiar are you with the concept of mentoring in schools? \*

1. Not familiar at all
2. Slightly familiar
3. Moderately familiar
4. Fairly familiar
5. Very familiar

Mark only one oval.

Not familiar at all      1    2    3    4    5      Very familiar  
           

6. Have you ever been involved in a formal or informal mentoring program in a South African school? (Tick all applicable)

Check all that apply.

- Yes  
 No  
 Formal  
 Informal

7. If YES to above question,  
Please describe your mentoring experience.

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**Section C: Perceptions and beliefs about mentoring in schools**

8. Do you believe that mentoring can positively impact the education system in South Africa?

Mark only one oval.

- Yes  
 No  
 Not sure

9. What specific benefits or outcomes do you expect from successful mentoring programs in South African schools?

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10. In your opinion, to what extent should school management support mentoring programs? \*

Please rate the following options on a scale from 1 to 5, where 1 indicates "Not important at all" and 5 indicates "Extremely important."

*Tick only once in each row.*

	1. Not important at all	2. Somewhat unimportant	3. Neutral	4. Somewhat important	5. Extremely important
Establish a mentoring program in the school.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Provide funding and resources for mentoring programs.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Identify and assign suitable mentors to mentees.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of mentoring programs.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Encourage teacher participation in mentoring.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Foster a supportive school culture that values mentoring.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Coordinate with external organizations or mentors.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

11. Any other comments or feedback on school management teams and mentoring initiatives or activities?

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**Section D: Obstacles and challenges with mentoring in schools**

12. What, in your opinion, are the primary obstacles or challenges preventing mentoring programs from being established or being successful in South African schools? (Select all that apply, when choosing "other", please specify)

*Check all that apply.*

- Lack of funding
- Lack of training
- Lack of interest
- Cultural barriers
- Time constraints
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_

**Section E: Insights into mentoring in schools in South Africa**

13. Are there any success stories or examples of mentoring programs in South African schools that you are aware of? Please describe.

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14. Please share any personal experiences or observations related to the lack of mentoring in South African schools.

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15. In your opinion, what cultural or societal factors may be influencing the lack of mentoring in South African schools?

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**Section F: Views on being a mentor in a school**

16. What would motivate you to mentor a beginner teacher?

Please rate the following options on a scale from 1 to 5, where 1 indicates "Not important at all" and 5 indicates "Extremely important."

Mark only one oval per row.

	1. Not important at all	2. Somewhat unimportant	3. Neutral	4. Somewhat important	5. Extremely important
Professional growth and development.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Leadership development and career advancement.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Personal fulfillment in helping others succeed.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Lifelong learning journey.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Mentorship training.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Meaningful contribution to the profession.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Building collaboration with colleagues.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Providing smooth transition for new teachers.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Providing consistency of the school's teaching practices.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Improved learner outcomes.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

17. Other comments or feedback.

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