

**Departmental head's experiences in mentoring and supporting novice
secondary teachers in rural Malelane circuit, Mpumalanga Province**

by

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I declare that the above thesis is my own work and that all the sources that I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references.



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DATE 13 November 2025 _____

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I want to acknowledge the following for their immeasurable support, guidance and contribution to ensure I succeed in completing the dissertation.

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this dissertation to my parents. My father was a breadwinner who ensured I went to school and saw the value of education as an instrument for changing our lives. I also dedicate this dissertation to my late mother, who loved education but never got a chance to complete her schooling. My grandparents' cultural beliefs would not let her complete school, dictated that she quit school and go for marriage.

ABSTRACT

The aim of this study was to investigate the experiences of Department Heads (DHs) in supporting and mentoring novice secondary school teachers in rural Malelane circuit, Mpumalanga Province. The main research drawn from the aim of the study was -what are the experiences of the Departmental Heads (DHs) in mentoring and supporting novice secondary teachers in rural Malelane circuit Mpumalanga province? The study took place in one circuit in a rural area of Mpumalanga Province. The study took a qualitative approach and used a case study design. The study was conducted in four schools in the selected circuit. The study used the theoretical framework of the Situational Mentoring Framework by Kajs to guide it. The study participants were eight DHs from the four schools, with two DHs per school. A semi-structured interview was used to gather the data from the participants. The findings of the study show that DHs assume the role of being mentors to novice teachers by virtue of being head of the department and head of the subject under the department. In preparation for mentoring novice teachers, DHs organise all the teaching and learning resources that the novice teacher requires. DHs mentor and support novice teachers by discussing policy documents with novice teachers and assisting novice teachers to plan and present lessons. During the mentorship process, the DHs experience challenges from novice teachers, such as inappropriate dress code, absenteeism, arrogant behaviour of the novice teachers, poor classroom management and inability to talk about frustrations. The DHs address their experience in the mentoring process by meeting with novice teachers and discussing the problems encountered, as well as encouraging novice teachers to adopt positive behaviour. DHs also report to the senior management by providing a report on the progress of the mentorship process and the competency of the novice teachers in classroom management.

Keywords: Department Heads, Novice teachers, Mentorship, Mentors, Senior management, Situational Mentoring Framework, Teacher Support.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

B.Ed.	Bachelor of Education
BA	Bachelor of Arts
DHs	Departmental heads
FET	Further Education and Training
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
NSC	National Senior Certificate
PAM	Personnel Administrative Measures
PGCE	Post Graduate Certificate in Education
SAPPI	South African Paper Pulp Industry
SASA	South Africa Schools Act
SASOL	South Africa Synthetic Oil Limited
SMF	Situational Mentoring Framework
SMT	School Management Team
STD	Secondary Teachers Diploma
TVET	Technical and vocational education and training
UNISA	University of South Africa

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION AND ORIENTATION TO THE STUDY

1.1 INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

The teaching profession welcomes a number of novice teachers each year. The novice teachers enter the teaching profession rich with theory but with little or no teaching experience. This is where they experience reality shock because of the gap between what they learnt during training and what they experience at schools (Paula & Grinfelde, 2018). According to Botha and Rens (2018), reality shock is the gap between what novice teachers learnt during their training and the reality they face during their first years in schools where they get employed. The reality shock reported by Botha and Rens (2018) suggests that novice teachers find it difficult to cope in the profession during their first years of work. The literature (Paula & Grinfelde, 2018; Dishena & Mokoena, 2016; Pillay, 2016; Nemaston, 2020) states that novice teachers are supported in schools through various strategies such as induction, mentoring and collaborative work with other colleagues. However, novice teachers still experience many challenges in the teaching profession.

In Namibia, Nantanga (2014) reported that novice teachers mentioned challenges such as managing time and learner behaviours, lesson planning, assessment, recording, acquiring teaching resources, and understanding policies governing schools and other documents. Sözen (2018) also reported similar findings, indicating that most novice teachers face a challenge of feelings of belonging and being appreciated by administrators and students. In a study by Dayan et al. (2018), novice teachers seemed to struggle to do what was expected of them without adequate support. Amin and Rahimi (2018) suggest that due to the challenges that novice teachers experience, many of them leave the teaching profession for other careers.

According to Kiser (2022), there is no policy from the Department of Education for mentoring and supporting novice teachers. This is also evident in the study by du Plessis and Eberlein (2017), which reveals that some DHs receive minimal support from senior managers of the schools, while there is no external support outside the school. This perpetuates the challenges that novice teachers face and negatively

affects how DHs handle the mentoring process. Nemaston (2020) suggested that DHs suffer a heavy workload when they have to teach their subjects and also deal with mentoring and supporting novice teachers.

Departmental Heads (DHs) are responsible for ensuring that novice teachers get the support and mentoring that they need. In an ideal situation, the support and mentoring that DHs need to provide to novice teachers should help close the gap between theory and the lack of teaching experience in novice teachers' lives. Since such a situation may not hold in all schools, this study explored DHs' experiences supporting and mentoring novice teachers in rural Mpumalanga schools.

1.2 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

DHs welcomes novice teachers who graduated from their institutions of higher learning equipped with theory and no experience except the little time they get to spend at schools when they go for teaching practice. When novice teachers arrive at school, they need to be nurtured until they have at least gain three years teaching experience to be able to stand on their own. Part of nurturing the novice teacher can be mentorship. The novice teacher needs to be allocated a mentor who should ensure that the novice teacher challenges are addressed. The mentorship can work well if the mentor is someone who teaches same subjects with the mentee or DH who has vast knowledge of the subject matter that the novice teacher is offering. The school can also design a mentorship programme that can be utilised whenever there is a novice teacher in the school. Setting up mentorship structure where a trained committee for mentorship and set guidelines are put in place to handle mentorship in the school. Having the mentorship programme in place and implementing it will make the life of novice teacher easier and they will be able to handle challenges they facing with ease.

There seems to be a problem about the support and mentorship that novice teachers are getting from DHs. Novice teachers are faced with challenges in the schools which leaves them frustrated. This challenges novice teachers faces makes it difficult to adjust to the schools where they start working as beginner teachers. This is evident in Nantanga (2014) who found that novices are constantly confronted with challenges in the first years of their profession. It means that DHs do not ensure their

subordinates, especially novice teachers, are mentored and get the necessary support to deal with any challenges they experience in the early days of their teaching career. Literature highlights that teachers face challenges in their first few years in the teaching profession, and there is limited knowledge on how they are supported to cope with the challenges they experience. According to Mahome and Mpahlele (2023), newly appointed DHs assume their roles without proper induction and without knowing their functions. A study conducted by Nhlumayo and Chikoko (2022) revealed that DHs mentored new teachers to adjust to the new environment, and in some cases, DHs assigned senior teachers to mentor novice teachers. There is little evidence suggesting DHs are providing adequate support and mentorship to novice teachers.

If challenges experienced by novice teachers are not addressed, it may result in poor retention rate of novice teacher. The school may produce poor results as novice teachers may be underperforming. DHs might be frustrated with unhappy and stressed teachers. This indicates that there is a further gap in the knowledge on the effectiveness of the support and mentoring process by DHs, especially in South African schools and in rural Mpumalanga schools. The DHs are the teachers' immediate line managers, so if the teachers are struggling, the DHs are better positioned to support them. This is what motivated the need for this study to explore the experiences of the DHs in mentoring and supporting novice teachers in rural secondary schools in Mpumalanga Province.

1.3 RATIONALE

Every novice teacher needs mentoring and support until they find their feet in the teaching profession. In my experience as a teacher, my DH supported me in dealing with the challenges I encountered. I did not go through any mentoring programme. Other novice teachers who came after me received support, which helped them to adjust to the school. The only challenge I observed was that some DHs exploited the relationship they had with novice teachers by overworking them. Such practices led to poor relationships between the novice teachers and the DH as their mentors. Some DHs believed the novice teachers adjusted well through their support and had a good relationship. During my time as a teacher, I also observed novices struggling with numerous challenges, such as classroom management, lesson preparation,

setting assessments, and more. I believe that classroom management is a challenge in many schools, particularly in maintaining classroom discipline, which requires skills beyond the preservice skills novice teachers gain in practical classroom management.

Fantilli (2009) also holds the view that novice teachers face several challenges that lead them to leave the teaching profession. If some novice teachers encounter challenges in the first few years and leave the profession, this raises questions about the support they receive. The challenges experienced by novice teachers may be further compounded by the lack of resources in rural schools. Kozikoglu (2017) and Woest (2018) share that the lack of support from school management results in novice teachers encountering challenges in their day-to-day teaching responsibilities. Such support can be in the form of induction programmes, meetings with other novices and mentorship (Paula & Grinfelde, 2018). Sözen (2018) suggests that it would be better if managers, principals and experienced teachers collaborate with novice teachers to help them settle in the school. Novice teachers, being inexperienced in teaching, should be supported to become more competent in doing their work. It is, therefore, vital to design mentoring programmes that enable the development of novice teachers' careers (Gholam, 2018). The aim of this study was to generate knowledge on how DHs support novice teachers in rural schools through mentoring in rural secondary schools in Mpumalanga Province.

1.4 PURPOSE AND OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The purpose of this study was to explore the experiences of DHs in mentoring and supporting novice teachers in rural secondary schools in Mpumalanga Province.

The objectives of the study were as follows.

- To establish how DHs are selected to mentor novice teachers in secondary schools.
- To identify the DHs' preparation processes for mentoring novice teachers.
- To explore how the DHs mentor novice teachers (To establish how the DHs communicate with the novice teachers during the mentorship process) (To investigate the kind of support that the DHs give to novice teachers).

- To establish the challenges experienced by the DHs when mentoring novice teachers.
- To explore how the DHs address the challenges they experience when mentoring novice teachers.
- To establish the support that DHs give to novice teachers during the mentoring process.
- To establish how DHs account for mentoring novice teachers.

1.5 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Main question

What are the experiences of the Departmental Heads (DHs) in mentoring and supporting novice secondary teachers?

Sub questions

- How are the DHs selected to mentor novice teachers?
- How do DHs prepare to mentor novice secondary school teachers?
- How do the DHs mentor novice teachers? (how the DHs communicate with the novice teachers during the mentorship process and what kind of support DHs give to novice teachers).
- What are the challenges experienced by DHs when mentoring novice teachers?
- How do DHs address the challenges they experience when mentoring novice teachers?
- What support do the DHs give to novice teachers during the mentoring process?
- How do the DHs account for mentoring novice teachers?

1.6 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

In the following section, I present a summary of the procedures and methodology used to accomplish the study. A detailed description of the procedures and methodology is provided in Chapter Three of this dissertation. The research paradigm for this study was interpretivism; the study explored the experiences of different DHs in mentoring and supporting novice teachers. Every DH shared a unique experience with me. The study took a qualitative approach to explore how DHs work with novice teachers day to day in an effort to mentor and support them in

rural secondary schools. The study used a case study as a research design. I considered the case study design most suitable for this study because it enabled me to explore how DHs handle mentoring and supporting novice teachers. With regards to sampling, this study used a purposive sampling method to select the research site and participants. The DHs with a minimum of three years' experience as supervisors, who mentor novice teachers, were involved in the study. The study used semi-structured Interviews, observation, and document analysis to collect data. An inductive approach and thematic analysis procedures were followed in doing the analysis of the data. This study adhered to the four ethical principles: beneficence, nonmaleficence, autonomy and justice to ensure the study is ethical. The study also strived to ensure trustworthiness through credibility, dependability, transferability and comfortability.

1.7 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

1.7.1 Contribution to fundamental understanding (knowledge)

This study explored the experiences of DHs in mentoring and supporting novice secondary teachers in rural secondary schools in Mpumalanga Province. The findings of this study provide insight into the successes and failures of mentoring and supporting novice teachers by DHs. Experiences of success and failures of the mentoring and supporting process are shared and provide knowledge on the topic.

1.7.2 Contribution to practice and policy (applied)

This study also shares good practices which could improve how DHs mentor and support novice teachers to decrease the challenges that novice teachers face. The Department of Education, policy makers, and schools may be able to use the new information generated by this study to improve policies related to the role and responsibilities of DHs in mentoring and supporting novice teachers.

1.8 DEFINITION OF TERMS

Novice teacher

A novice teacher is described as a teacher who has limited teaching experience, which is not more than three years from pre-service training (al-Naimi, 2019). Lap et

al. (2022) argue that novice teachers can also be referred to using various names such as newly qualified, newly recruited, beginning or early career. Whilst Gottfried et al. (2025) define novice teachers as teachers with experience ranging between zero to three, zero to four and zero to five years of experience, However, for this study, a novice teacher is one who has just joined the profession, with less than three years of experience as a teacher.

Mentoring

Nemaston (2020) defines mentoring as a tool used by experienced teachers to provide support and guidance to novice teachers so that the novice teacher can progress well in their career. Hryshchenko et al. (2025) defined mentoring as a mechanism for providing support that employees need to succeed. Jannerdene et al (2023) are of the view that mentoring is transferring skills, knowledge and experience to sharpen the mentee. In the study, mentoring refers to the guidance novice teachers receive from DHs to address the challenges they face as novice teachers.

Reality shock

Botha and Rens (2018) explain that reality shock is a state when novice teachers see the reality in the teaching profession as opposed to their pre-service training on teaching and learning. Chipere and Nkosi (2019) define reality shock as reactions of newly qualified who come across situations they never expected in the workplace. Watanabe (2026) also sees reality shock as a phenomenon one may experience as they begin work in their career. In this study, reality shock is referred to as the challenging situation that novice teachers confront when they start their careers, which is beyond their expectations.

Departmental Head (DH)

According to Leveson (2007), a departmental head is a subordinate to the principal and has a responsibility to manage the department assigned to lead. PAM (2016) DHs are teachers promoted to head department or phases, higher level than ordinary teachers although lower than senior management. Mestry (2025) refers to DHs as middle managers. For the purposes of the study, a DH is a teacher who is responsible for managing a particular department.

1.9 ORGANISATION OF THE STUDY

Chapter one: Introduction and orientation to the study

This chapter gives the context and background of the study, outlines the problem statement, and states the research questions and objectives of the study. This chapter further discusses the theoretical framework, as well as the significance of the study.

Chapter two: Literature review

In this chapter, I review the literature on the topic and discuss the themes that underpin the current study. Both national and international literature will be reviewed.

Chapter three: Research methodology

The study is underpinned by an interpretivist paradigm. The research approach is qualitative using a case study design. The researcher uses purposive sampling to select the participants. Semi-structured interviews are used to collect data.

Chapter four: Research findings

Thematic analysis process used in this chapter and the findings of this research are presented in this chapter. There is also a discussion comparing the findings of this study with the literature.

Chapter five: Summary, conclusions and recommendations

This chapter consists of a summary of the research findings, conclusions and recommendations made from the findings of this study.

1.10 SUMMARY OF THE CHAPTER

In this first chapter, I presented introduction and background of the study, statement of the problem, rationale, purpose of the study, research questions, theoretical framework, research methodology, significance of the study, and definitions of terms. Lastly, I described how the study was organised. In Chapter Two, I discussed the national and international literature I reviewed on DHs experiences in mentoring and supporting novice teachers.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 INTRODUCTION

In Chapter 1, I presented introduction and background of the study, statement of the problem, rationale, purpose of the study, research questions, theoretical framework, research methodology, significance of the study, and definitions of terms. In this chapter, I presented the national and international literature on the experiences of DHs on mentoring and supporting novice teachers. This literature review includes the challenges faced by novice teachers and the experiences of the Departmental Head (DH) in mentoring and supporting novice teachers. DHs are often the ones who work closely with novice teachers and have the responsibility of ensuring that all the teachers, including novice teachers, perform well in the department. Novice teachers face many challenges during their first few years in the teaching profession. According to Nantanga (2014), Fantili (2009), Paula and Grinfelde (2018), Ahmed et al. (2020), Barker (2014), and Nemaston (2020), novice teachers face challenges such as overcrowded classrooms, lesson implementation and workload, lack of professional relationships, and classroom management. Experiencing these challenges frustrates the life of the novice teacher.

Paula and Grinfelde (2018) describe the experience that novice teachers encounter in the schools as reality shock. According to Botha and Rens (2018), reality shock is the gap between what novice teachers learnt during their training and the reality they face in their first years in schools where they are employed. The reality shock reported by Botha and Rens (2018) suggests that novice teachers find it difficult to cope in the profession during their first years. When novice teachers are confronted with these challenges and cannot cope, it leads to poor performance and a lack of job satisfaction. According to Amin and Rahimi (2018), novice teachers leave the field at higher rates as a result of challenges they face.

The DH who leads the department where there is a novice teacher is responsible for the overall performance of the department. Therefore, when a novice teacher is confronted with challenges, the DH needs to intervene to address the challenges by

the novice teacher. Novice teachers need mentoring to help them address challenges they encounter. Kajs (2002) asserts that schools should have a planned system in place for mentoring and supporting novice teachers to deal with the challenges they face. This system in place may ensure that there is accountability for the mentorship programme. According to Personnel Administrative Measures (PAM) (2016), a master teacher or senior teacher must be assigned to mentor and support a novice teacher. The DH is responsible for novice teachers in the department, has a responsibility to provide opportunities for mentorship and support for novice teachers, yet novice teachers still face challenges. This shows a gap between the roles of DH and the challenges faced by novice teachers. Therefore, in closing the gap, the literature review investigates DHs' experiences of mentoring and the support given to novice teachers.

2.2 CONTEXT OF THE STUDY

- Mpumalanga Province

Mpumalanga Province is one of the nine provinces in South Africa. The provincial capital is called Nelspruit, recently renamed Mbombela. The province is in the east of the country. The province shares borders with Mozambique and eSwatini. The province is hosting a university, which is the University of Mpumalanga. There are also three Technical Vocational Education and Training (TVET) colleges with a number of campuses across the province.

The Province is one of the richest Provinces in South Africa. According to the website statssa.gov.za (2022), Mpumalanga Province ranked as the largest GDP contributor out of the nine provinces. It is the largest coal mining province in the country and also one of the top three gold mining provinces. It also hosts the SASOL plant, which is a global chemical and energy company, the TSB sugar holdings plant and the SAPPI global renewable resource company plant, which are the richest companies that provide employment to local communities and contribute to the GDP of the province.

The province also hosts Kruger National Park. According to Brett (2018), Kruger National Park is the oldest and largest park in South Africa. It attracts tourists from all over the world who visit to see the big five. Farming is also rife in the province because of the favourable weather. The province is the home of citrus fruits, mangoes, avocados, maize meal and sugar cane, to mention a few. Thus, the

province is also rich in crops and livestock farming. According to the website Census.statssa.gov.za (2022), Mpumalanga Province consists of about 5143 324 million people, of which 66,4 percent are employed. The population is diverse, with 6 official languages spoken. There are economic activities, such as mining, industry, and transportation, although they are not enough for the entire population. There are cultural events taking place in schools and different locations where people gather to celebrate Heritage Day.

Wikipedia (2024) published that the population in the village is about 23000 as of 2011. The population in the village share the limited opportunities available. Most of the people who are working in the village are employed in the recently built shopping mall, schools and hospital, whilst some are transported by bus to work in towns away from the village. Some are self-employed, selling veggies, penal beating and owning day care centres. Whilst the majority of people, especially youth, are roaming around the village during the day, this shows a lack of job opportunities.

The province is rich in coal and gold. Roughly ninety percent of the coal and gold mined in South Africa is mined in Mpumalanga Province. The climate in the province allows farming, almost all types of fruits and vegetables and also livestock are growing in the province. That makes it easy for some households to have a small garden in their yards. The village is one of the rural villages in Mpumalanga. The village is under a tribal king. Where residents annually pay services to the tribal authority. The government does provide basic services such as water and electricity, refuse removal, healthcare and schools. It is less than ten km from the Matsamo border gate. This border gate separates the two countries, South Africa and Eswatini.

The language spoken in the village is IsiSwati, one of the 12 official languages in South Africa and the Main official language in Eswatini. The population in the village share the same cultural practices with the population in Eswatini. It is believed that when borders were drawn, they separated one community into two parts: one part fell into South Africa, and the majority fell under Eswatini. This is also evident in the nickname the people around the village gave to the country of Eswatini as “Kagogo,” meaning grandmother’s place. The village also hosts a large portion of the Driekopies dam, which is the only dam in the municipality. This dam supports economic activities such as boat rides and a picnic park.

- Secondary schools

In South Africa, secondary school, also referred to as high school, consists of grades eight to twelve. This phase of education is called the senior phase, although it starts in grade seven and extends to grade nine; grade seven is part of primary school education, and grade ten to grade twelve is called the Further Education and Training phase (FET). In grades eight and nine, learners study all subjects, whereas in grade ten learners have the chance to choose the subjects they want to specialise in, depending on the career they want to pursue. It is the last phase of schooling; hence you graduate with a senior certificate when you complete grade twelve. A senior certificate is a university entry certificate. If students don't make it in grade twelve, they get a chance to rewrite the grade twelve examinations they did not pass. Alternatively, the student can enrol at TVET. College where they will be admitted with grade eleven results.

The SASA (2011) stipulates that learners are expected to start schooling at seven years old, meaning they will start secondary schooling at the ages of thirteen-fourteen in grade eight and exit secondary school at the ages of seventeen-eighteen upon completing grade twelve. Between grade eight and nine, learners are taking all the subjects offered in the school, but once they are in grade ten, they start choosing major subjects to pursue until grade twelve. The major subjects must be in line with the career path that the learner wants to pursue in their further studies at a higher institution of learning.

Every learner is expected to sit for the grade 12 National Senior Certificate (NSC) exam, which will determine their grade in the senior certificate and allow them university entry. According to Mabizela and Goerge (2020), the NSC determines the extent to which students meet the outcomes set for grades R-12. The level of achievement in NCS determines the qualification the student can enrol in at a higher education institution. Student achievement may grant the student entry to a higher education institution to study for a higher certificate, diploma, or bachelor's degree. The NSC is also a qualification that many companies requiring unskilled labour require applicants to have at least.

Michaela et al. (2020) state that academic-related stress is a major problem among secondary and tertiary students; it plays a major role in their learning capacity, academic performance, and health. This leads to many problems prevalent in most secondary schools, such as unruly behaviour, alcohol and drug abuse amongst the learners. Deb et al. (2015) argue that researchers and policymakers find academic stress a big challenge amongst students because of the rise in the number of suicide cases amongst students around the globe. Ajemba et al. (2021) identified challenges such as a lack of learner and teacher support material, which also becomes a challenge for teaching and learning to take place, and inadequate infrastructural facilities. A study by Nemaston (2020), Bhembe (2018) and Woest (2018) indicated overcrowding classes as a challenge in schools that novice teachers had to battle with. I agree with that. In my experience as a secondary school learner, we often surpass the learner-to-teacher ratio to the point where a teacher can hardly move in the classroom. This was also the case at a couple of secondary schools where I did my teaching practice.

2.3 DEPARTMENTAL HEADS

The aim of the Departmental Head (DH) previously known as Head of Department HoD, is to engage in class teaching, be responsible for effective function of department and to organise relevant/related extra-curricular activities so as to ensure that the subject, learning area or phase and the education of learners is promoted in a proper manner (Personnel Administrative Measures (PAM) (2016). According to Wald and Golding (2019), in the United States of America, DH is referred to as a departmental chair, whose role is to serve as an academic leader and a middle manager. Obers (2015) further explains that DH sets the tone and influences the department's culture, and participates in governing and ensuring the school is performing well. The DHs perform multiple roles in the school. The following subsection presents the different roles expected of the DH.

- The role of DHs

According to the Personnel Administrative Measures (PAM) (2016), the duties of DHs vary depending on the needs of the school. The general duties include teaching, extra- and co-curricular, personnel, general/administrative, and communication. Mestry (2025) argues that DH serves as change catalyst who ensures school vision

is realised in the classroom. In the study by Siteketa (2023), some of the DHs perceived their roles as: (1) Agents to bring change on the school performance; (2) A big man who behind teachers who ensures teachers perform their duties; (3) Observe and address teachers' shortcomings; Lastly (4) lead by example by achieving higher results than the other teachers. I agree with the above roles of DHs because, from my experience as a teacher, DHs must lead by example, achieving higher results than other teachers. The expectation from the DHs of being a role model may also have the potential of creating unnecessary competition between the DHs and other teachers who might seem to be producing higher results than the DHs.

England (2022) reported that the responsibilities of DHs include managing teacher performance, managing inter-teacher issues or conflict, and being a change catalyst, whilst Kabaso (2023) indicates that, amongst other duties of DHs, is orienting new teachers to the department. Madonsela (2017) mentions that the DHs must plan, organise, coordinate, control and monitor the implemented scope coverage by consulting the annual teaching plan, which indicates dates and topics to be covered. They control teachers' files and learners' exercise books to ensure teaching and learning takes place.

The literature reviewed in this section appears to be consistent with the Personnel Administrative Measures (PAM) (2016) on the roles of DH. According to the Personnel Administrative Measures (PAM) (2016), the duties and responsibilities of a DH will differ from school to school, depending on the needs of each school. Certain responsibilities of a manager can be delegated to another staff member. I argue that different school circumstances are the reason why, in some schools, DH can serve as mentors or delegate that responsibility to another senior or master teacher, while in other schools, this may not be the case.

- Characteristics expected of DHs

Kabaso (2023) argues that DHs are supposed to be innovative and creative in their management of the department. Innovative and creative DH may ensure the department works as a team and is able to meet its target goals (Kabaso, 2023). According to Ghavifekr and Ibrahim (2014), DH should have the characteristics of an

instructional supervisor to be able to play a big role in influencing the performance of the teachers through support and development initiatives. Ghavifekr and Ibrahim (2014) add that DHs need to develop intellectual, personal, social, emotional and physical skills in order to perform their role well.

In a study by Tedla and others (2021), more than eighty percent (85%) of the participants in their study revealed that the most important skills that DHs should possess are personal skills, such as establishing interpersonal mutual relationships with their peers, knowledge of subject matter, knowledge of the curriculum, the skill of teacher supervision, as well as good communication skills. I believe it is impossible for DH to have knowledge of all subjects, since in some cases DH oversees a number of learning areas clustered within the department. In some cases, they do not have adequate knowledge of the subject matter in some learning areas. In one of the schools I worked in, the DH would rely on the teacher who taught the learning area for critical information about that particular learning area. This working experience reveals that not all the mentioned characteristics of DHs are often showcased in schools.

- Leadership aspects of DHs

According to Leithwood (2016), DHs, as middle-level leaders, faced challenges from senior teachers, teacher unions, and some teachers and other DHs that prevented them from providing a comprehensive leadership role in their departments and schools at large. The tensions that may exist between teachers and DHs may lead to a lack of cooperation and negatively affect the performance of the DHs, as well as the teachers (Siteketa, 2023). In my teaching experience, I can agree that jealousy and undermining between teachers and managers lead to unnecessary tension amongst staff. DH may end up being unable to provide leadership in some cases. A study conducted in Mpumalanga by Bipath and Nkabinde (2018) reveals that DHs do not recognise parental involvement in their children's education as a critical role in motivating the children. I believe that cooperation of parents and teachers is very important for the well-being of children at school, enforcing discipline, ensuring children do homework and study at home. Therefore, parents play a critical role by motivating children and keeping them focused on their education. This suggests that HDs' leadership role should incorporate parental responsibility.

- Challenges experienced by DHs

Common challenges in some schools include inadequate learner and teacher support materials such as textbooks, a shortage of tables and chairs in classrooms, overcrowded classrooms, and ill-disciplined learners (Sali & Kecik, 2018; Dayan et al., 2018; Widiati et al., 2018). This is also evident in a study conducted in Namibia by Siteketa (2016), which revealed that DHs, in particular, experience a shortage of teaching resources, and the resources available were of poor quality and did not improve performance. The study (Siteketa, 2016) recommended that the DH, together with subordinates, develop strategies to address these challenges and ensure the department performs well. Other challenges identified by Saleem and others (2022) included teachers' immature behaviour, low morale, unnecessary teacher absenteeism, poor interpersonal relationships, and communication gaps amongst department members. In addressing these challenges, DH needs to consider mentoring and coaching to ensure that staff members are motivated and work as a team. Whilst Madonsela (2017) and Obers (2015) found that the DHs are faced with too much administrative work and that the role of DH is not given the recognition it deserves. I agree that DHs have too much workload as they have admin work and still have to go to class to teach. The lack of studies that show the extent to which the work of DHs is appreciated and acknowledged by other stakeholders suggests a knowledge gap regarding the role played by DHs.

- Training

The literature that I reviewed indicated a further need for training DHs, as there is a consensus that the knowledge and skills of some DHs are insufficient to enable them to perform their anticipated role. A study conducted by Madonsela (2017) and Netshiombo (2021) revealed that although some DHs received training, they still complained that it was insufficient to assist them in implementing the curriculum. This is also evident in a study conducted in Mpumalanga by Bipath and Nkabinde (2018), which found that many DHs lacked leadership or management training, leading to poor learner performance. Whilst in an earlier study by Rajoo (2012), it was argued that DHs had been given training and guidelines in the subjects that belong to the department they lead to make changes they think are needed. Training is one aspect of the role of DHs that makes them effective middle managers if they have the

knowledge and skills required as DHs. Therefore, newly appointed DHs need training and induction as well as continuous professional development to familiarise themselves with the new roles they have been given.

- Support

Newly appointed and long-serving DHs need continuous support for professional development, to refresh their knowledge of the curriculum they are tasked to deliver and also in cases where there is a change in curriculum. According to a study by Rajoo (2012), DH is a level of management which is neglected in terms of receiving support from the Department of Education and other stakeholders. Mampane (2017) argues that South African DHs lack professional development skills in mentoring and coaching and further suggests that DHs need to be capacitated in order to improve their mentoring and coaching skills to ensure that teachers get the necessary support to improve learners' performance in a school. Mashiane-Nkabinde (2020) asserts that there is a problem of DHs getting support in South Africa. There is a lack of orientation programmes for newly appointed DHs, which may make it difficult for the DHs to execute their responsibilities, especially mentoring and supporting novice teachers in the departments. Therefore, the literature indicates insufficient support for DHs. Senior SMT, schools, circuits, and the Department of Education should provide adequate support to DHs so they can perform their duties.

2.4 NOVICE TEACHERS

There are various definitions of a novice teacher. Al-Naimi (2019) define a novice teacher as a teacher who has been working for less than 3 years after attaining their qualification. In comparison, Kim and Roth (2011) and Makoa and Segalo (2021) describe novice teachers as newly qualified teachers with less than five years of teaching experience. According to Ural (2021), there is no consensus about the number of years a novice teacher must have spent in the teaching profession; hence, in other definitions, it can be less than three years, while others can be less than five years. For this study, a novice teacher is defined as a newly qualified teacher whose teaching experience is not more than three years. Novice teachers are sometimes referred to as newly qualified teachers or beginner teachers. The sub-section below presents further discussion of the different aspects of being a novice teacher.

- Characteristics of a novice teacher

Makoa and Segalo (2021) describe novice teachers as newly qualified teachers with less than five years of teaching experience. According to my observation, since I joined the teaching career, most novice teachers are young adults fresh from college or university, who are at times not married yet, still living with their parents and looking forward to establishing their own families. A novice teacher may possess a minimum qualification, such as a diploma in education or a diploma accompanied by a postgraduate certificate. A novice teacher will be an inexperienced teacher or a teacher with 1-3 years of teaching experience.

According to Redman (2015), when novice teachers enter the teaching profession, they show a lack of professional self-efficacy. The lack of experience among novice teachers makes them inquisitive about educational matters. If novice teachers have caring mentors, they may be able to handle the challenges they face and find it easier to adjust to the teaching profession. Banerjee and Waxman (2017) assert that novice teachers struggle to blend technology during their lessons. From my experience, novice teachers may have technological knowledge and orientation; what they need is support and push to be able to infuse technology in their day-to-day teaching activities.

- Challenges

Lack of professional relations

The study by Ahmed et al. (2020) found that novice teachers face challenges such as a lack of professional networks and communication skills, difficulties in dealing with students' disruptive behaviour, a non-supportive attitude from school heads, a lack of harmony, a lack of self-respect, and professional isolation. Whilst a study by Dyosini (2022) revealed that novice teachers find it difficult to ask for help until they make a mistake. The social problems extend to parents who undermine novice teachers because they are young and unable to handle learners with learning barriers. I can also attest that, during my first years of teaching as a young teacher, some parents would undermine me during meetings, and that made it difficult to chair meetings where parents came to discuss the progress of their children with me as a

class teacher. Poor working relationships may interfere with the professional development of a novice teacher.

Overcrowded classes

One of the challenges experienced by novice teachers identified in the literature is large classroom sizes or overcrowded classrooms (Sali & Kecik, 2018; Dayan et al., 2018; Widiati et al., 2018). The number of learners that novice teachers expect to find in the classroom is often the opposite of what they experience when they begin their career. Most novice teachers find themselves teaching overcrowded classes, which makes it difficult for the newly appointed teacher to handle the behaviour of learners in large classes. Classroom sizes that novice teachers found themselves having to teach are larger than they expected. This may be because many public schools lack infrastructure, and there are not enough classrooms and teachers. According to the Personnel Administrative Measures (PAM) (2016), the maximum number of learners per subject in a large class is forty learners. Teachers find themselves teaching more learners than the stipulated maximum number of learners per subject offered in a classroom. This becomes a big challenge for novice teachers as they do not have the experience of managing large classes. Literature (Bhembe, 2018; Nemaston, 2020; Woest, 2018) found that participants in studies involving novice teachers seem to be overwhelmed when they had to deal with overcrowded classrooms. This finding suggests that novice teachers may need mentoring to be able to handle overcrowded classrooms.

Lesson implementations and workload

Lesson implementation was also reported by Widiati and others (2018) and Kozikoglu (2017) as a challenge because novice teachers struggle to implement lessons that address the needs of all learners in the classroom. I agree with the findings, stating that it is challenging for a novice teacher to implement the lesson and reach all learners. In cases where novice teachers have challenges in maintaining discipline in the classroom, implementing the lesson and addressing all the learners' needs becomes impossible. The findings in the studies by Kozikoglu (2017), Widiati et al. (2018) and Sali and Kecik (2018) indicate that novice teachers face a heavy workload. The paperwork in the teaching profession was noted by Kozikoglu (2017) to be too much for novice teachers because novice teachers are not used to marking classwork, tests and preparing lessons. All these are new

experiences for them, and having overcrowded classes just makes the workload even heavier because the paperwork almost doubles.

Woest (2018) found that the participants in the study mentioned that they had to take an additional learning area apart from what they specialised in. This makes it difficult for Novice teachers to deal with the workload because they must teach new learning areas that require new knowledge of the subject matter. In my opinion, this means a higher workload in lesson preparation than the novice teacher anticipated, and the novice teacher must study a new subject matter that they do not have adequate knowledge of, to do more lesson preparation and marking. All this adds to the stress that novice teachers are already going through.

- *Classroom management*

A study by Botha and Rens (2018) revealed that classroom management is one of the greatest challenges faced by novice teachers. The classroom management challenges mentioned by participants in the study by Barker (2014) and Nemaston (2020) indicated that novice teachers struggled with learner discipline. Maintaining discipline in the classroom is challenging for most novice teachers. Although according to the South African Schools Act (SASA) (2011), corporal punishment has been prohibited, some teachers find themselves having to administer corporal punishment to try to maintain classroom discipline. This becomes a bad example for novice teachers, as corporal punishment is prohibited in schools. Classroom discipline can only be maintained if all learners are engaged in teaching and learning activities at all times, even in overcrowded classrooms.

Support

According to literature (Kozikoglu, 2017; Woest, 2018; Bhembe, 2018; Dyosini, 2022), novice teachers are not getting the support they need to be able to cope with the demands of teaching and learning; instead, they are isolated by their colleagues. This finding could make novice teachers' lives worse, as they need support from colleagues and management to adjust to school systems. I agree with the view that novice teachers sometimes feel isolated and often left on their own in the challenges they face. When the management and experienced teachers isolate novice teachers, novice teachers may face multiple challenges. This means that novice teachers

must find a way to deal with the challenges they experience. Whilst Davids (2021) as well as Saleem and others (2020) reported that participants shared mixed views about receiving support, some indicated that they received support from the principal and deputy principal, whilst others did not receive support at all. Induction and mentoring, professional development, and collaborative work are the most common themes in the recent literature that speaks to supporting novice teachers in the early years of their career (Nemaston, 2020).

2.5 MENTORSHIP

Hryshchenko et al. (2025) defined mentoring as way of providing supporting employees to succeed in their career. Zoutendijk (2021) asserts that a mentorship programme is a formal programme that is implemented by school management, in which a novice teacher is allocated a senior or master teacher to guide and support the novice teacher. Whilst Crafton and Kraiser (2011) state that mentoring is a one-on-one interaction between an experienced teacher and a novice teacher. Therefore, a mentor is described by Daniel et al. (2006) as an experienced individual who can nurture the career of a mentee. McMahon (2023) defines a mentee as an individual who receives guidance and support from a more experienced and/or knowledgeable person known as a mentor.

- **Characteristics**

Zoutendijk (2021) explains that a mentorship programme is a programme that school management implements to guide the interaction between senior teachers and novice teachers for the purpose of developing the novice teachers. Vikaraman et al. (2017) further state that the mentorship programme must be structured, indicate time allocated for senior teacher and novice teacher meetings, as well as the roles and responsibilities of the mentor. The characteristic of mentorship is that the programme should have an important contribution to professional development in the entire teacher's career (Postholm & Boylan, 2018). The development takes place from student teacher training, continues throughout the induction stage as a teacher, and is strengthened in the rest of the teacher's career. Zoutendijk (2021) argues that mentoring is a taxing and time-consuming activity. This is because mentoring involves Informal communication, face-to-face and continues for a period of time where the mentor shares knowledge and wisdom with the mentee (Hamlin & Sage, 2011).

According to Kemmis et al. (2014), as well as Owusu-Mensah (2013), mentoring is done in three parts. The first one is mentoring as supervision; in this case, the mentor helps a student complete a project. The second part is mentoring as support, where an experienced teacher guides a novice. The last part is mentoring as collaborative self-development, where teachers mentor each other. In this study, I explored the type of mentoring that the DH give to the novice teachers in rural secondary schools of Mpumalanga Province.

- Role of mentorship

The Personnel Administrative Measures (PAM) (2016) document states that mentoring is one of the roles of a senior or master teacher. This suggests that any experienced or senior teacher may be allocated a responsibility by DH to mentor novice teachers, whilst in some cases, the DH may take up the responsibility to mentor novice teachers. Gibson (2006) states that the role of mentor is one of the key responsibilities of DH, adding that mentoring culture can be used to transform institutions and empower women and minority groups.

The role of a mentor is to provide professional guidance, including developing the mentee's identity, teaching skills, managing a class, and fostering a professional state of mind (Ben-Amram & Davidovitch, 2024; Geraci & Thigpe, 2017). Mentors also help novice teachers adjust to the school through sharing information about the school environment, rules and regulations, and rights and responsibilities. Hamlin and Sage (2011) are also of the view that the mentoring role is to offer the mentee counsel, a role model, professional development and boost the confidence of the mentee.

A study by Hudson (2013) reported that mentorship serves as professional development, which improves communication skills, develops leadership roles, and advances knowledge of subject matter. Zoutendijk (2021) found that there is a high correlation between ineffective mentoring and the high number of attritions of novice teachers. Therefore, the mentoring programme, if implemented successfully, has the potential to decrease the number of novice teachers' attrition. I argue that mentorship plays a big role in the life of novice teachers in and outside school, and also ensures the school's overall performance.

2.6 MENTORING NOVICE TEACHERS

A study done by Iancu-Haddad and Oplatka (2009) revealed the benefits of mentoring novice teachers, such as emotional rewards, where the mentors feel part of the successes of novice teachers. The second is professional benefit, where the mentors get to learn new things and refresh their practices and perspectives that they neglected. Whilst there are negative results where mentors feel delusional when the mentorship did not bring the results they expected.

Some novice teachers have different experiences during mentorship. In a study by Roff (2012) conducted in the United States of America, novice teachers reported that their mentors did not have enough time to mentor them. Likewise, Davids (2021) reported that all participants never received any form of mentoring in the school. This is also evident in a study by Zoutendijk (2021) conducted in South Africa, which revealed that none of the novice teachers who participated in the study receive mentoring. This finding further suggests that more research on mentoring of novice teachers should be done to echo the need for more mentoring opportunities for novice teachers.

Mentoring process

According to Hill et al. (2022) states that mentoring has the following stages:

Initiation stage: This is a stage where the mentor meets the mentee to agree to collaborate and develop the novice teacher. The following stage is the cultivation stage, in which, the mentee learns from the mentor, and the mentor shares lessons based on their experience. Separation is the third stage; in this stage, the mentoring relationship ends. This may lead to one party happy and the other unhappy. Mentees may feel dropped, or mentors may feel betrayed. The last stage is the redefinition stage; in this stage, mentor and mentee can develop other relationships outside of mentoring. The stages can benefit novice teachers if implemented in full. At the end of the third stage, the mentees would have learnt a lot and be able to stand on their own.

Apart from the different stages of mentoring, there are four specific components of mentoring, as stated by Kajs (2002). The first component is mentor selection. This is when the novice teacher is paired with a capable mentor who will work with the novice teacher throughout the mentorship and ensure it is successful. According to Hayes and Mahfouz (2020), mentor pairing can be either formal or informal. Informal mentor pairing occurs naturally and unplanned when a novice teacher feels they can trust and work well with a certain mentor. In formal mentoring, there is no matching of characters and personalities between the mentor and mentee. If the mentor and mentee are not a match, this often brings discomfort and anxiety to the mentee. The mentor must be an experienced teacher or master teacher with adequate knowledge of the subject matter and capable of guiding the novice teacher in all the challenges encountered.

Mentor and novice teacher preparation

Mentor and novice teacher preparation is presented by Kajs (2002) as the second component in the mentoring process. The novice teacher and the mentor need to be prepared for the mentorship journey they are about to embark on. If the mentor and novice teacher already have a good working relationship, it will make it easier for the mentorship to succeed. They need to plan and make time for meetings and set schedules for class visits.

Support teams

The next component is the Support teams. Novice teachers and mentors need preparation in the form of professional development to ensure they are prepared to rise to any challenge that they may encounter during mentoring. There must be support teams such as mentors, novices, schools, school districts and other experienced teachers from universities who will be able to provide professional development to the novices.

Accountability

Accountability is the final stage that determines if the mentorship was successful or not. The accountability process determines whether to select or retain the mentor, which starts the next cycle of the Situational mentorship process. To ensure accountability, the school must develop a systemic plan for accounting. This will ensure that meetings and planned observations are adhered to. I agree with the four

components of mentoring; however, the mentoring process must involve communication and cooperation, as well as challenges. In this stage, the novice teacher will be discussing their experiences with the mentor. Lastly, the novice teacher and the mentor might face challenges. In the challenges they faced, they might also seek help from the support team when needed.

Accounting for mentorship

According to Kajs (2002), if the school wants to ensure accountability for the mentoring of novice teachers, there must be a systemic plan of accountability with programme benchmarks. In doing so, the accountability plan will indicate the time for meetings and observations planned between novices and mentors for the purposes of developing the novice teachers. This is also evident in the study by Vikaraman and others (2017), who reported that the mentorship programme must be structured, with time allocated for senior teacher and novice teacher meetings, as well as clearly defined roles and responsibilities of the mentor. When there is an accountability plan, time and dates for the mentoring programme activities may ensure that the mentorship is effective. Every role player in the mentoring programme will be made aware of when and what is expected of them.

2.7 SUPPORT FOR NOVICE TEACHERS

In the following bullets, I present literature discussions on the support that novice teachers need to perform their role effectively.

- Need for support

According to a study conducted by Saleem and others (2020) about challenges faced by HoDs and strategies used to improve faculty performance, all the participants reported that they need support from the principal, administrative staff and senior teachers. They need support to better understand school rules, deal with challenging behaviours of learners, recommended ways of teaching and challenges they encounter while teaching.

- Types of support

There are various support mechanisms that can be utilised to provide novice teachers with the necessary support they need to be able to survive the challenges they face. Participants interviewed in a study by Davids (2021) reported that some

novice teachers received various types of support, such as induction, mentoring, support from subject advisors, support from the disciplinary committee and support from the Western Cape Education Department. Koca (2016) suggests that peer coaching can be used as a strategy that can assist novice teachers in dealing with the challenges they face. A study by Hill et al. (2022) argued that a mentor mentee good relationship result in robust, growth orientated relationship and meeting mentorship expectation. . However, Kozikoglu (2017), Pillay (2016), Salleh and Tan (2013), Dayan et al. (2018), Dishena and Mokoena (2016), Nemaston (2020) and Aspors (2012) emphasised three mechanisms that could be used to support novice teachers: induction, collaborative work and mentoring.

Induction

Aspors (2012) defines induction as a period of socialising and developing the novice teacher. A study by Dayan et al. (2018) recommends that novice teachers need to be provided with professional support through induction during their first few years of service. Pillay (2016) believes that induction and mentoring are the best ways to support the novice teacher within the school. Through induction and mentoring, novice teachers can settle into the school and have a colleague who can hold their hand throughout the challenges. Paula and Grinfelde's (2018) study indicates that the novice teachers who were involved in their study received support from the school through induction programmes, meetings with other novices and mentorship. Dishena and Mokoena's (2016) earlier study revealed that novice teachers are supported through induction, which runs for weeks in some schools, while in others it covers almost 2 years. This makes the induction programme successful when it is implemented for a long period. The induction process is beneficial to novice teachers when properly planned for and runs for a longer time until the novice teacher adjusts to the school environment.

Collaborative work

Pillay (2016) and Nemaston (2020) identified collaborative work as a strategy for supporting novice teachers. Collaborative work gives the novice teacher a sense of being part of a team and helps them learn to be a team player. Through collaborative work, the novice teacher gets to learn from other experienced colleagues. In a study conducted by Ngang et al. (2013), teachers' collective work on their teaching practices revealed that novice teachers took part in various aspects of

collective work, such as curriculum, extra-curricular and interschool activities. The majority of the participants indicated that they benefited from discussing with colleagues while preparing assessments and teaching aids. Furthermore, all the respondents shared the same view that experienced teachers and administrators have been supportive and helpful in coaching them on effective teaching strategies and the marking scheme.

Mentoring

The first years of novice teachers are perceived as challenging and, in some instances, determine how long the novice teacher will stay in the profession. If novice teachers are provided with the relevant support, like mentoring, the life of a novice teacher may be less challenging. The process of mentoring covers all aspects of teaching, such as discussion of teaching material, lesson observation and critiquing, teaching methods and setting and marking assignments (Salleh & Tan, 2013). Jones (2006) suggests the following mentoring strategies: peer mentoring, where all novices can collaborate and share their experiences. This strategy can be useful because it's easy for novices to share good practices amongst themselves as they face similar challenges. The other two mentoring strategies suggested are cross-department mentoring and mentoring teams. In all the mentoring strategies, there is no clear description of the role of DHs in the mentoring process.

A study by Jennerdene et al. (2025) revealed the benefits of mentoring novice teachers, such as emotional rewards, a good relationship sharing deep connection like siblings. The second is a professional benefit where the mentors get to learn new things and refresh their practices and perspectives they neglected. Whilst there are negative results where mentors feel delusional when the mentorship did not bring the results they expected. Despite the benefits of mentorship, a study by Roff (2012) conducted in the United States of America revealed that novice teachers felt their mentors did not have enough time for them.

- What works well

There are three types of support that can work well to provide novice teachers with the necessary support they need, namely:

Induction

Vikaraman et al. (2017) describe induction as a programme implemented by the school management team (SMT) when a novice teacher joins the school, with the purpose of orientating and acclimatising the novice teacher to the school environment. According to Zoutendijk (2021), induction is important for novice teachers, as it makes novice teachers feel welcomed to the school, feel that they are supported, and they find it easy to adjust in the school environment. Koca (2016) also argues that to implement the induction programme successfully, there must be a proper analysis of the problems faced by novice teachers and implementation of the solutions during induction. Incorporating solutions to challenges experienced by novice teachers during induction prepares the novice teachers for possible challenges and solutions before they happen.

Collaborative work

If a novice teacher is part of the team, it becomes easier to learn from experienced teachers. This is also evident in a study by Arnsby (2025), participants reported that collaborating with experienced colleagues played a crucial role in supporting novice teachers. This enables the novice teacher to have reference from other teachers, be scaffolded where they are lacking. This can also build working relationships with a number of teachers in the team. This is evident in a study by Charner-Laird et al, (2016), which revealed that participants received support in different ways such as scheduled meetings with, DHs, mentors and other novice teachers where they shared ideas and resources, in other cases experienced teachers checked on the novices to hear how are they doing and some cases the novices started interactions with the experienced teachers.

Mentoring

Mampane (2017) argues that having a mentoring and coaching environment ensures the school delivers quality teaching and learning. Schools should also encourage teachers to gather best practices by continuously attending professional development workshops. A study by Ural (2021) reported that all participants thought that their mentors were effective and had a positive influence on their commitment to the teaching profession. Through the support of mentors, they were able to adapt to the school and improve instructional capabilities.

Challenges

A study by Scoulding (2025) reported mixed views whilst other participants indicated they had sufficient time some reported that during the mentoring process, the mentor did not have enough time for the mentee, which the mentee described as little engagement. In some instances, mentors have to compromise their work. This already dooms the mentoring process to fail, because whenever the mentee has things that they would like to engage the mentor, the mentor will have no time. In Dyosini (2020), novice teachers indicated they had the challenge of being undermined by parents because they are younger teachers. If parents undermine novice teachers, this may lead learners to lack discipline and drop in school performance.

In a study by Charner-Laird et al. (2016), findings revealed that while most participants were able to collaborate and work well with several colleagues, only 4 participants reported being isolated. The participants indicated that they were shocked and demotivated by the isolation and had to work alone. Zoutendijk (2021) is also of the same view that many novice teachers feel isolated and they confronted with a full workload, which leaves them frustrated, and there is a lack of assistance. Harmsen et al. (2018) reported that novices face challenges such as non-supportive attitudes from school heads and senior teachers. This can frustrate the novice teacher and put their job at risk because senior teachers and school heads are the ones who are supposed to provide support and ensure novice teachers settle into the profession.

2.8 DHS MENTORSHIP EXPERIENCES

The Personnel Administrative Measures (PAM) (2016) does not put the role of mentorship squarely on the shoulders of DHs but states that a senior teacher or master teacher is responsible for mentoring novice teachers. I argue that the DH are also senior or master teachers in their own right, although they also wear a management hat. Thus, DH still have a role to play in mentoring in a case where the novice teacher who needs mentoring belongs to the department headed by the DH. Mestry (2025) reported due to heavy workload DHs pays little attention to role of professional development of teachers.

A study by Phafoli (2019) reported that out-of-field teachers were required to teach learning areas they did not specialise in, which posed challenges for DHs who were

supposed to mentor the out-of-field teachers. I am also of the view that novice teachers find it difficult to cope with the challenges they face. Even if they had to offer learning areas they specialised in, it must be worse for DHs having to mentor novice teachers who do not have knowledge of the subject matter they have to teach. Phafoli (2019) added that DHs need to seek external help in the form of professional development for the out-of-service teachers to improve their knowledge and understanding.

2.9 THEORITICAL FRAMEWORK OF THE STUDY

This study seeks to explore the experiences of DHs in mentoring and supporting novice teachers in rural secondary schools in Mpumalanga Province so that the novice teachers can deal with the challenges they face. The theoretical framework that underpinned this study is the Situational Mentoring Framework (SMF) by Kajs (2002). SMF is grounded in four major components of the mentoring process. The components are shown in the figure below:

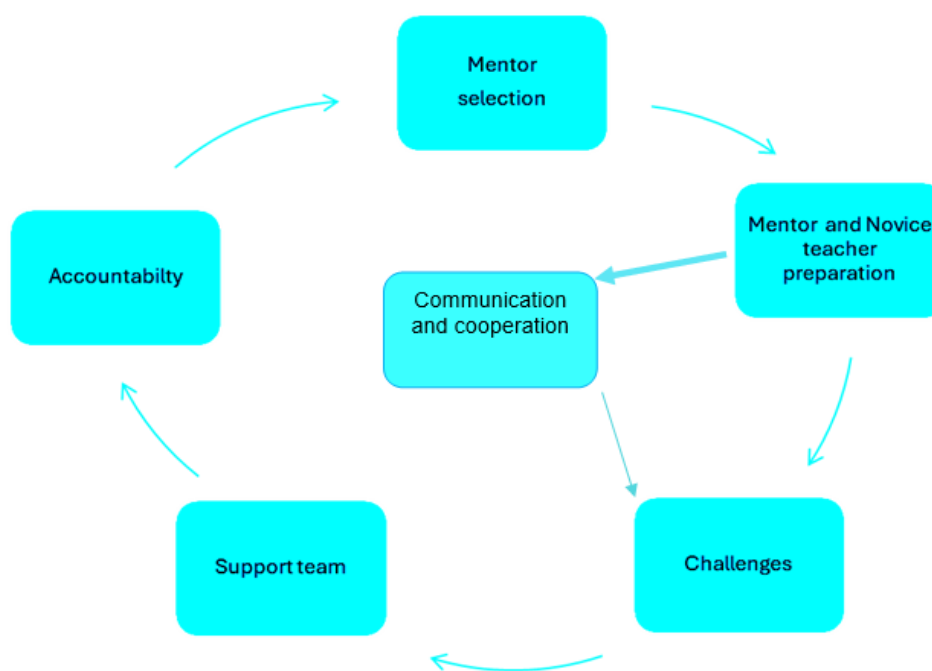


Figure 1 Components of the SMF mentoring process

The model shows the components of a mentoring process as a continuous cyclical process that begins with the selection of mentors. Situational mentorship proposes that mentors should be matched with novice teachers according to their thinking

style. Clark and Byrnes (2012) identify the Situational Mentoring Framework (SMF) as the matching of mentors and novice teachers based on their compatibility to ensure the success of the mentorship programme. The framework assumes that if the mentor and novice teacher already have good working relations, the mentorship process becomes easier, and the success of the process is evident (Clark & Byrnes, 2012). This means the school principal needs to consider specific matching characteristics when selecting mentors for novice teachers.

The next step of the framework is developing the mentor teachers to assist novice teachers. In this phase, SMF suggests that mentor teachers need professional development to equip themselves with the knowledge and skills needed for their mentoring role. The reality is that schools do not often send mentor teachers for development workshops, making this a gap that needs to be fulfilled for successful mentorship. SMF proposes that a support team should be appointed and made responsible for mentoring novice teachers. The common practice is that a novice teacher is assigned a mentor, who is the only person responsible for mentoring them. It further recommends that there must be a plan for accountability with set standards to be met.

Mentor and novice teachers need to work towards professional advancement through mentoring to overcome the challenges experienced in the early years of teaching. The mentoring process in this framework is perceived as a collaborative effort that includes the support teams made up of mentors, novices and school, school district, and other experienced teachers.

The accountability process that is included in SMF determines the need for selecting or retaining the mentor, which starts the next cycle of the Situational mentorship process. Accountability includes the methodological process of working and setting a standard to be followed. This accountability plan ensures that there are scheduled meetings and observations between novices and mentors for the purposes of developing the novice.

The components of the SMF mentoring process also need effective communication and collaboration from all stakeholders. This can enable all stakeholders to develop an environment that empowers novice teachers. In this study, I explored the experiences of DHs in mentoring novice teachers, which includes the selection and

preparation process, the challenges they experience and how to address the challenges, as well as the accountability measures employed by the DHs or the lack of them.

In summarising the literature reviewed, which investigated DH experiences in mentoring and supporting novice teachers. The literature reviewed, Nantanga (2014), Paula and Grinfelde (2018), Ahmed et al. (2020), Barker (2014), and Nemaston (2020), indicated that novice teachers are faced with challenges including classroom management, lack of professional relations, lesson implementation and workload, and overcrowded classes. The novice teachers need support to confront the challenges they encounter.

2.10 GAPS IN LITERATURE

There is little evidence that mentoring of novice teachers is taking place in some schools. Studies by Saleem et al. (2020), Davids (2021) and Zoutendijk (2021) revealed that the participants in the studies indicated that they did not receive mentoring, and some schools where they tried to implement a mentorship programme were ineffective. The challenges experienced by novice teachers were the mentor having no time for the mentorship, and novice teachers feeling isolated. The mentorship programme was not planned; hence, there is no evidence of accountability for mentors who do not make time for the mentorship programme. It seems that more studies should be done on how the mentor is selected for novice teachers. According to Personnel Administrative Measures (PAM) (2016), a senior or master teacher should be given responsibility to mentor novice teachers. The literature reviewed indicated that in some schools, no mentoring activities are taking place. The literature from the studies done by Pillay (2016), Nemaston (2020), and Charner-Laird et al. (2016) revealed that there are mixed views about receiving support. Novice teachers who were able to receive support from DH, experienced teachers and other novice teachers through collaborative work.

The literature, Vikaraman et al. (2017), Hayes and Mahfouz (2020), Saleem et al. (2020), Davids (2021), and Zoutendijk (2021), also indicated that there is little evidence of DH taking the role of being mentors of novice teachers. There are also concerns that the DH involved in the reviewed studies revealed that they did not receive training, Mashiane-Nkabinde (2020), Mampane (2017) and Rajoo (2020).

The School Management Team seem not to be paying attention to mentorship for novice teachers and the training for DH. Novice teachers and DH are left to find ways to address the situation they face. In the absence of a formal mentoring programme, the DH and novice teachers find ways to handle the challenges the school is facing. This is consistent with the interpretivist paradigm for this study.

As stated above, the literature reviewed does not provide any evidence of mentoring of novice teachers occurring in schools. However, there is evidence of novice teachers receiving support. This study sought to investigate how DH mentors and supports novice teachers. In answering the question, the literature reviewed does not show evidence of DHs mentoring and providing support to novice teachers.

2.11 SUMMARY OF THE CHAPTER

This chapter reviewed the national and international literature on DHs' experiences of mentoring and supporting novice teachers. I discussed mentorship, novice teachers, departmental heads, support for novice teachers, secondary schools, and the context of the study. In the next chapter, I presented the research methodology that was applied to conduct the study.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 INTRODUCTION

In Chapter Two, I reviewed the literature on DHs' experiences in supporting and mentoring novice teachers. In this chapter, I discuss the research methodology of this study. The research paradigm, research approach and research design are presented. I also explain the research site, sampling and participants, as well as data generation methods and analysis procedures. The ethical considerations and the strategies that I used to ensure the trustworthiness of the findings are also included in this chapter.

3.2 RESEARCH PARADIGM

Research paradigm is described by Rehman and Alharthi (2016) as a way in which researchers express their understanding of what reality means to them. There are different research paradigms for various research designs. According to Ugwu et al. (2021), qualitative paradigms include interpretivist and constructivist paradigms, among others, while quantitative paradigms include positivist and critical theory. Different types of research paradigms have different ontologies and epistemologies. According to Kant (2014), ontology means the existence of reality independent of human beings' knowing of it. In simple terms, ontology is concerned with what we can know in the world. This study sought to find out the reality regarding how DHs mentor and support novice teachers. Therefore, the ontology of the study focused on the reality of the phenomenon as described by the different participants. This means that the findings of this study were based on multiple realities experienced by the participants.

Another aspect of a research paradigm is epistemology. Kant (2014) states that epistemology is about validating what we know about knowledge generated. The epistemology of the study is to learn how DHs mentor and support novice teachers. In this study, epistemology is concerned with validating the details of how the mentorship process is carried out and also what DHs do to support novice teachers. This means that knowledge about mentorship support for the DHs by the teachers

will be generated from the participants' responses. Rehman and Alharthi (2016) state that methodology is about studying and analysing data production techniques. In this study, the methodology is about determining which data collection strategies can be applied to give the required data for answering the research questions.

The paradigm that underpinned this study is interpretivism. Gemma (2018) asserts that interpretivists understand truth as knowledge that is subjective, based on the experiences of the participants. According to Pulla and Carter (2018), interpretivism focuses on understanding the meaning behind the behaviour of human beings and social phenomena. Furthermore, Johnson and Christiansen (2024) state that in an interpretivist paradigm, the reality being studied is subjective. The researcher seeks to understand the participants' interpretations and perceptions of the truth as they experienced it. Ugwu et al. (2021) share the view that the interpretivist paradigm emphasises understanding how individuals interpret their experiences of the world. Babones (2016) argues that interpretivism is meant for a qualitative approach but can also be used in quantitative data analysis.

In this study, I, as the researcher, believe in subjective and multiple realities, and I explored the experiences of DHs in mentoring and supporting novice teachers. I wanted to generate knowledge about the reality of mentoring novice teachers as experienced by the DHs. Since different DHs were involved in this study, I expected multiple realities of the phenomenon. In this study, the epistemological assumption that knowledge about the experiences of how DHs mentor and support novice teachers is co-constructed by me and the participants, whose views were expressed through the interviews I conducted with them. My task as the researcher was to make sense of the data generated from the participants.

3.3 RESEARCH APPROACH

The study followed a qualitative research approach. Aspers and Corte (2019) define qualitative research as an iterative process in which improved understanding of the scientific community is achieved by making new significant distinctions resulting from getting closer to the phenomenon. Rahman (2016) argues that a qualitative approach enables the participants to give a detailed understanding of the phenomenon and a clear interpretation of their actions. The different qualitative data collection methods

make data collection subjective and detailed. Qualitative design makes complex issues easier to understand. Lastly, a qualitative approach holistically understands human experience in a specific setting. The qualitative approach was a suitable approach for this study because it enabled me to investigate in depth how DHs mentor and support novice teachers in secondary schools.

Asenahabi (2019) states that the advantage of the qualitative approach is that it produces data that is descriptive and detailed, using open-ended questions. In that sense, it allows the researcher to ask questions and use follow-up questions to dig for more information. Qualitative research approach allows the participants to answer in their own words rather than having to choose from given answers. The research required me to be a good listener during the interviews. The interviews also enable the participants to be in a conversational mode.

Despite the advantages of the qualitative approach, there are some limitations, such as low validity, inability to generalise findings due to small sample size, and complex data analysis and interpretation. The other disadvantage of interviews is that they can be time-consuming, have low validity, be high-risk, and require the researcher to have the skills to encourage participants to share their experiences. In this study, I ensured that the time allotted for interviews was adhered to and that all interviews were completed on time. During interviews, I asked focused and non-leading questions. The findings of the study were shared with the participants to verify if their responses were captured correctly to reduce researcher bias.

3.4 RESEARCH DESIGN

Creswell (2014) describes a research design as an inquiry that provides a direction which must be followed in conducting the study. Ansari et al. (2022) describe a research design as a wide framework that defines the whole plan of conducting research work. There are different types of research designs: descriptive exploratory, experimental, diagnostic and correlational. This study used an exploratory research design. According to Ansari et al. (2022), an exploratory research design is a research approach used to study a particular topic that has been studied before or has not been well explained. There are many research designs in quantitative, qualitative and mixed method studies. Asenahabi (2019) states that research designs in quantitative studies include true experimental, quasi-experimental, survey,

correlation, and causal-comparative research. Whilst in a qualitative study, the research designs include grounded theory, phenomenology, ethnography, narrative design, case study, and others.

In this study, I chose a case study design. Heale and Twycross (2017) explain that a case study is an intensive study of a person, group of people, or unit, with the intention of generalising across several units. This means the researcher may only generalise the study's findings to the cases involved in the study, not beyond its boundaries. Case study design was the most suitable one for this study because I explored how DHs mentor and support novice teachers in the secondary schools in rural areas of Mpumalanga Province. This study was a multi-site case study involving four rural secondary schools.

Case study design has both advantages and disadvantages. Heale and Twycross (2017) note that a case study is able to use multiple case research studies that enable an in-depth understanding of the cases as a unit. The data generated in a case study is based on the real-life experiences of the participants. The weaknesses of a case study design are that the findings of the study cannot be generalised beyond the context of the study. There is also a possibility of researcher bias in the collection and analysis of the data. This calls for accuracy in the process of enhancing the trustworthiness of the data.

3.5 DATA GENERATION

The following process provides details of how I generated data in this study.

- **Research site**

The research sites of this study were four secondary schools in two villages in the rural areas of Mpumalanga Province. These two villages are situated opposite each other, and there is a newly built shopping mall in between. Initially, it was one village, but as people needed places to build homes, it expanded until the area was demarcated into two villages. The four secondary schools are public secondary schools and the only ones in these two villages. Life in the villages is slowly improving in terms of social and economic activities. Although unemployment is rife,

there are some community members who are working. Buses transport migrant workers from the village to their workstations daily. Although most villagers' economic capacity is low, there are amenities such as electricity and running water. The mode of transport is minibus taxis and buses.

The schools are in a position where they are easily accessible. This makes it easier for students to reach the school on foot or by other modes of transport in the villages. I used the purposive sampling method to choose these villages. The chosen villages had at least two secondary schools where I needed to conduct my study. The schools had a high number of teachers, which made it possible for me to find the required number of participants. The sampling was also convenient because these two villages are close to my village, making them easily accessible for me at a low cost of transport.

- **Sampling**

In this study, not all participants in the schools were included. I had to sample the participants who were approached to participate in the study. Shorten and Moorley (2014) define sampling as the process of selecting a portion of the population to participate in a study. Sampling is broad, and there are various types. Etikan and Bala (2017) identify the types of sampling as quota sampling, snowball sampling, systematic sampling, purposive sampling, stratified sampling and many more. For this study, the most suitable sampling method is purposive sampling.

I used purposive sampling to choose the participants from the different schools. Okeke and Van Wyk (2015) refer to purposive sampling as a process in which the researcher uses predetermined characteristics to select the individuals to participate in the study. Purposive sampling was the most suitable sampling technique for this study. In this study, eight DHs from four secondary schools were eligible to take part in the study. In each school, two DHs were sampled. The DHs sampled were those from different departments in each of the four schools. These were the DHs currently mentoring novice teachers at their school and those who recently mentored novice teachers. The DHs had to have at least 3 years' experience as DHs. Preference was given to the DHs with more years of experience supervising novice teachers.

The DHs qualifications were a minimum of a Diploma, a master's degree as the highest qualification, or a postgraduate certificate in education. I focused on maintaining an equal number of both male and female participants. I called the principals of the schools to discuss the purpose of the study. The principals shared the message with their DHs who fit the given criteria. I made individual telephone calls and discussed the intended study with the DHs. The school principals assisted me with the names of DHs who were responsible for mentoring and induction in the schools.

- **Data generation**

In this study, I used an interview protocol to generate data from the participants. Ruslin et al. (2022) define an interview as the interaction between two people on an occasion in which one is the interviewer and the other the interviewee. There are various types of interviews: unstructured, semi-structured, and structured. The type of interviews used in this study was semi-structured to give me the opportunity to ask follow-up questions. Magaldi and Berler (2020) describe semi-structured interviews as an exploratory interview where the interviewer uses a guide of questions emanating from the main topic. The interviews took place in the schools' DHs offices. The interview lasted about 30 minutes each session.

According to Kakilla (2021), the advantages of a semi-structured interview include the ability to critically scrutinise conversations, the researcher being able to ask further questions, and the interviewee being able to respond in detail. Disadvantages and limitations include loss of data if the interview is not face-to-face; a language barrier can cause loss of direct meaning; a semi-structured interview is time-consuming, has low validity, and is high-risk for bias. Cohen et al. (2007) further state that semi-structured observation is an observation in which the researcher has an agenda of issues to be analysed in the setting. Observations can be made on human setting, physical setting, programme setting and interactional setting. Limitations such as time-consuming interviews will be eliminated by avoiding unnecessary chats that are not related to the study. In this study, low validity was avoided by ensuring that interviews were correctly transcribed and verified with participants to confirm that I had captured their responses correctly.

The second data collection method used in this study was document analysis. Morgan (2022) asserts that document analysis is an important research method used over the years, which means reviewing different types of documents such as books, newspapers, articles, journals, and institutional reports. This study reviewed documents such as lesson observation tools, mentoring files, results analysis, meeting agendas and minutes, duty rosters, and work allocation for the department.

The lesson observation tool assisted in reviewing feedback from classroom observations, whilst in the mentorship file, I checked the frequency of mentorship and feedback. I assured the participants that the data would be protected using code names and that the documents would be secured safely, with only the researcher having access to them. In the meeting agenda and minutes, the study provided information on how DHs handled mentoring and supporting novice teachers. Analysing work allocation for DHs and novice teachers provided insight into their cry of heavy workload. Reviewing these documents provided me with evidence on how DHs handled mentoring and support of novice teachers.

- **Data analysis**

The process after data collection is data analysis. Dyosini (2022) states that data analysis aims to give a description of the statements and themes identified from the transcribed data that was collected using interviews. This study applied an inductive approach and thematic analysis to analyse the generated data. All the interviews in this study were recorded. I started the analysis process by listening to the recorded interviews and transcribing them.

After transcribing the interviews, I drew an analysis table and started coding the data. As I coded the data, I identified the categories and themes that were aligned with the research questions. I checked the themes I formulated against the data to ensure they address the research questions. Where possible, each theme was defined and named so that they are easily understandable. I merged the coded data into categories, which formed themes. After forming the themes, I started writing the narratives of the findings supported by quotations from the participants. The findings were followed by an interpretation. At the end of each theme, I compared the findings with the literature reviewed and the conceptual framework.

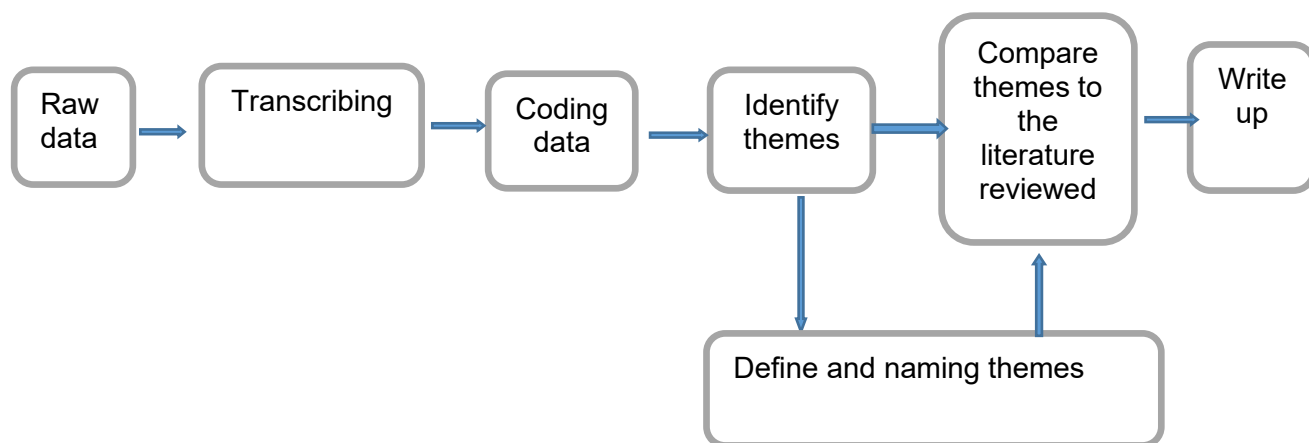


Figure 2. Data analysis

3.6 ETHICAL ISSUES

Ethical consideration is concerned with avoiding harming the participants, fabricating data, data falsification and plagiarism (Zoutendijk, 2021). Before I started data collection, I applied for ethical approval from the Ethics Committee of the School of Education at the University of South Africa (UNISA). After obtaining ethical clearance from the Ethics Committee, I sent a letter to the Department of Education requesting permission to disseminate my research data at the selected schools. I obtained permission to access schools from the Department of Education, Mpumalanga Province. I also asked the principals of the four schools for permission to conduct the study. The study required the consent of the participants (DHs) to take part. The participants signed the informed consent form after meeting with them and explaining the purpose of the study and what was expected of them. I assured the participants that there is no harm in participating in the study or putting their lives at risk. The conversations between me and the participants were confidential, and their identities remained anonymous. I also made the participants aware that they can withdraw at any time from studying if they don't feel comfortable or wish to continue to participate.

Varkey (2020) and Ajuwon (2020) assert that there are four fundamental principles of ethics, namely: beneficence; nonmaleficence; autonomy and justice.

- Beneficence

The researcher must uphold moral rules to ensure that participants are not exposed to any harm. The image of the participants must be protected. What the researcher discussed with the participants during the interviews must be confidential. The researcher must not violate the rights of the participants in any form. I adhered to this principle by not exposing the participants to any form of harm and by keeping the interview conversations confidential. I ensured that the study was conducted keeping in mind the best interests and well-being of the participants.

- Nonmaleficence

The researcher has an obligation not to harm the participants. This means that the researcher must avoid doing anything that will harm the participants. The participants must never feel offended, hurt or regret participating in the study. However, there are no foreseeable risks associated with participating in this research study. If, during the study, it becomes evident that a participant experiences harm or emotional discomfort, since the participants will be DHs, I avoided any action that seemed to lead to discomfort for them. I upheld human rights, as I conducted the study to ensure no one felt violated.

- Autonomy.

All the participants have the right to make their own decisions. The researcher cannot impose themselves on the participant. The participant is free to choose whether to take part in the study, whether to answer or not answer a question, and to quit at any point. I obtained informed consent from the eight DHs in writing after having initial contact with the principal. In the initial contact, I explained the aims of the study to enable them to make informed decisions on whether to participate in the study. I also safeguarded the rights of the participants by informing them of their right to withdraw from the research study at any time, if they wanted to or not to respond to any questions that they were uncomfortable with.

- Justice

Justice is about fairness, equality and appropriate treatment of all human beings. The researcher must ensure that the participants' rights are well respected. The approach of the researcher must show collegiality and value the time of the participants. When conducting the study, the participants were treated equally and given fair

opportunities to participate. The researcher was professional and friendly to the participants. The researcher arrived on time and was well prepared for the appointment with the participants.

I adhered to all four principles stated above.

3.7 TRUSTWORTHINESS OF THE STUDY

Trustworthiness of the study is when a researcher applies different procedures to check the accuracy of the research findings (McMillan & Schumacher, 2014). According to Gunawan (2015), trustworthiness of a study can be achieved through ensuring credibility, dependability, transferability, and confirmability. Below, I discussed trustworthiness by explaining how I ensured credibility, dependability, transferability and comfortability in the study.

3.7.1 Credibility

Korstjens and Moser (2018) suggest that credibility is about establishing if the research findings represent information from original data gathered from participants and interpretation reflects the original views of participants. Credibility of the study can be achieved through triangulation, in which a participant's viewpoints and experiences can be used to verify, confirm, or contradict the findings of other participants.

In this study, I used triangulation to ensure credibility of the findings. According to Donkoh and Mensah (2023), triangulation is studying a phenomenon utilising a number of data sources through various theories, methods and researchers. I triangulated the data from the different participants as well as the data from interviews and document analysis. Triangulation helped me in reducing incidents of bias using different methods to collect data. Credibility of the study can also be achieved by ensuring that the participant is willing to take part in the study and free to offer the information needed (Gunawan, 2015).

In this study, I ensured credibility of the study by making every participant feel comfortable and free to answer my research questions. This encouraged them to be

honest in sharing their experiences with me. I did this by establishing rapport through telephone conversations with the participants before the interviews were conducted. Member checking can also be done to ensure the credibility of the study. According to Busetto et.al (2020), member checking is verifying the findings with respondents to ensure the findings represent their views. In this study, I consulted with the participants regarding the findings to ensure they represented their experiences. I gave the participant an opportunity to read the interview transcripts and confirm the accuracy of the data.

3.7.2 Dependability

Korstjens and Moser (2018) define dependability as a measure to evaluate findings, interpretation, and recommendations to ensure they reflect the data from participants. According to Zia Ul Haq et al. (2023), to ensure dependability, the researcher needs to explain the research process undertaken to provide clarity to other researchers who have to repeat the study. In this study, I described the process I followed to conduct the study in detail. I also ensured that I recorded the interviews and transcribed them to capture the participants' exact point of view. All this provides a clear description of how the study was conducted and makes it easy for other researchers to repeat the study and obtain the same findings.

3.7.3 Transferability

According to Korstjens and Moser (2018), transferability is the extent to which qualitative research results can be transferred to a different setting or context and participants. Zia Ul Haq et al. (2023) state that transferability is also referred to as applicability. Transferability of the study is when a researcher provides detailed information about the context of the study to enable the reader to decide on the applicability of the research findings to their own or other contexts. Nyathi (2018) argues that thick descriptions of the background of the study and the setting are essential for the transferability of the study. I clearly described the context of the study. I also gave a clear picture of the setting where the study took place and gave a description of the kinds of participants who took part.

3.7.4 Comfortability

According to Cope (2014), neutrality is purely the data made up of responses given by the participants. Zia Ul Haq et al. (2023) argue that using direct quotes of participants helps in ensuring neutrality. This can be achieved through triangulation of the data from the research participants or by using different data collection methods. Audit trails can also be done to provide detailed step-by-step processes followed in data collection and data analysis. According to Carcary (2020), an audit trail is a record of how a qualitative study was conducted to reach a certain conclusion. In this study, I ensured the confirmability of the research findings by using participants' quotations to support them. The tape recorder ensured that I correctly captured the respondents' views during data analysis. I transcribed the views of the respondents using a tape recorder.

3.8 SUMMARY OF THE CHAPTER

In this chapter, I discussed the research paradigm, research approach, research design, data generation, ethical issues, and the trustworthiness of the study. The findings of this study and discussion are presented in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 4

RESEARCH FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 INTRODUCTION

In Chapter Three, I discussed the research methods that I used to conduct the study. The previous chapter covered the research paradigm, research approach, research design, data generation methods, ethical issues and trustworthiness of the study. In this chapter, I present the research findings based on the research questions. The findings are supported by verbatim quotations from the participants, followed by my analysis of the findings. At the end of each theme, I present the findings of the study as compared with the literature discussion on the research topic. In the following section, I present the biographical data of the participants. The schools are represented by code names such as School A, School B, School C, and School D. Participants are represented by codes, namely DHA1 (the first Department Head from School A), DH A2 (the second Department Head from School A), and so on. The table also shows the age group of each participant and the years of teaching experience of the participants, as well as their highest qualification.

4.2 BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION OF THE PARTICIPANTS

Table 4.2 Biographical information of the participants

School	Participant	Gender	Age Bracket	Years of experience as DH	Qualification
School A	DH A1	Male	50-60 years	20 years	BA and Education Management Diploma (DEM)
School A	DH A2	Male	35 years	6 years	B. Agriculture and PGCE
School B	DH B1	Female	50 years	15 years	Honours degree
School B	DH B2	Female	40-50 years	13 years	Bachelor's degree
School C	DH C1	Male	55-60 years	11 years	Secondary teachers' diploma (STD) and Further education diploma

School C	DH C2	Female	40-45 years	1 year	Bachelor of Science degree and PGCE
School D	DH D1	Female	55 years	13 years	Honours degree in education management
School D	DH D2	Male	45-50 years	8 years	B.Ed.

4.3 RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Table 4.3 Research question and interview questions

Research question	Interview questions
1. How are DHs selected to mentor novice teachers?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How were you selected to be a mentor for novice teachers? • What was needed from you in order to become a mentor?
2. How do DHs prepare and mentor novice secondary school teachers?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explain how you prepare to mentor novice teachers? • What do you need as a mentor?
3. How do you mentor novice teachers?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Please explain to me how you mentor novice teachers.
4. What are the challenges experienced by DHs when mentoring novice teachers?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explain the challenges you experienced when mentoring novice teachers.
5. How do DHs address the challenges they experience when mentoring novice teachers?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explain how you addressed the challenges you experienced during the mentoring of novice teachers.
6. What support do the DHs give to novice teachers during the mentoring process?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • As a mentor, what kind of support do you give to novice teachers?
7. How do the DHs account for mentoring novice teachers?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How do you account for the mentoring process? • What worked well in the mentoring

	<p>process?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Who did not work well during the mentoring process?
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4.4 RESEARCH QUESTIONS, THEMES AND SUB-THEMES

Table 4.4 Research questions, themes and sub-themes

<p>Research question 1</p> <p>How are DHs selected to mentor novice teachers?</p> <p>How were you selected to be a mentor for novice teachers?</p> <p>What was needed from you in order to become a mentor?</p>	<p>Theme 1: The selection of DHs to be mentors</p> <p><i>Sub-theme 1.1: Selection of DHs to be mentors</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Selection based on area of subject expertise. • Selection by virtue of being the departmental head • Selection based on prior training in mentorship • Selection based on a formal recruitment process <p><i>Sub-theme 1. 2: Pre-requisites for mentorship</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Availability and use of curriculum documents • Inducting the novice teacher • Ability to assist the novice teacher in lesson planning and delivery • Teaching experience
<p>Research question 2</p> <p>How do DHs prepare and mentor novice secondary school teachers?</p>	<p>Theme 2: Preparation to mentor novice teachers</p>

<p>Explain how you prepare to mentor novice teachers?</p> <p>What do you need as a mentor?</p>	<p><i>Sub-theme 2.1: Mentoring preparation</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Providing policy documents and assisting in lesson preparation • Guided by what novice teacher is lacking in <p><i>Sub-theme 2.2: Mentoring resources</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teaching experience • Policy documents
<p>Research question 3</p> <p>How do you mentor novice teachers?</p>	<p>Theme 3: Mentoring process</p> <p><i>Sub-theme 3.1: Different styles used by heads of departments in the mentoring process of novice teachers</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mentoring by simulation-setting example for the novice teacher to follow, and providing guidance. • Mentoring that involves learner participation, support and discipline. • Document based mentoring. • Mentoring by monitoring the conduct of the novice teacher, appearance, punctuality and teaching.
<p>Research question 4</p> <p>What are the challenges experienced by DHs when mentoring novice teachers?</p>	<p>Theme 4: Challenges experienced by departmental heads when mentoring novice teachers</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of punctuality and absenteeism of the novice

	<p>teachers</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Arrogant behaviour from novice teachers • Unprofessional dress code of novice teachers • Inability of novice teachers to manage learner behaviour in the classroom
<p>Research question 5</p> <p>How do DHs address the challenges they experience when mentoring novice teachers?</p>	<p>Theme 5: addressing challenges experienced</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Set up meetings to discuss challenges • Prepare lessons and assessment together
<p>Research question 6</p> <p>What support do the DHs give to novice teachers during the mentoring process?</p>	<p>Theme 6: Support that department heads give to novice teachers during mentoring process</p> <p><i>Sub-theme 6.1: How departmental heads support novice teachers during mentoring process</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Novice teachers supported by providing teaching and learning resources • Novice teachers supported by DHs sharing with novice teachers the art of teaching • Novice teachers supported by DHs in ensuring that they observe the dos and don'ts of teaching • Novice teachers supported by DHs in managing learner behaviour
<p>Research question 7</p> <p>How do the DHs account for mentoring novice teachers?</p>	<p>Theme 7: Accounting for mentoring process</p>

<p>How do you account for the mentoring process?</p>	<p>Sub-theme 1: How does DH account for mentoring novice teachers</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>The process of accounting for mentorship</i> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. <i>formal accounting channel</i> 2. <i>Informal accounting</i> • <i>How to account for mentoring</i>
<p>What worked well in the mentoring process?</p>	<p>Sub-theme 2: Things that worked well during the mentoring process</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Classroom management • Good communication • Professional working relations
<p>Who did not work well during mentoring process?</p>	<p>Sub-theme 3: Things that did not work well during mentoring process</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Classroom management • Communication • Adhering to school rules and regulations

4.5 RESEARCH FINDINGS

In this section, I present the research findings of this study that align with the research questions.

Table 4.5.1 Theme 1: Research question 1, theme and sub-themes

<p>Research question 1</p> <p>How are DHs selected to mentor novice teachers?</p> <p>How were you selected to be a mentor for novice teachers?</p>	<p>Theme 1: The selection of DHs to be mentors</p> <p>Sub-theme 1: Selection of DHs to be mentors</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Selection based on area of subject expertise. • Selection by virtue of being the
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<p>What was needed from you in order to become a mentor?</p>	<p>departmental head</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Selection based on prior training in mentorship • Selection based on a formal recruitment process <p><i>Sub-theme 2: Pre-requisites for the selection of mentors</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Availability and use of curriculum documents • Inducting the novice teacher • Ability to assist the novice teacher in lesson planning and delivery • Teaching experience
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The findings are confirmed by the verbatim quotations from the participants. In this study, I asked seven research questions. I start by presenting a table that recaps the first research question and the themes, as well as the sub-themes identified from the collected data.

4.5.1 Theme 1: The selection of DHs to be mentors for novice teachers

This theme provides narratives of the findings of research question 1. Sub-theme 1 is about the selection of DH to be mentors of novice teachers. Sub-theme 2 is about the prerequisites for selecting mentors. Under each sub-theme, there are several categories.

4.5.1.1 Sub-theme 1.1: The selection of DHs as mentors for novice teachers.

The research question seeks to find out about the selection of DH as mentors for novice teachers. The interview provides data on the different ways in which the DH were selected to serve as mentors for novice teachers. The participants said:

...but in our school, the DH are selected in terms of the learning areas they head in their various departments. An example of a

student teacher in Mathematics will be taken to the departmental head of Maths and Science (DH A1).

I was selected according to the subjects that I'm heading. As I have said, it depends on which subjects you have in your department. If a student teacher comes in, then they are sent to the relevant department (DH C2).

The findings in this sub-theme imply that there is no official panel that sits down and selects DH to mentor novice teachers. The responsibility of mentoring novice teachers lies with the DH concerned. The only determining factor in who will mentor the novice teacher is the subject the novice teacher will be teaching, and the DH, who is the head of the department where that subject belongs. This finding implies that one of the criteria for selecting a DH mentor for novice teachers depends on the mentor's and mentee's specialisation in the teaching subject. This finding shows the importance of selecting a mentor with subject knowledge and, ideally, teaching skills for the subject assigned to the novice teacher.

This study also found that the appointment of DHs as mentors is done just by being a Head of Department. The participants said:

...as a head, you are a mentor because you are the one responsible for everything in the department (DH A2).

...as a head of department, it is expected of me to mentor new teachers in my department. It is by virtue of my duties that I must mentor them, those who come to the maths and science department ... There wasn't a specific day where I was called and told to mentor them. It's just my duty to make sure that when a new teacher comes in, I must do the induction process to get the teacher acquainted with the environment and everything happening in the department (DH B2).

The responsibility of mentoring novice teachers lies with the departmental heads. The finding indicates that when a teacher assumes the departmental head position, they automatically inherit the duty of being a mentor for novice teachers in the

department they are heading. Another finding is that the selection of mentors for novice teachers is also done based on prior training in mentorship. A participant said:

I have been selected to be a mentor for novice teachers based on the training that I attended in Nelspruit under UNISA on how to mentor practising teachers at the time (DH D2).

This finding implies the departmental head was selected to be a mentor of novice teachers in the schools due to the mentoring training received. The skills gathered during the training enabled the departmental head to have the necessary qualities to be selected as a mentor for novice teachers.

They conducted interviews and advertised the post for a number of subjects. From there, you become a mentor for the subjects under your department (DH C1).

This finding implies that once a teacher undergoes interviews and is appointed as a departmental head, they are automatically selected to serve as mentors for the subjects under the department they are heading.

4.5.1.2 Sub-theme 1.2: Prerequisite for mentorship

The findings of this study regarding the prerequisites for mentorship found that there is an expectation for the DHs to have knowledge and physical documents on the curriculum policies and other teaching requirements. The participants said:

...the DH should provide curriculum support documents to the novice teacher. E.g. CAPS document, timetable, lesson plan, lesson preparation on a daily basis, ATP (Annual Teaching Plan), POA (Programme of Assessment) (DH A1).

...Following departmental policies, you say we are working with this material. In short, you are mentoring using these policies (DH C1).

This implies that departmental heads need to have all the necessary curriculum documents and be able to guide novice teachers on how to use them. By doing so, the DHs meet the prerequisites to be selected as mentors.

The person was handed over to me, then I'm going to do the induction for the department... (DA A2).

This finding implies that the DHs must be able to conduct induction for the novice teachers who are joining the department.

Once I assist him in preparing the lesson, I will allow him to present the lesson plan so that I'm able to correct him or her on how they are going to deliver the lesson on the following day (DH A2).

This finding implies that the DH must be able to assist the novice teacher in preparation and lesson delivery to be considered as a mentor. The participants said:

...you must be in the field, teaching, having experience of real-life situations when teaching learners, when you can advise someone new to the field based on your experience (DH D2).

It is important to grow and become DH. After three years, you can be DH. It is not about money, it's about growth, being able to work and induct people (DH D1).

The findings suggest that the departmental head needed substantial teaching experience as a prerequisite for being selected as a mentor for novice teachers. The teaching experience enables the DHs not only to provide guidance and check the lesson but also to evaluate the actual teaching.

These findings appear to be consistent with the situational mentoring framework by Kajs (2002), which argues that mentors should be matched with their mentees according to their thinking style. If the mentor and mentee are qualified to teach the same subject, they become a match in the approach to the content to be taught. Amongst other reasons, the study revealed that departmental heads are selected as

mentors by virtue of being departmental heads. This implies that departmental heads understand that their role as departmental heads includes mentoring novice teachers. The findings also revealed that departmental heads are selected to be mentors due to the subject they are experts on, which is usually the subjects that they belong to the department they are heading. A study by Kabaso (2023) reported that, amongst other duties, the departmental head has the responsibility to orient new teachers to the department. A possible explanation for this might be that during the orientation, a need for mentoring arises, where the novice teachers need to learn certain things they are not familiar with regarding teaching the subject.

The findings of this study regarding the selection of mentors for novice teachers support the evidence from previous studies of Kabaso (2023), PAM (2016) and Siteketa (2023) that suggest that departmental heads become mentors for novice teachers in their department by virtue of occupying the position of being departmental head. This study also found that there were cases in which the departmental head of the novice teacher automatically assumes the responsibility of being a mentor to the novice teacher without any predetermined qualities. There is insufficient literature on the topic. This means that there is a need for more studies to be conducted to uncover how the DHs are selected to be mentors for novice teachers.

4.5.2 Theme 2: Preparation for mentoring novice teachers

Theme 2 provides narratives of the findings of research question 2. Sub-theme 1 is about preparation for mentoring. Sub-theme 2 is the findings on the things the participants needed as mentors.

Table 4.5.2 Theme 2: Research question 2, theme and sub-themes

<p>Research question 2 How do DHs prepare for mentor novice secondary school teachers?</p> <p>Interview question What was needed from you in order to become a mentor?</p>	<p>Theme 2: Preparation for mentor novice teachers</p> <p><i>Sub-theme 2.1: Preparation for mentoring novice teachers</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Doing induction
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<p>Interview question What do you need as a mentor?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Organising and providing curriculum documents and assessment documents • Providing policy documents • Assisting in lesson preparation and lesson presentation through observation. • Preparation based on the individual needs of novice teachers. <p><i>Sub-theme 2.2: What departmental heads need to mentor novice teachers</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teaching experience • Policy documents
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4.5.2.1 Sub-theme 2.1: Preparation for mentoring novice teachers.

The research question: How do DHs prepare to mentor novice secondary school teachers? seeks to find out how DHs prepare for mentoring novice teachers. The findings revealed that the DHs' preparation involves induction of novice teachers, organising and providing curriculum documents as well as assessment documents, assisting in lesson planning and observing novice teachers' lesson delivery. The participants also discussed mentoring novice teachers based on the individual needs of the novice teacher. With regards to doing induction, the participants said the following:

Okay, when a new teacher comes into my department, we usually have a short meeting with the new teacher, and then I will introduce her to the stream —the school stream, as in, the learners in the maths and science department are also doing these subjects. I have to show her around which classes she will be going into for teaching (DH B2).

I'm going to do the induction for the department, bring him these polices of the subject, subject polices, all the caps documents that they must understand and assist him in preparing a lesson (DH A2).

The very same departmental head will therefore introduce the teacher to his department, then from there introduce the teacher to the whole staff. After which, the same teacher must be provided with material that will be used for teaching, after inducting the teacher, knowing the whereabouts in the school (DH D2).

...organise the programmes of your department, especially programme numbers, it's the policy, departmental policy. Following departmental policies, you say we are working with this material (DH C1).

The findings imply that when departmental heads are joined by a novice teacher in their department, they organise a meeting to sit down with and introduce them to the department. The introduction serves as an induction of a novice teacher to the department. The sit-down meeting helps the novice teacher feel part of the department, open up, learn about the department they joined, and receive the necessary teaching and learning materials. The induction process seems to create an opportunity for the novice teachers to have a sense of belonging. The sense of belonging is not only created in the form of relationships with other colleagues but also through integration with policy documents and other teaching and learning materials.

The participants mentioned the documents that they should make ready to share with the novice teachers during mentoring. This is what they said:

Provide curriculum support documents to the novice teacher. E.g. CAPS document, timetable, lesson plan, lesson preparation on a daily basis, ATP (Annual Teaching Plan), POA (DH A1).

we will sit down, and I will present the school files, the subject file to her (DHB2).

...we share with them all the caps document that they must understand and assist them in preparing a lesson (DHA2).

The findings show that the DHs should have relevant documents to give to novice teachers for teaching their allocated subjects. The DHs seem to be expected to prepare for mentoring by organising and availing curriculum documents to the novice teachers. This expectation ensures that novice teachers acquire the necessary curriculum documents as well as the support documents to be able to teach. The subject and school policy documents are also provided by the mentors to the novice teachers to ascertain that the novice teacher abides by the guidelines given in teaching and assessing the subjects, as well as the school regulations.

...bring him these polices of the subject, subject polices, you must have documents with you, documents such as departmental policy, duties expected from the teacher, every department has different expectations. Documents such as school policy speak based on the documents at hand... you must have documents with you, documents such as departmental policy, duties expected from the teacher; every department has different expectations. Documents such as school policy (DHB1).

you organise the programmes in your department, especially programme number one, it's the policy, departmental policy. Following departmental policies, you say we are working with this material. In short, you are mentoring using these policies (DHC1).

In the subject file, there is a school policy, so we need to get down and discuss the school policy in detail, and then, because the school policy is about how many periods she has in a week, informal assessment, formal assessments, vision and mission of the school, targets of the department (DH B2).

This finding implies that the departmental head provides the novice teachers with policies that the novice teacher must read and understand before applying them in teaching and learning. The departmental head does this to ensure that the novice teacher understands how the department functions and is able to meet all expectations. Providing the novice teacher with the subject policy will empower the novice teacher to know what to teach and what to assess.

The participants also talk about helping novice teachers in the preparation of lessons and observing the novice teachers during the lesson delivery.

Once I assist him in preparing the lesson, I will allow him to present the lesson plan so that I'm able to correct him or her on how they are going to deliver the lesson on the following day (DHA2).

So I'll prepare the lesson as I usually do, and the student teacher will observe me. After the lesson, I'll fill out his form (DHC2).

I first prepare a lesson and present it myself in front of the teacher, in the presence of the learners, so the teacher can see how to gain confidence as you teach (DH D2).

The above findings imply that departmental heads provide support to the novice teacher on how to prepare a lesson and how to deliver the lesson in the classroom. The novice teacher goes to observe the departmental head delivering a lesson to emulate the teaching strategies to be used in teaching the subject. It appears that the departmental head ensures that the novice teacher knows how to plan and deliver lessons, learn about time management and classroom management, and be confident in front of learners. The departmental head also observes the novice teacher with the intention to correct where the novice teacher lacks lesson delivery expertise.

The participants further revealed that at times, the mentors prepare the support they give to the novice teachers based on individual needs. A participant said:

...Use experience, and where a person says I'm lacking here and there (DH D1).

This finding suggests that the DHs prepare for mentoring guided by what the novice teacher says they are lacking and use experience on how to go about mentoring novice teachers. This finding suggests that one size does not fit all, and preference is given to the needs of an individual novice teacher.

4.5.2.2 Sub-theme 2.2: What departmental heads need to mentor novice teachers.

The findings in this sub-theme are based on the interview question - What do you need as a mentor? This question seeks to find out what departmental heads need to mentor novice teachers. The participants said the following regarding what they need for mentoring:

You can't be a mentor if you don't have experience (DH A2).

I think it goes with experience, having been the head of department for almost 13 years now, I know what to expect from teachers in my department. So, it's just experience that is assisting me to give them what they need in order to be teachers in my department and not have conflicts or disagreements (DH B2).

...as a mentor, you must have the learner's supporting material that you need to have. You must know the subject that is about to be taught more especially by the new teacher (DH D2).

The finding in this sub-theme indicates that a mentor needs to be an experienced person in teaching the subject allocated to the novice teacher. Apart from experience, there are basic teaching aids that the mentor should possess and share with the novice teacher to facilitate lesson delivery.

...as a mentor, you must have the learner's supporting material that you need to have. You must know the subject that is about to be taught more especially by the new teacher. Provide him with your pace setters, exam guidelines, and all the stuff. The lesson plans, the teachers must be shown how to prepare such (DH D2).

You need textbooks and a chart that you are going to give to the person who is going to deliver the lesson (DH A2).

The finding implies that the departmental head needs to have learner and teacher support material that the novice teacher will use and be able to provide to the novice

teacher. When the novice teacher has the teaching resources they need, they will be able to plan and deliver lessons without any hindrance.

Apart from the teaching experience and the teaching resources, the DH as a mentor should have a policy that gives guidance in terms of what is expected of the teacher. There are different policies, such as school-based policies and departmental policies, among others. The participant said:

...school policy, departmental policy and duties... (DH B1).

yes, policies. You work under this; you are guided by this (DH C1).

...supporting material that you need to have. You must know the subject that is about to be taught more especially by the new teacher. Provide him with your pace setters, exam guidelines, and all the stuff. The lesson plans, the teachers must be shown how to prepare such (DH D2).

The findings imply that DHs need policy documents that speak to the issues that they want novice teachers to pay attention to. Policy documents such as school policy, departmental policy, and examination guidelines help novice teachers find a direction to follow as they start their teaching career. The policy is also used as a point of reference in the induction process for novice teachers, as well as in teaching and conducting learner assessments. The findings of this study, which link the DH's role in induction as preparation for mentorship, are consistent with the mentorship framework by Kajs (2002), which suggests the need for mentorship preparation, where the mentor and mentee undergo an induction workshop for the benefit of the mentorship.

The previous studies by Treasure et al. (2022) suggested that monitoring and evaluation of the mentoring programme are important as they ensure quality improvement and effectiveness of the programme. In this study, there were narratives of structured mentoring sessions, as well as unstructured mentoring. Vikaraman et al. (2017) believe that the mentorship programmes need to be structured, with a detailed design that clearly indicates the roles and responsibilities

of mentor and mentee, and time for meetings should be available in schools. Earlier studies by Kajs (2002), Vikaraman et al. (2017), Treasure et al. (2022), show consistency, as their study finds that departmental heads prepare for mentoring by doing induction for novice teachers, organising and providing policy documents, assisting in lesson preparation and preparing based on individual needs of the novice teachers, which is unstructured mentoring. This is likely because of schools using a variety of ways to implement mentoring, and some schools lack a mentorship programme.

4.5.3 Theme 3: Mentoring process

Theme 3 provides narratives of the findings of research question 3. Sub-theme 3.1 is about the explanation of the mentoring process.

Table 4.5.3 Theme 3: Research question 3, theme and sub-themes

<p>Research question 3 How do you mentor novice teachers?</p>	<p>Theme 3: Mentoring process for novice teachers</p> <p><i>Sub-theme 3.1: Different styles used by heads of departments in the mentoring process of novice teachers</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mentoring by simulation-setting example for the novice teacher to follow and providing guidance. • Mentoring that involves learner participation, support and discipline. • Document-based mentoring. • Mentoring by monitoring the conduct of the novice teacher appearance, punctuality and teaching.
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4.5.3.1 Sub-theme 3.1: Different styles used by Departmental Heads in the mentoring process of novice teachers

The research question: How do you mentor novice teachers? seeks to find out the unfolding of the mentoring processes used by the different department heads. The

findings revealed different ways in which departmental heads mentor novice teachers. A participant interviewed said:

I will first go and teach. In the first class, the person will be observing. Then, in the next period, I will give him or her a chance to teach. After he or she delivers the lesson, we will go out to do what we call a post-discussion. Where I'm just advising him or her, what things he needs to add and what things are supposed (DH A2).

This finding implies the departmental head mentor's novice teachers through demonstration. The departmental head delivers a lesson in a classroom, and the novice teacher observes the departmental head teach. In doing so, the novice teacher will take notes and learn. In the next period, the departmental head observes the novice teacher delivering the lesson and criticises the novice teacher after the lesson. This reveals the style of mentoring by simulation, setting an example for the novice teacher to follow and providing guidance. This process seems to give the novice teachers an opportunity to receive feedback and take notes on how to improve moving forward.

to say that he must allow learners to ask questions. Don't just teach without asking them whether they understand or not. Also, to advise him to say, "don't concentrate only on the learners who are performing." There are those who are shy. You must know all the learners in the classroom. Also, as a mentor, I will tell him about how many learners are not performing. You need to concentrate on those in most cases (DH A2).

...Take them to class, for them to learn how to maintain discipline in class. Time on task (DH C2).

The departmental heads in this study seem to provide support and guidance to novice teachers on how to handle different situations they encounter in the classroom. The mentors appear to encourage novice teachers to ask learners questions during the lesson to ensure they understand, give all the learners attention

in the classroom, and not focus only on the best learner. Such training in novice teachers' early careers promotes learner participation in teaching and learning. Other lessons learnt include keeping time and maintaining discipline in the classroom.

...use the documents I mention and speak to the teacher about the documents, duties and expectations of the teacher (DH B1).

...one-on-one meetings with them, as I mentioned, we discuss the policy of the department and what to expect (DH B2).

The findings imply that the departmental head organises meetings with the novice teacher where they sit down and discuss the policy documents that the novice teacher needs to use, the duties of the novice teacher and the expectations of the novice teacher. This assists the novice teacher in knowing how to conduct themselves moving forward.

with the student teacher, I have to monitor them from entering the gate. Monitor if they come to work. Monitor if they dress as a teacher (DH C2).

...From there, we sit down to deal with the expectations, how to conduct yourself, more especially for a new teacher, how to dress and all the stuff (DH D2)

You monitor even the progress when he or she is teaching because he or she is new in the system (DH D2).

This finding implies that the departmental head pays attention to the conduct of the novice teacher. The way the novice teacher dresses when they come to work and the progress in the classes they are teaching. In doing so, the departmental head will be able to provide guidance where the novice teacher seems to be lacking and uphold the dignity of the teaching profession through the physical appearance of the teacher. The findings of this study show how DHs acted as mentors and a support team for the novice teachers.

The findings of this study reveal that departmental heads mentor novice teachers by setting an example, mentoring based on documents, mentoring that involves learner participation, support and discipline, and mentoring by monitoring novice teacher conduct, appearance, punctuality, and teaching. In the situational mentoring framework, Kajs (2002) argues that the mentorship process must involve support teams, the school district, and other mentors. Previous studies by Kemmis and others (2014), as well as Owusu-Mensah (2013), have reported that mentoring happens in three stages. The mentor supervises the novice teacher; for example, the mentor helps the novice teacher complete a project. The next stage, the mentor provides support; for example, the mentor provides guidance to the novice teacher. The last stage is collaborative self-development, in which teachers mentor one another. The literature by Daniel et al. (2006), Kram (2006) and Rivera (2007) also reported similar sentiments, indicating that mentoring involves three stages. The first stage is for the mentor to meet the mentee to agree, collaborate, and develop the mentee. The next stage is the cultivation stage, where the mentee learns from the mentor. The mentor shares lessons based on the experience. The last stage marks the end of the mentoring. The findings of this study shows similarities to earlier studies by Kemmis et al. (2014), Owusu-Mensah (2013), Daniel et al. (2006) Kram (2006) and Rivera (2007) where the mentor monitors and observes the novice teacher delivering a lesson in the classroom, after the lesson the mentor shares with the novice teacher ways to improve lesson presentation and classroom management.

4.5.4 Theme 4: Challenges experienced by departmental heads when mentoring novice teachers

Theme 4 provides narratives of the findings of research question 4. Sub-theme 4.1 is about explaining the challenges experienced by departmental heads when mentoring novice teachers.

4.5.4 Table 4.5.4 Theme 4, Research question 4, theme and sub-themes

Research question 4 What are the challenges experienced by	Theme: Challenges experienced by departmental heads when mentoring
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DHs when mentoring novice teachers?	<p>novice teachers</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of punctuality and absenteeism of the novice teachers • Arrogant behaviour from novice teachers • Unprofessional dress code of novice teachers • Inability of novice teachers to manage learner behaviour in the classroom
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4.5.4.1 The challenges experienced by departmental heads when mentoring novice teachers

The findings of the study reported here are the participants' responses to the research question on the challenges experienced by departmental heads when mentoring novice teachers. The purpose of this question was to uncover the difficulties that departmental heads experience when mentoring novice teachers. One of the problems identified by the participants was coming late to school as well as being absent from school without seeking permission from management. The departmental heads said:

...is absenteeism from school without reporting (DH A1).

...they arrive late for school; they could not sign the period register in the classroom (DH A1).

...yes, the challenge is that some of them come late to school (DH A2).

This finding in this theme implies that during the mentorship process, the departmental head must deal with novice teachers who are not punctual and also who are absent from work. The first few years of novice teachers are challenging. It is possible that novice teachers find it difficult to cope with their work demands and fail to commit to their responsibilities. This could be due to being overwhelmed by the new duties and responsibilities the novice teacher must perform. This would make

the responsibility of the departmental head as mentor difficult in the sense that time for mentoring will be reduced if the mentee is absent or comes to school late. Another possible explanation for novice teachers' absenteeism and late arrival at school could be the laxity of school management in enforcing rules and regulations on late arrival and teacher absenteeism, or the absence of consequences for being absent from school or arriving late. However, it is common practice for management to be soft on novice teachers. The management usually becomes patient with novice teachers and gives them time to adjust to the new environment. This finding implies that mentoring novice teachers goes beyond curriculum delivery. The responsibilities of department heads include monitoring the professional conduct of the novice teacher.

Another issue reported by the departmental heads as problematic is the negative or unacceptable attitude of the novice teachers. The participants said the following:

...Some of them will come in with an attitude. There are people who will be coming claiming I know everything, I'm a teacher, I'm qualified, so what is there to tell me (DH B2).

Another issue is using phones too much at work, especially among young teachers (DH B1).

When teacher X does not explain their challenges, they are unable to open up and say, 'I find it difficult to teach certain subjects.' You only hear from the learners complaining. The teacher doesn't disclose that I'm qualified to teach this subject, but I'm unable to teach it properly (DH C1).

Sometimes they come to school with an attitude. I must call them to sit down and insist that we talk and guide them in that area. You need to be strong and brave because they sometimes dodge you (DH D1).

It seems from the above quotations that, during the mentoring process, the departmental head must deal with the arrogant behaviour of novice teachers who are

unwilling to learn, claiming that they know everything. This kind of behaviour is likely caused by the fact that old teachers had lower qualifications, like teaching certificates or diplomas; they are computer illiterate, whilst novice teachers come with a degree or an honours degree, even computer literate and therefore feel superior, belittling older teachers in the profession. Spending too much time on the phone whilst executing their duties. This is perhaps caused by a lack of novice teachers' dedication to their teaching responsibilities. Another possible reason could be the lack of rules that guide the use of cell phones during teaching time, or inadequate monitoring or enforcement of cell phone rules. Being unable to open up to the departmental head as novice teachers could be due to fear that it will be known that the novice teacher is not competent in teaching a certain subject. Another reason might be a hostile relationship between the novice teacher and the departmental head providing the mentoring. The arrogant attitude of the novice teachers, as perceived by the departmental head, could limit the novice teachers' knowledge and experience gain from the departmental head because the negative attitude of the novice teachers could negatively affect the mentor-mentee relationship.

The departmental heads also talked about the appearance of the novice teachers in terms of their dress. The participants said:

...dress code, they dress as they like (DH A1).

Some of the things they become against policy. Things such as dress and being presentable (DH B1).

This finding implies that novice teachers do not dress presentably just like other teachers; instead, they dress as they wish. Although novice teachers may not be deliberate in not dressing professionally, the reason for dressing inappropriately could be a matter of not having enough money to buy presentable clothes. The dressing could be motivated by wanting to be comfortable in casual, informal clothing, which makes novice teachers appear unprofessional at work. The voices of the participants suggest that there is a particular standard of dress code that is acceptable for a teacher. The participants expected the novice teachers to be dressed as expected and not to violate the dress code. This finding also suggests that schools have different policies on dress code, and that every staff member is

expected to follow the school policy on dress code. What was not established in this finding is whether the mentors made the novice teachers aware of the dress code expected of them. Other possible reasons could be that the dress code for teachers is not part of the pre-service training, or that novice teachers have an “I don’t care” attitude.

The challenges related to classroom management were expressed by the participants as follows:

...some of them have a challenge with classroom management. If I'm not there, the class is chaotic (DH A2).

One key aspect that I noticed as I mentor novice teachers is confidence. They lack confidence because when they come to a real situation, it is in school. We are having overcrowding, having overcrowded the classroom, management turns to be a challenge because they are not used to such (DH D2).

The findings on the challenges that the department heads experience with the ability of the novice teacher to manage the classroom imply that novice teachers find it difficult to manage the way the learners behave in the classroom. According to the departmental heads, the novice teachers appear unable to take control of the classroom and exercise authority over learner behaviour. Possible reasons for a lack of competence or novice status in managing learner behaviour include a lack of experience and confidence, and a lack of training in classroom management. The unruly learner behaviour in the classroom could also be caused by an uncondusive school climate or a school culture that tolerates learner misconduct. This leads to the classroom being chaotic, and teaching and learning cannot take place in such an environment.

The challenges experienced by departmental heads when mentoring novice teachers are not unexpected. According to the situational mentoring framework by Kajs (2002), the mentorship process is likely to encounter challenges which the mentor, together with the support team, must find ways to address. This study reveals that departmental heads experienced several challenges when mentoring novice teachers. The challenges are novice teachers lacking in punctuality and

absenteeism, displaying arrogant behaviour, an unprofessional dress code, and an inability to manage learner behaviour. These findings are like those reported by Saleem and others (2022), which revealed that departmental heads experience challenges such as immature behaviour of novice teachers, low morale of the novice teachers, unnecessary absenteeism of novice teachers, poor interpersonal work relationships and communication gap. Other studies, such as Sali and Kecik (2018), Dayan et al. (2018), and Widiatii et al. (2018), reported the challenges experienced by departmental heads, including shortages of classroom furniture and textbooks, ill-disciplined learners, and overcrowded classrooms. While the current study reported the challenges related to the practices of novice teachers, the named studies also considered institutional challenges that affected the mentorship process. This means that the process of mentoring novice teachers could be driven by the generic challenges often experienced by novice teachers during their mentoring period.

4.5.5 Theme 5: Addressing challenges experienced by the departmental heads when mentoring novice teachers

Theme 5: provide narratives of the findings of research question 5. Sub-theme 5.1 is about addressing the challenges experienced by departmental heads when mentoring novice teachers.

Table 4.5.5 Theme 5 Research question 5, theme and sub-themes

<p>Research question 5 How do DHs address the challenges they experience when mentoring novice teachers?</p>	<p>Theme: Addressing challenges experienced by departmental heads when mentoring novice teachers</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Referring to the policy in addressing the challenges experienced. • Assisting the novice teacher in the classroom in lesson preparation • Motivating and encouraging the novice teacher to develop positive behaviour
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4.5.5.1 Subtheme 5.1: Addressing the challenges faced by departmental heads when mentoring novice teachers

The research question: How do DHs address the challenges they experience when mentoring novice teachers? seeks to find out the different approaches that DHs employ to deal with the challenges they come across during the mentorship. The findings revealed that DHs referred the novice teachers to policy documents when they experienced challenges in their work. The DH also assisted the novice teachers in lesson preparation as well as delivery when they experienced challenges in teaching. Another way in which the DH assisted the novice teachers is through motivation and encouragement, particularly in addressing behaviour-related challenges. The participants said:

The Department Head would invite them into the office, read before them the departmental policy, for example, SASA and SACE conduct, and, secondly, school policy must be read to them (DH A1).

...you have to revisit these polices, if they are not following the procedures we agreed upon (DH C1).

The finding implies that departmental heads address the challenges they experience when mentoring teachers by inviting the novice teachers to a meeting where they will discuss the challenges. Similarly, other participants indicated that they address the challenges by reminding novice teachers of the discussions they had about what the policies require of them. This approach enables both the departmental head and novice teacher to engage and clarify any issues that may have arisen in the mentorship process.

Another way in which the DH narrative regarding how they deal with the challenges they experience when mentoring novice teachers was by assisting the novice teacher in lesson preparation and lesson delivery. Here is what they said:

...what I usually do, one, I go with him or her in class to assist in maintaining the classroom. Number two, I assist him to prepare the assessment that must be given to the learners (DH A2).

... that's why I always encourage them to prepare their lesson. If you are not sure of what to do when you get to the learners, I don't mind preparing the lesson and coming back to you to demonstrate how you are going to teach the lesson (DH D2).

This finding implies that departmental heads address the challenges they experience when mentoring novice teachers by providing support to novice teachers through planning lessons and assessments together. These are the basics of classroom teaching. The finding shows that DHs, as mentors, are directly involved in solving the teaching and learning challenges they encounter during their mentorship by practically sharing their teaching skills with novice teachers. Other participants indicated they addressed the challenge of controlling the classroom by simulating how to maintain discipline in the classroom. Mentoring through simulation enables the novice teacher to observe, learn, and pose questions to gain a better understanding.

In terms of challenges that the DH experience in terms of the behaviour of the novice teachers, the participants talked about motivating and encouraging novice teachers to develop positive behaviour. They said:

I motivate them. Tell them that, since you are here, you are no longer a teenager; you are a young adult. You must be responsible. Parents place their trust in you. That's how you try to change their attitude. You try to instil positive behaviour (DH B1).

I mention they should feel free, and I'm actually a friend. I'm not on a fault-finding mission, but it's time to assist them develop and grow in this environment (DH B2).

you only must be brave, insist they come to sit down and talk, in a polite manner to avoid conflict, explain where they did wrong and how they must correct (DH D1).

According to this finding, departmental heads address the challenges by motivating the novice teachers to do better and adopt positive behaviour. Other participants indicated that they try to talk calmly to novice teachers and establish friendly relations so that novice teachers feel free to open up. In doing so, the department heads create a healthy relationship and a positive atmosphere where novice teachers can find it easy to access the departmental head and share any challenges.

The findings on the challenges experienced by the DHs in mentoring novice teachers in this study are consistent with the situational mentoring framework by Kajs (2002), who asserts that mentorship is an ongoing cyclical process. When there are challenges encountered, the mentor repeats the mentoring process until the novice teacher learns and the challenges have been overcome. The findings of this study suggest that departmental heads address challenges they face when mentoring novice teachers by referring to policy documents. The DHs also assist the novice teacher in lesson preparation and in motivating and encouraging the novice teacher to adopt positive behaviour towards teaching and learning. Such findings have also been reported in a study done by Phafoli (2019), which revealed that departmental heads dealt with the challenges they faced by seeking external professional development help when addressing the issue of out-of-service teachers.

A study by Siteketa (2016) indicated that departmental heads, together with other members of the department, collaborate to develop strategies to address the challenges they face. In contrast with earlier studies by Phafoli (2019) and Siteketa (2016), this study found that departmental heads address the challenges they face when mentoring novice teachers by intervening in person and helping novice teachers where they are lacking, instead of seeking external support structures. The difference in approach to dealing with challenges faced by the DHs could result from the context in which they are experienced and the nature of those challenges.

4.5.6 Theme 6: Support that department heads give to novice teachers during the mentoring process

Theme 6 provides narratives of the findings of research question 6. Sub-theme 6.1 is about investigating the support that departmental heads give to novice teachers during the mentoring process.

Table 4.5.6 Theme 6: Research question 6, theme and sub-themes

<p>Research question 6 What support do the DHs give to novice teachers during the mentoring process?</p>	<p>Theme: Support that department heads give to novice teachers during the mentoring process</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Novice teachers are supported by providing teaching and learning resources• Novice teachers supported by DHs share with novice teachers the art of teaching• Novice teachers supported by DHs in ensuring that they observe the dos and don'ts of teaching• Novice teachers supported by DHs in managing learner behaviour
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4.5.6.1: Sub-theme 6.1: Support that department heads give to novice teachers during the mentoring process

Novice teachers are supported by being provided with teaching and learning resources that they can utilise during their lessons. This is what the participants had to say:

...they request teaching material, the policy document, and they need even the learners' code of conduct; those are some of the things that assist them. There is a lot, but those are some of the things they turn to use from time to time (DH D2).

...provided them with material. There is no need for a new teacher to go around looking for the textbook to be used in class. All the material they needed. So, a textbook, a blank file, a pace setter (DH C1).

...support for classroom management, controlling late coming, marking a register, and implementing a policy. How to present a lesson (DH A1).

Usually, when they come in, they will request the textbook that the school uses. Besides the textbook, some of them, because they come from other schools, don't bring any files (DH B2).

The findings on the support that novice teachers receive from their DHs imply that departmental heads support novice teachers by providing the necessary teaching and learning resources, as well as the skills they request. Teaching materials, such as textbooks, pace setters, and the student code of conduct, are very important for novice teachers to refer to when preparing and delivering lessons. The teaching materials ensure that what the novice teachers teach is in line with the syllabus. Also, the code of conduct for learners ensures that novice teachers are familiar with what is expected of them and of the learners, so they can encourage good behaviour from learners.

Novice teachers supported by DHs share with novice teachers the art of teaching to assist in improving their skills of delivering a lesson. This is what some of the participants have to say:

Doing a class visit, checking lesson presentation, voice projection, when writing on the board, do they face learners and also do they show confidence (DHB1).

I explain that, according to the pace setter, week 1 you do this, week 2 you do this. If you have come behind, you have a recovery plan. If you finish term one's work, you revise; you don't start term two's work in term one (DH C1).

... step-by-step mentoring. What does it take to be a good teacher? You don't need to assume they know varsity, they know, you need to take them step by step, show them everything... Class visit, checking if they mark the classwork book, checking if they follow the annual teaching plan. Also insisting that they must take part in extracurricular activities (DH C2).

So, show them how to use the pace setters, exam guidelines, programme of assessment, and we interpret those documents together, how to use them (DH H2).

The above quotations imply that the departmental heads provided support to novice teachers by coaching them on how to use the pace setter, conducting class visits, and monitoring syllabus coverage. This becomes a good head start for novice teachers, which gets them equipped with skills on how to prepare for class, how to deliver the lesson, whilst the departmental head observes and then provides feedback on the observed lesson. The feedback helps the novice teachers develop teaching skills. The novice teachers also get to reflect on their strengths and areas that need improvement.

Novice teachers supported by DHs in ensuring that they observe the dos and don'ts of teaching. The participants made the following comments:

... after mentoring, I monitor to ensure they follow the policy. Time on task, they are not dodging classes (DH B1).

class visit, call them to a meeting to discuss where they are lacking; constantly remind them what they shouldn't do, like using the phone when working... constantly remind them what they shouldn't do, like using the phone when working (DH D1).

The participants' responses imply that the departmental head provided support to novice teachers by encouraging them to do the right things expected of them and to avoid being found engaged in the wrong things during working hours. Things such as being on the phone whilst on duty, dodging classes, and being late are 'don'ts' that novice teachers need to avoid, as they miss valuable contact time that should count as experience.

Novice teachers supported by DHs in managing learner behaviour to ensure that teaching and learning take place uninterrupted, with all learners involved. This is what the participants have to say:

The teacher, when she got in, had morning classes starting at half past six, so half of the class didn't attend. She reported them to me. I had to chip in and assist her with the learners coming to school on time (DH B2).

She once had behavioural issues, where learners are making noise, some of them on their phones whilst she is teaching, and then in that case I went to the class together with the principal and other teachers took the phones of the learners away and kept them for 7-8 days, without them having their phones, just to discipline them not to use phones during class (DH B2).

Support for classroom management, controlling late coming, marking a register, and implementing a policy. How to present a lesson (DH A1).

The quotations from the participants indicate that departmental heads supported novice teachers by going to the classroom to assist in managing learner behaviour and to ensure that novice teachers do what is expected of them. This is hands-on monitoring that helps the novice teacher develop professionally and ensures accountability for the mentoring role of the DHs. The departmental head had to encourage learners to attend morning classes, mark the class register, and collect cell phones from learners who unlawfully brought them to school. In doing so, departmental heads assert the authority of the novice teacher. It is possible that the presence of the DH in the classroom while the novice teacher delivers a lesson may make learners behave better, since they know the novice teacher has the support of the DH.

The findings of this theme revealed that although novice teachers are qualified, they still need support from the experienced teachers to provide scaffolding where they are lacking until they are settled. This is consistent with the situational mentoring framework by Kajs (2002), which asserts that the mentorship process should include a support team that assists in intervening when a novice teacher needs support.

Previous studies by some authors (Kozikoglu, 2017; Woest, 2018; Bhembe, 2018; Dyosini, 2022) have reported a gap in the support needed by novice teachers during the mentorship process. Such findings implied that the departmental head did not provide adequate support to the novice teachers; instead, the novice teachers felt they were left to face and overcome any challenges they experienced. The current study reveals that departmental heads provide support to novice teachers in the form of sharing the art of teaching, and teaching and learning resources, ensuring they avoid the do's and don'ts of teaching, and managing learner behaviour. This implies that departmental heads intervene and provide novice teachers with the support they need during the mentorship, which is in contrast with other findings in the literature (Kozikoglu, 2017; Woest, 2018; Bhembe, 2018; Dyosini, 2022).

4.5.7 Theme 7: DH accounting for mentoring novice teachers

Theme 7 provides narratives of the findings of research question 7, sub-theme 1, which is about how novice teachers account for the mentoring process. Sub-theme 2 is about some aspects that worked well during the mentoring process. Sub-theme 3 is about some aspects that did not work well during the mentoring process.

4.5.7 Table 4.5.7 Theme 7: Research question 7, theme and sub-themes

<p>Research question 7 How do the DHs account for mentoring novice teachers?</p> <p>IQ How do you account for the mentoring process?</p> <p>IQ What worked well in the mentoring process?</p>	<p>Theme 7: DH accounting for mentoring novice teachers</p> <p><i>Sub-theme 7.1: How do DHs account for mentoring novice teachers</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>The process of accounting for mentorship</i> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. <i>formal accounting channel</i> 2. <i>Informal accounting</i> • <i>How to account for mentoring</i> <p><i>Sub-theme 7.2: Things that worked well in the mentoring process</i></p>
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<p>IQ What did not work well during mentoring process?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Classroom management</i> • <i>Good communication</i> • <i>Professional working relations</i> <p><i>Sub-theme 7.3: Things that did not work well during the mentoring process</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Classroom management</i> • <i>Communication</i> • <i>Adhering to school rules and regulations</i>
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4.5.7.1: Sub-theme 7.1: How do DHs account for mentoring novice teachers?

The research question: How do you account for the mentoring process? seeks to find out how departmental heads are held accountable for mentoring novice teachers. The findings revealed that they use a variety of methods to account for the mentoring process. The process of accounting can be either formal or informal, using different accounting channels. On the formal accounting channels, it is to follow the leadership hierarchy in sending mentoring accounting reports. The participants said the following:

...the DH reports to the Human resource manager, in this case, it is the Deputy principal at the school level, then the deputy principal takes the matter up to the principal of the school (DH A1).

We do a developmental programme to monitor the progress and take it further, report to the senior management to say 1,2,3 has

been done ... In a form of writing, that's how we account for it (DH D2).

Report that their session is over and say goodbye, just like they brought him. Oh yes, we have to report to the principal so that the principal informs staff members (DH C2).

The finding implies that there is a formal accounting process in which the departmental head reports to the human resource manager, who then takes the matter to the principal. Design a developmental programme for the mentorship and report to the principal about the progress. These accounting methods keep the senior management involved and informed about the status of the mentoring process. Upon the senior management receiving the report, they also get the opportunity to provide support to the mentorship process or suggest any other strategy that can be used in mentoring novice teachers.

The mentorship process also has informal accounting channels. This is what the participants have to say about informal accounting channels:

write reports, there is no specific encounter with the principal where you must get there, tell her I did this or this. We only write reports to say that there is a teacher who came to my department. I've done this and this (DH B2).

The findings imply that departmental heads provide a detailed report to the principal about the mentorship of the novice teachers in the department. This form of accounting ensures the principal gets involved in the mentorship through interacting with the report, wherein the principal can make comments or provide support.

The participants indicated the ways in which they account for the mentorship process. This is what the participants had to say:

So, we submit monthly reports to her on how we are working in our department, including mentoring the new teachers (DH B2).

Whatever is happening in the class, I write down as the departmental head, and then I indicate the areas where the teacher needs to be developed (DH D2).

Unless there are challenges, I'll have to report, but if everything went well, we'll just sign the relevant documents (DH C2).

meeting keep minutes and agenda of mentoring to say we have discussed this and this. When you account, you're able to say, 'We have done this and this.' So that when certain things come out, we can see if the mentor fails or not (DH C1).

...indicate how the teachers' progress is. Discuss with the teacher. Have one one-on-one, write down what you agreed upon as evidence (DH B1).

The participants indicate that they write down a report that they submit to their seniors. Include mentorship progress on their departmental monthly report. Keep minutes of their meeting with novice teachers as evidence. In doing so, the departmental heads provide a written account of the mentorship.

4.5.7.2: Sub-theme 7.2: Things that worked well in the mentoring process

The participants indicated things that worked well during the mentorship process. This is what they have to say:

It is the setting of assessment and classroom management (DH A2).

The finding implies that the mentorship process yields results. The novice teacher had improved, now able to set an assessment that meets all the standards. Also, the novice teacher manages the classroom.

The communications make it easy to interact and ask questions (DH C1).

The mentee listens to my advice, does what I told them, even if they did not do it right, but then comes to explain themselves (DH D1).

I think what worked well is that they were able to open up to me so they could learn. As you know, as teachers, we put them at arm's length; we tell them, "stop what you are doing" (DH C2).

There is good communication between the departmental heads and novice teachers; they interact well. The novice teacher is able to open up, take advice from the departmental head, and report where things have gone wrong. They were able to establish rapport, which makes it easier for the mentorship process to succeed.

After the class visit, we have a meeting to discuss the challenges. Then I carry on monitoring if they are implementing what we discussed (DH B1).

It is the cooperation between the mentor and the mentee. The mutual respect between the two stems from the fact that I'm the experienced teacher, if I may say so (DH D2).

So, what worked well was that they were in good standing; they knew they could come to me and ask any question to learn (DH C2).

This finding implies that the departmental head and the novice teachers have developed a professional working relationship. They cooperate in executing their responsibilities for the success of the mentorship process. There is a mutual respect amongst them.

4.5.7.3: Sub-theme 7.3: Things that did not work well during the mentoring process

The participants also shared narratives about things that did not work well during the mentorship process. Their comments are as follows:

Another thing is maintaining classroom discipline. The new teachers end up coming to report to me about ill-disciplined learners in the class... (DH B1).

This finding suggests that novice teachers still lack the ability to maintain classroom discipline and often rely on the departmental head for help. Maintaining discipline is the most critical aspect of managing a classroom, as it creates a conducive atmosphere for teaching and learning to take place. The mentorship process needs to put more emphasis on maintaining classroom discipline.

...poor communication. Failing to disclose challenges. Like I won't be able to honour morning classes because I can't wake up early in the morning. (DH C1).

This finding infers that the novice teachers agree to take responsibilities that they cannot fulfil. Fearing losing their jobs, they take on responsibilities they cannot meet. Failing to disclose their challenges would make their development take longer and stall the mentorship process.

The period registers. They don't take it seriously. They don't do it. It is important when you account to the parents. You use as evidence when they accuse you of not attending your classes (DH B1).

When they continue doing what we discussed they shouldn't do, they don't care. Coming late, using the phone even if I cautioned them (DH D1).

The issue of late coming was a challenge (DH B2).

Novice teachers did not sign period registers, coming late and being on the phone whilst on duty indicate that they find it difficult to follow school rules and regulations. The novice teacher would repeat the act after being cautioned. The conduct of a novice teacher is compromised when the act is repeated even after a warning. This shows a lack of commitment and willingness to learn. The most appropriate thing novice teachers should do is to communicate on time if they will be late or if an emergency requires them to be on the phone for longer.

Situational Mentoring Framework by Kajs (2002) indicates that a mentorship process needs to include accountability, where the mentor is going to give feedback about the progress of the mentorship to the senior management of the school. Therefore, the findings of this study are consistent with the situational mentoring framework. The departmental heads in this study reported on how they account for mentoring novice teachers through formal and informal channels. Formal accounting channels required the departmental heads to write a report and submit it to the senior management. An informal accounting channel unfolded when the departmental head provided a detailed verbal report to the principal. These accounting channels were used to provide feedback about the progress of the mentorship to the school's senior management. Other studies by Vikaraman (2017) and Kajs (2002) argued that accountability must be structured. There must be a benchmark set, time for meetings, as well as roles and responsibilities for the mentor. Once every role player is made aware of their role and responsibilities, mentoring will be effective. Another possible explanation for this is that departmental heads are accountable to the plan they drafted or the benchmark they set for themselves. This makes it necessary to be able to account for mentoring novice teachers.

4.6 SUMMARY OF THE CHAPTER

In this chapter, I presented the research findings based on the research question. The findings are supported by the verbatim quotations from participants. I also covered the analysis of the findings of the study at the end of the theme. I further compared the findings of this study with the literature discussion on the research topic. In the next chapter, I present the summary of findings, conclusion and recommendations of the study.

CHAPTER 5

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 INTRODUCTION

In Chapter Four, I presented the research findings based on the research question. The findings have been supported by verbatim quotations from the participants. The research findings are followed by my analysis of the findings. In this chapter, I intend to present the summary of the findings and conclusions of the study. I also provided the recommendations of the study.

5.2 REFLECTIONS OF THE RESEARCH JOURNEY

An exciting journey that, when it started, brought together many students from various parts of the country. We had a WhatsApp group where we shared advice, study material, and reminded each other of upcoming due dates and exams. As time went by, the research journey became challenging because I was unfamiliar with the methods of learning used by master's students. I could not manage my time properly. It became difficult to balance my work duties and my studies. During the progress of my studies, I tried to catch up and discovered new ways of learning and completing the task at hand. I was able to strike a balance between the demands of my responsibilities at work and my studies. Mentorship and guidance from my supervisor made it easy to learn whilst conducting the study.

I followed the ethical considerations stipulated in the ethical clearance to ensure that I minimise any risk of harm when conducting the study. I obtained permission to conduct the study from the Department of Education, the school circuit, and the school principal. Potential participants who showed no interest in the study were not compelled to take part. I only proceeded with participants who were willing and gave me consent. The study used the most suitable research approach, design, and methods, namely a qualitative study, a case study, and semi-structured interviews. I used them to my advantage to explore the phenomenon and uncover the experiences of DHs when mentoring and supporting novice teachers. The methods

were effective; the interview strategy applied made participants relax as we had a conversation, and I was able to ask clarity-seeking questions when needed. In interpreting the results, I avoided bias and instead remained objective.

5.3 SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

In the following section, I present the summary of the findings of this study that aligns with the research questions.

5.3.1 The selection of DHs to be mentors

The first research question of this study focuses on how the DHs are selected to be mentors of novice teachers. According to responses from participants at the different schools involved in this study, there appear to be different ways of selecting departmental heads to serve as mentors for novice teachers. There were departmental heads who were selected based on area of subject expertise, some were selected by virtue of being departmental heads, others were selected based on prior training in mentorship, and lastly, the selection was also done based on formal recruitment processes. The responses on how the departmental heads were selected to become mentors of novice teachers also identified that the departmental heads were expected to have teaching experience, be able to assist novice teachers with lesson planning and lesson delivery, use curriculum support documents and other teaching material, and be able to induct novice teachers. These qualities were perceived by the participants as a prerequisite for being a mentor of novice teachers. This is inconsistent with situational framework by Kajs (2002) which states that mentors and mentee must be pair according to their thinking style.

5.3.2 Preparation for mentoring novice teachers

This study aimed to establish the preparation DHs undertake for mentoring novice teachers, as well as the resources mentors need for the mentorship process. Participants' narrations about the preparation needed for mentoring novice teachers varied across schools. In some schools, departmental heads prepare to mentor novice teachers by inducting them, organising and providing curriculum and assessment documents, and providing policy documents. In others, the department heads discussed assisting novice teachers with lesson preparation and presentation

through observation. In comparison, some department heads prepared for mentoring novice teachers based on the individual needs of those novice teachers. These preparations, done by the departmental heads, require teaching experience and an understanding of the policy documents as a point of reference to mentor novice teachers. The SMF also suggested that there must be preparation for mentorship. The findings are inconsistent with SMF as the participants never indicated they attend mentor training.

5.3.3 Mentoring process for novice teachers

This study established the different styles used by heads of departments in the mentoring process for novice teachers. The findings of this study revealed that the departmental head mentored the novice teacher by setting an example that the novice teacher should follow. The DHs also monitored novice teachers' behaviour and dress code, and discussed with them the policy documents related to the subjects they were to teach. The department heads also focused on mentoring novice teachers on how to involve learners in the lesson, ensuring they participate, providing support to learners who are lacking, and maintaining classroom discipline.

5.3.4. Challenges experienced by departmental heads when mentoring novice teachers

This study also explored the challenges experienced by departmental heads when mentoring novice teachers. The findings indicated that the departmental heads experience several challenges. The challenges varied from school to school. The challenges included the novice teacher's lack of punctuality and absenteeism. The department heads also had to tolerate arrogant behaviour from some of the novice teachers. Other DHs also indicated that novice teachers do not dress professionally as teachers, as well as their inability to manage learner behaviour in the classroom. Some DHs mentioned that novice teachers were unable to control learner behaviour. This was a result of overcrowded classrooms, novice teachers lacking confidence, novice teachers using their phones too much during working hours, and novice teachers finding it difficult to report to departmental heads when there are challenges. This is in line with SMF suggesting that novice teacher and mentee experience similar challenges during the mentoring process.

5.3.5 Addressing challenges experienced by the departmental heads when mentoring novice teachers

After identifying the challenges DHs face in mentoring novice teachers, this study also explored the strategies DHs use to address them. The findings show that departmental heads provide opportunities for dialogue with novice teachers by setting up a meeting to discuss the challenges. In such platforms, novice teachers are given a chance to voice their concerns. The novice teachers are also encouraged to develop positive behaviour and improve their professional conduct. Other departmental heads mentioned that they support novice teachers by preparing lessons and assessments together with them. The interaction between the department heads, as mentors, and the novice teachers provides learning opportunities for both parties, with mutual gain. According to SMF addressing the challenges involves using support the novice teacher and also involving school support teams.

5.3.6 Support that department heads give to novice teachers during the mentoring process

This study also explored the support that departmental heads give to novice teachers during the mentoring process. The findings of this study show that the DHs support novice teachers by providing teaching and learning resources and by sharing the art of teaching. The DHs also share dos and don'ts of teaching and learning with novice teachers. Lastly, the DHs supported novice teachers on how to manage learner behaviour in the classroom and during the lesson.

5.3.7 Departmental Heads accounting for mentoring novice teachers

The findings of this study provide narratives of how novice teachers account for the mentoring process, what worked well during the mentoring process, and what did not work well during the mentoring process. The findings show that departmental heads account for the mentoring process through formal and informal reporting channels, which include discussing the mentorship process with the senior management and providing a written report. What worked well during the mentoring process is classroom management, good communication and professional working relations.

What did not work well during the mentoring process included novice teachers acquiring classroom management, communication challenges and the novice teachers adhering to the school rules and regulations. The findings are consistent with SMF where meetings between novice and mentee are held to discuss mentorship.

5.4 DELIMITATION OF THE STUDY

The study took place in four secondary schools in rural Mpumalanga Province, and the study can only be generalised to rural secondary school DHs. The study applied a qualitative approach, which enabled a thorough investigation of the topic. The study used a case study, which allowed a diligent probing of the phenomenon and provided a detailed report. In gathering the data, the study used semi-structured interviews that followed a predetermined set of questions and allowed the opportunity to ask follow-up questions to seek clarity on responses. The study focused on the experiences of DHs in mentoring and supporting novice teachers. The study involved DHs who are working in public schools; private schools were excluded from participation. Only two participants from each school participated in the study, which was gender-balanced. The participants in the study were departmental heads who mentored novice teachers before.

5.5 LIMITATION OF THE STUDY

Limitations of this study include the unavailability of departmental heads who mentored novice teachers in the schools and the unwillingness of the eligible sample to take part in the study. DHs who mentored novice teachers are the only eligible population to participate in the study. Participants who gave responses in their mother tongue increased the chances of losing meaning when translating into English. Time also became a limitation, as some participants were busy marking whilst taking part in the study.

Some participants were in a rush, as the interviews were held after work. This made me conduct the study whilst considering that it was after work, and the participants asked me to be considerate. I had to do follow up in some instances to gather details that I felt were left out. I had difficulties in organising the follow up. The participants hardly made time. The study also has a bias in its selection of DHs eligible to take part. Only DHs who supervised novice teachers previously are eligible to participate

in the study. In conducting the study, there was limited funding covering only tuition. I used my own money to travel to the research site. This affected the results of the study, as there was not enough money to travel, print the documents needed, and provide refreshments to ensure full focus on the study.

5.6 CONCLUSION

In this study, I explored the departmental heads' experience in supporting and mentoring novice secondary school teachers in rural Mpumalanga Province. The findings of the study suggest that schools use different methods to select mentors for novice teachers. In some instances, DHs were selected to be mentors by virtue of being DHs. In other cases, DHs were selected because they are subject experts and selected based on prior training. This is inconsistent with SMF which suggest mentor and mentee must be paired according to their personality. DHs prepare to mentor novice teachers by providing induction, organising and providing curriculum and assessment documents, as well as policy documents. According to SMF mentors prepare for mentorship through attending mentoring training. Furthermore, the departmental heads mentored novice teachers by monitoring their conduct and dress code, discussing policy documents with them, and simulating teaching and learning methodologies by setting an example for them.

Challenges experienced by DHs included the arrogant behaviour of novice teachers, their absenteeism and lack of punctuality, as well as poor classroom management skills. In addressing these challenges, DHs indicated that they prepare lessons and assessments together with novice teachers to help them learn, hold meetings to address challenges, and encourage novice teachers to adopt positive behaviour. Support that DHs provided to novice teachers included sharing the dos and don'ts of teaching and learning, how to manage a classroom, and providing teaching and learning resources. The accounting process involves formal and informal channels, including DHs discussing mentorship progress with senior management and providing written reports. The SMF is also of the view that meetings are held to discuss the mentorship. The findings of this study imply that DHs plan and prepare to mentor and support novice teachers. During the mentorship, challenges arise, and DHs come up with strategies to address them so that the mentorship can succeed. This is consistent with SMF which states that mentors and support team provides

support to novice teachers. DHs account for the mentorship to the senior school management. This reveals that mentoring novice teachers is an internal exercise carried out mostly by DHs across various schools. The mentorship challenges, as well as the strategies used to address them, are context-bound. There is no one-size-fits-all. This study fills a gap in the experiences of DH in mentoring and supporting novice teachers.

5.7 RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE FINDINGS

5.7.1 Recommendations from Theme 1: Selection of DHs to be mentors

Based on the findings of this study, I recommend that school leadership and management select DHs to serve as mentors for novice teachers based on the subject they teach and the department they head. Pairing the mentor and mentee with suitable partner whom they have similar personalities. Another selection criterion that school management should use is that the DHs appointed as mentors for novice teachers should be prepared to practically assist novice teachers with lesson planning and presentation.

5.7.2 Recommendations from Theme 2: Preparation for mentoring novice teachers

Based on the findings of this study, I recommend that DDHs, as mentors, talk to novice teachers about the challenges they face and prepare for mentoring based on the individual needs of each novice teacher. Provide training for mentor to ensure mentorship succeeds. Furthermore, prepare for mentoring novice teachers by organising and providing curriculum and policy documents to the novice teacher.

5.7.3 Recommendations from Theme 3: Mentoring process for novice teachers

Based on the findings of this study, I recommend that DHs, as mentors, use simulation during mentorship to help novice teachers better understand the aspect they are discussing. DHs should also monitor the conduct and dress code of novice teachers every day when they come to work. Another recommendation is that DHs as mentors should assist novice teachers in providing support to learners who are slow. Moreover, DHs as mentors should assist novice teachers in using different ways to involve learners during

lessons to ensure they participate. Lastly, DHs as mentors should share strategies with novice teachers on how to maintain discipline in the classroom.

5.7.4 Recommendations from Theme 4: Challenges experienced by departmental heads when mentoring novice teachers

Based on the findings of this study, I recommend that when novice teachers arrive at the school, DHs should induct them into the expected dress code. Another recommendation for Circuit managers is to organise professional development training for novice teachers, with greater emphasis on classroom management. Lastly, DHs as mentors should encourage novice teachers to open up and speak about their frustrations so they get help.

5.7.5 Recommendations from Theme 5: Addressing challenges experienced by the departmental heads when mentoring novice teachers

Based on the findings of this study, consistent with the SMF, I recommend that DHs, as mentors, should address challenges experienced during mentoring novice teachers by arranging meetings with novice teachers to discuss their concerns. DHs as mentors should also have formal or informal talks with novice teachers to encourage them to adopt a positive attitude and behaviour in school matters.

5.7.6 Recommendations from Theme 6: Support that department heads give to novice teachers during the mentoring process

From the findings of this study, I recommend that DHs, as mentors should provide teaching and learning materials to the novice teachers to ensure they have all the resources they need. Furthermore, DHs as mentors need to share with novice teachers the dos and don'ts of teaching and learning to help them know what to do and what not to do.

5.7.7 Recommendations from Theme 7: departmental heads accounting for mentoring novice teachers.

Based on the findings of the study, I recommend that DHs, as mentors, should use a written report when reporting to the senior management about the progress of the mentorship for novice teachers.

5.8 A FINAL WORD

In this study, I realised that DHs are expected and trusted with the responsibility to mentor and support novice teachers in the department they are heading. DHs provide novice teachers with all the resources they need. Besides, they discuss with the novice teachers to ensure they are able to present well-planned lessons in the classroom. They promote positive behaviour among novice teachers to ensure they are punctual, well-dressed, and avoid absenteeism. The significance of this study is to provide good practices of the DH experience in mentoring and supporting novice teachers. The study found that schools have no structure or committee for mentorship, which results in an ineffective mentorship process. The study had limitations, such as the unwillingness of some participants to provide detailed information. For future studies I recommend utilising different participants, using different data collection methods as well as different research sites.

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ANNEXURE A: ETHICAL CLEARANCE



UNISA COLLEGE OF EDUCATION ETHICS REVIEW COMMITTEE

Date: 12 October 2024

Ref: **2024/10/12/000000291/05/RB**

Name: **Khoza Bhekinkosi Postoli**

Student No.: **55738192**

Decision: Ethics Approval form

Dear **Khoza Bhekinkosi Postoli**

Researcher(s): Name: **Khoza Bhekinkosi Postoli**

E-mail address: 55738192@gmail.com

Telephone: **0825320473**

Supervisor: Name: **Dr T Ogina**

E-mail address: oginatereza8@gmail.com

Telephone: **+254 719 288 098**

Title of research: *Departmental Heads' experiences in mentoring and supporting novice secondary school teachers in rural Mpumalanga province.*

Qualification: MEd

Thank you for the application for research ethics clearance by the UNISA College of Education Ethics Review Committee for the above-mentioned research. Ethics approval is granted for the period **2024/10/12 to 2027/10/12**.

*The **low risk level** application was reviewed by the Ethics Review Committee on **12 September 2024** in compliance with the UNISA Policy on Research Ethics and the Standard Operating Procedure on Research Ethics Risk Assessment.*

The proposed research may now commence with the provisions that:

1. The researcher will ensure that the research project adheres to the relevant guidelines set out in the Unisa Covid-19 position statement on research ethics attached.
2. The researcher(s) will ensure that the research project adheres to the values and principles expressed in the UNISA Policy on Research Ethics.



3. Any adverse circumstance arising in the undertaking of the research project that is relevant to the ethicality of the study should be communicated in writing to the UNISA College of Education Ethics Review Committee.
4. The researcher(s) will conduct the study according to the methods and procedures set out in the approved application.
5. Any changes that can affect the study-related risks for the research participants, particularly in terms of assurances made with regards to the protection of participants' privacy and the confidentiality of the data, should be reported to the Committee in writing.
6. The researcher will ensure that the research project adheres to any applicable national legislation, professional codes of conduct, institutional guidelines and scientific standards relevant to the specific field of study. Adherence to the following South African legislation is important, if applicable: Protection of Personal Information Act, no 4 of 2013; Children's act no 38 of 2005 and the National Health Act, no 61 of 2003.
7. Only de-identified research data may be used for secondary research purposes in future on condition that the research objectives are similar to those of the original research. Secondary use of identifiable human research data requires additional ethics clearance.
8. The study's risk level is Category 2- Low risk: Human participants are involved and there is foreseeable risk of inconvenience. Non-vulnerable adult participants and non-sensitive information is involved.
9. No field work activities may continue after the expiry date **2027/10/12**. Submission of a completed research ethics progress report will constitute an application for renewal of Ethics Research Committee approval.

Note:

The reference number **2024/10/12/00000291/05/RB** should be clearly indicated on all forms of communication with the intended research participants, as well as with the Committee.

Kind regards,



Prof RB Manyal
Acting Head: CEDU Research
monyarb@unisa.ac.za



Prof Mpine Makoe
Executive Dean: CEDU
gakisme@unisa.ac.za

Approved - decision template – updated 16 Feb 2017



ANNEXURE B: PERMISSION LETTER FROM THE DEPARTMENT



education
MPUMALANGA PROVINCE
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

Ikhama Building, Government Boulevard, Riverside Park, Mpumalanga Province
Private Bag X11341, Mbombela, 1200
Tel: 013 766 5552/5115, Toll Free Line: 0800 203 116

Litiko le Temfundvo, Umnyango we Fundo

Departement van Onderwys

Ndzawulo ya Dyondzo

Khoza BP
UNISA
Contact 0825320473
Email: 55738192@mylife.unisa.ac.za

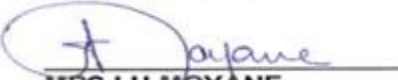
RE: "DEPARTMENTAL HEADS' EXPERIENCES IN MENTORING AND SUPPORTING NOVICE SECONDARY SCHOOL TEACHERS IN RURAL MPUMALANGA PROVINCE".

Your application to conduct research study was received and is therefore acknowledged. The title of your research project reads: "**Departmental heads' experiences in mentoring and supporting novice secondary school teachers in rural Mpumalanga Province**". I trust that the aims and the objectives of the study will benefit the whole department especially the beneficiaries. Your request is approved subject to you observing the provisions of the departmental research policy which is available in the department website. You are requested to adhere to your university's research ethics as spelt out in your research ethics.

In terms of the research policy, data or any research activity can be conducted after school hours as per appointment with affected participants and schools' regulations be observed. You are also requested to share your findings with the relevant sections of the department so that we may consider implementing your findings if that will be in the best interest of the department. To this effect, your final approved research report (both soft and hard copy) should be submitted to the department so that your recommendations could be implemented. You may be required to prepare a presentation and present at the departments' annual research dialogue.

For more information kindly liaise with the department's research unit @ 013 766 5015 / 5124 Or c.maphanga@mpuedu.gov.za

The department wishes you well in this important project and pledges to give you the necessary support you may need.


MRS LH MOYANE
HEAD: EDUCATION

28 / 03 / 2025
DATE



ANNEXURE C: PERMISSION LETTER FROM THE CIRCUIT



education
MPUMALANGA PROVINCE
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

Ikhama Building, Government Boulevard, Riverside Park, Mpumalanga Province
Private Bag X11341, Mbombela, 1200
Tel: 013 766 5552/5115, Toll Line: 0800 203 116

Litiko le Temfundvo, Umnyango we Fundo

Departement van Onderwys

Ndzawulo ya Dyondzo

**TO : KHOZA BP
UNISA**

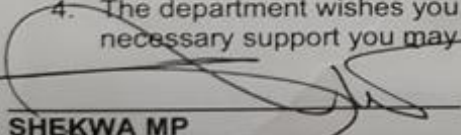
**FROM : SHEKWA MP
CIRCUIT MANAGER
MALELANE CIRCUIT**

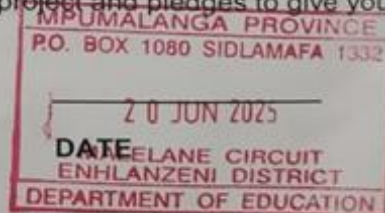
DATE : 24 JUNE 2025.

**SUBJECT : RE: "DEPARTMENTAL HEADS' EXPERIENCE IN MENTORING AND
SUPPORTING MALELANE CIRCUIT SCHOOLS TEACHERS IN MPUMALANGA
PROVINCE".**

1. The above matter has reference
2. Your application to conduct research study was received and is therefore acknowledged. Your request is approved subject to you observing the provisions of the departmental research policy.
3. In terms of the research policy, data or any research activity can be conducted after school hours as per appointment with affected participants and schools regulation be observed.

4. The department wishes you well in this important project and pledges to give you the necessary support you may need.


SHEKWA MP
SUPERVISOR



ANNEXURE D: LETTER TO THE PRINCIPAL

PERMISSION LETTER TO THE PRINCIPAL



Private Bag x007

Evander

2280

20 JULY 2024

Dear Principal

Request for permission to conduct research at your school.

I Khoza Bhokinkosi am doing research under the supervision of Dr T Ogina, senior lecture at the University of South Africa. We are inviting you to participate in a study entitled *“Departmental heads’ experiences in mentoring and supporting novice secondary school teachers in rural Mpumalanga province.”*

The aim of the study is to explore the experiences of Departmental Heads when mentoring and supporting novice teachers in rural Mpumalanga province. Your school has been selected because you have Department Heads with years of experience in mentoring novice teachers. Your school is also a convenient research site because I reside in Mpumalanga which will minimize the cost of transport during fieldwork. The study will involve two Departmental Heads in the school who are currently supervising novice teachers or those who have supervised novice teachers. The Departmental Heads will be expected to participate in an interview after school hours for about 30 minutes. Semi-structured interviews will be conducted to obtain information from DHs on their experiences in mentoring novice teachers.

The benefits of this study are that, the findings may reveal challenges faced by Departmental Heads during the mentoring process and how they address the challenges that they experience. The study may contribute to the body of knowledge on how novice Departmental Heads should mentor novice teachers. The findings of the study may also make recommendations to the Department of Education on how to improve the mentoring support given that the DHs give to novice teachers. The DHs will also get the opportunity of reflecting on their practices regarding mentoring novice teachers.

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There are no foreseeable risk in doing this study. The name of the school will be protected, and pseudonyms will be used to replace real names of the school and participants to maintain confidentiality. There will be no reimbursement or any incentives for participating in the research. Feedback procedure will entail sharing copies of the findings with the participants to verify. Feedback procedure will entail sharing the final draft of the research findings with the participants for verification before the final write-up and publication of the report.

For additional information feel free to contact the following people:

Researcher: Khoza BP (0825320473)

Supervisor: Dr TA Ogina (+254 719288098)

Yours Sincerely



_Mr_BP_Khoza_|

Researcher

ANNEXURE E: CONSENT FORM

CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN THE STUDY (Return slip)

You are deciding whether or not to participate by continuing to the next page.

You are free to withdraw from the study at any time prior to clicking the second button.

I _____ grant consent that the information I share during the interview may be used by _____ (name of researcher) for research purposes. I am aware that the discussions will be digitally recorded and grant consent for these recordings, provided that my privacy will be protected. I understand that I am at liberty to withdraw from the project at any time, should I so desire.

Participant's Name (Please print): _____

Participant Signature: _____

Researcher's Name: _____

Date: _____

ANNEXURE F: INTERVIEW QUESTIONS



Research Title: **Departmental heads’ experiences in mentoring and supporting novice secondary teachers in rural Mpumalanga Province.**

Introduction and assurance to the participants

I am Bhekinkosi Postoli Khoza, a student at the University of South Africa (UNISA) doing master’s degree in education management. As part of the requirements for graduation, I am conducting a study on Departmental heads’ experiences in mentoring and supporting novice secondary school teachers in rural Mpumalanga Province. The purpose of the study is to explore the experiences of departmental heads in mentoring and supporting novice secondary school teachers in rural Mpumalanga Province. It is hoped that findings of this study will reveal challenges of departmental head in mentoring and supporting departmental heads, and how to address them. The interviews will be face-to-face and one-on-one lasting not more than 30 minutes. Signing the consent form meant you agreed to be interviewed but if you feel uncomfortable with any question feel free to choose not to answer it. The interviews will be recorded, and your answers will solely be used for the purposes of this study.

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS FOR DEPARTMENTAL HEADS

Research questions	Interview questions
Biographical questions	How long have you been a departmental head? What is your highest qualification? What age bracket are you in?
1. How are DHs selected to mentor novice teachers?	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• How were you selected to be a mentor for novice teachers?• What was needed from you in order to become a mentor?

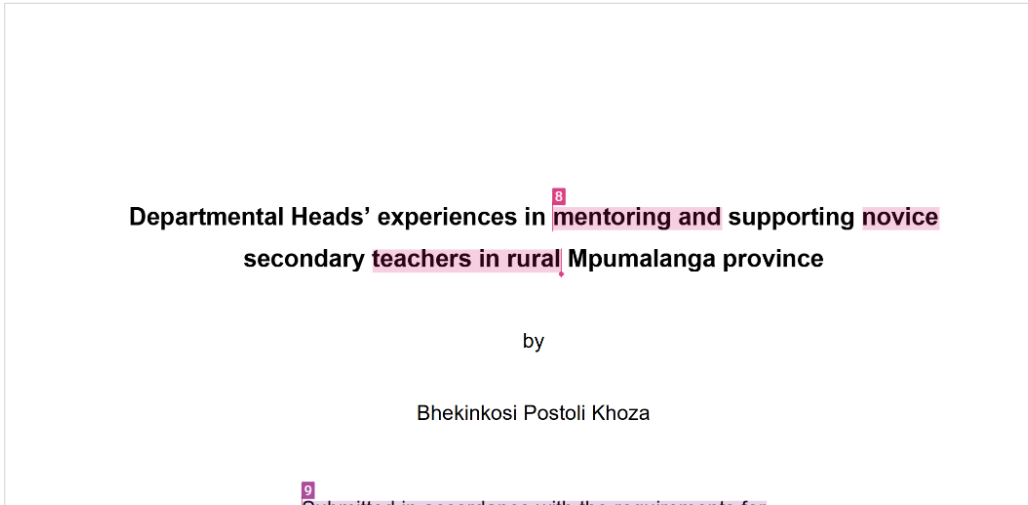
<p>2. How do DHs prepare and mentor novice secondary school teachers?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explain how you prepare to mentor novice teachers? • What do you need as a mentor? • How do you mentor novice teachers?
<p>3. What are the challenges experienced by DHs when mentoring novice teachers?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explain the challenges you experienced when mentoring novice teachers.
<p>4. How do DHs address the challenges they experience when mentoring novice teachers?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explain how you addressed the challenges you experienced during mentoring of novice teachers.
<p>5. What support do the DHs give to novice teachers during the mentoring process?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What kind of support do the novice teachers need during the mentoring process? • What support were you able to give to the novice teachers process?
<p>6. How do the DHs account for mentoring novice teachers?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What worked well in the mentoring process? • Who did not work well during mentoring process? • How do you account for the mentoring process?Process?

ANNEXURE G: DOCUMENT ANALYSIS TIMELINE

1. What records do DHs keep in the mentorship file?
2. What written evidence for mentorship do DH keep?
3. Which documents did DHs share with the mentee for support and mentorship?
4. What duties and responsibilities, as well as subject allocation, did DH allocate to the novice teachers?
5. What are the class sizes taught by novice teachers?
6. What are the results of the analysis for classes taught by the novice teachers?

ACTIVITY	DATE
(Analysing available documents) (SCHOOL A)	1 JULY 2025
(Analysing available documents) (SCHOOL B)	2 JULY 2025
(Analysing available documents) (SCHOOL C)	3 JULY 2025
(Analysing available documents) (SCHOOL D)	4 JULY 2025

ANNEXURE H: TURNITIN REPORT



Khoza BP Dissertation October 2025 (1)

ORIGINALITY REPORT



PRIMARY SOURCES

1	hdl.handle.net Internet Source	1%
2	Nsimbini, Nelisiwe Peaceful. "Management of Teacher Absenteeism in Soweto Township Schools", University of South Africa (South Africa) Publication	1%

ANNEXURE I: LANGUAGE CERTIFICATE



Reference No:1000686

kufazano@gmail.com

+27631434276

2 November 2025

To whom it may concern,

RE: CONFIRMATION OF LANGUAGE EDITING

This serves to confirm that I edited a Master of Education Management dissertation by Bhekinkosi Postoli Khoza (student number 55738192), titled, "Departmental Heads' experiences in mentoring and supporting novice secondary teachers in rural Mpumalanga Province".

The scope of my editing comprised:

- Spelling
- Tense
- Vocabulary
- Punctuation
- Word usage
- Language and sentence structure
- References

If you need any further details, kindly contact me on the details provided above.

Yours faithfully



Kufakunesu Zano

Dr Kufakunesu Zano, PhD (English). A member of the South African Translators' Institute, Ref 1000686