

Mentoring experiences of student pastors from a theological college in Zimbabwe

Gamuchirai, T. Ndamba, Great Zimbabwe University
&
Simbarashe Munamati, Murray Theological College

Abstract

The article presents results of a qualitative study that investigated the perspectives of student pastors who had participated in a one year mentoring programme. Participants were ten student pastors who had each been mentored by an average of three qualified Ministers of Religion in different Reformed Churches in Zimbabwe congregations throughout the country. Data collection instruments were semi-structured questionnaires and focus group discussions. The constant comparative method was used to analyse data for thematic coding. Findings indicated that participants viewed mentoring as a developmental experience since they gained various basic practical skills in terms of house visits, preaching in different contexts, church council chairing and many other administrative responsibilities. The success of the attachment programme was attributed to those mentors who were capable of providing the necessary guidance and support. However, some challenges were noted, the major ones including failure by mentors to discharge their duties through modelling practice, not giving students the opportunity to practise, and inadequate feedback. Participants suggested ways of improving the practicum period in order to accomplish positive outcomes. The study recommends that the relevant college conducts a mentor training workshop and compile a document in which it spells out its expectations.

Key words: *mentor, practicum, religious setting, student pastor, mentor roles*

Introduction and background

Mentoring is becoming one of the easiest ways of developing skills and talents of individuals in different fields, ranging from entrepreneurs, leaders, medicine, law, artistes and gospel ministers (Kerry & Mayes, 1995; Godfrey, 2005; Ali & Panther, 2008; Wronka, 2012; Bachkirova, Arthur & Reading, 2015; Abugre & Kpinpuo, 2017; Robinson, 2017). In simple terms, mentoring is a relationship between an experienced person (mentor) and a less experienced individual (mentee) with the objective of fostering the mentee's professional development through providing guidance and support in a given area. In this study, qualified gospel ministers of the Reformed Church in Zimbabwe were tasked with the responsibility of mentoring student pastors in a religious context.

Makoni (2006) argues that, for religious leaders to realise their potential, they need the nurturing and protection of a powerful mentor. In the same vein, Ngomane and Mahlangu (2014) assert that, church leaders who do not promote mentoring in order to develop emerging

leaders will be doing so at their own risk. Ngomane and Mahlangu (2014) further note that religious mentoring is based on Biblical experiences whereby in the Old Testament, examples of mentoring relationships were those of Moses and Joshua, Eli and Samuel, and Elijah and Elisha. Likewise, the New Testament leaders starting with Jesus continued with the norm of mentoring leaders for leadership succession. The same practice was followed where “leaders such as Barnabas and Paul left a legacy of leadership mentoring and succession for the current church to learn from” (Ngomane & Mahlangu, 2014:2).

In the context of this study, the Theological College and the qualified pastors involved in mentoring have to play a complementary role in their efforts to train men and women for the Ministry, by bridging the gap between theory and practice. Specifically, our study focused on what effect student pastors perceived mentoring may have had on their professional and personal development. They had participated as mentees in the one year attachment programme under an average of three mentors each. In some cases, some students had the opportunity to be attached to more than three mentors, up to a maximum of seven. Sanfey, Hollands and Gantt (2013) recommend the use of a number of mentors per student in order for the mentee to be empowered by the strengths of each.

For the purpose of this study, the following definition was adopted because numerous mentor roles are embedded in it. Anderson in Kerry and Mayes (1995:29) defines mentoring as:

A nurturing process in which a more skilled or more experienced person serving as a role model, teaches, sponsors, encourages, counsels and befriends a less skilled or less experienced person for the purpose of promoting the latter’s professional and/or personal development.

Fibkins (2011, cited in Templeton and Tremont, 2014:57) further enlightens us on a number of roles which a successful mentor should fulfill. These are given as follows:

Successful mentors know how to intervene, listen, be non-judgmental, give constructive and accurate feedback, confront failure-causing behaviors, support successful and failed efforts to change, be available for counseling on educational and personal issues, and be a general advocate for their protégés.

The above quotations demonstrate that the success of the mentoring programme may be viewed as being dependent on the efforts of a mentor who is patient and tolerant in assisting the protégé to become a competent religious practitioner (Makoni, 2006). In the same line of thinking, Sanfey, Hollands and Gantt (2013) assert that mentoring skills are vital, just like the case of good parenting skills which are indispensable for developing future leaders and role models in different fields.

The identified mentor roles can be effectively executed by a mentor who is cognisant of mentoring techniques. In other words, mentoring roles can be accomplished through employing mentoring strategies which include modelling (Allen & Peteet, 1999), giving the mentee space to practise independently (Hobson, 2012), progressive collaboration (Templeton & Tremont, 2014), and providing feedback (Maynard, 1997). In the context of our study, during the initial stages of the mentoring relationship, the student pastor is expected to observe the mentor as he or she models preaching and other administrative responsibilities. Skills learnt from the mentor's demonstration can then be practised while the mentor instructs and gives constructive criticism. The mentee should be allowed to learn through trial and error, whereby he or she practises independently. Progressive collaboration involves working together and sharing responsibilities, beginning with the mentor taking a lead and gradually asking the mentee to assume the upper hand. To demonstrate this practice in a religious context, "a mentor starts as a pointman but as the emerging champion develops he comfortably takes a back seat" (Makoni, 2006:21). Finally, the mentor's role of giving feedback should be ongoing since research indicates that mentees prefer a mentor who gives constructive criticism (Allen & Peteet, 1999).

With regard to mentoring in a religious setting such as the one which prevailed in our study, Robinson (2017) outlines five basic principles that can be drawn from Jesus and Paul's mentoring. Firstly, Jesus called those he mentored "friends", and Paul did likewise. This shows that a Christian mentor should "befriend" the mentee in order to create a positive mentoring relationship (Kerry & Mayes, 1995; English, 1996). Robinson's second basic point is that mentoring occurs in a community. Therefore, in the context of this study, it means that student pastors should be allowed to engage in community events during the attachment period, where the mentor should have an eye which is trained to spot the potential (Makoni, 2006). The third

crucial observation is that the mentor should build enough trust in order to correct the mentee and address details of life and ministry (Hobson, 2012). The fourth principle concerns asking questions, like what Jesus regularly did with the twelve disciples. This is unlike a situation where the mentor always pours information as if the mentee is a blank slate. Through questioning, the student pastor begins to think of various strategies of how to serve, preach and shepherd (Boldeau, 2014). Finally, Robinson declares that in mentoring, the idea is to aim at ministering with excellence, like what Jesus did with the twelve and what Paul did with Titus and Timothy. Thus, the experienced pastor is required to patiently and wisely discharge the role of mentoring, while strategizing by identifying growth opportunities for their mentees (Makoni, 2006).

In the field of education as well as in other disciplines, recent studies continue to yield results which prove that mentors are a source of wisdom for their mentees. For example, Mukeredzi (2017) found that as a result of mentoring in a cohort model of practicum in the education context, mentees had gained valuable professional knowledge around teaching styles and they could easily engage with their learners. In their study, Bachkirova, Arthur and Reading (2015) also found that those mentees who had participated in the coaching and mentoring programme in the field of medicine had mainly benefitted in the areas of confidence, problem solving, self-awareness and reflection, among other benefits. Our study sought to explore the experiences of student pastors who were mentees during the attachment programme in a religious context.

Statement of the problem

Whereas the College under study offers a broad curriculum of theological, historical, missions and biblical languages, it cannot equip a young pastor with the required day-to-day work of a congregation set up. In a religious context, the duties of counseling, administrative responsibilities and other forms of productive interaction with congregants in the communities are critical for a student pastor to gain the experience (Godfrey, 2005; Robinson, 2017). In the field of education, much has been written on the role of mentors in the professional development of student teachers during school experiences (Tomlinson, 1995; Maynard, 1997). Ngomane and Mahlangu (2014) advocate for a rigorous research agenda to support mentoring programmes in the church and religious contexts, while borrowing from other

disciplines. Not much has been documented from empirical data on the effects of a mentoring programme in a religious setting in Zimbabwe. Since the inception of the one-year mentoring programme at the institution under study, no research known to us has been conducted to establish its effects on the professional and personal development of student pastors. Thus, this study may provide for an ongoing contribution to the mentoring literature from the perspective of student pastors.

Research questions

The major question which guided the study was: What are the student pastors' perceptions of mentoring during the attachment programme?

This was unpacked through the following sub-questions:

- How is mentoring viewed by student pastors?
- What are the student pastors' experiences of mentoring?
- How do student pastors perceive of their mentors?
- How can student pastors' mentoring be made more effective?

Method

Research design

The study adopted a qualitative case study design in order to identify the strengths and weaknesses of the mentoring programme in a religious context, and to propose solutions to the acknowledged challenges. One of the advantages of the case study design was that it enabled the researchers to gain an understanding of the participants' views in their natural setting (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). A qualitative approach was found to be suitable as it enabled researchers to listen to the stories of the student pastors.

Participants and setting

The sample comprised ten (10) student pastors who had participated as mentees for one year, where they were each mentored by three or more mentors from different congregations of the Reformed Church in Zimbabwe. The student pastors were pursuing a four-year diploma programme in Theology. The structure of their programme was such that they spent eight school terms at campus, went for 'practicals' for three terms, and came back for one term to consolidate theory with practice and to write their final examinations. Purposive sampling was

used to select all the ten student pastors who had just returned from the practicum, as it was felt that they had the capacity to provide rich descriptions and details of their experiences (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2011). Since the introduction of the one-year mentoring programme which started three years prior to the commencement of this study, no research had been conducted to establish student pastors' perspectives pertaining to its role and impact on their professional and personal development. The study was carried out at the premises of the Theological College under study.

Instrumentation

The researchers constructed a semi-structured questionnaire which yielded qualitative answers, and an interview guide for focus group discussions. Both the semi-structured open-ended questionnaire and the focus group interview guide solicited participants' views on mentoring benefits, challenges and solutions to perceived challenges. The advantage of using the focus group discussion in this study was that, it gave the researcher the opportunity to interact with participants in a manner which allowed for clarification, follow up questions and probing (Gray, 2009).

Procedure

One of the researchers personally administered the questionnaire. The second researcher was involved in facilitating the focus group discussion with all the ten student pastors. The focus group discussion lasted approximately one and half hours and it was audio-taped, with the permission of the participants.

Data analysis

Findings were presented in line with thematic issues drawn from the four research questions. Data were transcribed verbatim, coded and organised into themes through the use of the constant comparative mode of data analysis (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2011). The constant comparative approach is the analytic technique of qualitatively comparing and contrasting data from various data sources in a bid to develop categories and to look for patterns among the categories (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). Therefore, constant comparative method was compatible with triangulation which was achieved by collecting data through the use of the questionnaire and focus group discussion methods.

Trustworthiness

To enhance trustworthiness of the qualitative data, the researchers focused on attaining credibility, dependability, transferability and confirmability (Guba, 1981). According to Gray (2009), for most qualitative approaches, reliability is improved, and even guaranteed by triangulation where information is gathered, for example, by using more than one tool for gathering data. Data for this study were collected using questionnaires and focus group discussions. In order to find out how the participants would respond to these questions, some of the questions asked in both methods were similar. Such an approach contributed towards effecting methodological triangulation to enhance the credibility of the study, thereby making researchers confident of the research results.

Ethical considerations

Permission to conduct the study was granted by the institution. Participation in the study was voluntary. All information has been treated in strict confidence. In order to protect the identity of individual participants, pseudonyms were used instead of their real names and the congregations where they were attached during their practicals. They were informed that since their involvement in the study was voluntary, they were free to withdraw any time they felt uncomfortable to continue.

Results

This study sought to explore the experiences of student pastors during their one year of practicals under the guidance of several mentors. After reading responses from the semi structured questionnaires and transcriptions from the focus group discussions several times, data was categorised into themes which were developed from research questions that guided the participants' narratives namely: The extent to which student pastors view mentoring as a developmental experience, the type of mentor considered effective in enhancing the mentee's professional and/or personal development, experiences perceived as negatively affecting mentees in a religious setting, and how student pastors' mentoring can be made more effective.

The extent to which student pastors perceive mentoring as beneficial

Findings indicate that participants felt that they derived a number of benefits from being attached to mentors. The following are questionnaire responses, which represent what was stated by many participants:

The benefit from the attachment programme as a student pastor was that I had some opportunity to participate in several pastoral activities like house visits, preaching, church council chairing and I had some opportunity to observe how sacraments are orderly administered (**Participant 9**).

Being among congregants with various personalities, statutes/classes enabled me to react differently and accommodate the differences for the work of God to go forward. I benefitted from administrative duties such as planning, leading church council meetings, filing, preparation and conducting sermons in different contexts and occasions (**Participant 10**).

The same sentiments were echoed by the majority during the focus group discussion:

I learnt how certain issues that arise in a congregation are handled through various structures of the church. For instance I learnt the procedure on how to handle grievances from the cell to the council and even the presbytery. It was done openly, that I learnt. I was afforded an opportunity to attend presbytery meetings and saw how the issues are deliberated. I benefited from all the congregations, both from ministers and congregants (**Victor**).

The above stated responses clearly indicate that many participants felt that they benefitted by gaining basic practical skills which they could only get through the attachment programme. These included pastoral duties in the form of house visits, Holy Communion, preaching, Church Council chairing and many other administrative responsibilities involved in running the congregation on a daily basis.

The type of mentor considered effective in enhancing the mentee's professional and/or personal development

The following questionnaire responses represent what was said by many participants on how they benefitted from mentors who provided the requisite guidance and support:

Since I was still a novice, I appreciated all that my mentors did in helping me and giving me directions and guidance towards the ministry (**Participant 3**).

My mentors were very cooperative and they assisted me in all I needed. They gave me an opportunity to learn, teach, preach and lead the church council. They assisted me to give an appreciation of the day to day running of the congregation. The mentors were open to discussions and they greatly helped me during my trial sermon preparation. Their support and sacrifice went a long way to mould me holistically (**Participant 6**).

The majority of the participants stated how they benefitted when they observed mentors modelling practice. They were also given the opportunity to learn from their own practice. The views were expressed in questionnaire responses as well as during the focus group discussions (FGD) :

These mentors gave me time to interact with congregants and also time to preach at funerals, birthday parties etc. During house visits, they also gave me time to have a leading role in house visits and correcting me in areas which they saw it fit. Everything was done in participatory method, not top down approach (**Participant 5, Questionnaire**).

On visitations again, I think it was good for me because in the first congregation, the mentor would say, I am going to start because I know you are learning and see how I do things. Then if you want to change somewhere, somehow on how I do things, then you may do it the way you think is easier for you. Then he started and after I did one or two houses, he would say you can't do it alone, ukaitadzimbambirinhatundoitawotichingodarosaizvozvo (*if you do two or three houses then I take over and we continue like that*) (**Jacob, FGD**).

In connection with feedback from mentors, participants expressed during focus group discussions how they benefitted from comments made by their mentors:

As for me, after preaching when I had my mentor, where I would have gone astray a bit, they would criticise me constructively. "No, here you could have done it this way or in this context, you could have approached it this way". Where I would have done well, they would say "excellent work, you have preached well and the congregation has benefited". They did not dress me down (**TK**).

I benefited a lot (from feedback). I can say three quarters it was okay because like what others have said, taiti taenda tose kana tapedza kuparidza voti apa maita zvakanaka madai, madai, madai, asi apa dai mawedzera (*when we went together, after preaching*)

they would say here you did well but there you could have added something). Then sometimes I speak very fast, so I was helped by one of the mentors who said “slow down, slow down” and I had to slow down *zvekuti zvakanga zvofamba zvakana* (*things were now moving well*) (**Paul**).

The above vignettes show that among the identified benefits were support and guidance from the mentors, gaining specific knowledge and skills through mentor demonstration, independent practice, collaboration, constructive criticism and feedback.

Mentor characteristics viewed as good

The following mentor characteristics were viewed as critical in the professional and personal development of student pastors.

Friendliness and social support:

They were very friendly and accommodative in most areas. Other two mentors of mine helped me with my second term fees of my fourth year. I will always remember those mentors who stood by me during this unstable economic environment. Everything was done in care and love. The remaining five mentors also helped me with food and other basic things needed for better living (**Participant 8, Questionnaire**).

There was an atmosphere of friendliness and good relationship with me and the congregation as a whole. I learnt that such type of atmosphere can be created in a congregation where you relate well with all the members (**Mike, FGD**).

Dedication

The majority of the participants indicated that they emulated mentors who were dedicated:

I noted dedication. You need to work hard to motivate congregants. So dedication by that minister also motivated me. Sometimes we would start work at 6 am. They don't have a car but a motorbike. There are farm areas and you need to travel for over 20 km. You need to be dedicated to the work you want to achieve (**Kundai**).

We would go for house visits and come back around 8 or 9 in the evening. Saka *zvakandiratidza* (*it showed me*) dedication because each person in the congregation *anoda kushanyirwa* (*wants to be visited*).

Kwaivanechifambisoasikwaivanenzvimbodzakangadzisingasvikichifambiso (*there was a vehicle but there were some places which were not accessible*). We would walk

for 2 kilometres tichikwira makomo (*climbing mountains*). That showed me that it is dedication to the work of God (**Victor**).

In one of the congregations I have been, the congregation is large and it stretches for about 150 km so we could rarely stay at home. We would go out for house visitation and we would stay for a week or a week and half and then come back home. My mentor was very committed (**Mike**).

Hospitality

Hospitality was viewed as a good mentor characteristic of a religious mentor:

Hospitality is a great tool which I observed. At one congregation, the parsonage is located in the Growth point so most of the congregants came for business till after hours. In terms of hospitality, it was difficult to spend five days with 5 litres of orange crush. They would come to sleep or come early in the morning before shops open because buses would arrive early. After analysing, it was a blessing because congregants would send us goats and other goodies. So I learnt that hospitality is a good quality of a good mentor. The minister made sure that the congregants would be given something to eat (**Kundai**).

Transparency

Transparency was regarded as a mentor characteristic which was beneficial for a student pastor:

In one of the congregations I learnt transparency. The mentor was transparent in all he was doing. He could bring out files and would tell me everything he was going to do. Each and every day we had an itinerary that we were going to follow. So everything was transparent to the extent of telling me the accounts of the congregation like you know what, this is the state of the accounts, so it is one of the things I learnt to be transparent (**TK**).

It is evident from the above excerpts that participants in this study emulated and regarded good mentors as those who are friendly, dedicated, hospitable and transparent.

Experiences perceived as negatively affecting mentees in a religious setting

Among the constraints cited by the participants were mentor characteristics which were deemed as stifling mentees' development. These are presented below.

Lack of guidance and support through feedback

One thing I did not like about my mentors which I think should not apply to other students is that, they must help the student in the areas they feel the student is lacking while the student is still with them, checking progress. If you check well with our assessment reports, there is nothing on them which shows a heart of mentorship

(Participant 4, Questionnaire).

The same applies to me because I did not get any feedback. As stated by Victor, I would go to one preaching post and he had to go to another preaching post. I did not benefit any feedback because we went to different preaching posts. In my other congregation where we worked together maybe he was afraid to comment because of my age. I was far much older than the mentor, so maybe he was afraid of saying you missed the point (laughter). So I did not get any feedback in terms of preaching **(Kundai, FGD).**

I had 7 mentors but out of seven, the majority did not comment on my practice, except only two. Some would only comment *kuti yarebesa chete zvoga kwete mharidzo chaiyo* (*that the sermon had taken long, only that, and not the actual preaching*) [laughter]

(Tami, FGD).

Failure to model practice

One of my mentors did not give me practical examples of work, for example, how to do house visitation and counselling **(Participant 9, Questionnaire).**

Then lastly, if the mentor has only one preaching post, he must not ask the student pastor to preach every Sunday. Like in my case, I preached consecutive Sundays at one branch *ndichingorova chete iye akagara* (*doing all the preaching while he was seated and doing nothing*) **(Lee, FGD).**

When I got to another congregation, the mentor announced in church that, this term this is now your minister, I am now on leave [laughter] **(Paul, FGD).**

Inadequate opportunity for mentee practice

Some of them were not really good. During home visitations, one of them did not allow me to preach even once. He would preach in all the homesteads **(Participant 2, Questionnaire).**

The mentor did not give me the platform to preach especially on manyaradzo, funerals and other church programmes **(Participant 3, Questionnaire).**

Ini yangu manje, ma congregation ose andakaenda, ndakaita six. Yechi six ndiye aiparidza kose kuma house visits, parufu, pama tombstone, pamanyaradzo, birthday, negadziro dzechirairo. Ndakatanga ndichifunga sokuti ndiri kudzidza. Three Sundays dzokutanga ndaiona sendiri kudzidziswa. Ndikaona one week, two, three, four, five, ndikati ummm muchinda uyu haadi kuti ndiparidze kuvanhu vake [laughter]. *(In my case now, all the congregation where I went, I had six. At the sixth congregation he was the one preaching during house visits, funerals, unveiling of tombstones, condolence gatherings, birthdays and services conducted when preparing for the Holy Communion. At first I thought that I was learning. The first three Sundays I thought I was being taught. Then I saw one week, two, three, four, five, and I told myself that ummm this guy does not want me to preach to his people)* [laughter] (TK, FGD).

Lack of transparency

I experienced lack of transparency. There was the issue of Pentecostalism where pastors label each other. Mentor aiita sekuti arikutyira territory yake achikuavoidha *(It appears the mentor was trying to protect his territory by avoiding me)*. Saka zvekuti anozokuratidza kuti kune ma documents akadai nekadai zvinoita sokuti anoti regai time yeku ma prac ipfuure *(So for him/her to show you that there are these kinds of documents, it appears as if they say let the time for practicals pass)*. It is important for us to learn that when a student comes, he/she has come to learn (Jacob, FGD).

How student pastors' mentoring can be made more effective

Participants were asked to comment on the level of preparedness for the attachment programme. All of them indicated that the College had prepared them adequately. The following views represent what was said as questionnaire responses:

I think when I went out for attachment I was well equipped because I did not have any problem in all aspects or areas that the congregation expected me to tackle (Participant 3).

Personally, I think the college had prepared me for the attachment programmes. The lecturers equipped me with the necessary information and skills which I then applied on real life, hands-on attachment period, the greatest preparation being the Andrew Low Wednesday experiences. The critiques, recommendations and sermon changes are

of great benefit and fully equipped me for the practical experience. It is my recommendation that such should continue with an objective spirit. **(Participant 6)**

Participants suggested the main measures that the College could take in order to improve the mentoring programme. This view was expressed as follows:

The objectives of the attachment programme are not listed down. It seems what the mentor likes is what you do in that congregation. What he dislikes you also do not do then. NB It is quite difficult to evaluate my performance without stipulated objectives **(Participant 1: Questionnaire).**

So the college must be very clear as to their expectations concerning what they want to bring out of the students at the end of the day. It was something which was taken for granted that mentors know the expectations since they are trained and varimubasa (*and they are at work*). We do not take with us any information concerning the college expectations. We had different experiences. You find that some were allowed to administer Holy Communion while others were denied the chance. We want something standard **(Lee: FGD).**

It is evident that the participants were happy with the way the College prepared them for the practicum. However, they were concerned that not all the mentors were aware of how to discharge the mentoring roles and techniques. As a result, some of the mentors operated in a manner that was not acceptable to their mentees. Due to lack of guidelines with a standard format, the mentees felt that their mentors did not execute their duties in line with their expectations.

Discussion

The study sought to explore the views of student pastors on the mentoring programme in terms of benefits, constraints and suggestions on how to improve the programme. Results indicate that the student pastors felt that the attachment programme had empowered them since they had mastered various basic practical skills in terms of house visits, preaching in different contexts, Church Council chairing and many other administrative responsibilities involved in the day to day running of a Reformed Church in Zimbabwe congregation. In cases where mentors discharged their roles appropriately, participants acknowledged that they benefitted tremendously (Ali & Panther, 2008; Godfrey, 2005; Abugre & Kpinpuo, 2017). Effective mentors in this study were viewed as those who were capable of providing requisite guidance

and support for the professional and personal development of their mentees (Wronka, 2012; Sanfey, Hollands & Gantt, 2013; Bachkirova, Arthur & Reading, 2015). Qualities of a good religious mentor that came out prominently in this study were friendliness, dedication, hospitality and transparency. According to Robinson (2017) such characteristics can be drawn from Jesus and Paul's mentoring.

Most mentors in this study used the strategy of role modelling where the student pastors had the opportunity to observe skills in the form of pastoral care and other administrative responsibilities. Research on mentoring has yielded results which show that mentees learn a lot of skills from their mentors' practice (Allen & Peteet, 1999; Durning & Artino, 2011; Sanfey, Hollands & Gantt, 2013).

The other strategy that was used by mentors in this study was that of allowing mentees to practise preaching during house visits, funerals, parties, manyaradzo (condolence gatherings) and church service. Some mentees were given the opportunity to chair sessions of the Church Council, which happens to be the highest body in a congregation. Others indicated that they benefitted when they were allowed by their mentors to practise how to administer Holy Communion. These religious mentees, therefore, benefitted from their own practice under the watchful eye of the mentor (Makoni, 2006; Hobson, 2012).

Mentees in this study felt that some mentors practised collaboration. They shared preaching responsibilities with their mentees particularly during house visits. Some research findings indicate that sharing responsibilities with the mentor is crucial for the professional development of a protégé (Templeton & Tremont, 2014). The mentee benefits from the religious mentor when they work together and both engage in various strategies of preaching and shepherding (Makoni, 2006; Boldeau, 2014).

Feedback was pointed out as a major strategy which helped in the student pastors' professional and personal development. Whereas some benefitted from the feedback, others indicated that they did not. Some research findings have proved that constructive feedback is critical in a mentoring relationship (Maynard, 1997; Hobson, 2012). Through feedback, mentees get to know their strengths and weaknesses, and therefore find ways of overcoming their challenges.

Experiences perceived as negatively affecting student pastors in this study were in some cases mainly due to failure by the mentors to model practice. Similar results were yielded by Nkambule and Mukeredzi (2017), where participants reported that their mentors were not willing to be observed. In other instances, student pastors were concerned about failure to get the opportunity to learn from their own practice. Ineffective mentors are viewed as those who do not model commitment through providing guidance and support for their mentees (Allen & Petee, 1999; Bloomfield, 2010; Templeton & Tremont, 2014). In a good mentoring relationship, mentees would benefit from their mentors' wealth of experience through guidance, support and rigorous practices accompanied by constructive criticism and feedback (Maynard, 1997; Hobson, 2012; Florian, 2013).

Among suggestions on what they thought the College could have done to improve the mentoring programme, it was good to note that all participants felt that they had been adequately prepared in terms of content. However, when it came to mentor knowledge of mentoring responsibilities, what came out significantly was that some of the mentors were ignorant. Two extremes were noted whereby in some cases, mentors did not give their mentees the opportunity to observe them preaching, while in other cases, the student pastors did not get any chance to practise the knowledge gained through observing the mentor. Participants reported that they had different experiences, implying that there was no standard instrument to guide mentors on how to discharge their duties since each mentor practised the way he or she saw fit.

Conclusion and Implications

The findings suggest that during the attachment period student pastors interacted and experienced different mentorship in various congregations. Hence, they benefitted in terms of their professional and personal development due to effective mentors who modeled practice and offered constructive criticism and feedback that nurtured mentees into competent practitioners. On the contrary, there are some mentors who failed to successfully discharge their duties in an efficient, committed and responsible manner. They appeared to be ignorant about the mentoring roles and techniques, where in this case, they ought to have been guiding and supporting student pastors towards specificities of running a congregation. There is also no standard practice which guides all mentors tasked with the responsibility of mentoring. In view

of these findings, the study recommends a mentor training workshop where mentor roles are spelt out. The College should also come up with a document in the form of guidelines which clearly state expectation for the benefit of both the student pastors and the mentors. This research suggests that the achievement of effective mentoring in this religious context may be enhanced by strengthening collaborative partnership between the College and the congregations which host student pastors.

References

- Abugre, J.B.&Kpinpuo, S.D. (2017). Determinants of Academic Mentoring in Higher Education: Evidence from a Research University. *Educational Process International Journal*, 6(2), 20-36.
- Ali, P.A. & Panther, W. (2008). Professional development and the role of mentorship. *Nursing Standard*, 22(42), 35-39.
- Allen, T.D. (2003). Mentoring others: A dispositional and motivational approach. *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, 62(1), 134–154.
- Allen, T. D.& Poteet, M. L. (1999). *Developing effective mentoring relationships: As iron sharpens iron*. Chicago: Moody Press.
- Bachkirova, T. Arthur, L. & Reading, E. (2015). Evaluating a coaching and mentoring programme: Challenges and solutions. *International Coaching Psychology Review*, 10(2), 175-189.
- Bloomfield, D. (2010). Emotions and 'getting by': a pre-service teacher navigating professional experience. *Asia-Pacific Journal of Teacher Education*, 38(3), 221-234.
- Boldeau, D.G. (2014). Developing a Mentoring Model, Based on Christ's Approach to Discipleship, for Intern Pastors in the British Union. *Project Documents*, 18. Andrews University.

- Cohen, L., Manion, L. & Morrison, K. (2011). *Research methods in education* (7th Ed.). London: Routledge.
- Durning S.J. & Artino A.R. (2011). Situativity theory: A perspective on how participants and the environment can interact: AMEE Guide no. 52. *Medical Teacher*, 33(3), 188-199.
- English, L.M. (1996). The tradition of Teresa of Avila and its implications for mentoring of religious educators. *Religious Education*, 91(1), 86-104.
- Florian, L. (2013). Preparing teachers to work with *everybody*: a curricular approach to the reform of teacher education. *Forum*, 55(1), 95-102.
- Godfrey, J.M. (2005). The Role of Mentoring in the Developmental Experiences of Baptist Pastors in Texas: A Case Study. Unpublished PhD thesis, Baylor University, USA.
- Gray, D.E. (2009). *Doing research in the real world* (2nd Ed.). London: SAGE Publications.
- Guba, E.G. (1981). Criteria for assessing the trustworthiness of naturalistic enquiries. *Educational Communication and Technology Journal*, 29, 75-91.
- Hilary, S., Hollands, C. & Gantt, N.L. (2013). Strategies for building an effective mentoring relationship. *The American Journal of Surgery*, 206, 714-718.
- Hobson, A.J. (2012). Fostering face-to-face mentoring and coaching. In: S. Fletcher & C. Mullen (Eds). *SAGE Handbook of mentoring and coaching in education*, pp.59-73. London: SAGE.
- Kerry, T. & Mayes, S. (1995). *Issues in mentoring*. London: The Open University Press.
- Makoni, T.A. (2006). *Nurturing champions: Powerful mentoring strategies and concepts for perpetuating your influence and legacy*. Harare: Rapha Trust Publications.

- McMillan, J.H. & Schumacher, S. (2010). *Research in education: Evidence-based enquiry* (7thed). New Jersey: Pearson Education.
- Mukeredzi, T.G. (2017). Mentoring in a cohort model of practicum: mentors and preservice teachers' experiences in a rural South African school. *SAGE Open*, April – June, 1-15.
- Ngomane, R.M. &Mahlangu, E.(2014) 'Leadership mentoring and succession in the charismatic churches in Bushbuckridge', *HTS Teologiese Studies/ Theological Studies* 70(1), 1-10.
- Nkambule, T. &Mukeredzi, T.G. (2017). Pre-service teachers' professional learning experiences during rural teaching practice in Acornhoek, Mpumalanga Province. *South African Journal of Education*, 37 (3), 1-9.
- Robinson, J. (2017). "The Gospel Coalition" Available at: <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/article/mentoring-future-ministers-is-community-project/>(Accessed 14 January 2019).
- Sanfey, H., Hollands, C & Gantt, N. L. (2013). Strategies for building an effective mentoring relationship. *The American Journal of Surgery*, (2013) 206, 714-718.
- Templeton, N.R. & Tremont, J.W. (2014). Applying business lessons to education: Mentoring as job-embedded professional development. *The International Journal of Organizational Innovation*, 6(4), 54-59.
- Wronka, M. (2012). The Role of Mentoring in Organisational Learning: Case Study on the University. Management, Knowledge and Learning International Conference, January, 2012.

