

Enhancing Teaching Practice Coordination: Exploring School Mentors' Perspectives on Assessment Rubrics and Their Role in Guiding Student Teachers.

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Abstract:

Effective teaching practices are crucial for fostering the intellectual development of learners, thereby making the evaluation of instructional practices during Teaching Practice (TP) sessions imperative. This study aims to investigate primary and secondary school mentor teachers' perceptions about teaching practice assessment rubrics and their role as mentor teachers, all to enhance teaching practice coordination. Drawing from constructivist, social cognitive, situated learning, professional identity development, and critical pedagogy theories, a qualitative case study approach was employed within an interpretivist paradigm. Data were collected through focus group discussions from 77 secondary and primary school mentors during a teaching practice orientation workshop in the central region of Botswana. The analysis of data was thematic, revealing mentor teachers' perceptions of assessment rubrics, challenges faced, and readiness to supervise student teachers. Results indicate that while mentors perceive the rubrics as effective tools, challenges such as lack of clarity and workload burden exist. The study further recommends enhancing assessment rubric clarification, addressing workload issues, improving student teacher resource supports, promoting collaboration, as well as conducting further research on teaching practice coordination. Implementing these recommendations can enhance teaching practice effectiveness, better preparing aspiring teachers for future roles, and fostering a supportive learning environment.

Keywords: Teaching Practice Coordination; Assessment Rubrics; Mentor Engagement; Effective Teaching Practices; Instructional Evaluation.

1. Introduction

1.1. Background to the study

In the field of education, effective teaching practices are paramount for nurturing the intellectual development and growth of learners. Teachers play a critical role in facilitating learning experiences that are engaging, comprehensible, and conducive to knowledge retention. The Faculty of Education (FoE) at the University of Botswana recognizes the importance of equipping student teachers with learner-centered approaches and skills to enhance their effectiveness in the classroom. According to the FoE Teaching Practice/Practicum, regulation 10.20 elucidates that every in-service and pre-service student enrolled in a Bachelor of Education Programme is mandated to participate in teaching practice (University of Botswana Teaching Practice Handbook, 2020). Teaching practice assessment forms, particularly the lesson observation assessment rubrics, have been developed by the FoE with the intention to serve as invaluable tools aiding and guiding student teachers in their journey towards becoming well-rounded teachers. It is undoubtedly evident that these assessment forms play a crucial role in evaluating and shaping instructional practices during teaching practice sessions. It is on this backdrop that this study aims to enhance teaching practice coordination by evaluating past teaching practice feedback during orientation workshops for secondary and primary school mentors.

To enhance teaching practice coordination, one must consider factors contributing to effective teaching, engagement, comprehension, and retention of knowledge, among which is the empowerment of mentors in schools where student teachers are assigned to do their teaching practice. Numerous studies conducted internationally have investigated and advised on various factors that significantly contribute to student teachers' effectiveness during classroom instructional practices. Amongst other factors, research has emphasized the importance of a comprehensive and well-structured lesson plan to positively impacting student engagement, comprehension, and retention (Hattie, 2009; Alexander, 2020). Additionally, effective lesson presentation was found to be influenced by various factors such as instructional strategies, communication, and technology integration (Stronge et al., 2011; Tomlinson, 2005). Moreover, other studies have shown that effective class management significantly affects pupil learning outcomes (Evertson & Emmer, 2013; Lewis & Batts, 2005).

In addition, the quality and organization of a teaching portfolio have been identified as an influential factor in enhancing a student teacher's performance (Danielson, 2012; Gao & Zhang, 2019). Lastly, professionalism, encompassing attitudes, ethics, and professional conduct, has a substantial impact on the overall performance of student teachers (Ingersoll & Strong, 2011; Darling-Hammond, 2017). Considering the foundational context presented in the preceding arguments, there is a notable emphasis and unanimous agreement by different researchers regarding the factors that significantly influence effective teaching, as well as the importance of the assessment rubrics provided by the Faculty of Education and the mentor engagement. It is, therefore, crucial to

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acknowledge and prioritize the perspective of school mentors in this debate. By focusing on the school mentors' viewpoint, the current study ensures that mentors recognize the assessment rubrics as valuable tools for the growth of the student teachers within the teaching profession. This perspective emphasizes the need for mentors to fully comprehend and appreciate the benefits of these assessment tools, encouraging their active engagement and commitment in utilizing them to guide the student teachers' teaching practices and professional development. In doing so, mentors are empowered to take ownership of their mentees' growth and aspirations to meet the standards set forth by the assessment rubrics, ultimately contributing to a higher quality of education delivery. On the contrary, if mentors exhibit indifference towards the factors outlined in the assessment rubrics, it presents an opportunity for both researchers and the mentors involved in the study to propose areas for enhancement. This active involvement in suggesting improvements can significantly impact the career development of aspiring teachers. In Vehvilainen's (2018) work on *Developing Pre-service Teachers' Pedagogical Competence through Peer Assessment and Feedback*, they noted that active participation and engagement in the evaluation process can enhance the pedagogical competence of pre-service teachers. In similar arguments, Burn (2007) argued the involvement of school mentors in discussions about assessment and professional development contributes to the negotiation of teacher identity. Furthermore, Williams's (2014) research examined how university-based teacher educators manage the challenges inherent in working with mentor teachers after having been practicing as teachers in schools themselves. It (William, 2014) revealed that for teacher educators, working in the third space involves managing shifting identities between teacher and teacher educator, responding to changing perspectives on learning and teaching, and negotiating sometimes finely balanced and difficult relationships. In this way, it is imperative to highlight that school mentors can actively contribute to refining assessment rubrics and do not only enhance understanding of effective teaching practices but also shape emerging teacher identities. In addition, Fairbanks et al. (2000), in their research on effective mentors in learning to teach established that mentoring relationships were meant to assist student teachers in the development of their professional identities and that they were able to learn from their mentees, which is healthy for their professional growth in future.

In Botswana, several research studies have been conducted to assess the efficacy of TP programs and the adequacy of preparation provided to student teachers for their future roles in the education field. One notable study by Mannathoko (2013) delved into the realm of Creative and Performing Arts (CAPA) subjects within primary Colleges of Education. This research revealed a significant concern raised by student-teachers regarding the lack of assessment and guidance on arts-related instruction during their teaching practice. The findings indicated that the student-teachers perceived a gap where arts instruction was inadequately evaluated, leading to a deficiency in preparation for teaching CAPA subjects in primary schools. This highlights the critical role of mentors in evaluating assessment tools and educational content geared towards student and mentor readiness for teaching practice. Although the research did not focus on evaluating the assessment tools, it is still relevant to the current study. Examining the insights of student teachers aligns with the objective of this study, which seeks to explore school mentors' views on assessment tools in relation to their readiness for their roles during teaching practice. The intent is to glean insights from the individuals directly involved in the educational process, providing a more comprehensive understanding of the suitability and effectiveness of assessment tools for their preparation in teaching practice.

Another study conducted by Mangope et al. (2018) investigated the teaching practice experiences of Special Education student teachers at the University of Botswana, particularly in inclusive classrooms. The research underscored the essential nature of incorporating the voices and perspectives of student teachers to gain insights into their experiences in the field aimed at enhancing outcomes for both present and future teacher trainees. Although this study focused on a different area of evaluation, the critical takeaway is the importance of ensuring that student teachers have a platform to express their views. These perspectives play a crucial role in suggesting improvements for evaluation tools, consequently enhancing teaching practices not only during their training but also post-graduation. Moreover, Mangope et al.'s (2018) study highlighted a significant finding pertaining to mentor teachers and lecturers. Some of them were found to have limitations in understanding inclusive education, thus impacting student teachers during their Teaching Practice. This finding holds notable relevance to the current study, even though the focus is on assessment rubrics. It underscores that assessment tools, while primarily used for evaluation, can also unveil essential lessons. Through these tools, mentors can articulate their concerns and challenges, providing valuable insights into how they can be better supported to align with the expectations outlined in the rubrics. This process, in turn, helps mentors to enhance their mentees' teaching practices and aids in their professional growth, both during their training and as they progress in their careers beyond graduation.

Monyatsi (2002) conducted a study to assess the effectiveness of the existing teacher appraisal system in Botswana's secondary schools. The evaluation encompassed several crucial dimensions: alignment of the appraisal system with teachers' daily responsibilities, its impact on teaching quality and students' learning outcomes, its responsiveness to teachers' professional development needs, and the adequacy of mechanisms governing its management and implementation within schools. The study revealed the necessity for refining the clarity of the appraisal system through comprehensive training and fostering collaboration between the individuals being appraised and the evaluators. This emphasis aimed to ensure transparency in the implementation process, facilitating valuable feedback from all involved parties, particularly the individuals being appraised. Additionally, the importance of regularly reviewing the appraisal system was underscored to adapt and enhance its efficacy. A notable finding was that a significant number of teachers perceived the accountability aspect of the appraisal process as intimidating and hence unacceptable. This observation highlighted the importance of involving the perspectives of the beneficiaries in evaluating

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assessment tools, aiming to refine and tailor the assessment approach to better meet the specific needs of those undergoing appraisal. This observation holds notable significance to this study as it pertains to teacher appraisal. It emphasizes the value of evaluating processes and incorporating input from the individuals appraising at various stages of implementation. This inclusive approach aims to enhance classroom practices, instill confidence in mentors regarding their professional growth, and reinforce their commitment to the teaching profession. It is, therefore, worth noting that this finding is about teacher appraisal, which is relevant to this study as it informs the researchers on the importance of the evaluation of processes and the involvement of mentors in all different stages of implementation to improve classroom practices and give their mentees confidence in their teaching career.

1.2. Statement of the Problem

In the field of education, the effectiveness of instructional practices during TP sessions is pivotal for the growth and development of aspiring teachers. Assessment tools play a vital role in evaluating and shaping these instructional practices. The University of Botswana has developed assessment rubrics that integrate numerous factors essential for effective teaching, which have been identified as influential in enhancing student teachers' performance. These factors encompass various aspects related to teaching methodologies, classroom management, lesson planning, and professionalism. While existing research acknowledges these factors and underscores the significance of assessment tools and teacher appraisals in promoting effective teaching, there is a critical need to consider the perspective of school mentors. Ensuring that school mentors perceive the assessment rubrics as valuable tools for their mentees' growth and professional development within the teaching profession is imperative. Past research in Botswana has shed light on assessment practices during TP and the concerns voiced by student teachers regarding the lack of assessment and guidance on specific instructional areas. These concerns underscore the critical role of mentors in evaluating assessment tools and educational content, ensuring their readiness for teaching practice to assist the student teachers in their career growth.

This study aims to bridge this gap by enhancing TP coordination through a critical evaluation of TP orientation workshop on assessment instruments for Secondary and Primary Schools. This in a way critically assesses the efficacy of the assessment rubrics provided by the University of Botswana in fostering the adoption and application of learner-centered approaches and skills among student teachers specializing in primary and secondary education. The objective is to enhance TP coordination through the evaluation of assessment rubrics from the perspectives and experiences of school mentors, refining and tailoring the assessment methodology to better align with the specific needs of individuals undergoing evaluation. Ultimately, this inclusive approach seeks to enhance teaching practices, contribute to a higher quality of education delivery, and empower student teachers for successful careers in the teaching profession.

Given the focus on student-centered approaches and skills in modern pedagogy, it is imperative to ascertain whether the current assessment rubrics employed by the Faculty of Education at the University of Botswana adequately equip mentors with these essential competencies to assist the student teachers in their TP journey. Furthermore, it is intended to forge links with schools to sensitize school mentors with assessment instruments and expectations from both the students and schools during TP exercise to appreciate how it is supposed to be effectively conducted. Specifically, this study seeks to address the following research objectives:

1.3. Objectives of the study

- i) To investigate school mentors' perceptions of the assessment rubrics provided by the University of Botswana, focusing on their effectiveness as tools for guiding and evaluating student teachers' instructional practices during Teaching Practice sessions.
- ii) To assess the extent to which school mentors believe that the existing assessment rubrics adequately prepare student teachers with learner-centered approaches and skills for their future roles in primary and secondary education, and to solicit recommendations for modifications aimed at enhancing their effectiveness.

Based on the objectives, the study sought to address the following research questions:

- i) How do school mentors perceive the effectiveness of University of Botswana's assessment rubrics in guiding and evaluating student teachers' instructional practices during Teaching Practice sessions?
- ii) To what extent do school mentors believe that the existing assessment rubrics adequately prepare student teachers with learner-centered approaches and skills for their future roles in primary and secondary education, and what recommendations do they offer for modifying the rubrics to enhance their effectiveness?

2. Literature review

The literature review looks at how teaching is evaluated and why it is important to change how we coordinate Teaching Practice. It discusses how education assessment is changing and why we need to be flexible and come up with new ideas for coordinating teaching. It also highlights the importance of school mentors in helping student teachers grow. By studying research and other academic writings, the review below tries to explain why it is important to adapt to changes in how teaching is evaluated and how mentors help new teachers become better.

2.1. School Mentors' Perceptions of the Assessment Rubrics

Rubrics are essential tools for assessing tasks that are qualitative, open-ended, and interpretive, such as essays, plays, teaching

portfolios, and projects. According to Matshediso (2020), "a rubric is a set of clear expectations or criteria used to help teachers and students focus on what is valued in a subject, topic, or activity" (p. 223). Rubrics foster a shared understanding of what is valued in student-teacher performance, carrying a broader significance for assessors. They serve not only as assessment tools but also as mechanisms to enhance teaching practices and learning outcomes. Without rubrics, neither teachers nor students gain clarity about the direction and objectives of their tasks. Teachers believe that mentor teachers use rubrics to clearly communicate expectations to student teachers. Rubrics also help align performance standards with students' learning outcomes (Cohen-Vogel, Sadler, Little, & Merrill, 2020). When constructed collaboratively—where both teachers and students participate in deciding what to teach and how to assess—rubrics can help refine teaching skills within the school context (Joseph, Rickett, Northcote, & Christian, 2020). A well-designed rubric has the potential to uncover blind spots in teaching and learning activities, prompting teacher trainees to reflect on and correct their mistakes. It allows educators to track the developmental process of learning and identify areas where students may require further support or improvement over time.

2.2. Coordination of Teaching practice assessment

The literature underscores the evolving landscape of teaching evaluation and the consequent need for Teaching Practice coordination to adapt to these changes. It emphasizes the importance of strong leadership, effective coordination, and ongoing professional learning in ensuring successful teaching practice implementation (Lewthwaite, 2006; Peers, Diezmann & Watters, 2003). Moreover, it highlights the role of University of Botswana's Faculty of Education and its Teaching Practice coordination unit in organizing and supporting Teaching Practice, while also referencing the pro-social classroom model as instrumental in fostering healthy student-teacher relationships and effective classroom management (Jennings & Greenberg, 2009; Reyes et al., 2012). Teacher preparation programs across education systems rely on classroom teachers to welcome student teachers into their classrooms and to provide meaningful teacher training experiences (Clarke et al., 2012). Historically, classroom teachers have not received formal training to prepare them for their role as mentors of teachers (Hall, Draper, Smith, & Bullough, 2008; Choi & Tang, 2009). As such workshops come in handy in guiding schools through the rubric used to assess student teachers, emphasizing areas of teaching methodologies, classroom management, lesson planning, and professionalism. Research has shown that both mentors and schools have a vague sense of what the professional role of a mentor involves (Leshem, 2014). While the mentor role is typically respected by various school management, it is not entirely recognized as a professional role, as no clear distinction is made between the teacher and mentor roles. Most mentors reported that they agree to mentor student teachers when asked by their superiors since they feel obligated to, perceiving mentoring as part of their teaching role. This suggests that competent teachers are competent mentors as well, capable of guiding student teachers along the right path in the profession.

According to Leshem (2014), teachers often choose to participate in professional development opportunities because they feel their teaching experience alone qualifies them for the mentorship role. For those who refuse to take on student teachers, it points to the concern that some class teachers are not ready to mentor student teachers with the processes and skills they need to engage in while planning for student learning. Mentor teachers assume a major role in defining the teaching practicum. This lead role profoundly influences student teachers' perceived self-efficacy (Black, 2015; Chambers, 2003; Saffold, 2005) and level of stress (Hockley & Hemmings, 2001). Mentees regard mentors as the most important element of their teaching preparation (Clarke, 2001; Gardner, 2006). Even though the mentor is considered a major constituent in the preparation of student teachers (Clarke et al., 2012; Gardner, 2006; Weasmer & Woods, 2003), such classroom teachers are not well-prepared to assume the mentorship role. This role becomes even more difficult when challenges arise with student teachers (Ambrosetti, 2014), hence the need for workshops geared towards capacitating the mentor to deal with issues that may arise. Since teacher preparation programs rely on classroom teachers to mentor student teachers, they need to be provided with training and support (Hudson, 2013). What student teachers learn during their first exposure to teaching is important, as it will influence their professional competencies as well as influencing their decision to complete their course (Caires & Almeida, 2005).

2.3. Importance of Mentorship in Teaching Practice

Mentoring is crucial for the professional growth of student teachers, encompassing both cognitive and affective elements of the learning process (Bearman et al., 2016; Ambrosetti, 2014). Successful mentoring relationships contribute significantly to positive outcomes in the Teaching Practice experience, providing structured opportunities for reflection and growth (Lai, 2005; Moir, 2009). Mentoring has evolved into a more formal process within the teaching profession, offering a supportive environment conducive to professional development and influencing student teachers' self-efficacy and stress levels (Fletcher, 2000; Cookson, 2005; Heider, 2005; Black, 2015; Saffold, 2005). A shared understanding of teaching practicum goals and evaluation processes is essential for positive outcomes (Parker, Ndoy, & Imig, 2009). Effective mentoring also contributes to reducing attrition rates among novice teachers and improving overall effectiveness in the teaching profession (Fletcher, 2000; Parker, Ndoy, & Imig, 2009). Mentorship emphasizes learner-centered instructional strategies to promote deep and lasting learning experiences (Fahraeus, 2013). However, a common challenge in mentoring is the lack of formal training and clear delineation of the mentor's professional role, which can hinder the effectiveness of the mentoring process (Leshem, 2014). Workshops play a crucial role in equipping mentors with the necessary skills to navigate challenges effectively (Ambrosetti, 2014). The success of teacher preparation programs heavily relies

on the quality of mentoring experiences, underscoring the importance of providing adequate training and support to classroom teachers (Hudson, 2013; Caires & Almeida, 2005). Mentor teachers provide structured opportunities for teacher trainees to reflect on their decisions and seek guidance and support (Green, 2006). The goal of mentoring is dual-fold, aiming to support novice teachers and enhance the quality of their experiences to reduce beginning teacher attrition (Parker, Ndooy, & Imig, 2009).

In summary, effective Teaching Practice coordination, mentorship, and assessment are critical in nurturing well-rounded teachers. Workshops are a promising avenue for enhancing teaching practice by equipping mentors with the necessary skills and support to guide student teachers effectively. Continuous corrective efforts are needed to ensure that assessment rubrics align with learner-centered approaches and adequately prepare student teachers for their future roles in primary and secondary education.

3. Theoretical framework

The theoretical framework guiding this study draws upon several key educational theories and concepts that inform effective teaching practices and mentorship in the field of education. Constructivism, which underscores the active role of learners in constructing their understanding of the world, emphasizes the importance of learner-centered approaches in teaching practice. The assessment rubrics provided by the University of Botswana should align with constructivist principles, facilitating student teachers' engagement, comprehension, and retention of knowledge through experiential learning and reflection (Brooks & Brooks, 1993). Social cognitive theory, as proposed by Albert Bandura, accentuates the significance of observational learning and modeling in the learning process. In the context of mentorship during Teaching Practice, this theory highlights the role of school mentors as influential models for student teachers, whose perceptions of the assessment rubrics can shape student teachers' observational learning and professional development (Bandura, 1986). Situated learning theory posits that learning takes place within authentic contexts and communities of practice. Within the Teaching Practice environment, student teachers develop their teaching skills under the guidance of experienced mentors, emphasizing the need for assessment rubrics to reflect authentic teaching demands and expectations as perceived by school mentors (Lave & Wenger, 1991). Professional identity development theory suggests that individuals shape their professional identities through interactions within their professional communities. In this study, student teachers' professional identities are influenced by their interactions with school mentors and their engagement with assessment rubrics, highlighting the role of mentors in shaping student teachers' sense of professional identity and efficacy (Beijaard et al., 2004). Lastly, critical pedagogy advocates for challenging dominant power structures and promoting social justice through education. In the context of this study, critical pedagogy underscores the importance of critically evaluating assessment rubrics for inclusivity, cultural relevance, and alignment with social justice principles. School mentors' perspectives on assessment rubrics should consider their potential impact on promoting equitable educational outcomes for all students (Freire, 1970).

4. Methodology

The methodology employed in this study utilized a qualitative design with a case study approach, operating within an interpretivist paradigm (Creswell, 2013; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). This approach allowed for an in-depth exploration of the perceptions and experiences of secondary and primary school mentors regarding the teaching practice exercise and the assessment rubrics used. The population for this study comprised 77 secondary and primary school mentors who were responsible for the supervision of student teachers within their respective schools (Patton, 2015). Sampling was conducted using a purposive sampling technique to select participants who had firsthand experience and expertise in mentoring student teachers during teaching practice sessions (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). These mentors were chosen for their insights and perspectives on the effectiveness of the assessment rubrics and their readiness to supervise student teachers.

Data collection was primarily conducted through a focus group discussion format (Krueger & Casey, 2015). A one-day workshop provided the platform for gathering data, where mentors participated in facilitated discussions to share their perceptions of the teaching practice exercise. These discussions were held in a neutral and comfortable setting to encourage open communication. After the discussions, each group had the opportunity to present their findings. This approach was effective as the lecturers facilitating the sessions were experienced in teaching practice assessment, making them competent moderators capable of guiding discussions using a semi-structured guide with open-ended questions. The semi-structured guide was divided into three sessions, each lasting approximately 30 minutes. The focus group discussions explored various topics, including mentors' understanding of the assessment rubrics, their experiences with mentoring student teachers, the workload involved in mentoring, and their readiness to supervise student teachers (Miles et al., 2014). Instruments used for data collection included a moderator's guide to structure the discussions and ensure key topics were addressed (Patton, 2015). This guide contained open-ended questions designed to elicit detailed and insightful responses from participants, enabling an in-depth exploration of mentors' perspectives (Krueger & Casey, 2015).

The sessions covered the following topics:

- a) Perceptions of Assessment Rubrics – How familiar were mentors with the University of Botswana's assessment rubrics used for teaching practice sessions?

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- b) Learner-Centered Approaches and Skill Development – In the mentors' view, how well do the assessment rubrics support the development of learner-centered teaching approaches in student teachers?
- c) Recommendations for Improvement – What changes or additions would mentors suggest to improve the effectiveness of the assessment rubrics?

The sessions were audio-recorded with participants' permission, and detailed notes were taken to assist in data analysis. The moderator guided participants through the predetermined topics, fostering open dialogue and sharing of experiences. The combination of audio recordings and written notes ensured accurate capture of participants' responses (Miles et al., 2014).

The analysis of the data revealed several key themes, including mentors' varying levels of familiarity and understanding of the assessment rubrics, challenges faced in mentoring student teachers, perceptions of workload associated with mentoring responsibilities, and insights into mentors' readiness to supervise student teachers (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). These findings provided valuable insights into the effectiveness of the assessment rubrics and the support provided to mentors in their role during teaching practice sessions.

5. Results and discussions

The results of the study shed light on school mentors' perceptions of the assessment rubrics provided by the University of Botswana and their effectiveness in guiding and evaluating student teachers' instructional practices during Teaching Practice sessions. The research questions guided the discussion of the results through development of the following themes:

5.1. Theme 1: Perceptions of Assessment Rubrics

The findings reveal that school mentors generally perceive the assessment rubrics provided by the University of Botswana as effective tools for guiding and evaluating student teachers' instructional practices during Teaching Practice sessions. Mentors commended the clarity and organization of the rubric, noting that its categorization into different sections facilitated supervision. This aligns with the principles of constructivism, which emphasize learner-centered approaches in teaching. However, concerns were raised regarding the lack of clarity in the rationale as one of the key elements in a lesson plan, hindering mentors' ability to provide effective guidance. This underscores the importance of clear expectations and guidelines, as emphasized by previous research (Smith et al., 2018; Jones & Smith, 2019).

5.2. Theme 2: Emphasis and Overlooked Aspects

Mentors identified specific aspects of teaching methodologies, classroom management, lesson planning, and professionalism as areas that are either overemphasized or overlooked in the current assessment rubrics. Although the rubrics were commended for their clarity, mentors highlighted significant challenges faced by student teachers, particularly related to inadequate resources for lesson planning and difficulties aligning teaching philosophy with portfolio requirements. This finding aligns with the principles of situated learning theory (Lave & Wenger, 1991), which emphasizes the importance of authentic learning experiences that reflect real-world demands and expectations. The mismatch between rubric criteria and teaching realities contributed to an increased workload for mentors, who needed to provide additional support and guidance to address these issues. The need for adequate support and resources for student teachers during Teaching Practice is underscored by Darling-Hammond et al. (2017), who advocate for comprehensive preparation and support for aspiring teachers. The mentors' expressed workload challenges resonate with Brown et al. (2020), who stress the importance of recognizing and addressing the workload burden on mentors to ensure effective support for student teachers. Furthermore, mentors emphasized the positive impact of student teachers on the teaching and learning processes, advocating for increased participation from the University of Botswana. This finding underscores the value of collaborative learning environments and the exchange of ideas between student teachers and experienced mentors, as highlighted by Lave and Wenger (1991) in their theory of situated learning.

Based on the discussion of results, several conclusions and recommendations can be drawn for schools, teaching practice coordination offices, student teachers, and further research.

6. Conclusions

School mentors generally perceive the assessment rubrics provided by the University of Botswana as effective tools for guiding and evaluating student teachers' instructional practices during Teaching Practice sessions. The rubrics were praised for their clarity and organization, which facilitated supervision. Despite the effectiveness of the rubrics, mentors expressed concerns about the lack of clarity regarding rationale, which is a critical component in the lesson plan, as well as the workload associated with mentorship during Teaching Practice. Additionally, mentors identified challenges faced by student teachers, such as inadequate resources for lesson planning and difficulties aligning teaching philosophy with portfolio requirements. However, mentors highlighted the positive impact of student teachers' presence on the teaching and learning processes, advocating for increased participation of student teachers from the University of Botswana. Collaborative learning environments and the exchange of ideas between student teachers and experienced mentors were emphasized.

7. Recommendations

To enhance the effectiveness of Teaching Practice and better prepare future teachers for their roles in primary and secondary education, several recommendations can be implemented. Firstly, teaching practice coordination offices should collaborate with schools to enhance the clarity of assessment rubrics by providing clear explanations and rationales for each criterion. This will enable mentors to offer more effective guidance to student teachers. Additionally, addressing the workload burden on mentors is crucial. Teaching practice coordination offices should explore strategies such as providing remuneration or additional support staff to ensure that mentors can support student teachers effectively without feeling overwhelmed. Moreover, it's essential to improve resources for student teachers. Teaching Practice coordination offices should work with schools to ensure that student teachers have access to adequate resources for lesson planning and portfolio development, which may include additional training or materials. Promoting collaboration and support is also vital. Schools and TP coordination offices should foster collaborative learning environments where student teachers and mentors can exchange ideas and support each other's professional growth through workshops or other professional development opportunities. Further research is also recommended. Longitudinal studies can track the long-term impact of Teaching Practice experiences on student teachers' professional development and retention. Comparative studies can compare the effectiveness of different assessment rubrics and support systems across various educational contexts to identify best practices. Additionally, exploring different mentorship models and their impact on student teachers' learning experiences during Teaching Practice is essential. By implementing these recommendations and conducting further research, stakeholders can enhance Teaching Practice's effectiveness and better prepare aspiring teachers for their future roles.

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