

The Extent to Which Collegial Supervision Is Utilized In Zimbabwe's 2-5-2 Teaching Practice towards Continuous Improvement of Student Teachers' Teaching Skills and Competencies

Reuben Tshuma¹, Sithulisiwe Bhebhe²

¹Senior Regional Quality Assurance Coordinator, Quality Assurance Unit, Zimbabwe Open University, Matabeleland South Region, Box 346, Gwanda, Zimbabwe.

²Lecturer Primary Education, University of Swaziland Private Bag 4, Kwaluseni, Swaziland.M201.

Abstract: *The study sought to examine the extent to which Zimbabwe's 2-5-2 teaching practice utilized collegial supervision in promoting continuous improvement of student teachers' teaching skills and competencies. The mixed methods design was used to collect data through questionnaires, individual interviews and focus group discussions. The research revealed that collegial supervision was utilized and benefitted student teachers in Zimbabwe's 2-5-2 teaching practice. The study also revealed that mentors were not mandated to monitor and enforce participation of student teachers in collegial supervision hence the inconsistency in participation was noted among student teachers on teaching practice. The study recommended that collegial supervision be formalized so as to mandate mentors to monitor and enforce student participation in collegial supervision activities such as demonstration lessons, peer study groups, inter-class visitations collaborative lesson planning. The study also recommended that mentors be in-serviced on collegial supervision in Zimbabwe's 2-5-2 teaching practice.*

Key Words: *Collegial supervision, collegial relationship, teaching practice, continuous improvement*

I. Introduction

In Zimbabwe, all primary teacher education institutions follow the 2-5-2 teacher education model in which student teachers spend the initial two terms (thirty-two weeks) at college learning theory of education, applied education and research methods and then proceed on teaching practice for five terms (eighty weeks) and finally return to college for revision and examinations for two terms (thirty-two weeks) hence the programme referred to as 2-5-2 model. Research studies by Tshuma (2012) cite literature by (Chikunda, 2005; Chivore in Perraton, 1993; Wailer, Gadzirayi and Mkondo in Chikunda, 2005; Yeomans & Sampson, 1994) on studies done in Zimbabwe on student teacher supervision revealed 'lecturers in a hurry' who supervised student teachers in a 'fly past' manner and did not take time to discuss with student teachers and mentors before and after the lesson observation. These 'fly past' tendencies in lecturer supervision have made the role of collegial supervision between student teachers and mentors and among students themselves very crucial in ensuring continuous development of student teachers' teaching skills and competencies during teaching practice.

To facilitate the success of collegial supervision among student teachers their deployment for teaching practice is critical. Zindi, Nyota and Batidzirayi (2003) in Owusu and Brown (2014) and Bhebhe and Tshuma (2015) argue that the teaching practice coordinators in teacher training institutions play an active role in the deployment of student teachers for teaching practice. In Zimbabwe, student teachers are deployed to schools at least in pairs. This enables trainee teachers to deal with professional challenges collectively and thus benefit from each other's assistance. In addition, the student teachers are attached to qualified teachers who have a role to guide and coach them as they practice teaching (Chiromo in Maunganidze, 2015). Deploying student teachers at least in pairs encourages collegial supervision which does not happen in a vacuum but supported by ideal collegial relationship.

1.1. Collegial Relationship

Collegiality is sharing ideas and responsibility amongst colleagues for pursuit of common goals (Shin, 2009) and is crucial for successful collegial supervision. The collegial relationship can help remove the stress and anxiety as it encourages student teachers to work under a non-intimidating environment that supports the collaborative construction of knowledge (Owusu-Mensah, 2014). The collegial relationship encourages both the mentor and student teacher to work in partnership; encourages reflective evaluation in which mentors and students reflect on their own teaching practice; promptly provides focused, honest, critical and constructive feedback and evaluates student teacher's classroom performance (Blake, Steven & Thomas, 1998). Bullough

(2012) in Owusu-Mensah (2014) contends that mentor teachers need to learn to be helpful and kindly critical without undermining the confidence of their mentees and the quality of their relationship. Musingafi and Mafumbate (2014) argue that a successful mentoring relationship provides positive outcomes for both the mentor and mentee through the expansion of knowledge, skill, energy and creativity. A good and supportive mentoring relationship ensures quality teaching practice, stimulates and accelerates cognitive growth and enhances career rewards and daily satisfaction and is expected between teacher-mentors and student teachers (Mutemeri and Tirivanhu, 2014; Owusu-Mensah, 2014).

The good collegial relationship between the mentor and student teacher creates a favourable atmosphere for collegial supervision where the mentee learns from the mentor (Owusu-Mensah, 2014) hence is a pre-requisite for quality teaching practice and can make or break the process of the student teachers' continuous development of their teaching skills and competences. Barnes & Stiasny (1995) in Chakanyuka (2006) posit that one important feature of a collegial relationship is that the mentor and student teacher should be willing to work together for the relationship to be successful. Mentors and student teachers have to be willing to accept the different power positions of student teachers as learners and mentors as teachers with authority for the training of student teachers. Hence Lawrence (2005) in Mapholisa and Tshabalala (2014) argues that there should be marriage of minds and unity of purpose between supervisor and supervisee for teaching practice to benefit both. Creating a good collegial relationship is the responsibility of mentors as hosts in facilitating student teachers to conduct their trial and error experimental teaching, which is the basis of continuous self improvement, but the student teachers have a part to play also in building good relationships that can promote their continuous development, since they are not helpless victims (Yeomans (1994) in Chakanyuka (2006). This therefore implies that student teachers have to be friendly, willing, open and positive about the whole teaching practice process. This openness is exemplified by Allen and Peach (2007) where the majority of the participants indicated that they sought advice from their supervising teachers or other teachers when confronted with unfamiliar problems. According to Shea and Gordon (1997) in Ngara and Ngwarai (2012) as friends, mentors would naturally stand by their mentees in critical situations, provide growth experiences, offer wise counsel, and encourage winning behavior.

Student teachers operating in a collegial, open and non-intimidating relationship freely question mentors about areas of confusion or lack of understanding and are also free to experiment with new teaching ideas and approaches that lead to confidence building which ensures continuous improvement of their teaching skills and competences. Maphosa and Ndamba (2012) cite Lu (2012) who argues that collegial relationship boosts the morale and confidence of the student teacher resulting in a situation where the mentor and mentee criticize each other's lessons. In the study by Maphosa and Ndamba (2012) most mentors (90%) working in a collegial atmosphere welcomed criticisms of their lessons from their mentees hence indicated that they were quite happy to discuss strong and weak points of their lessons with the mentees. Student teachers working in a good collegial relationship freely integrate and interact with the whole staff in the host school and stand to experience a range of teaching skills, expertise, insight, styles and perspectives and are more likely to reflect on their own teaching styles, select and adopt the best teaching techniques that promote continuous improvement of their instructional skills and competences. In a good relationship, the mentors ought to join student teachers as equal partners or 'almost colleagues' in dealing with many dilemmas of teaching and learning that arise continuously in the real-life work settings of their schools with a view of arriving at a reasoned set of opinions for action (Allen and Peach, 2007; Chakanyuka, 2006; Edwards & Collison, 1996). Mapholisa and Tshabalala (2014) revealed that students value a supportive, interactive classroom environment, especially with respect to the process of learning to teach. It can therefore be safely argued that student teachers working under a non-threatening mentoring relationship are secure and free enough to approach the supervisor for professional assistance and to try out new teaching strategies that enhance their continuous professional development.

A study by Chakanyuka (2006) in Zimbabwe, observed that student teachers and lecturers generally felt that collegial relationships between student teachers and mentors were important and crucial in facilitating mentors' collegial support for student teachers to acquire the necessary teaching skills and knowledge that facilitate professional development. In another study in Zimbabwe by Ngara, Ngwarai and Ngara (2013) one student teacher suggested that supervisors should be friendly and should not make student teachers fear them while on teaching practice. In a study by Allen and Peach (2007) two respondents expressed their dissatisfaction over lack of collegiality and freedom as they were expected to follow the teachers' routine, teaching styles and behavior management styles. The value of collegiality between mentors and student teachers is demonstrated by Owusu and Brown (2014) who revealed that student teachers had most conversations with teacher mentors during teaching practice and spent the least time talking to their college or University supervisors and school principals. Owusu and Brown (2014) sums up the value of collegial support by arguing that being friends to trainee teachers and giving professional coaching to them are some of the surest ways of helping trainee teachers teach with confidence and hope during their teaching practice to continuously develop their teaching skills.

A collegial working relationship between teacher-mentors and student teachers is therefore crucial, indispensable, and central in helping student teachers to acquire the necessary teaching skills and competencies (Chakanyuka, 2006; Mukeredzi & Ndamba, 2005; Owusu-Mensah, 2014; Rudney & Guillaume, 2003). The collegial relationship enables mentors and mentees to freely engage in collaborative scheming, lesson preparation and planning, classroom management, effective teaching methods, maintaining classroom discipline, and other daily routines such as marking the register and written exercises in which the student teacher gains access to the mentor's craft competence by observing and discussing these with the mentor (Maynard, 1997; Mudavanhu in Tirivanhu, 2014). Good collegial relationship blends well with collegial supervision.

1.2. Collegial Supervision

Collegial supervision is a forum where student teachers on teaching practice review, reflect and supervise each other's work for their continuous professional development (Carroll (2007) in Mudavanhu, 2015; Galthorn in Sergiovanni & Starratt, 1993). The collegial supervision practice indicates the existence of high levels of collaboration among and between student teachers that is characterized by mutual respect, shared work values, co-operation and discussions about teaching and learning which is ideal for continuous development of the student teachers' teaching skills and competences. Collegial supervision emphasizes the capacity of student teachers to examine and evaluate each other's teaching practice through reflective analysis of colleagues' teaching for each other's continuous development of their teaching skills and competencies.

Collegial supervision promotes quality teaching by student teachers as it removes stress and anxiety on the student teacher since it is administered in an atmosphere that is full of mutual trust, shared responsibility and respect, which fosters continuous improvement of their teaching skills and competences. Quality teaching is also assured in collegial supervision since peers generally tend to do their best when their colleagues are watching and employ new and innovative ideas hence learn a lot from each other as they observe colleagues teaching in different styles, methods and approaches (Goldhammer et al., 1993). Collegial supervision creates opportunities for mentees to learn from each other's strengths and weaknesses and enhance reflection in student teachers (Maphosa and Ndamba, 2012). It can therefore be argued that in observing colleagues teaching and analyzing each other's teaching styles and instructional effectiveness, student teachers develop their evaluative and reflective skills and get to understand their own teaching better.

Continuous professional improvement is promoted through collegial supervision when student teachers who participate in the teamwork realize that co-operation and shared experiences are more beneficial than working alone (Sternberg, 2001). According to Sternberg (2001) collegial supervision encourages student teachers to participate in communities of learning in which the individual student teachers think and solve problems with others engaged in similar tasks and ensure quality teaching practice through richer inputs. Collegial supervision can involve student teachers working together in drawing schemes and lesson plans, developing teaching media, rating each other's demonstration lessons, offering each other feedback about lesson observations and analysis, peer coaching and offering general professional advice (Sergiovanni & Starratt, 1993; Groundwater-Smith, Deer, Sharp & March, 1996). According to Carroll (2007), Bolton (2001 and Moon (1999) in Mudavanhu (2015), collegial supervision of student teachers can serve as a valuable reflective learning tool based on the assumption that reflecting on their work provides the basis for learning from practice and doing it more creatively. This argument is consistent with that of Harvey & Green (1993) and Smout (2005) who posit that collegial supervision promotes quality teaching practice through self-enlightenment in which the student teachers are self reflective as they examine and evaluate their own behaviour and actions by themselves, for themselves and for their own continuous improvement. A study by Maphosa and Ndamba (2012) revealed that mentors encouraged their mentees to observe lessons of fellow student teachers and these mentors confirmed that the mentees who supervised each other benefitted a lot from criticizing each other as peers, friends and colleagues.

Collegial supervision is at the heart of supervision in teaching practice as colleagues work together in small groups with special curricular interest, knowledge and experience. The collegial team may follow up on the shared recommendations and coaching hints by observing the classroom implementation process of the new ideas and then further discuss their effectiveness and re-coach each other for further professional development. Collegial collaborative group-work can encourage innovation, boost teacher confidence, foster continuous professional improvement as well as reduce the teachers' isolation and encourage student teachers to attempt curricular-instructional innovation that they would probably not have tried as individuals, and learn from each other (Grimmit & Greham, 2003; Sternburg, 2001).

Since peers generally tend to do their best when their colleagues are watching (Goldhammer et al., 1993) quality teaching therefore tends to be assured when student teachers present demonstration lessons for peers as they thoroughly prepare and select the most effective teaching strategies at their disposal. Collegial supervision therefore presents colleagues with a chance of collecting new and innovative ideas from each other

when observing a colleague delivering a lesson using different styles, methods and approaches. The observing colleagues receive directly or indirectly a better understanding of the effectiveness of their own teaching styles by observing and analyzing colleagues' teaching. An example is in observing a negative teaching element in a colleague that also exists in one's teaching style which one may get rid of in line with the team's recommendation to the colleague. In this way, student teachers experience self understanding and continuous improvement of their own teaching skills and competences as they share and provide mutual professional assistance, discuss problems they face, help one another in preparing lessons, exchange tips and provide support to one another.

In Europe, the development of teacher education has evolved around collegial supervision practice. This has led to many European countries establishing University Practice Schools Model (UPS) or Professional Development Schools (PDS) as they are known in Australia, United States of America, and Canada. In these UPSs and PDSs effective schools are identified and selected by Universities for quality teaching practice purposes (Burghes, 2006). In some isolated instances, UPS is owned and administered by the Faculty of Education and staffed with excellent teachers having higher qualifications than usual who subsequently act as teacher-mentors for the trainee teachers. The Professional Development model enables student teachers as a group, to observe good demonstration teaching that is delivered by well qualified teacher-mentors. The trainee teachers have an opportunity to discuss and review lessons in depth with the teacher-mentor immediately soon after delivery. Collegial supervision practice is beneficial to student teachers on teaching practice in that it removes stress and anxiety among the student teachers since it is administered under a non-intimidating atmosphere and serves as a means of enhancing career rewards and daily satisfaction (Mowah & Scann, 1997).

II. Methodology

2.1. The Research Design

This study is premised on the Mixed Methods research design. The Journal of Mixed Methods (2006) in Cameron (2011) defines mixed methods as 'research in which the investigator collects, analyses, mixes, and draws inferences from both quantitative and qualitative data in a single study or a program of inquiry'. The mixed methods design was preferred for this study because it enabled the researcher to use both qualitative and quantitative approaches in a complementary manner and provided some interaction rather than a dichotomy between these approaches (Gelo et. al. 2008). The use of Mixed Methods design enabled the researcher an opportunity to check or explain findings from one method against findings from another hence provided a more complete analysis of the research problem through comparing data produced by the different methods. The mixed methods research design also enabled the researcher to overcome the limitations of purely quantitative or qualitative approaches by maximizing the advantages and minimizing the disadvantages connected to the single application of one of the two approaches (Creswell, 2007; Gelo et. al., 2008; Maree, 2007).

The mixed methods design also enabled the researcher to triangulate the quantitative and qualitative methods and data sources as well as provided a convergence and corroboration of results from the different methods and designs in studying the same phenomenon (Creswell, 2007; Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004). The mixed methods design in this study produced qualitative and quantitative data on the same phenomenon that allowed the researcher to see and understand the problem under study in a more rounded and complete fashion than would be the case had the data been drawn from just one method. The researcher used sampling to collect data in two separate phases. The first phase used survey questionnaires to collect quantitative data while the second phase used interviews and document analysis to collect qualitative data.

III. Research Results And Discussion

The major purpose of this study was to establish the extent to which collegial supervision among student teachers and their mentors in Zimbabwe's 2-5-2 teaching practice promoted continuous improvement of the students' teaching skills and competencies. Collegial supervision comprises collaboration between students and mentors, participation in demonstration lessons, inter class visitations, collaborative lesson planning and in peer study groups. Collegial supervision is founded upon the deployment practice of student teachers for teaching practice.

3.1. Deployment Of Student Teachers For Teaching Practice

The deployment practice encourages or discourages collegial supervision during teaching practice. When responding to how student teachers were deployed in Zimbabwe's 2-5-2 teaching practice, the majority of mentors (92%) and student teachers (96%) in Table 1 indicated that student teachers were deployed at least in pairs. Data therefore concur with Chiromo in Maunganidze, (2015) in that student teachers in Zimbabwe's 2-5-2 teaching practice are deployed at least in pairs to enhance collegial supervision. Deploying student teachers at least in pairs encourages student teachers to collectively work in groups in dealing with professional challenges and thus benefit from each other's assistance. Deploying student teachers at least in pairs in Zimbabwe's 2-5-2

teaching practice sets the stage for student teacher participation in collegial supervision activities. Collaboration between mentors and student teachers is one form of collegial supervision and is discussed next.

3.2. Collaboration Between Mentors And Students

The study also sought to establish the extent to which collaboration existed between mentors and students in Zimbabwe's 2-5-2 teaching practice as a collegial supervision practice. When responding to the extent to which collaboration existed between mentors and students, 58% of the students in table 1 confirmed its existence while 42% disagreed. On the other hand, 80% of the mentors confirmed the existence of collaboration between mentors and students and 19% disagreed while 1% was not sure. The existence of collaboration among mentors and student teachers includes shared lesson scheming, planning and delivery. The low response of 58% from student teachers could be the actual picture while the mentor response of 80% could be a cover up on weaknesses known to the respondents. Data therefore suggests a need for in-service training of mentors on the value of collaboration between mentors and student teachers. The findings of this study indicate that collaboration between mentors and student teachers partly exists hence concurs with Mowah & Scann, 1997 in that where it is lacking students are deprived the benefit of working in an atmosphere that is non-intimidating and free of stress and anxiety which fosters instructional and professional growth. Collaboration between mentors and student teachers is anchored on collegial relationship discussed next.

3.3. Collegial Relationship Between Mentors And Students

When responding on the extent to which collegial relationship between mentors and student teachers existed, 84% students and 94% mentors in Table 1 acknowledged its existence. These findings on the existence of a collegial relationship in Zimbabwe's 2-5-2 teaching practice between mentors and student teachers concur with previous research findings by (Chakanyuka, 2006; Mukeredzi & Ndamba, 2005; Mutemeri and Tirivanhu, 2014; Owusu-Mensah, 2014; Rudney & Guillaume, 2003) in that a good intimated collegial relationship between teacher-mentors and student teachers creates a favourable atmosphere for the mentee to learn from the mentor and gain access to the mentor's craft competence (Maynard, 1997; Mudavanhu in Tirivanhu, 2014). The findings of this study are similar to those of Lu (2012) in Maphosa and Ndamba (2012), Sergiovanni & Starratt (1993 and Groundwater-Smith, Deer, Sharp & March (1996) in that collegial relationship boosts the morale and confidence of the student teachers on teaching practice resulting in a situation where the mentor and mentee criticize each other's lessons and student teachers freely engage in collaborative scheming, lesson preparation and planning, classroom management, effective teaching methods, maintaining classroom discipline and other daily routines. The general picture that emerges is that a collegial relationship exists between mentors and students in Zimbabwe's 2-5-2 teaching practice in support of the continuous development of student teachers' teaching skills and competencies.

Table 1: Existence of collegial supervision practices in Zimbabwe's 2-5-2 teaching practice

	Agree	Disagree	Not sure
Deployment of students at least in pairs-mentors	92	8	0
Deployment of students at least in pairs-students	96	4	0
Existence of collaboration between mentors and students-Mentors	80	19	1
Existence of collaboration between mentors and students-students	58	42	0
Existence of colleagueship between mentors and students-mentors	94	6	0
Existence of colleagueship between mentors and students-students	84	14	2
Existence of demonstration lessons by mentors-mentors	100	0	0
Existence of demonstration lessons by mentors-students	91	3	6
Participation in demonstration lessons by students-mentors	63	27	0
Participation in demonstration lessons by students-students	75	23	2
Collaborative lesson planning by mentors and students-Mentors	56	36	8
Collaborative lesson planning by mentors and students-students	76	24	0
Participation in inter-class visits by students-mentors	61	28	11
Participation in inter-class visits by students-students	75	23	2
Participation in peer study groups by students-mentors	43	33	24
Participation in peer study groups by students-students	67	32	1

3.4. Collegial Supervision

When responding to the extent to which mentors conducted demonstration lessons as collegial supervision practice for their student teachers to emulate good teaching, the majority of mentors (100%) in Table 1 replied in the affirmative while 91% student teachers acknowledged that they were provided with demonstration lessons by mentors. Good and effective mentors are expected to deliver demonstration lessons to enable student teachers to emulate good teaching. The findings of the study concur with Burghes, (2006) in that student teachers' professional development is enhanced when they observe good demonstration teaching that is delivered by qualified teacher-mentors. The data in Table 1 clearly reveal that mentors in Zimbabwe's 2-5-2

teaching practice conduct demonstration lessons to assist the student teachers continuously improve their teaching skills and competencies. One interviewed lecturer said the following about demonstration lessons:

Eh, we expect the mentors to conduct more demonstration lessons so that the students know how things are done -----, we expect mentors to comment on a day to day basis on how students perform so that the quality of their teaching is improved.

This is what the other lecturer said:

Ehhh in our 2-5-2 program during teaching practice students also observe teachers teach so as to see how certain concepts or how certain subjects are taught. In a way the class teacher will be demonstrating how to handle certain lessons in a more qualitative way. Ehh these demonstrations include chalkboard work and the neatness that is required in writing BB work -----and how planning is done in a more detailed way.

Data show that mentors in Zimbabwe's 2-5-2 teaching practice provide student teachers with demonstration lessons as collegial supervision practice. Participation in demonstration lessons by student teachers as a collegial supervision practice is discussed next.

3.5. Participation In Demonstration Lessons By Students

Participation in demonstration lessons enables student teachers to learn from each other's strengths and weaknesses. Responses from the majority of mentors (63%) in Table 1 indicate that student teachers participated in demonstration lessons with colleagues, while 27% disagreed and 10% were not sure. Among student teachers, 75% indicated that they participated in demonstration lessons while 23% indicated that they did not and 3% was not sure.

According to student teacher focus group discussions, students engaged in rotational demonstration teaching in which they visited each other's classrooms and observed lesson delivery by colleagues before engaging in post lesson delivery discussions. Students indicated that they benefitted a lot from the demonstration lessons during teaching practice. The findings of this study concur with previous research findings by Carroll (2007), Bolton (2001), Moon (1999) in Mudavanhu (2015) and Maphosa and Ndamba (2012) who revealed the need for fellow student teachers to observe each other's lessons and learn from each other's strengths and weaknesses to enhance their self reflection practice based on the assumption that reflecting on their work provides the basis for learning from practice and doing it more creatively. The data revealed that most students in Zimbabwe's 2-5-2 teaching practice participated in demonstration lessons while in some schools student teachers were not exposed to demonstration lessons and mentor teachers attributed this failure to school based administrative weakness.

An interview with one mentor revealed that failure to provide student teachers with demonstration lessons in some instances was caused by the fact that student teachers were not in the same stream or grade, as some were teaching Early Childhood Development (ECD) while others were teaching infant classes so they found it difficult to engage in demonstration lessons because of the different modes of lesson delivery. The researcher found this to be a lame excuse, as student teachers could be grouped according to the closeness of the grades they taught to enable them to benefit from the demonstration lessons. One other interviewed mentor believed that demonstration lessons by students could be implemented and therefore attributed the lack of demonstration lessons at her school to an administrative weakness in the school system. Hence the mentor emphasized that student teachers were deprived of the opportunity of watching colleagues teaching and of learning from each other as they only depended on their mentor's lessons in the classroom. Lack of student demonstration lessons in some schools represents missed learning opportunities hence suggests a need for mentor in-service training in Zimbabwe's 2-5-2 teaching practice on collegial supervision. Collaborative lesson planning by student teachers as a collegial supervision practice is discussed next.

3.6. Participation In Collaborative Lesson Planning By Student Teachers

In responding to the extent to which student teachers participated in collaborative lesson planning with their peers 56% mentors indicated that students participated in peer lesson planning while 36% indicated that students did not participate and 8% were not sure. The majority of students (76%) indicated that they participated in collaborative lesson planning while 24% indicated that they did not participate and 2% were not sure. The data show fair participation in collaborative lesson planning by some student teachers and lack of it by some.

Focus group discussions with sampled student teachers revealed that students benefitted a great deal from working with colleagues collaboratively during teaching practice as they learnt various effective teaching methods from each other. This includes how to scheme and plan, how to display teaching and learning media in their classrooms, delivering effective lessons and disciplining learners, improvising in the absence of teaching materials and solving varied instructional challenges. The data therefore concur with Mapholisa and Tshabalala (2014) who revealed that students value a supportive, interactive classroom environment, especially with respect to the process of learning to teach. The findings of this study also concur with Goldhammer et al., (1993) in that

quality teaching is assured when colleagues collaboratively work together since peers generally tend to do their best when their colleagues are watching as they tend to employ new and innovative ideas, different teaching styles, methods and approaches. The existence of collaborative lesson planning among student teachers in Zimbabwe's 2-5-2 teaching practice is consistent with related literature by Harvey & Green (1993) and Smout (2005) who posit that collegiality promotes quality teaching practice through self-enlightenment in which the student teachers are self reflective as they examine and evaluate their own behaviour and actions by themselves, for themselves and for their own continuous improvement. Data however show variations among mentors and student teachers on the existence of collaborative lesson planning among student teachers in Zimbabwe's 2-5-2 teaching practice. The variations suggest that teacher education institutions might have instructed student teachers to engage in collaborative lesson planning, leaving mentors on the other hand not mandated to monitor and enforce collaborative lesson planning among student teachers under their supervision. The variations suggest a need for in service training of mentors on the value of collaborative lesson planning as collegial practice. Inter class visitation as a form of collegial supervision is discussed next.

3.7. Participation In Inter-Class Visitations By Student Teachers

Responses from mentors (61%) indicate that inter-class visitations by student teachers exist, while 28% indicated that they do not exist and 11% were not sure. The majority of student teachers (75%) indicated that students participated in inter-class visitations while 23% indicated that they did not and 2% were not sure. The data show a strong existence of inter-class visitation by student teachers and lack of it in some schools.

An interview with one lecturer revealed that student teachers were expected by the teacher education institutions to observe lessons taught by other student teachers and other senior teachers besides their mentors under inter-class visits so that they could widen their teaching knowledge and skills in handling different lessons. Other interviewed lecturers also pointed out that student teachers were expected to move from class to class, visit their colleagues' classes, study classroom displays, the quality of charts, improvisation that was in the classroom and suggest possible improvements on any shortcomings in each of those classrooms. One lecturer went a little further and said:

We also expect student teachers to visit local schools, if possible, to see how classes are taught, materials are being used and buy ideas from the neighbouring schools so that they can perform better than they were doing before.

The lecturer's comments concur with Sternberg (2001) in that collegial supervision practice encourages student teachers to participate in communities of learning in which the individual student teachers think and solve problems with others engaged in similar tasks to ensure quality teaching practice through richer inputs. One student teacher focus group discussion revealed that through inter-class visits students had learnt how to decorate their classrooms and how to improvise in the absence of appropriate teaching materials. The study revealed that most student teachers in Zimbabwe's 2-5-2 teaching practice participated in inter-class visitations with colleagues. Limited or lack of participation in inter-class visitations by some student teachers' suggests a need for mentor in-service training as previously pointed out by Mutemeri and Tirivanhu (2014) on the value of inter-class visitations by student teachers on teaching practice. Participation in peer study groups by students in collegial supervision is discussed next.

3.8. Participation In Peer Study Groups By Students

Participation by student teachers in peer study groups enhances collegial supervision as they receive collegial assistance and learn from each other. Among mentors, 43% indicated that student teachers participated in peer study groups for academic support while 33% indicated that they did not and 24% were not sure. Responses from student teachers (67%) confirmed student teacher participation in collegial peer study groups while 32% reveal a lack of it and 1% was not sure. The study revealed a high level of lack of students' participation in peer study groups from mentors and this suggests lack of school based monitoring to ensure that all student teachers participated in peer study groups as a collegial supervision practice. Inadequate student participation in peer study groups indicates missed quality learning opportunities and leaves the effectiveness of collaborative scheming, lesson planning, production of instructional materials and peer coaching (Sergiovanni & Starratt, 1993; Groundwater-Smith, Deer, Sharp & March, 1996) in doubt as these hinge around the existence of peer study groups.

The data show low student teacher participation in peer study groups as collegial practice in Zimbabwe's 2-5-2 teaching practice. All the teaching practice lecturers who were interviewed however indicated that they expected student teachers to work together collaboratively on professional and academic issues. This is what two lecturers said;

1st Lecturer: *We also expect them to help each other as students, have their own sessions where they help each other in scheming, evaluating each other's work, and they have to be with their friends evaluating their work*

and helping each other in areas they are not doing well so that when they are assessed or supervised they will be having less mistakes. At times we discover that at the same school there is a distinctive student and there is one who is performing poorly so if they work as a team and help each other that will lessen such problems, those that are not doing well will learn from those that are doing well.

2nd Lecturer: *Ehh in our department of teaching practice, we encourage students to meet regularly as a team at a school so that they discuss their documents, criticize each other and suggest possible improvements that can be made by their colleagues.*

Interviewed mentors also revealed that student teachers consulted each other for assistance on instructional problems and occasionally engaged in peer group discussions. Interviewed mentors also indicated that students worked together in lesson planning, production of learning and teaching media and they had also observed them writing their distance education assignments together. One mentor argued that students at times researched together from the established classroom practitioners for information for use in their distance education assignments. The individual interviews and focus group discussions revealed that student teachers participated in peer study groups. The findings of this study concur with Grimmit & Greham (2003 and Sternburg (2001) in that peer group-work encourages innovation, boosts teacher confidence, fosters continuous professional improvement as well as reduces the teachers' isolation and encourage student teachers to attempt curricular-instructional innovation that they would probably not have tried as individuals and learn from each other.

IV. Conclusions

The data revealed that student teachers in Zimbabwe's 2-5-2 teaching practice participated in collegial supervision and they benefitted a lot from it. The study also revealed inconsistency in participation in collegial supervision across the student teachers with some participating and some not. The inconsistency seems to be due to lack of school based monitoring and enforcement of participation in collegial supervision by mentors since they are not mandated to monitor and enforce participation. The study concluded that in-service training for mentors on the importance of collegial supervision to student teachers was needed. The study also concluded that mentor teachers were not monitoring student participation in the different collegial supervision practices.

V. Recommendations

The study recommended that:

- collegial supervision be formalized in Zimbabwe's 2-5-2 teaching practice as an additional means of supervising student teachers.
- mentor teachers monitor and ensure that student teachers participate in collegial supervision activities during teaching practice so as to promote continuous improvement of their teaching skills and competencies.
- mentor teachers be provided with in-service training on the value of collegial supervision to student teachers.

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