

# **Mentorship as a form of Newly Qualified Teacher Support in Zambian Secondary Schools.**

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## **Abstract**

The aim of this paper was to argue the case for the need for mentorship of newly qualified secondary school teachers in Zambia. Based on both a global perspective and the findings of a study, this paper argues that inadequate initial training coupled with an unfriendly work environment make mentorship of newly qualified teachers a necessity. Further, the paper presents numerous benefits accruing from the mentoring of newly qualified teachers. These benefits include benefits to the newly qualified teachers themselves, the heads of departments, head teachers and ultimately filter to the learners. In view of both the identified needs of newly qualified teachers and the invaluable benefits, the paper ends with a clarion call for the introduction of mentorship of newly qualified teachers in Zambian secondary schools.

## **Keywords**

*Mentorship, newly qualified teachers, initial teacher training, work environment*

## **Introduction**

The purpose of this study was to examine the perceptions of teachers, head teachers and education officials regarding the needs of newly qualified teachers (hereafter referred to as NQTs) and the benefits of the mentorship of NQTs in secondary schools in Zambia. In this article, I use results from a questionnaire survey and in-depth interviews conducted as part of my recently completed PhD work titled 'Mentoring of Newly Qualified Teachers in Zambian Secondary Schools: An Introspection of Teachers' and Head teachers' Perspectives in Selected Districts of Zambia'. The article is structured as follows: the first part introduces the concept of mentorship. The second part introduces the methodology that was used to conduct the study. The third part presents and discusses the findings of the study and makes a conclusion based on the discussion.

There has been an explosion of interest in the concept of mentoring in teaching and elsewhere (Clutterbuck, 1991). The first year in teaching, often termed as the induction or transition phase, is recognised as an important segment that has a tremendous impact on a teacher's professional career and personal life (Greiman, 2002), and it is believed to have long term implications for reaching teaching effectiveness, job satisfaction, and career length. The importance of the first year of teaching is well recognised by Archived (2005) cited in Chatora (2008:13) who states that 'as a result of lack of formal guidance and mentoring of teachers, the first year of teaching may be overwhelming for the newly qualified teacher and thus, many find the early years frustrating and discouraging and simply leave the profession.'

Further, Ngalomba (2013) has argued that mentoring after being employed is an essential undertaking for effective preparation of competent and motivated teachers. Another point worth noting according to Ismail and Arokiasamy (2007) is that mentoring is important for organisational development as it implies workplace learning and leadership principles in career advancement.

From the literature on NQTs in Zambia, it is evident that very little is done to provide NQTs in Zambian secondary schools with school-based support so that they confidently enter and stay in the teaching career. This school-based support includes mentorship of newly qualified teachers. In Zambia, currently, there is ample evidence that most teachers have not received

mentorship because mentorship programmes for NQTs were isolated and unco-ordinated (Malasha, 2009). In view of the fact that NQTs are known to face numerous challenges in their first few years of work, and given that there is substantial evidence in the literature from Western, Asian and Oceanic countries in support of the benefits of mentorship of NQTs as an effective tool for ensuring quality teachers, it interested the researcher to find out why mentorship of NQTs was missing as a support mechanism for NQTs and what stakeholders felt about it. It is the needs of NQTs in discharging their duties and the need to rectify these shortcomings that gives birth to the need for mentorship.

### **Why newly qualified teachers need professional help**

The plight of NQTs has been felt by scholars and researchers, but also by school headteachers and other education officials. Little (1990) and Galvez-Hjornevik (1985) have indicated that new teacher induction is intended to help transition NQTs into the classroom, and establish teaching competence and introduce the teacher to teaching as a continuously developing and life-long profession.

Part of the purpose of mentorship is to help a new teacher to easily adapt to the school environment. The needs of NQTs are many and can be traced back to their time during initial training. Poor initial training has the potential to affect the competence, effectiveness and efficiency of a NQT (Lankau and Scandura, 2007).

This is in recognition of the fact that NQTs tend to lack in numerous areas of their practice. As Bolam (1984) argues, however good external courses, they were necessarily general and thus peripheral to the probationer's major professional concerns which were to do with their particular pupils, classrooms and schools. Further, Lankau and Scandura (2007) have expressed the need for mentorship as follows:

Learning from training programmes and books will not be sufficient to keep pace with required competencies for success in today's fast-paced work environments. Individuals often must look to others to learn new skills and keep up with the demands of their jobs and professions. Mentoring relationships can serve as a forum for such personal learning in organisations.

Stansbury & Zimmerman (2000) further state that settling in a new workplace can be a nerve-racking experience that causes untold anxiety and brings with it a litany of frustrations. Considering the many needs that NQTs have, there is need to help them settle in their new work places because the success of NQTs depends on how well they are received and integrated into the school.

Mentorship ensures that all NQTs at least undergo a certain level and standard of socialisation in order to have a certain quality of teachers that contribute to the attainment of quality education. Experience and research show that mentoring can achieve the above purposes quite readily and very effectively because the process is individualised. In his analysis of the rationale for induction programmes and the needs of NQTs, Lawson (1992) makes it clear that 'the bureaucratic assumption that all teachers are alike, interchangeable, and replaceable' is faulty. The background of these NQTs in terms of training, subject of specialization, gender, culture of school they are working at and so on is diverse; this therefore calls for individual attention to address the individual needs of these newly qualified teachers. Newly qualified teachers have to be mentored because of an identified need that requires to be attended to.

### **Benefits of mentorship**

Simon and Wardlow (1989) conducted a study and concluded that beginning teachers with mentors were better able to reduce the number and severity of problems they encountered during

their first year of teaching, were better at managing their classrooms and preventing problems, exhibited more effective teaching behaviors, and had fewer incidence of disruptive student behavior than teachers without a mentor. Further, mentored teachers were more confident in their abilities, mentioned plans for improvement more often, spoke more freely about their weaknesses, and appeared to be at a higher level of professional development. While the positive influence of mentorship on the NQT remains largely undisputed, of greater interest to administrators and policy makers is the potential impact that mentorship has on student achievement. Seen from this view, the goal of mentorship focuses on addressing the needs of NQTs so that they gain more knowledge and insight into what is necessary for increasing student achievement in the classroom setting.

To achieve this, a NQT needs to be exposed to a variety of teaching techniques and evaluation processes so as to enhance his/her skills as an upcoming career professional.

Balthazar (2010) attests to the well-known fact that in education ongoing mentoring has a positive impact on both teachers and students. She adds that when teachers are mentored, the ultimate goal is to impact student learning.

### **Problem Statement**

A global review of literature on mentoring of NQTs points to the immeasurable value of mentorship in facilitating preparation for and smooth transition into the teaching profession. Simon and Wardlow (1989) found that mentored teachers exhibited more effective teaching behaviours, higher levels of teacher efficacy, and were better equipped to handle classroom issues, exhibited and expressed more positive attitudes than did teachers without formal mentorship. In addition, mentoring has been found to increase job satisfaction, reduce the stress level of NQTs and assist their professional growth (Galvez-Hjornevik, 1985).

In Zambia, very little is known about the practice of mentorship as a strategy for supporting NQTs and the potential it holds for their personal and professional growth. As Malasha (2009) found, mentorship programmes for NQTs in Zambian secondary schools were isolated and uncoordinated. This is so inspite of widespread findings which suggest, as Greiman (2002) records, that without mentorship, new teachers learn through time consuming and stressful trial and error and yet are given a wide range of responsibilities which they are expected to execute in the same manner as veteran teachers.

Little (1990) found that mentoring has become the preferred method of dealing with teacher induction, and takes precedence over reduced workload, peer group support, and formally structured continuous professional development.

The capacity to develop professional competence in NQTs early in their practice has profound implications for learner achievement. One effective strategy for supporting NQTs towards attaining success is induction through teacher mentorship. The benefits of mentorship as an effective tool for ensuring quality teachers are well known in other parts of the world. What is not known are the perspectives of Zambian teachers, head teachers and education officials towards the mentorship of newly qualified teachers. Against this background, the present study was designed to explore the perspectives of teachers, head teachers and education officials on the mentorship of NQTs with the view of understanding why mentorship was still a largely ignored phenomenon in Zambian secondary schools despite its well-known efficacy in improving teacher competence.

### **Research questions**

The study reported here was guided by two research questions as follows:

- i. Why and in which areas did newly qualified teachers in Zambian secondary schools

need professional help?

ii. What are the benefits of mentoring newly qualified secondary school teachers?

### **Methodology**

This section describes the methodology that was used to achieve the objectives of the present study. A concurrent mixed methods approach was used. This study utilized a cross-sectional survey with the aim of eliciting detailed quantitative and qualitative information to answer questions pertaining to the perceived needs and benefits of mentorship of NQTs in secondary schools in Zambia.

The study target population from which the sample was drawn consisted of 5,000 NQTs based on a recruitment list of names obtained from the Ministry of General Education headquarters in Lusaka, all high school heads of department, all high school head teachers and all Senior Education and Standards Officers, in the Central, Lusaka and Copperbelt provinces of Zambia.

A combination of probability and non-probability sampling procedures was used. In terms of non-probability sampling, purposive sampling was used to select to select eighteen (18) head teachers of secondary schools, three in each of six districts, Heads of Department, Senior Education and Standards Officers and senior officials from the Ministry of General Education.

Purposive selection of secondary schools was found to be appropriate because the decision depended on the schools with the highest enrolment of newly qualified teachers. Probability sampling used a two stage procedure. In the first stage, since the researcher had access to a list of all NQTs recruited in the year 2011, the study used a single-stage sampling procedure. In the second stage, based on this list the population of 5,000 NQTs was segmented into strata to represent the various sub-groups in the population. Thereafter, stratification was done and then simple random sampling was used to select the sample. The population of NQTs was stratified on the basis of gender and level of education in order to ensure proportionate representation as the population had more males than females and more degree holders than diploma holders.

In selecting the sample for this study emphasis was placed on ensuring that the results of the sample would be similar to those, which would be obtained if the entire population was involved in the study. The researcher targeted 7 NQTs, 6 heads of department and the head teacher from each of the eighteen schools, six Senior Education and Standards Officers from each provincial education office in the three provinces as well as 6 senior officials from the Ministry of Education headquarters.

The accessible sample of the study was two hundred and seventy (217). This consisted of 92 NQTs of varying ages and who had been teaching for periods between six months and 24 months, 99 Heads of Department, 15 head teachers, 9 Senior Education and Standards Officers a provincial level and 4 senior officials from the Ministry of General Education at national headquarters.

The study targeted NQTs who had served for a period between 6 and 24 months. Those who had served less than 6 months were considered too raw to give an informed viewpoint on matters under discussion while those who had served more than 24 months were excluded on grounds that they could no longer be considered newly qualified. The characteristics of NQTs were as follows: 56 (60.9%) were males while 36 (39.1%) were females. In terms of highest qualification obtained 61 (66.3%) had University degree while (31 (33.7%) had a college diploma.

Among the Heads of Department 63(63.6%) were male while 36(36.4%) were female. Fifty (50.5%) of the respondents had college diplomas while 49(49.5%) had university degrees. The respondents represented all the seven subject departments in the secondary school system. These had held the position of Head of Department for periods ranging from less than five years to above 20 years. Their ages ranged from less than 35 years to above 50 years.

As earlier mentioned, all the Heads of Department of the eighteen schools that were sampled were purposively included in the sample because by virtue of their positions they were directly in charge of day-to-day supervision of classroom teachers. All the head teachers of the eighteen schools that were sampled were purposively selected to be part of the sample because by virtue of their positions they are in charge of all staff and academic matters including ensuring that NQTs are appropriately inducted into the school and helped to become effective teachers. All the Senior Evaluation and Standards Officers at the provincial offices were included in the sample because by virtue of their positions they are in charge of all matters to do with evaluation and standards at provincial level.

Both qualitative and quantitative data were collected using three different instruments, namely, self-administered questionnaires, semi-structured interviews and document analysis. A questionnaire for each of the four groups, namely NQTs, heads of department, head teachers and Senior Evaluation and Standards Officers was utilised to gather information. Four adapted versions of the Mentoring Relationship Questionnaire (MRQ) (the NQT teacher version and the mentor version) suggested by Greiman (2002) were used.

Self-administered questionnaires were used to collect data from the NQTs, heads of department, head teachers and Senior Evaluation and Standards Officers while semi-structured interviews were conducted with head teachers and key senior officials from the Ministry of General Education. Quantitative data were obtained through questionnaires. Instrument data (close-ended questions) that collected quantitative data were augmented in all the questionnaires with open-ended questions that were rich in soliciting qualitative data. In addition to the self-administered questionnaires and in-depth interviews, relevant documents were also used to collect data.

In this study, both quantitative and qualitative methods of data analysis were used considering that some research questions endeared themselves to the use of quantitative methods of analysis, while other questions endeared themselves to the use of qualitative methods of analysis. Qualitative data both from the self-administered questionnaires and the interviews with head teachers and other key informants at the Ministry of General Education were analysed using text and thematic analysis, that is, coding and categorisation of themes emerging from the data, and patterns interpretation, and item analysis of the questionnaire responses. Quantitative data were analysed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 20.0. computer programme for windows to summarise and analyse the numerical data and generate frequencies, percentages, tables, bar graphs and pie charts.

The findings have been presented in line with the research questions of the study.

## **Findings and Discussion**

### ***Why newly qualified teachers needed professional help in their work***

When NQTs, HoDs and head teachers were asked why they perceived that NQTs needed professional help in their work, generally two main themes emerged; the first relates to the respondents' experience of numerous instructional difficulties which they blamed on inadequate initial teacher training. The respondents reported that the initial teacher training NQTs had received was inadequate to enable them perform their duties competently. The areas of particular concern included a broad range of teacher professional skills such as preparation of lesson plans, schemes of work, records of work, improving teaching skills and developing understanding of subject area. Considering, as numerous scholars have advanced (Malambo, 2012; Kibera and Kimokoti, 2007), the aim of a teacher training programme, pre-service or in-service, includes the development in teachers of those abilities, knowledge and skills that will assist them to become effective teachers in their schools, such as writing schemes, records of work and lesson planning,

academic depth in subject area, knowledge of teaching methodologies, induction to teaching, and an understanding of pedagogic approaches in teaching among others, the lack of such knowledge and skills caused NQTs to face serious difficulties in discharging their instructional duties in their first few years of teaching. All these skills if obtained should help a teacher to be anchored on a sound and solid foundation of teacher preparation during training and thereafter to teach effectively and thereby demonstrate an acceptable level of understanding of the subject content that one is teaching.

The views linking difficulties in teaching to inadequate initial training were revealed through various statements that were made by one head teacher as indicated in the following statement:

*We have a challenge, in the past we used to have at least three-quarters of newly qualified teachers capable enough to handle the teaching. But, at the moment we have three-quarters who would not manage to teach effectively. You'll find that most of them have problems when it comes to presenting the work.*

The implication of this is that most teacher education programmes may be failing to adequately prepare their graduates for the world of work. This agrees with Lankau and Scandura (2007) who have argued that the many needs of NQTs go back to ineffective initial training which may affect the competence, effectiveness and efficiency of a newly qualified teacher.

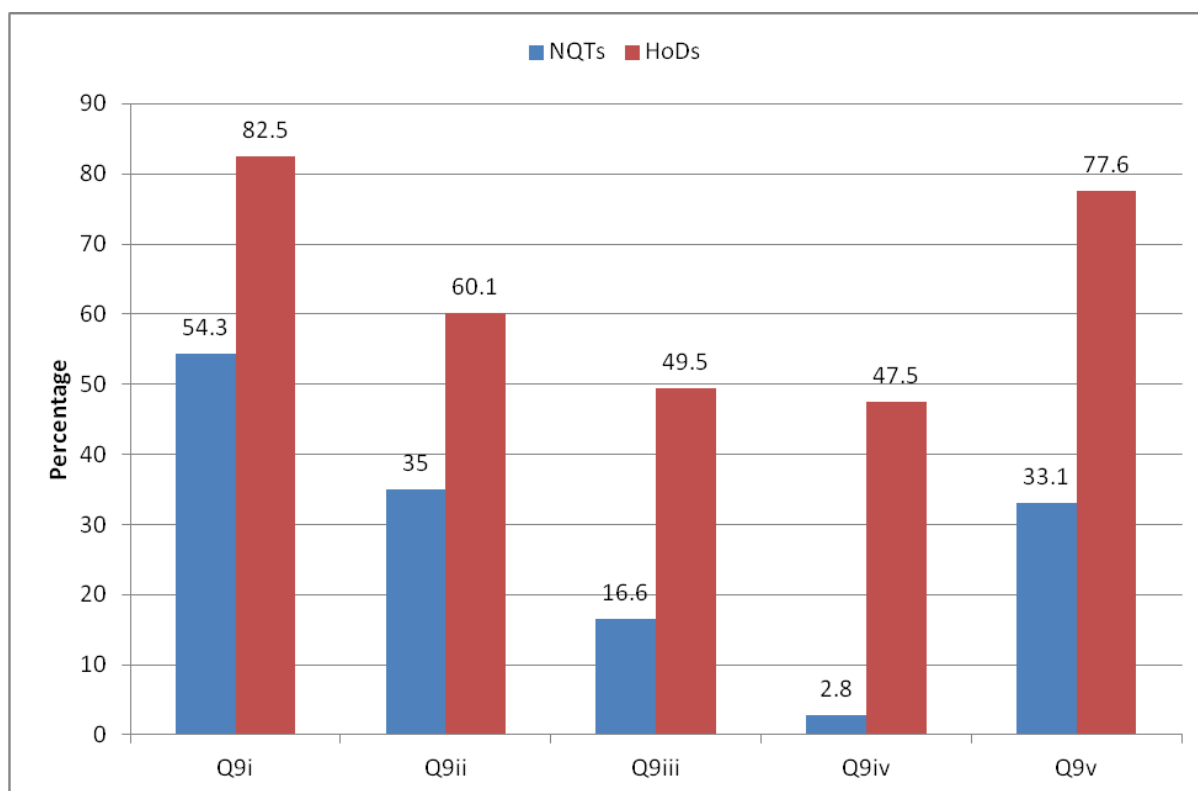
The need so established could be handled by, among other things, improving the training provided to students during training. There must be deliberate efforts to sharpen the skills of NQTs so as to help them improve their teaching performance relative to the key professional areas of a teacher's work discussed above.

The second theme that emerged regarding why NQTs needed professional help was the absence of a supportive working environment anchored on positive interpersonal relationships. The majority of the fifteen head teachers reported that they felt NQTs were not welcomed and assisted in their work by veteran teachers to quickly adjust and adapt to their new working place resulting in feelings of being sidelined and rejected. One head teacher expressed this view as follows:

*Old teachers sometimes shun assisting newly qualified teachers to settle in school. They will be isolated and in most cases, they are not incorporated by the old teachers in the system hence they become frustrated and adopt an 'I do not care' attitude.*

As Kram (1985) states, novice employees such as NQTs need acceptance and confirmation. It is therefore imperative for schools to help NQTs feel accepted and appreciated by welcoming them to their new work stations and providing the necessary guidance and assistance in the first few years of their teaching career. Because of the type of treatment received at the hands of veteran teachers as described above, a NQT develops the tendency to stay aloof, isolated and watch proceedings from a distance as was reported by the head teachers in the current study. The findings of the study on this item confirm the views of the HoDs and head teachers that NQTs often needed help from long serving teachers and further highlights the need for a relationship with veteran teachers deliberately tailored to address these key career/professional functions of the teacher.

Specifically when NQTs and HoDs were asked why they felt that NQTs needed help from long serving teachers, NQTs and HoDs pointed to a number of reasons. This information is shown in figure 1 below.



**Figure 1: Why newly qualified teachers needed professional help from long serving teachers**

- Key:** Q9i =Inadequate exposure to classroom situation and activities during training  
 Q9ii =Anxiety caused by a new environment  
 Q9iii =Difficulties of classroom management  
 Q9iv =Lack confidence in themselves  
 Q9v =Mismatch between content learnt at college/university and content for classroom teaching

As figure 1 shows, the reasons why NQTs needed help from long serving teachers according to HoDs and NQTs themselves included inadequate exposure to classroom situation and activities during training, anxiety caused by a new environment, difficulties of classroom management, lacking confidence in themselves, and mismatch between content learnt at college/university and content for classroom teaching. The majority of the head teachers equally agreed with the NQTs and HoDs that NQTs needed help from long serving teachers in the areas mentioned above. The reasons for the need for professional help from the standpoint of the HoDs all seem to stem from the ill-preparedness of the NQTs to handle their teaching responsibilities effectively to the satisfaction of their supervisors. This is a further confirmation by the HoDs of their view that NQTs are ill-prepared to handle the requirements of classroom teaching. These areas of need agree with the literature on the subject (Lawson, 1992; Lankau and Scandura, 2007) and further add credence to the advocacy for the provision of mentorship to newly qualified teachers.

In addition, Chi Square statistical tests were conducted to determine whether there were any associations between why NQTs needed help from veteran teachers and educational level. The tests were conducted at a significance level of 0.05. Significant levels (p values) which were less than or equal to 0.05 were significant. The results are shown in table 2.

**Table 2: Why NQTs needed help from veteran teachers vs educational level**

S/N	Variable	$\chi^2$	Pvalue
1	Inadequate exposure to classroom situation and activities during training	5.772	.016
2	Anxiety caused by a new environment	.030	.862
3	Difficulties in classroom management	3.643	.056
4	Lack confidence in themselves	1.686	.194
5	Mismatch between content learnt at college/university and content for classroom teaching	1.581	.209

Table 2 reveals that there was a significant association between educational level and inadequate exposure to classroom situation and activities during training ( $p < 0.05$ ). More degree holders (82.0%) than diploma holders (67.0%) agreed that they needed help from veteran teachers because of inadequate exposure to classroom situation and activities during trainings. However, there was no association between educational level and the following items: anxiety caused by a new environment ( $p > 0.05$ ), difficulties in classroom management ( $p > 0.05$ ), lack of confidence in themselves (NQTs) ( $p > 0.05$ ), and mismatch between content learnt at college/university and content for classroom teaching ( $p > 0.05$ ). This is explained by the fact that diploma holders spent more time on teaching experience (not less than three months) and therefore gained more valuable classroom based experience than degree holders who usually spent only six weeks on teaching practice.

Since NQTs came straight from training, schools realised that NQTs would face challenges and would therefore need help in their work to surmount these challenges. As a result, schools instituted certain mechanisms to cushion the difficulties associated with being new in a job. These mechanisms included CPD, orientation, induction workshops and so on.

However, this study found that during such sessions emphasis was placed on issues like ethical conduct of NQTs and not instructional-related matters like developing competence in pedagogy and pedagogical knowledge which would help the NQT in terms of preparation of lesson plans, lesson delivery and so on. During such meetings, the issues dealt with were of a general nature revolving around orientation to a workplace which did little to enhance the competence levels of NQTs in so far as their teaching was concerned.

Given the perceived inadequate initial training received and an unsupportive working environment as discussed above, it is hardly surprising that NQTs lacked confidence to teach effectively as reported by some of the NQTs themselves. To achieve expertise in their teaching, NQTs needed a firm footing in the acquisition of knowledge and skills; but this was lacking. The finding on the lack of confidence to teach arising out of feelings of inadequacy due to inadequate training agrees with the findings of Mulenga (2015) who in his study established that the English language teacher education curriculum at the University of Zambia did not have the relevant knowledge and skills for teaching English language in Zambian secondary schools and therefore could not produce a quality teacher of English language.

To achieve expertise in their teaching, NQTs needed support in various aspects of their work.

### **Benefits of Mentoring Newly Qualified Teachers**

Indeed literature on the subject of mentorship justifies its use by pointing to several career and psychological related benefits that accrue simultaneously in a reciprocal relationship to both the newly qualified teacher and the mentor. In addition, there are huge benefits for learners. When



asked whether or not mentorship of NQTs was beneficial, 89 (96.7%) of the NQTs, all the heads of department and the majority of the head teachers felt that mentorship of NQTs was beneficial.

### ***Benefits of mentorship to newly qualified teachers***

Respondents were further asked to indicate the areas in which they perceived mentorship of NQTs was beneficial to them, NQTs and HoDs gave the responses indicated in figure 2.

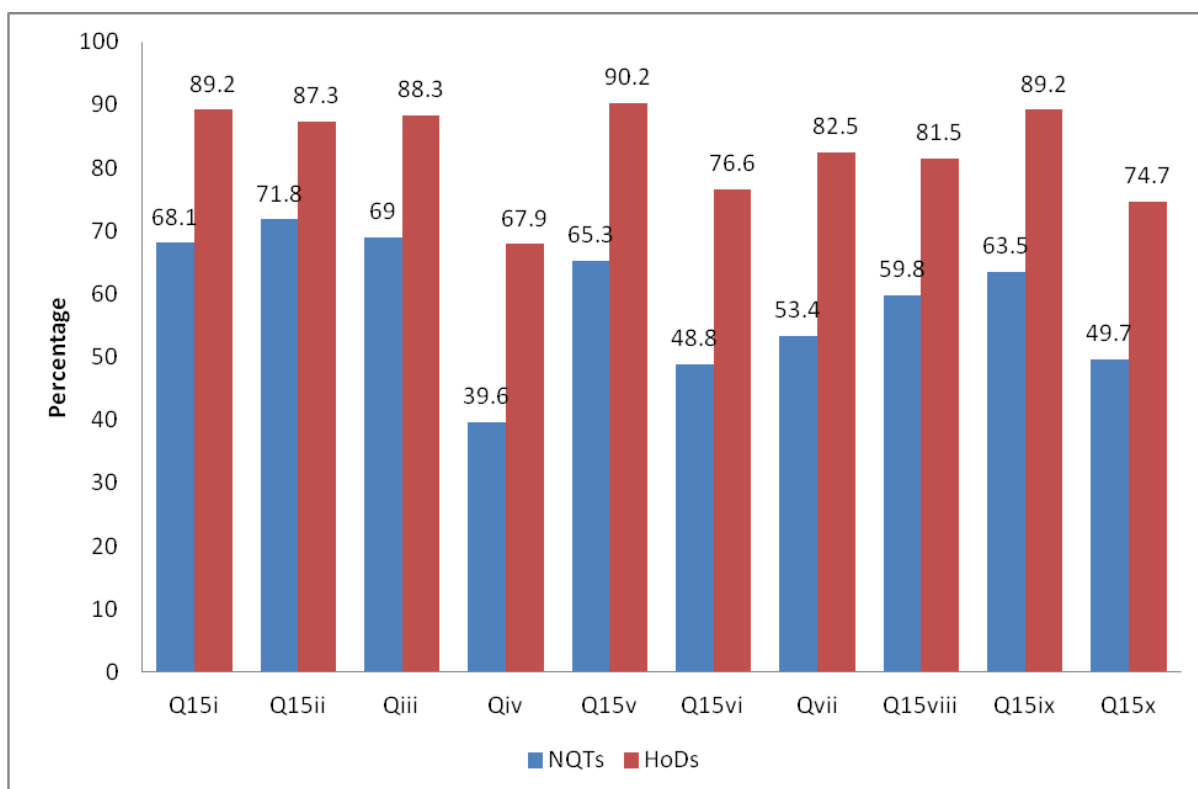


Figure 2: How mentoring of newly qualified teachers is beneficial to newly qualified teachers

Key: Q15i = It helps the teachers to be confident and have self – esteem

Q15ii = It helps them know and work within the stipulated work ethics

Q15iii = It helps them teach the right material to pupils

Q15iv = It is part of teacher induction to teaching

Q15v = It helps newly qualified teachers to fit in a new working environment

Q15vi = It blend new and old teachers

Q15vii = It helps them understand the subject area very well

Q15viii = It helps them participate fully in school activities

Q15ix = It helps them improve on their general teaching skills

Q15x = It instils confidence in them

As figure 2 shows, the majority of NQTs and HoDs perceived that mentorship would be beneficial to NQTs in the following ways: developing knowledge of and working within work ethics, cultivation of confidence and self-esteem in the NQT, helping NQTs teach the right material to pupils, aiding adaptation to a new working environment, helping them to improve their general teaching skills, improvement of one’s general teaching skills, helping them to participate fully in school activities and help them understand their subject area very well. Similarly, the majority of

the headteachers felt that mentorship of NQTs would benefit NQTs in the areas already indicated by the NQTs and the heads of department.

### ***Benefits of mentorship to heads of department and head teachers***

The study further investigated the perceived benefits of mentorship to the heads of department and head teachers by asking them what benefits they perceived they would acquire from the formal mentorship of newly qualified teachers. The majority of the HoDs reported that they would benefit from formally mentoring NQTs in the following ways: to build good relationships with NQTs (94.0 %), to be up to date with new educational trends (83.1%) and to improve pupils results in subjects under their department, (83.1%). In addition, the majority of the head teachers reported the same benefits of mentoring newly qualified teachers. These findings agree with the findings of Little (1990) and Smith and West-Burnham as cited in Turner and Bash (1999) who have argued that through mentorship, mentors experience multiple benefits of professional stimulation, personal enrichment and personal rejuvenation.

In addition to the benefits of formal mentorship, the study did look at the perceived benefits of informal mentorship of newly qualified teachers. However, this paper focuses on perceived benefits of formal mentorship.

In summary the major findings of the study revealed that head teachers, HoDs and senior personnel from the MoGE all perceived formal mentorship to be beneficial. The analysis revealed a wide range of benefits linked to mentorship for newly qualified teachers. These benefits can be summarised into two categories, namely, those that benefit the instructional capacities of the NQTs in terms of their teaching proficiency (cultivation of confidence and self-esteem in the NQT to teach, helping NQTs teach the right material to pupils, improvement of one's general teaching skills, and help them understand their subject area very well), and those that facilitated NQT induction or adaptation to a new working environment (aiding adaptation to a new working environment, developing knowledge of and working within work ethics, helping them to participate fully in school activities. It must be observed that these benefits directly correspond to the needs of NQTs discussed in detail earlier.

It is hoped that these potential benefits of mentorship should convince authorities to introduce mentorships as a way of ensuring that such advantageous relationships are deliberately developed and maintained.

In advocating for mentorship, this paper realises fact that the ultimate is the good of the learner as mentorship is not an end in and of itself. Mentorship is not only beneficial to NQTs; it is essential for the learners as well. They are indirect beneficiaries of it. Mentorship is not for its own sake, but that the teachers improve their performance so that they improve the performance of the learners. This viewpoint is what Shaw (1999:76) is discussing when he asserts that the benefits of mentorship to a school would include 'raising awareness about classroom practice; providing a climate for a discussion about teaching methods and subject content; the enhancement of a variety of school processes, all of which lead to an improved classroom experience for pupils with an ensuing rise in achievement.'

Given these perceived benefits, if well done, mentoring can play a significant role in maximizing the impact of newly qualified teachers. It is reasonable to infer that where mentorship is carefully structured and planned, NQTs are likely to receive a lot of help in the form of guidance, coaching, role modelling and so on from veteran teachers. But to make this a reality, numerous factors have to be taken into consideration. Senior people have to be trained in mentorship. Regarding formal training in mentorship, 91(91.9%) indicated that they had not been formally trained with only 6 (6.1%) indicating that they had been formally trained in mentorship. Whatever the mode of mentoring programme adopted by a particular school, there is extra demand on any school in terms of its budget, time, and spatial constraints. Beyond the obvious,

some of the expected benefits of mentorship might include loyalty and commitment to the school and its ideals and potentially an increased retention rate.

In view of this, the question that begs to be asked is: considering the overwhelming evidence regarding the efficacy of mentorship of NQTs, why is mentorship of NQTs still nonexistent in the Ministry of General Education?

## **Conclusion**

The most significant implication of these findings therefore is that mentoring needs to be accorded a more definitive place in the continuous professional development of newly qualified teachers than is currently the case. The findings of this study agree with a number of research evidence and with literature from around the globe that mentorship is an invaluable process in the career path of a newly qualified teacher. Considering that, as argued by Freiman-Nemser *et al.*, (2003) and Stansbury and Zimmermann (2000) instructional-related support and psychological support, help to build the self-concept of the newly qualified teachers, it is important that formal mentorship is seriously considered.

In brief this study has concluded that there was a need for NQTs support. Indeed schools did respond to this need by providing different forms of support. However, these tended to be inadequate; hence this study is recommending both instructional and psychosocial mentorship support in addition to the other forms of support already provided. It is clear that the combination of career and psychological support is desirable to mitigate the needs of newly qualified teachers. Moreover, it is clear that schools needed to assist NQTs to feel accepted. Schools must be seen to provide guidance and assistance to their newest teaching staff. The study reveals that career and psychosocial mentorship of NQTs is still largely unpractised in Zambia due to the absence of a national policy on mentorship.

It is clear therefore, from the findings of the study that while mentorship of NQTs may not solve all the problems associated with being a new employee, it has been found to have the potential of positively impacting the career path of newly qualified teachers. Several studies point to the efficacy of mentorship in developing a competent teacher. Little wonder then, in view of the many beneficial outcomes of mentorship, that many countries, particularly in the west, have adopted mentoring as a tool for career advancement. Therefore, education authorities in Zambia would do well to learn from others about the benefits of mentorship to the system as a whole.

## **Recommendations**

On the basis of the findings of this study, there is need to design and offer a curriculum in teacher education programmes that has a balance between subject matter or academic content and pedagogy or methodology if competent teachers are to be produced. It also requires that teacher educators develop interest in the challenges facing NQTs so as to forestall them during training. It is further recommended that to overcome many of the challenges faced by NQTs, a multi-faceted approach was desirable. This should include improved initial teacher training, orientation and induction, career and psychosocial mentorship as well as Continuous Professional Development. Further, a national policy on mentorship of NQTs needs to be developed and institutionalised to ensure among others, the mobilisation and use of resources for easy implementation so that NQTs are accordingly guided by veteran teachers as they set out to begin a career in teaching in terms of career and psychosocial school-based support to develop the competent teacher that is envisaged by all. In addition, it is imperative therefore, for the MoGE to take it upon itself the challenge to introduce a policy on mentorship of newly qualified teachers.

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