# EXPLORING THE DEVELOPMENT OF A

# MENTORSHIP PROGRAMME FOR TEACHERS

# THROUGH A REFLEXIVE DEMOCRATIC

# PRACTICE

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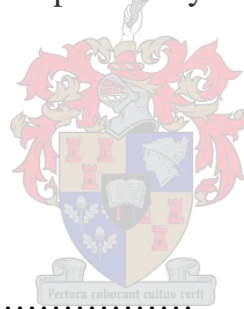**in the Department of Education Policy Studies**

at

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# DECLARATION

I, the undersigned, hereby declare that the work contained in this thesis is my own original work and that I have not previously in its entirety or in part submitted it at any university for a degree.

**SIGNATURE:** …………………………

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**DATE**: ………………………………

# ABSTRACT

This thesis explores the possibility of developing a mentorship programme for teachers through a reflexive democratic practice in order to support student teachers at the Cape Peninsula University of Technology (Bellville Campus), when they do their internship in the host schools. It argues that critical dialogue and reflection are at the core of practices that are more democratic and that the development of a mentorship programme within the context of a community of practice holds transformative possibilities for teaching and learning. Aspects of current practice at the schools and at the academy, which may enhance or hinder the development of a reflexive democratic practice, are identified. It is hoped that a critical analysis and reflection of the research findings will contribute to the improvement of the practice teaching experience of the student teachers as well as contribute to the development of an effective mentorship programme.

**KEYWORDS:**  mentorship, student teachers, teachers, reflexive democratic practice, community of practice, critical dialogue,  transformation

# OPSOMMING

Hierdie tesis ondersoek die moontlikheid dat 'n mentorprogram vir onderwysers ontwikkel kan word deur middel van 'n refleksiewe demokratiese praktyk, met die doel om studentonderwysers by die Kaapse Skiereland Universiteit van Tegnologie (Bellville kampus) te ondersteun gedurende hul internskap in die gasskole. 'n Argument word voorgestel dat kritiese dialoog en refleksie belangrike komponente is wat bydra tot meer demokratiese praktyke. Verder, dat die ontwikkeling van 'n mentorprogram binne die raamwerk van 'n gemeenskaplike praktyk transformerende moontlikhede inhou vir opvoeding in die klaskamer. Aspekte van huidige praktyk by die skole en die akademie, wat mag lei tot 'n afname of toename van 'n refleksiewe demokratiese praktyk, word geidentifiseer. Daar word gehoop dat 'n kritiese analise en nadenke oor die navorsingsbevindings 'n bydrae sal maak tot die verbetering van die proefonderwyservaring van die studentonderwysers, sowel as tot die ontwikkeling van 'n effektiewe mentorprogram.

**SLEUTELWOORDE:**        Mentorskap, studentonderwysers, onderwysers, refleksiewe demokratiese praktyk, gemeenskaplike praktyk, kritiese dialoog, transformasie

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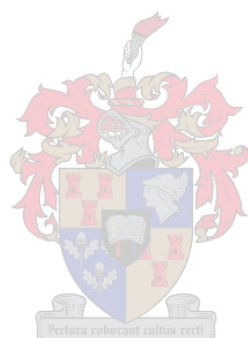
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# CHAPTER 1

## SETTING THE STAGE: ORIENTING MY RESEARCH IN RELATION TO THE DEVELOPMENT OF A MENTORSHIP PROGRAMME FOR TEACHERS

### 1.1    INTRODUCTION

The concept of an internship for teachers has long been part of a teacher development programme. The way in which it is implemented differs from teacher training institution to teacher training institution. The accepted rationale for student teachers spending time in the schools is to bridge the gap between the academy and the world of work.  The academy offers a theoretical orientation for prospective teachers while the schools provide the actual experience of classroom practice.  Many studies (Arthur, Davison & Moss, 1997; Fletcher, 2000; Jonson, 2002) acknowledge the contribution mentor teachers can make to the professional development of the student teachers during the school-based component of teacher development programmes.  My research examines the nature of current practices of the school-based component of a teacher development programme at the Cape Peninsula University of Technology, a Higher Education Institution (HEI) in the Western Cape, South Africa. It also investigates the relationship between the mentors at the academy and the teachers at the host schools.  My study further explores the possibility of developing a mentorship programme for those teachers who will be working closely with the students from the academy through a reflexive democratic practice.

In this chapter I shall elaborate on the context and rationale of my research as well as describe the theoretical points of departure and the research methods I shall employ in my exploration. In addition, I shall draw on the literature that focuses on the contribution of school-based mentoring to student teacher development. Finally, I shall give a brief overview of subsequent chapters in my study.

### 1.2    BACKGROUND AND RATIONALE

I am a lecturer in the Education Department at the Cape Peninsula University of Technology, Bellville Campus (formerly Peninsula Technikon). Peninsula Technikon merged with Cape Technikon in January 2006 to form the Cape Peninsula University of Technology (CPUT).

Our pre-service second- and third-year student teachers spend time in schools where they are meant to experience classroom-based practice at first hand by being allowed to teach under the supervision of mentor teachers. From informal feedback and observations during school visits, we (members of the lecturing staff in the Education Department) have come to the conclusion that what the students learn can be very eclectic. Their learning experiences are varied, context specific and to some extent dependent on where they are placed and with whom they interact as well affected by what the student teacher brings along with respect to his/her own particular biography. Some students may have positive learning experiences, which contribute to their professional development, while others may not be as fortunate. The point is that teachers allocated to assist these students often view this task as an additional responsibility for which they get nothing in return. Knowles, Cole and Presswood (1994:166) refer to Beynon's work (1991)[1] with pre-service teachers and point out that expectations for the role of cooperating teachers reflect ambiguity, inconsistency and lack of clarity. In-service teachers who work closely with student teachers are also known as cooperating teachers in the United States and Canada. I shall refer to such teachers as mentor teachers.

A curriculum stipulation for the new Bachelor of Education degree, introduced in 2002, requires that the fourth-year students spend six months in the schools. The first cohort of fourth-year students was placed in the schools in 2004. The programme for the school-based component is simply an extension of the existing programme for the second- and third-year students. Other than supplying the school with a teaching practice manual and holding two meetings to identify problems and challenges at host schools, adequate in-school support is left to the idiosyncrasies of the particular school. The students are required to teach a minimum quota of lessons per day (Peninsula Technikon, 2004). The Teaching Practice Manual outlines guidelines for the mentor teacher. These are very general and, as there is no formal arrangement with the school in terms of the mentor teacher's role, the mentor teacher has no obligation to comply. Reports from our students indicate that the school environment in which they find themselves can be quite alienating. So, despite the fact that the student teachers are given their quota of classes to teach, there is hardly much constructive mentoring going on. Clearly, conscious in-school support for the student teachers is sadly lacking.

For five consecutive years (1999-2003), the Science Education Department of the then Peninsula Technikon was involved in a project with King's College London and the Western

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[1] Beynon, C 1991. Understanding the role of the co-operating teacher. Faculty of Education, University of Western Ontario. [Unpublished manuscript.]

Cape Education Department. The project (Johnson, Monk, Watson, Hodges, Sadeck, Scholtz, Botha & Wilson, 2000; Scholtz, Watson & Amosun, 2004) attempted to develop science process skills[2] in learners, particularly in large classes and under-resourced schools. The main purposes of the project had been to develop active learning strategies suitable for implementing the new outcomes-based education (OBE) curriculum (DoE, 1997) and to explore the processes of teacher development that are necessary to implement these new approaches. The new curriculum demands a change from delivery mode teaching and rote learning to a more facilitative, learner-centred approach. In 2002, during the latter phase of the project, it occurred to me that the teachers involved in the in-service training could serve as appropriate mentors for our pre-service students as they had already established a professional linkage with the academy. These mentor teachers could provide a supportive and empathetic environment, so that the student teachers could operate in a justifiable educative 'space'.

## 1.3    PURPOSE OF RESEARCH AND RESEARCH QUESTIONS

In light of the extended stay in the host schools, it is clear that existing practices do not offer adequate support for the student teachers during the practice teaching component of the course. One way of providing that support is through the development of a mentorship programme for those teachers who will be working closely with the student teachers.
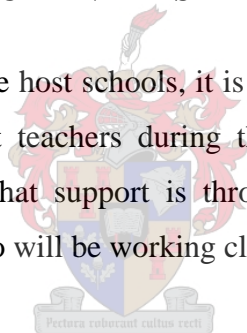
This study intends to inform the development of a mentorship programme for teachers through a reflexive democratic practice. An essential component of this approach is critical enquiry as it fosters reflexive practice. It does not take for granted existing approaches and old customs just because they are deemed suitable. Instead, it encourages a reflective discourse which has the potential to release transformative action. This practical response to contemplative reflection, which can possibly change existing practices to ones that are more appropriate, I regard as a reflexive practice. A reflexive practice encompasses a 'continual critique and reflection' (Morton, 2005:55) of emerging practices with the explicit intention to improve such practices. Further and more importantly a reflexive practice emanates from a particular type of discourse, which is essentially a democratic one. I agree with Waghid (2002:27), who points out that the constitutive rule of a democratic discourse opens up new possibilities, possibilities of understanding the actions of others, including actions one has

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[2] These are scientific skills and processes such as constructing apparatus, taking readings, recording and handling data, while also communicating ideas. Additional skills require learners to predict, extrapolate data or design an investigation.

never seen before, as well as possibilities of actions never performed. He suggests that this democratic discourse emphasises a particular relationship between people that embraces reflexivity, difference and change. It is in this context that I regard my research, as being driven by a reflexive democratic practice. A reflexive component is more likely to ensure considered contemplation of the effectiveness of decisions that are made, policies that are formulated and actions that are taken. It is also likely to enhance the possibility of appraising existing practices in the light of changing contexts and of seeking to improve such practices. A democratic component is more likely to be inclusive and participatory and has the potential to involve the critical, collaborative engagement of all role-players in the development of the programme, that is, students, teachers and lecturers. An orientation that involves a reflexive democratic practice is more likely to encourage sustainability than an orientation where decisions are solely made in the academy and with which the partners in the host schools are expected to comply. If people are not part of the decision-making, or more importantly do not understand the rationale for certain decisions, they are less motivated to participate willingly in endeavours that require their collaboration, hence the process can be undermined from the outset.

The two main foci for my research are an exploration of the literature on mentorship in education, as well as a critical analysis of a case study, in which I listen to the voices of the key participants at the academy and the schools as they currently present themselves in order to ascertain moments of a reflexive democratic practice. I also explore the nature of the interaction between teachers at the schools and the lecturers at the academy. The explicit purpose of the study is to inform practice. Hence, whatever findings may emerge will have implications for the development of the mentorship programme.

Data emerging from this exploration will be critically analysed to address the following research questions:

- What motivates teachers to be mentor teachers and how do they think that they can contribute to the professional development of pre-service teachers?
- What are the expectations and experiences of student teachers with their mentor teachers?
- What is the nature of the conversation between mentor teachers and student teachers?
- What is the nature of the interaction between lecturers at the academy and teachers from the host schools?

- What are the factors that contribute to the development of a mentorship programme through a reflexive democratic practice?
- To what extent can all of the above inform policy and practice?

It is hoped that the findings of the research will contribute to the improvement of the practice teaching programme of our pre-service teachers.

## 1.4 THEORETICAL POINTS OF DEPARTURE

I operate within an interpretive-critical framework. My main theoretical approach involves an interpretive-critical description of a case study vis-à-vis narratives of student teachers and their mentors.

According to Waghid (2000:262), the self-understanding of the individual forms the basis of all social interpretation or explanation in interpretive education theory. It conceptualises the actions of the individual. Zeichner (1996:216) points out that lessons of experience that student teachers learn will be strongly influenced by the assumptions, conceptions, beliefs, dispositions and capabilities that they bring to the field sites. It is this explanation of the self-understandings of mentors and pre-service teachers that I intend to reflect on in this thesis.

Moreover, the evolutionary model of teacher development (Johnson, Monk & Hodges, 2001) accepts that teachers or student teachers will enter any training at a variety of different levels of competence and experience. However, only those practices that fit with the social and material constraints of the school environment will survive, be repeated and become part of the teacher's pedagogic repertoire. In the light of the demands of the new curriculum (DoE, 1997) there is a perception among teachers that they need to change their practices towards a more facilitative mode in which active learning takes place in the classroom. How they respond and to what extent they change their practices will depend on their own personal biography, beliefs and circumstances. Any mentorship programme developed to radically transform practice needs to take account of this.

The wider pedagogic strategies, collaborative, and cross-curricular, introduced in the professional development programme for the in-service teachers, aims to replace the traditional transmission of knowledge with a socially constructed transdisciplinary approach

to knowledge production (Gibbons, Limoges, Nowotny, Schwartzman, Scott & Trow, 1994:29).

Finally, Waghid (2000:262-263) points out that the most important dimension of educational critical theory is the fact that it is driven by an emancipatory interest. Its intent is to change people's understanding of themselves and their practices by critical self-reflection, and hence to be in a position to take critical action on the basis of their reflection. 'Reflexivity' or 'reflection-in -action' (Schön, 1983:50) can add a critical dimension to the processes involved in learning to teach and in developing alternative classroom practices, both in the context of professional development and initial teacher training. I shall use notions of interpretive and critical theory to explore critical dimensions of mentorship in schools.

## 1.5    RESEARCH METHODS

My research methods will involve a review of relevant literature accompanied by critical analysis and reflection on mentorship and its meanings within the South African educational context. In addition, I shall explore the current nature of the interaction between the mentor teachers and the students as well as between the schools and the academy. The exploration will involve the use of questionnaires, interviews and self-reports as well as transcriptions of meetings, which take place between representatives of the host schools and the academy.

## 1.6    PRELIMINARY THOUGHTS AND SCOPE

Numerous studies on mentoring exist which encompass a wide spectrum of disciplines and perspectives. Though one can draw on all disciplines, I primarily draw on the research done in the education field over the past ten years to inform my study. Mentoring research, even within education has different foci. Some examples are: mentoring models (Anderson & Shannon, 1988; Furlong, 1994; Furlong & Maynard, 1995; Brooks, Sikes & Husbands, 1997) mentor/mentee interactions (John & Gilchrist, 1999; Braund, 2001), mentoring roles (Thuynsma, 1997; Lucas, 2001), factors affecting mentoring (Robinson, 2001) and effectiveness of mentoring (Williams & Prestage, 2002). In this study I shall explore the development of a mentorship programme for teachers through a reflexive democratic practice – that is, one which requires dialogical and critical engagement of teachers and students.

This section starts by drawing on conventional notions of mentorship as popularised by Western models (McIntyre, Hagger & Wilkin, 1993; Furlong, Whitty, Whiting, Miles, Barton

& Barrett, 1996; Ganser, 2002) in which I contend that the Western models of mentorship as emerging from the literature, though relevant and useful, are not sufficient and do not take into account the peculiar conditions of the South African educational milieu or the practices and conditions which exist.

Roberts (2000:145-170), in his phenomenological reading of the literature, identifies mentoring as a process. He cites work done by Caruso (1990)[3], East (1987)[4], Anderson and Shannon (1995)[5], Klopf and Harrison (1981)[6], Megginson and Clutterbuck (1995)[7] and Stewart and Krueger (1996)[8] to back this assertion. All these authors view the process as developmental, involving growth and development for the mentee, and in some instances for the mentor as well. Another important feature that Roberts (2000:145-170) identifies in his review is that mentoring is a formalised process. He comments that the difficulty of researching informal mentoring relationships is locating them, hence most of the literature reports on formalised processes. The mentorship programme for teachers as envisaged in my exploration is of necessity a formalised process initiated by the academy. Various factors, such as the nature of school placements and time constraints, may limit the developmental aspect of the process. This dilemma could possibly be addressed through a reflexive democratic practice.

Thuynsma (1997:308) suggests that if we think of a protégé–mentor relationship a protective element is detected. The apprentice-craftsman introduces an element of skills transfer, while the coaching relationship makes reference to the role of evolution and development. The situation for the student teacher in the school would probably include a bit of both. However, this description implies a one-way flow. It is hoped that as the study proceeds, a more critical dimension of mentorship will emerge, in which the relationship between mentor and mentee (the one being mentored) is more reciprocal. Thuynsma (1997:308) comments that a collegial-social relationship has a more reciprocal and somewhat social orientation. Joyce and Showers (1988) indicate that coaching in the classroom is vitally important to any success in teacher development. If teachers 'can do', they are more likely to sustain innovative practice (Johnson

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[3] Caruso, JE 1990. *An examination of organised mentoring: The case of Motorola.* British Thesis Service, DX 147810.
[4] East, PI 1987. The mentoring relatonship. MA dissertation, University of Loughborough.
[5] Anderson, EM & Shannon, AL 1995. Towards a conceptualisation of mentoring. In T.Kerry & A Mayes (eds), *Issues in mentoring*. London: Routledge.
[6] Klopf, G & Harrison, J 1981. Moving up the career ladder: A case for mentors. *Principal,* 2(3): 41-43.
[7] Megginson, D & Clutterbuck, D 1995. *Mentoring in acton: A practical guide for managers*. London: Kogan Page.
[8] Steward, BM & Kruegar, LE 1996. An evolutionary concept:Analysis of mentoring in nursing. *Journal of Professional Nursing,* 12(5): 311-321.

*et al.,* 2000:569-582). This would put them in a more favourable position to serve as mentors for pre-service students. For without having tried (and thereby tested) an innovation, the teachers are in no position to judge whether, and how much, it can add to their stock of pedagogical content knowledge (Shulman, 1987:1-22). Thuynsma (1997:308) refers to Knox and McGovern (1988:39),[9] who acknowledge that mentoring is a complex relationship, which seems to hover between 'dependence' and 'autonomy' for the protégé. Knowles (1992:147) claims that by not accommodating and dealing with the biographies of teachers in preparation, future beginning teachers are bound to become teachers who teach in the manner in which they were taught and who will be limited in the ways in which they can professionally develop.

Lortie (1975:55-81) contends that what students learn about teaching at this stage is intuitive and imitative rather than explicit and analytical: it is based on personalities rather than pedagogical principles. Britzman (1991) juxtaposes two simultaneous discourses in teacher education: the normative and the dialogic. She claims that dialogic discourses can offer different ways to re-conceptualise practice. Britzman (1991:239) draws on the work of Mikhail Bakhtin (1984)[10] and suggests that to re-theorise our practices in teacher education requires that we attend to the double problem of changing ourselves and transforming our circumstances.

Whiting, Whitty, Furlong, Miles and Barton (1996) identify three partnership models between HEIs and schools in the United Kingdom. They are collaborative, HEI-led and separatist models. They summarise the first model as involving teacher mentors and teacher educators working together in discussing professional issues and planning. In HEI-led partnerships, the HEIs utilise schools as a resource in developing learning opportunities for students, while in separatist partnerships HEIs and schools are seen as having separate and complementary roles and responsibilities. In both the United Kingdom (UK) and the United States (US) there are various levels of support for mentor teachers by their respective educational authorities. These can range from paying the host schools, to allocating additional time for mentor activities, to funding mentor-training programmes (Arthur, Davison & Moss, 1997:9-27; Ganser, 2002:47-55; Jonson, 2002:14-16). In some states in the US a mentoring process for beginner teachers is obligatory (Jonson, 2002:14-16).

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[9] Knox, PL & McGovern, TV 1988. Mentoring women in academia. *Teaching of Psychology*, 15(1): 39-41.
[10] Bakhtin, MM 1984. *The dialogic imagination: Four essays.* Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press.

In South Africa, as in other developing countries like Ghana, Lesotho, Malawi and Trinidad and Tobago, in-school support for the practicum component is minimal. Lewin and Stuart (2003: 691-707) point out that there are real economic and logistic problems when trying to provide appropriate practical experience for large numbers of students in countries with poor infrastructure. South African education policy does exist in terms of the development and qualification of teachers (DoE, 1998). However, it is expected that the HEIs meet these requirements and implement policy without any additional support from the national or provincial Department of Education, other than allowing schools to host the student teachers during the teaching practice component of their course. Agreement to participate in a mentorship programme is thus entirely left to the discretion of the respective schools. Unlike in developing countries, there are no specific rewards for schools in terms of acknowledgement or official recognition, support infrastructure, financial remuneration, time, training for mentor teachers and certification.

As indicated, research in the UK and US has focused on formalised mentoring schemes for pre-service teachers. The stimulus to develop these programmes is essentially an external one as a response to educational policy requirements. In the absence of formal policy or support infrastructure, the stimulus to formalise mentoring in our case is essentially internal. This internal response is motivated by the need to improve policy and practice. The nature of the collaboration between the schools and the academy evolves and becomes more explicit as the study proceeds.

As indicated in my literature review, the mentoring of student teachers has produced a significant body of research in a relatively short period, focusing on various aspects of mentorship, largely in developed countries such as the United Kingdom and the United States. The various partnership models identified by Whiting *et al.* (1996) offer a useful guide in terms of locating the nature of the relationship between the academy and the schools. I am drawn to the collaborative model in which members of host schools and members of the academy collaborate as this may have a greater potential of involving a reflexive democratic practice. As already mentioned, the external support from various education authorities for mentoring pre-service teachers, would not be applicable in our particular context. Very little research has been done on the school-based mentoring of pre-service teachers in South Africa specifically. An exception is a study by Robinson (2001:99-115), who identified three factors that constrain or enhance teacher involvement in mentoring at institutional level. These were school culture, school policies on mentoring, and support from the academy. These factors are

worth considering when making choices about school placements of our students. In this study, the focus of my investigation will include a serious consideration of how to forge stronger institutional links with host schools in the search for mentor teachers. I shall explore notions of reciprocity and mutual benefit for lecturers, students and teachers by means of an approach that embraces reflexivity and democratic practice, as I contend that such an approach is more likely to be sustainable.

## 1.7    OVERVIEW OF STUDY

In Chapter 2, I start by making a case for a conception of a mentorship programme embedded within the framework of a reflexive democratic practice because I contend that this orientation, as elaborated on earlier in the chapter, has a greater potential to transform existing practices to ones which are more appropriate to the educational demands of our times, as experienced by many teachers in South African schools. I argue that a reflexive democratic practice which involves critical enquiry, inclusivity, and considered action and interaction can more effectively address the challenges of changing curriculum contexts, large classes, under-resourced schools, overloaded teachers, and limited support infrastructure, to name but a few. I explore notions of reflexivity and democratic practice and expound on their implication for my study. I further elaborate on the main theoretical approach to my case study, which draws on interpretive-critical theory.

In Chapter 3, I report on a case study in which I identify instances of a reflexive democratic practice and its implications for the development of a mentorship practice.

In Chapter 4, I engage in critical reflection and analysis about the research findings. I further expand on notions of a reflexive democratic practice by making a case for a conception of mentorship that draws on the idea of a 'community of practice' (Lave & Wenger, 1991).

Finally, in Chapter 5, I consider the implications of democratically transforming our own practice at the Cape Peninsula University of Technology, based on the findings that emanate from my study. Throughout the study I draw on the relevant literature to reflect on the case study and inform the development of the mentorship programme.

## 1.8    SUMMARY

In this chapter I have outlined my rationale for exploring the development of a mentorship programme for teachers, which is essentially intrinsically motivated, driven by a desire to improve policy and practice.

Unlike Northern models of teacher education, for example, those of the United States and the United Kingdom, there is limited support for mentor teachers when working with student teachers during the latter's internship in South African schools. This study explores the possibility of developing a mentorship programme for mentor teachers through a reflexive democratic practice in order to address this problem. To do this, I shall appraise current practices pertaining to the practice teaching component of the teacher development programme by listening to the voices of the student teachers and the mentor teachers. The purpose will be to determine the extent to which a reflexive democratic practice is already evidenced in existing practices. I shall also critically analyse relevant literature in order to identify those factors that can enhance a reflexive democratic practice. The findings of the study will inform the development of the mentorship programme.
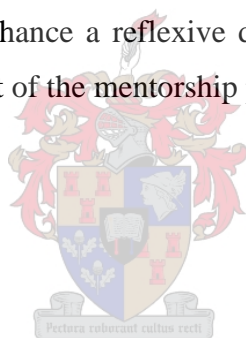
# CHAPTER 2

## RESEARCH FRAMEWORK: METHODOLOGY AND METHODS

### 2.1    INTRODUCTION

In this chapter I shall develop the research framework for my investigation, which involves the exploration of a mentorship programme for teachers through a reflexive democratic practice.  My main theoretical approach involves an interpretive-critical analysis of a case study. I shall use interpretive-critical educational theory to explore the narratives of student teachers and their mentors and I shall interpret and analyse the particular self-understandings embedded in their voices.

'The central endeavour in the context of the interpretive paradigm is to understand the subjective world of human experience' (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2000:22) According to Cohen *et al*. (2000:22-35), interpretive researchers begin with individuals and set out to understand their interpretations of the world around them. The data yielded will be glossed with the meanings and purposes of the people who are their source. They are the mentor teachers and the student teachers. However, the engagement of the narratives of student teachers and their mentors would limit my exploration if I only use the interpretive educational theory.  Cohen *et al*. (2000:22-35) point out that there is a risk in interpretive approaches as there can be a tendency to put artificial boundaries around subjects' behaviour as they become hermeneutically sealed from the world outside the participant's theatre of activity. I therefore intend to extend the boundaries of my research by including the critical paradigm.  Critical theory has to do with undermining bureaucracy and holds the possibility of allowing the voices of people to be heard on a level of equality. It has the potential to empower them so that they know and value their own role.

I draw on the work of Alvesson and Sköldberg (2000:110), who point out that critical theory is characterised by an interpretive approach combined with a pronounced interest in critically disputing actual social realities. Its guiding interest is an emancipatory interest in knowledge. That is, knowledge that will contribute towards transforming and improving existing, unsatisfactory conditions through a process of critical reflection and action. Against the assumption that realised societal conditions are natural and inevitable, is posed the idea that societal conditions are historically created and heavily influenced by the asymmetries of power and special interests, and that they can be made the subject of radical change. Thus, we

can consider our own educational milieu. Much has been written about the socio-political history of South Africa that has resulted in conditions of extreme inequality in our township and rural schools (Tabata, 1959; Christie, 1991; Hyslop, 1999; Steyn, 2000). Attempts to address these inequalities have been done at national level (DoE, 1995,1996) in terms of restructuring all aspects of education delivery. The extent to which these policy initiatives have filtered down to the educational institutions is debatable. It is better to turn our attention to our own sites of delivery in the academy and in the schools.

## 2.2    AN APPRAISAL OF CURRENT PRACTICE

The component of the programme for student teachers where they spend time working alongside practising teachers in the schools is known as 'practice teaching'.  At the academy there has been no precedent with respect to a six-month internship for student teachers. However, historically, with the short periods (six weeks maximum) of practice teaching for our students, it has always been based on decisions made by HEI staff, and students were simply informed about requirements.  Attempts over the years have been made to involve schools, by inviting them to feedback and planning sessions.  However, these have not been very well attended or successful.  One of the reasons may be that there has not been a concerted attempt on the part of the academy to consider and value the input of teachers, other than their facilitating the procedural requirements of the placements.  Notification of such meetings may have been lost in the day-to-day demands of the schools, which possibly take precedence over requests for meetings that are not directly concerned with the schools themselves. Feedback from host schools was taken into consideration when planning for practice teaching sessions.  However, they were not viewed as valued partners when developing and planning the cooperative experience for our students, possibly because of the short time spent in the schools.  Also, historically both the schools and the HEI have emerged from a milieu of Christian National Education (Schoeman, 1993:29-34), where decisions are made at the top and are expected to be followed. Our students themselves come from schools where that has been the dominant culture; despite emerging from a turbulent history of resistance to political inequalities (Morrow, 1988:247-254), they seem to acquiesce quite easily to the requirements of the course.  I contend that a way of addressing the challenges of a changing educational milieu, such as changing curriculum contexts, large classes, under-resourced schools, under-qualified and overloaded teachers and limited support infrastructure, is through a reflexive democratic practice.  As I have identified in Chapter 1, elements of a reflexive democratic practice would entail collaborative undertakings and critical reflection

resulting in improved and appropriate action. At the core of such collaborative undertakings would be critical dialogue and communication.

Alvesson and Sköldberg (2000:117-120) refer to 'communication' in Habermas's[11] terminology as something reciprocal in which communicative action contains the possibility of dialogue aiming to arrive at mutual understanding and agreement. I concur that such agreement, if arrived at through critical reflection, has the potential for going over into collaborative action that can bring about improved conditions. This does not imply that consensus should necessarily be the aim. Alvesson and Sköldberg (2000: 120-122) note that some critics of Habermas indicate that there can be value in dissensus. A lack of consensus is healthy as it provides the possibility of perceiving and relating to the world in different ways and of avoiding blockages. They refer to Deetz (1992)[12], who agrees on the importance and value of dialogue, but sees its value mainly in allowing for revealing a multiplicity of meanings during the processes and for avoiding an unreflecting attitude towards oneself and the world. Thus, in his view, it is the generation of dissensus and conflict, as opposed to the achievement of consensus that is the crucial ingredient.

I support Deetz's notion that conflict will enable a deeper probing of an issue; however, there needs to be mutual agreement when deciding on the most appropriate course of action to take in a particular situation. This does not mean that this particular choice of action is necessarily correct, but will be subject to ongoing reflection.

Alvesson and Sköldberg (2000:119) concede that this does not mean that the expressed view of everyone taking part in a discussion will carry equal weight. Participants will always be at different levels of conceptualisation and ability. Depending on a number of factors – knowledge, experience, wisdom and (contingent thereupon) the weight of the argument submitted – the opportunities for various interlocutors to influence things would vary. They point out that the basis for a particular validity claim should, however, always be open to question. They point out that Habermas has constructed a systematic philosophy in which the theory of communicative action is the central theme. I am drawn to this approach as it has the potential for enabling dialogue and conversation, which can serve as a basis for reflexive action. I shall now unpack notions of reflexivity and democratic practice in order to indicate their relevance to my investigation.

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[11] Habermas, J 1984. *The theory of communicative action. Vol.1.* Boston: Beacon Press.
[12] Deetz, S 1992. *Democracy in an age of corporate colonization: Developments in communication and the politics of everyday life.* Albany: State University of New York Press.

## 2.3 NOTIONS OF REFLEXIVITY AND DEMOCRATIC PRACTICE

A 'reflective' process is essentially introspective and interpretive and does not necessarily envisage a transformative agenda. A 'reflexive' process on the other hand requires some kind of response away from mere contemplation towards transformative action, which may emerge as a result of considered and critical reflection. Hence, for my exploration to involve a reflexive democratic practice, the examination of current practices pertaining to the internship of our pre-service teachers requires a shift, from superficial reflectivity to collaborative and critical reflexivity. I agree with Lather's (1986:257-277) commitment to critiquing the status quo in order to build a more just society. This approach is firmly aligned with critical theory. My allusion to 'collaborative reflexivity' implies a social engagement in which participants (representatives from the academy and the host schools) co-manage the development of the mentorship programme with the mutual intent of improving practice.

Democracy, like all political and ultimately social constructs, reflects interactions between social agents. I will look at the participative aspects of democracy and the power relations that manifest themselves in the quest for moving towards practices that are more emancipatory. Reflexive practice implies the application of an action that has been carefully considered. By extending this construct to include notions of democracy, that is, 'reflexive democratic practice', infers a process that is consultative and participative. This entails that decisions that are made, in terms of policy and practice, are subject to critical deliberations by the participants concerned. Improving policy and practice within a changing educational milieu motivated the assumption that a reflexive democratic practice is a desirable premise on which to base the exploration. This assumption is firmly supported by many studies done in education. The action research movement in education (Carr & Kemmis, 1986; Zuber-Skerritt, 1996; Goolam, 1997) is firmly based on this premise.

Reflexive democratic practice would involve and view all participants as of equal worth. Participants would be the teachers in the schools, the lecturers at the education department of the Cape Peninsula University of Technology and the student teachers themselves. An asymmetry may exist in terms of experience and maturity in the field. However, this does not minimise what each participant will bring to the collaborative endeavour. The process can be viewed as dynamic and continuously changing, hence reflexivity is ongoing. Changes may

occur with respect to sites of interaction, nature of sites and the participants themselves. Hence, the process needs to be sufficiently grounded to ensure sustainability, despite changing contexts. That is, there needs to be an attempt to continuously reflect on a shared vision of what our purpose is for the mentorship programme and what the outcomes could be for those participating in the process. This could serve as a basis for critical reflection in terms of translating policy into practice. Formulating a mentorship policy should therefore not be rigid and prescriptive, but should encompass democratic principles such as equality, involvement of participants in decision-making, freedom of expression that can be sustained despite changing contexts.

Democratic practices can be viewed as desirable for a number of reasons, namely, they take the view of all role-players and stakeholders into account; they enhance collaborative ownership of policies and programmes; they foster a commitment to collaborative decisions; and they promote sustainability. The extent to which all of this can be realised will depend on the extent to which democratic practices can be fostered among the role-players. When considering an exploration that involves reflexive democratic practice, it is worth realising that in starting a process, we will not necessarily know where it will go and what unforeseen dynamics will come into play. We need the courage and the state of mind to embark and stay on the journey, becoming strengthened as we move along in order to deal with most of the challenges that come our way. In the process, we also hope to become transformed as we develop a deeper understanding of ourselves as individuals and as a group. Such understandings may relate to how we view aspects of pedagogy and teacher professionalism, for example, the extent to which they relate to the shared vision of the group and our views on learner-centred approaches to teaching and learning. Hence we enhance our perceptive instincts, increasing our sensitivity and responsiveness, developing skills organically and consciously, which will make us more able to engage in a reflexive practice. It is useful to see this process as a continuous journey, which can include individual journeys – where some embark or disembark en route as well as an organisational journey that can take different twists and turns. It is hoped that the overall effect will be one where practices become more emancipatory.

## 2.4    METHODOLOGICAL IMPLICATIONS

I shall now outline the research methods that I have chosen to use in the study as consistent with an interpretive-critical approach.

## 2.4.1   Interpretive theory

Interpretive theory favours research methods that will highlight individuals' interpretations of their own reality such as interviews, focus-group discussions and narratives. I intend using these methods as a means of informing the development of the mentorship programme.

Ricoeur (1981:278-279) asserts that the crucial aspect of narrative 'does not simply consist in adding episodes to one another; it also constructs meaningful totalities out of scattered events'. I agree with Ricoeur that the purpose is not simply to list the stories told. The mere fact that particular stories have been chosen to be told and not others, implies that the teller has imbued them with meaning.  I shall interview and listen to the stories of selected role players.  Their stories will be told from their own perspectives and subject to their own interpretations depending on their unique set of circumstances.  These stories need not necessarily be sequential or concerned with precisely the same things. The purpose is to reflect significantly on the voices I hear and the stories they tell in order to inform my exploration. Fay (1996:178-198) identifies three types of narratives. They are narrative realism, narrative constructivism and narrativism. He points out that narrative realism insists only on the lived character, while narrative constructivism insists only on the told or the constructed character of the story. Narrativism tries to incorporate what is worthwhile in both by taking its lived and its told character into account.

In their book on narrative inquiry, Clandinin and Connelly (2000) draw on the work of John Dewey and point out that for them narrative is the best way of representing and understanding experience. They concur with Fay in that they see narrative inquiry as stories lived and told. However, they seem to view the researcher as an outsider, coming in.  I would like to view myself as a participant researcher who impacts on and is influenced by the stories that are told.

I shall focus on seeking meaning from the individual experiences of the student teachers and their mentors by listening to their stories. Patterns that emerge from the stories they tell can be used as a basis for a reflexive democratic practice in order to inform the development of the mentorship programme.  In this way people begin to realise that they have a voice that can be heard. Interpretive educational theory is restricted in exploring the narratives of students and their mentors, because interpretivism is only concerned with getting to know the self-

understandings of people but is not concerned with empowering people.  This movement towards improving practice, by acknowledging and responding to the voices of the students and mentors, shifts the emphasis of my research beyond the limitations of interpretive theory and towards critical theory, which has a transformative agenda.

## 2.4.2    Action research and critical theory

Critical theory is concerned with empowering people. Participants may be unequal in terms of their knowledge and experience, but they are equal in terms of their representation. I contend that a reflexive democratic practice is a constitutive feature of critical theory as people engaged in a reflexive democratic practice are less likely to be exploited and used by people or organisations that may have their own agendas. A considered and conscious contemplation of existing conditions that will lead to improved and more appropriate practice by the participants involved can be an empowering process.  This process of reflection and self-reflection could make people more aware of their own worth as well as sensitise them to the nature of the contribution that they bring to the collaborative endeavour.

Essa (2002:24) points out that critical educational theory is more concerned about liberating the attitudes of human beings towards practices which are more emancipatory.   Cohen *et al.* (2000: 20-35) use the early works of Habermas (1972)[13] to point out that the intention of critical theory is not merely to give an account of society and behaviour, but to realise a society that is based on equality and democracy for all its members.  Its purpose is not merely to understand situations and social phenomena but to change them.  They lay emphasis on the emancipation of the disempowered, the redress of inequality and the promotion of democratic freedoms within a democratic society as key aspects of critical educational theory. I concur with these notions of research within the critical paradigm as being driven by an emancipatory agenda.

What are these emancipatory practices and what kind of social environment will encourage such practices? An environment in which people feel free to express their views and opinions and to critique and question existing practices is a step towards emancipation. I intend to approach my research by emphasising notions of a reflexive democratic practice, as I contend that this approach has the inherent potential to enhance the successful sustainability of the programme. I would like to concur with Cohen *et al.'s* reading of Habermas in which they

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[13] Habermas, J 1972. *Knowledge and human interests.* (Translated by J Shapiro.). London: Heinemann

contend that critical theory is concerned with praxis. They present praxis as action that is informed by reflection with the aim to emancipate. Embedded in critical theory are notions of a reflexive democratic practice. As I contend, this approach has the inherent potential to enhance the successful sustainability of the mentorship programme.

'Not only does critical research have its own research agenda but also its own research methodologies – in particular ideological critique and action research' (Cohen *et al*., 2000:26) For the purposes of this research I need to do both, that is, critique the dominant ideology that exists in educational contexts being explored, and critically reflect on the actions we embark upon while developing a mentorship policy and programme.

Critical action research would involve reflecting on and critiquing existing practice with the aim of bringing about practices that are more emancipatory. Key aspects of critical action research would be communication and dialogue between all role players on the basis of equality. Hence, the environment which will promote such practices, needs to be non-threatening and tolerant so that participants will feel free to air their views without fear of reprisal. Walker (n.d.:366) stresses that critical reflection would seem to be a necessary condition for emancipatory action research. My contention is that critical reflection does not necessarily happen spontaneously, but that it needs to be introduced and sustained by conscious elements/participants if it is to become common practice (tradition) within institutions.

Hay and Fourie (1999:44-53) note that emancipatory action research provides participants with the opportunity to work collaboratively with colleagues and other stakeholders.  Hence, my chosen method of investigation will be action research. The case study and the narratives of the student teachers and their mentors will initiate the cycle of reflection, implementation, monitoring and evaluation, all of which are geared towards empowerment and emancipation. As a participant researcher, I shall evaluate and reflect on the outcome of the first phase of the implementation cycle of the practice teaching component of the programme.  These reflections will inform the development of the mentorship programme for teachers.

## 2.5    SUMMARY

Current practice pertaining to the 'practice teaching' component of the teacher development programme is not appropriate for the six-month internship of the fourth-year student teachers.

Currently the teachers at the host schools are consulted sporadically on procedural and organisational aspects, but they are not engaged in aspects of teaching and learning. Most decisions are taken at the academy and the host schools are mere recipients of these deliberations. This study explores the possibility of developing a mentorship programme for teachers through a reflexive democratic practice as a response to improving current practice. A reflexive democratic practice is a social engagement that entails critical and reflective enquiry in order to transform existing practices to ones that are more appropriate to changing educational contexts. This chapter has laid the theoretical basis for the exploration of my case study. It identifies interviews and narratives as the research methods that complement interpretive theory. It further shows that the boundaries of interpretive theory can be expanded by drawing on critical theory, in which reflexive democratic practice is highlighted as a constitutive feature of critical theory.
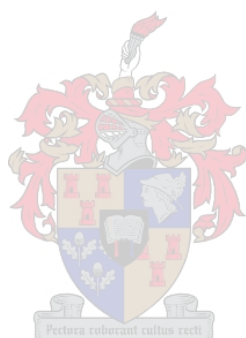
# CHAPTER 3

## A CASE STUDY: EXPLORING INSTANCES OF A REFLEXIVE DEMOCRATIC PRACTICE THROUGH THE VOICES OF MENTOR AND STUDENT TEACHERS

### 3.1 INTRODUCTION

In the previous chapter I developed the research framework for my study. In this chapter I shall show the extent to which the case study links up with the notion of a reflexive democratic practice. Benhabib (1996:67-94) develops a notion of practice where practice is seen as democratic – where people engage with one another, where they share ideas and challenge one another's thoughts, ideas and perspectives. This perspective links with MacIntyre's (1999:110-114) notion of practice. He develops a notion of practice where he says that central to any practice there has to be a notion of participants engaging justly in a conversation. This fits in with the kind of mentorship that I'm suggesting in which mentorship is just not about the transfer of knowledge from the mentor to the mentee but what should actually happen is a conversation between the mentor and the mentee, where people deliberate and offer justifications for their arguments and points of view. I will therefore report on the case study and evaluate to what extent elements of a reflexive democratic practice are evidenced between mentor teachers and their mentees, as well as in the interactions between teachers from the schools and lecturers from the academy (CPUT).

I will critically engage with the voices emanating from current practices in order to identify the extent to which they enhance or inhibit a reflexive democratic practice.

### 3.2 APPROACH TO THE CASE STUDY

The case study involves an exploration of the narratives of student and mentor teachers in order to inform the development of a mentorship programme. It also attempts to analyse the nature of the interaction between members of the academy and members of the schools in pursuit of a common purpose, namely the professional development of the student teachers.

Three distinct phases emerge from the case study. Phase 1 involves listening to the voices of the mentor teachers in order to find out why they were willing to be mentors and how they felt they could help the student teachers. Phase 2 involves listening to the voices of the third-year

pre-service teachers in order to get some feedback on their experiences in the schools with their mentor teachers and their ideas on how they felt the mentor teachers could assist them in becoming effective teachers. Phase 3 involves analysing conversations between mentor teachers and their mentees as well as analysing the interactions between teachers from the schools and lecturers from the academy.

For Phase 1 and 2 the idea is to get as broad a perspective as possible and to identify those key aspects which could serve as a basis for the development of a mentorship programme. Phase 3 examines the nature of the interaction between members of the schools (teachers) and members of the academy (students and lecturers).

## 3.3    PHASE 1: LISTENING TO THE VOICES OF THE MENTOR TEACHERS

In the conceptualisation of the mentorship programme it was felt that teachers who were willing to be mentors would be more motivated to assist student teachers if they themselves were enriched by the experience, as indicated in Chapter 1. South Africa has been experiencing curriculum renewal towards an outcomes-based education system. The new curriculum (DoE, 1997) requires that teachers adopt more active learning strategies in which they hand over more control of learning to the learners themselves. A specific methodology to teach science process skills to learners has been developed via a linkage project between King's College London, the then Peninsula Technikon and the Western Cape Education Department (Johnson *et al.,* 2000; Scholtz *et al*., 2004). The methodology is termed 'translation activities' as it requires that learners translate information from one form of representation to another, for example pictures to words or graphs to tables. The role of the teacher changes to that of facilitator. The project has been successful to the extent that the translation activity has been included as a compulsory assessment requirement for the Grade 9 Natural Science Curriculum (DoE, 2001). It was felt that the academy could offer to train mentor teachers in using the translation activities in the classroom, as part of its contribution to the professional development of the mentors themselves.

### 3.3.1    The invitation

Letters were faxed to about 60 schools which were going to host the student teachers. These schools included former Model C schools (historically White), former House of Representative schools (historically Coloured) and former Department of Education and Training schools (historically Black). The institution normally gives students a choice of

which schools they want to 'practise teach' in. Most of the students chose historically Black schools as these are to a large extent situated in the areas where they live. The convenience factor with respect to travel and familiarity plays a large role in choices made by the students.

The teachers who would be working closely with the student teachers were invited to attend a mentorship-training programme at the academy. The letter specified that part of the training would include assistance in interpreting and using the translation activities, termed 'translation tasks' in the Continuous Assessment Guidelines Document (DoE, 2001).

This training entailed three 3-hour sessions in the afternoon. It was envisaged that the first session would deal with the different roles of mentors and the origin of the concept. The teachers would also be asked what their expectations for the mentor training would be, in the form of a questionnaire and in a follow-up interview. In the second session, the mentor teachers would be introduced to the principles of translation activities (TAs) and how these could be taught in the classroom. The third session would continue with TA training. Teachers would then be invited to watch a demonstration lesson in an actual classroom with Grade 7 learners. Teachers would also be given a scientific literacy test instrument in order to ascertain their level of competency in science process skills, as this had a bearing on the extent to which they would be able to assist the student teachers.
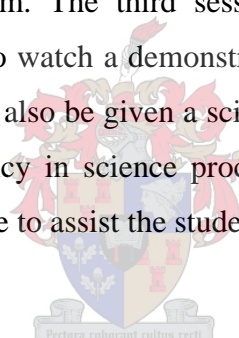
### 3.3.2    Who responded?

Only five teachers responded to the invitation. The teachers had the following in common: they were all Black teachers who

- had a formal qualification in science teaching;
- were teaching at historically disadvantaged Black secondary schools in an urban township environment surrounded by shanty dwellings;
- taught science at their respective schools, except for one teacher who taught technology and mathematics;
- had been exposed to an initial orientation of the TA methodology, either at the then Peninsula Technikon or at curriculum development workshops hosted by the Western Cape Education Department; and
- taught in classes with a range of 45 to 55 learners in a class.

Why did so few teachers respond, and why did they have so much in common? Our guess was that the priorities and the organisational nature of the schools, and the way in which information is communicated to the staff, were important. Sending out general invitations to schools where the response is on a voluntary basis does not appear to work.

Three of the teachers who attended the mentorship programme had completed a National Diploma in Education at the academy and were still attending on a part-time basis to upgrade their qualification to a degree. They were personally requested by their lecturer to become involved in the programme. The fourth and fifth teachers responded to the fax and volunteered to participate. One had qualified at the institution and had been teaching for two years. The other had been teaching for more than five years but had no formal links with the institution, that is, Mrs Yaphi.[14] So, four out of the five teachers were ex- and current students of the academy. Would building up a network of ex-students be a more effective way of choosing mentor teachers? It has the advantage that they are familiar with the institution and have developed social and professional relationships with the staff.

### 3.3.3 Their expectations

When asked in the questionnaire (see Appendix A), what they hoped to gain from attending the workshop, four out of the five teachers indicated that they would like to develop skills in teaching science, particularly in large, under-resourced classes. Three of them needed guidance on how to teach in the new outcomes-based education (OBE) curriculum. Mrs Yaphi was hoping that they could be supplied with learning materials for the new curriculum.

Only one teacher, Mr Mhlopo, indicated that he wanted to learn more about mentoring. 'I want to understand my role as a mentor, what assistance I can give or render to student teachers and what is to be done after they leave or finish with teaching practice.'

### 3.3.4 Why they responded

In the next section I shall let the teachers speak for themselves rather than paraphrase what they actually say. The quotes may sound simplistic, but in the tradition of narrative research the purpose would be to seek meaning in their authentic voices. In my analysis I shall identify the extent to which a reflexive democratic practice can be enhanced or inhibited. I consider

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[14] Pseudonyms have been used for the teachers.

key components of a reflexive democratic practice to be collaborative endeavours, critical dialogue and conversation resulting in improved practice, considered contemplation of current practices and an enabling environment that promotes all of the afore-mentioned.

The follow-up interview (see Appendix B) consolidated the responses in the questionnaire as to why they agreed to be mentor teachers. Mr Mhlopo elaborated: 'As a teacher myself, I was there before. So being out there as a student teacher and doing the teaching practice and not getting the OBE assistance from teachers who are already in service, who are already working, is a very difficult thing to do. So for those teachers who are coming to my school, I'll rather come and assist them so that they can find teaching practice much more easier.'

Mr Kiewiet indicated that he decided to become a mentor teacher because he wanted to make sure that the student teachers from the academy get thorough and effective training, in order to enhance learning in the classroom.

This is Mr Sonjica's response to explaining why he decided to join the programme: 'Because I wanted to assist the students from Peninsula Technikon with their lessons.' When asked whether he would have been as eager to join a mentorship programme run by another institution, this is what he said. 'Well, yes, I do have to assist them even if it's another institution but now, since it's Pentech[15] and I'm from Pentech, I'll assist them freely and I'm doing my best so that Pentech can produce good quality teachers at the end of the day.'

Miss Ndiki felt that she would benefit professionally from being involved in the programme: 'I'm teaching natural science and they (the academy) are investigating about teaching science in large classes, and I'm also experiencing problems when it comes to teaching science. Then I thought that if I join them maybe I'd benefit something besides helping the student teachers.'

When listening to the voices of the mentor teachers it becomes apparent that their motivation to participate in the programme was two-fold. On the one hand they were motivated by personal gain in terms of professional development and on the other hand they expressed a willingness to assist the students with various aspects of teaching and learning. The mentor teachers seem to perceive these two aspects running concurrently, that is, they benefit from

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[15] The case study was conducted in 2003, before the merger, hence the reference to 'Pentech' which is an abbreviation for Peninsula Technikon.

what the academy has to offer at the workshops, while they in turn have something to offer the students in a very linear way which limits the potential for a reflexive democratic practice.

### 3.3.5    How they felt they could help the student teachers

The teachers were asked in the questionnaire how they thought they could support the students. They responded that they could assist with lesson preparation and group facilitation.

Mr Kiewiet wrote: 'Assist in preparing lessons … assist on facilitation of group work activities.'

Mrs Yaphi also indicated that she could help with monitoring the progress of the students: 'By allowing them to provide work first to learners and try to visit their classes for evaluation, checking the progress of student teachers and learners.' Mr Mhlopo on the other hand indicated: 'Student teachers must not be shy to ask for assistance. I don't want to be seen as a supervisor, but I want to assist.' These two comments present two very different styles in terms of the nature of the interaction between the mentor teacher and the student teacher.  Mrs Yaphi clearly sees herself as the expert (which she is in terms of experience and possibly knowledge skills) who will guide and direct the student, while Mr Mhlopo leaves the initiative to the discretion of the student. Both approaches have potential in terms of collaborative possibilities.   The extent to which a reflexive democratic practice can be enhanced or inhibited will depend on the degree to which the mentor teacher encourages critical enquiry and dialogue during his or her engagement with the student teacher.

Individuals from the group felt that the institution could help them in their task by informing the students about the existence of mentors at the schools, provide them with the necessary guidelines for students in order to facilitate their own planning and issue the students with the necessary learning material. Lecturers at the academy should work hand in hand with mentors and guide them with respect to new approaches to lessons. When indicating how they could assist the students, the collaborative aspect comes through quite strongly, that is, the mentor teacher working with the student teacher as well as the mentor teacher working with the lecturer. This plea for cooperation and guidance points to elements of joint participation and inclusivity which highlights democratic aspects of a working relationship. This is an important aspect of a reflexive democratic practice that should be encouraged when considering the development of the mentorship programme.  Once again, the mentor teachers

seem to regard the link with the academy as being beneficial to their own professional development.

### 3.3.6    What they actually did

Mrs Yaphi only attended the first mentor training session and cited personal reasons for not coming to the other two sessions. She was not allocated any student teachers at the school where she taught. She indicated that the students were mathematics majors and that the school thought they could be of more use in the mathematics, rather than the science department. So, the following summary excludes her.

Generally, the teachers assisted the student teachers in lesson planning and giving advice on teaching strategies. Instances of helping the student teachers to maintain discipline and assisting them in getting teaching and learning aids also occurred. Mr Sonjica also focused on making the student teachers feel comfortable: 'My class has got an office, so they use my office as their office.  I'm flexible to them … like the lunch; I share it with them.  In these cold days I brought coffee for them so that they feel comfortable.'  He also gave them advice on their future professional development options. 'I've once had a conversation with them and asked them whether they want to come back next year for BTech[16]… they say they'll come, but I advised them to come part time because maths and science teachers are in need out there. So they say they are going to register part time.' He expressed his willingness to assist them with lesson planning. 'I can also help them in planning their lessons, but up to now they haven't come to me and asked for assistance. Every time I ask them, "Are you okay with your lessons?" they say,  "No, Mr Sonjica, we are okay with our lessons".'

A reflexive democratic practice is more likely to be sustained in an environment in which people feel free to express their viewpoints without fear of intimidation and repression. Mr Sonjica seems to implicitly recognise this, hence his attempt to make the students 'feel comfortable' and his expressed interest in their future career pathways as well as his offers to assist with lesson planning.  Unlike with Mr Sonjica, the student teachers took up Mr Mhlopo's offers of assistance.  Mr Mhlopo seemed to respond to the student teachers' needs as the occasion arose as he had indicated he would in the questionnaire.  For example, he assisted in getting resources for them, sometimes at very short notice.  He helped them in setting up their apparatus in another teacher's class.  'I'm not teaching biology, but I'm

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[16] Bachelor of Technology degree offered by the academy.

assisting. Lindiwe (the student teacher) had a problem last week trying to adjust the microscope to find clear meristematic tissue. I supported her, it worked quite well.' He intervened on their behalf when they were having discipline problems. On one occasion he spoke to learners to treat the student teachers with more respect. On another occasion he assisted a student teacher to improve on her lesson. 'There was that one student teacher. It was her first crit lesson (The term used for a lesson that will be observed by the Pentech lecturer). She didn't do very well. I said to her that next time she does a crit lesson she must come and speak to me. She came to me first … and did better in her second crit lesson.' Mr Mhlopo felt that she improved because he had assisted her in her planning. Collaborative engagement to improve a subsequent lesson highlights reflexivity in action, which is a key component of a reflexive democratic practice.

Mr Mhlopo's communicative style seems to elicit more response from the student teachers in terms of seeking advice and assistance. It is quite likely that the mentor teachers' intentions can be interpreted not only by what they say, but also how they say it. Aspects such as body language, tone, intonation and choice of words could contribute to how the listener perceives what is actually being said. It is possible that Mr Sonjica's superficial query, 'Are you okay with your lessons?' could prompt an affirmative response if it is not followed up with an explicit invitation to the student teachers to ask for assistance

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Miss Ndiki on the other hand took her role as a mentor teacher quite seriously. She worked with the student teachers through the whole cycle of planning their lessons, observing their lessons and giving verbal feedback on lessons taught. She also assisted in maintaining discipline in their classes. She commented that the school generally has discipline problems and implied that it is more difficult for student teachers to maintain discipline as learners tend to behave differently towards them. 'Even if they have to do planning, they come to me … Even if they are having disciplinary problems in class they report to us.' The actual nature of the interaction between Miss Ndiki and the student teachers did not emerge in the interview. It is clear that the student teachers were quite keen to consult her, but the extent to which she prescribed and intervened or took her cue from the student teachers was not ascertained. However, her willingness to assist and collaborate with the student teachers came through very strongly. The actual nature of the interactions between student teachers and their mentors I will address in the next section when I analyse the lesson -feedback sessions.

Mr Kiewiet is a head of department at his school and was responsible for coordinating the student teacher placements. He liaised with the other teachers whose classes the students would be teaching and tried to develop some code of conduct as to how they should liaise and interact with the student teachers. 'I indicated to each and every educator that you have to accompany the student teacher in the class, you have to see what has been planned by the student teacher before going to the class.'

Mr Kiewiet also gave some advice with respect to planning a lesson and teaching strategy. He had major concerns about the seriousness of the students and their willingness to learn. He indicated that generally their lesson plans were skimpy and did not include sufficient detail with respect to content and teaching and learning strategy. 'I've spoken to them. I went to the extent whereby I called them together. I wanted to show them how to plan a lesson, but, as I was saying, I was unfortunate to get such a group that is not prepared to be empowered and also to develop.'

An incident occurred where the resident teacher was dissatisfied with the performance of the student teacher and opted to take over the class herself. Mr Kiewiet liased with the resident teacher on behalf of the student teacher and the matter was resolved. He suggested that experienced teachers might be resistant to the new, more learner-centred approach. 'Teachers feel that no education is taking place … the class is noisy, etc. …  the new approach takes time. The learners are given a chance to think, chat, share and they end up not finishing.' Feimer-Nemser, Parker and Zeichner (1993:147-165) caution that some studies show that mentors promote conventional norms and practices such, as transmission mode methods, thus limiting reform. A study by Lovemore and Frances (2005:142) suggests that the time constraints in covering the crowded curriculum in preparation for a summative examination militate against mentors using time-consuming constructivist approaches in their practice. They, in turn, discourage student teachers from using them. This does seem to be the dilemma confronting the mentor and student teachers in this instance.

When asked whether there were any major difficulties that they encountered, all except Mr Kiewiet, as described above, indicated that there were none. Miss Ndiki pointed out that the teachers were willing to adapt the sequence of the curriculum for the student teachers in order to accommodate the biology component, which they were not teaching at the time.

### 3.3.7 Have they learnt anything from the students?

Mr Kiewiet, Miss Ndiki and Mr Sonjica all quoted instances where they had learnt something from observing the lessons of the student teachers. Mr Kiewiet noted the hands-on approach of the student teachers, which he admitted he had been neglecting, despite the difficulties of having to move teaching aids from class to class. Miss Ndiki was impressed by the way a student teacher used flashcards and Mr Sonjica liked the way in which a student teacher got the learners to work in pairs and complete a picture.

In my analysis of the voices of the mentor teachers I have considered whether the following elements were evidenced which could indicate instances of a reflexive democratic practice, namely, collaborative undertakings, critical contemplation of existing practice that result in improvement, an encouraging environment that is conducive to critical dialogue. The basis for a reflexive democratic practice does seem to emerge from the voices of the mentor teachers. A willingness to assist and work with the student teachers, albeit at various levels, is evidenced. Mr Sonjica established a non-threatening environment in which student teachers felt 'comfortable'. He, however, did not consciously pursue aspects of professional development, such as the use of appropriate methodologies, to engage the student teachers in critical conversation around their practice, which is an important component of a reflexive democratic practice. He seemed to be motivated by loyalty to his alma mater as he had indicated in the questionnaire. Mr Mhlopo had a very 'hands-on' approach to assisting the student teachers. His collaboration with the student teacher in order to improve her 'crit' lesson in preparation for a subsequent observation by a lecturer does indicate evidence of a reflexive democratic practice as it contains elements of considered reflection of a lesson already taught which resulted in improved practice. Miss Ndiki's assistance of the student teachers seems to show evidence of caring and empathy as well as a conscientious concern for their professional practice. This is evidenced by her willingness to use her time to assist the students in the whole cycle of lesson preparation, observation and feedback. Such collaborative endeavours could stimulate critical self-reflection, which could lay the basis for a reflexive democratic practice. As a coordinator of the teaching practice component at his school, Mr Kiewiet operated somewhat differently from the previous three teachers. He was clearly an authoritative figure, in charge of the mentor teachers as well as the student teachers. Despite his criticism of the student teachers, he was still quite willing to take up issues on their behalf, as indicated earlier. He also reflected on and tried to explain why the mentor teachers showed opposition to the interactive methodologies used by the student teachers. He

did not take his reflections further by sharing them with mentor and student teachers in order to stimulate critical conversation around these differences in pedagogy, which would have enhanced the possibility of a reflexive democratic practice. Sensitising coordinators to this aspect of their role should be considered when developing the mentorship programme.

### 3.3.8    Lessons for mentorship programme

When asked how the institution could assist them in their tasks as mentors, all of them indicated the following:

- The student teachers should be properly informed about the existence of the mentors at the schools and be given clear guidelines as to what is expected of them.
- The mentor teachers should be given clear guidelines as to their own roles.
- The mentor teachers should be given the school-based programme of the student teachers up front so that they could plan their own programme.

This group of teachers acknowledges their role as mentors and is willing to contribute towards the professional development of the student teachers.

### 3.3.9    Discussion

It is clear that good administration oils the wheels and that we need to heed the requests of the mentor teachers to keep them informed and to develop clear guidelines as to the roles of the various stakeholders, namely mentors, student teachers and lecturers at the academy. If teachers feel that they will benefit in some way, they will be more willing to mentor our student teachers.   Hence, continued opportunities for professional development of mentor teachers should be seen as an integral part of the mentorship programme.

The mentors, who qualified at the then Peninsula Technikon, attended all three training workshops and continued to assist and mentor the student teachers for the duration of the practice teaching session. Their familiarity with the institution enabled them to quickly establish a collegial link with the student teachers, and thus facilitated their transition from the academy to the school. A basis for a professional relationship, albeit at another level, already exists.  Could the institution provide a reciprocal support infrastructure which would make them keep on coming back?  It certainly seems that this is worth exploring. A basis for dialogue, conversation and reflection on practice has already been established through their common experiences at the academy.

## 3.4    PHASE 2: LISTENING TO THE VOICES OF THE STUDENT TEACHERS

This involved self-recorded focus-group discussions by third-year student teachers. When trying to identify a suitable way of getting feedback from the student teachers about their experiences in the schools and the nature of their interaction with the mentor teachers, I realised that standard interviews and questionnaires were limited, as they would not encourage the participants to discuss and tell their stories. This group of students was not necessarily linked to the original mentor teachers, as the purpose was not to triangulate what the mentor teachers did and what the students experienced.  It was merely to get a general sense of their experiences in the schools as well as their expectations of the role a mentor teacher could play.

So I devised a method which I have not seen in the literature before.  I presented them with a list of questions (see Appendix C) that would act as stimuli or prompts to start a discussion among a group of students. Twenty-one students participated. They were divided into four groups of 4 students and one group of 5 students. Each group gathered around a tape recorder and used the questions as a springboard to talk about their experiences with their mentor teacher. The groups operated entirely on their own, without the presence of a researcher.  This was useful as the intrusion of the researcher could have an inhibiting effect on their responses. In some cases they spoke in their home language, but then translated what they were saying into English for purposes of recording. They controlled the recording mechanism themselves.

The students were asked to focus on two things when they responded to the guiding questions. They had to indicate their expectations of how a mentor teacher could help them in planning their lessons, conducting their lessons, managing their learners, assessing their learners' skills, knowledge and understanding, evaluating their lessons, improving their content knowledge and developing different learning and teaching strategies.  They also had to relate their actual experiences with their mentor teachers in relation to these aspects by giving specific examples. Their responses were transcribed, summarised and analysed.

### 3.4.1    The student teachers' expectations and experiences in the schools

Letters to host schools provided written guidelines as to what was required of the school and the student teachers during their practice teaching session. There was no additional preparation of teachers at the host schools before the practice teaching session. Likewise,

there was no attempt to prepare the students to work with their mentor teachers and no guidelines or negotiations as to what the nature of their interaction should be.

Not surprisingly, the responses were varied and ranged from some students expecting active support and explicit guidance, to others who were quite prepared to operate independently. Experiences varied for different students depending on the school contexts. Here are two extreme views: 'I enjoyed teaching practice because I know I'm confident about everything I need as a teacher' to 'I didn't enjoy teaching practice, maybe I think it was because of the school … the learners were rude, the teachers were not responsible for their work. I think as a student that school is not well organised.'

Six categories were identified in which students expected guidance and assistance from the mentor teacher. These were classroom management and orientation, feedback on lessons taught, resources, pedagogy, planning and assessment of learners' work. One aspect that students felt, was very important was the fact that the teachers in most cases vacated the classroom when they taught. Some comments include the following:

 'The teacher should remain in the class to help with discipline.'
  'Teachers should stay in class and help to evaluate our lessons.''
 'The teacher must be in class during lesson presentation to make comments and recommendations.'
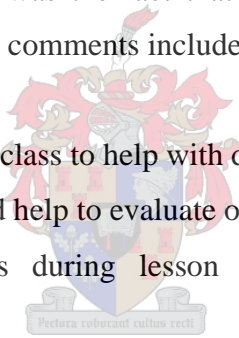
It seems that teachers responded to students' needs as they arose. The requests were largely about acquiring resources and assisting with classroom discipline. One student expressed a need for the mentor teachers and the lecturers at the academy to work more closely: 'The teachers should help us in teaching practice, but also the teachers must ask their subject teachers (lecturers), they must not expect that the mentor teachers are just going to tell them what to do.' This plea for collaboration is at the heart of reflexive practice. An explicit articulation of views and approaches among participants lays the basis for collaborative, reflexive action. It also breaks down the isolation that quite often exists between teachers at the schools and lecturers at the academy. This can potentially minimise instances where student teachers get conflicting advice from teachers or lecturers without the benefit of an opportunity to discuss these differences. Time constraints can be an obstacle to ongoing conversation. Joint observations of lessons with joint post-lesson reflections might have more

value than teachers and lecturers viewing many lessons separately without reflective conversations.

Three students indicated that they received no assistance from teachers in general other than from ex-Peninsula Technikon students. This confirms my theory that ex-Peninsula Technikon students are in a good position to act as mentors for our students as indicated in Phase 1 of the process. The conversation, as well as professional intervention, can start at the academy and proceed to the world of work. It fosters a natural progression which would benefit all three parties, that is, students, teachers and lecturers. It could potentially reinforce the value of our ex-students and also contribute to their further professional development in an organic way.

It might be argued that it is not merely what mentors do; it is also the way they do it. Hobson (2002:5-20) reported on a study done in the United Kingdom on what student teachers regarded as very valuable for their mentor teachers to do. These were observing student lessons and providing feedback, assisting with lesson planning and modelling teacher practice for trainees. The expectations of our own students confirm Hobson's first two findings. The students in my sample did not really mention his third finding. There seems to be a lack of critical engagement between the host teacher and the student teacher which inhibits the possibility for a reflexive democratic practice. This is evidenced by the tendency for host teachers to vacate the classroom when student teachers had to conduct lessons.

## 3.5    PHASE 3: INTERACTION BETWEEN THE ACADEMY AND THE WORLD OF WORK

Four feedback sessions between mentor teachers and student teachers were tape-recorded and analysed in order to find out the nature of their conversations. The teachers used the standard observation sheet normally used by the academy lecturers as a guide to post-lesson feedback (see Appendix D). Five teachers were asked to tape record their own feedback sessions with the student teachers.

In addition, a video recording was made of a meeting between representatives of the schools and lecturers of CPUT's education department. This was analysed in order to find out the concerns and priorities of each party as well as the nature of the interaction between the teachers from the schools and the lecturers from the academy.

### 3.5.1 Analysis of conversations between mentor teachers and students: searching for instances of a reflexive democratic practice

All the feedback sessions were practically monologues rather than dialogues or conversations. The fact that the teachers were guided by points on the observation sheet could have been a reason why the feedback resulted in monologues. The mentors were requested to focus on the following aspects of their lesson during the feedback, namely, preparation and planning, teacher confidence and presence, knowledge of subject matter, communication and classroom interaction, use of teaching and learning aids, classroom management, relevance of lesson to broader social issues, and the student's reflective ability in connection with the stated objectives. After this, they had to provide a general comment on the student's performance and then allocate a grade or a percentage mark as an indication of the overall performance of the student. The mentors themselves had not undergone any training on how to draw the student teacher into the conversation as well as in techniques that would encourage reflection of the teaching and learning aspects of the lesson.

### 3.5.2 A closer examination of the post-lesson conference

John and Gilchrist (1999:101-111) developed a useful framework in which to analyse post-lesson dialogue. They identified indicators for mentor dialogue and student dialogue (See Table 3.1 and 3.2 below).

I used the John and Gilchrist framework (1999:101-111) to examine the post-lesson conferences more closely.

**Table 3.1  Mentor Dialogue**

| **Suggesting** | outlining possibilities, option, ways forward |
|---|---|
| **Questioning** | requests for clarification, being provocative to encourage the  students to reflect |
| **Supporting** | offering interpersonal support to the student, praise and  encouragement |
| **Directing** | suggesting  (rather than dictating) definite strategies |
| **Silence** | listening, being attentive |

**Table 3.2  Student-teacher Dialogue**

| Justification | confident, positive exposition, outlining of future plans, saying why things went well |
|---|---|
| Being assured | a general state of confidence and buoyancy |
| Silence | listening, being attentive |
| Rationalising | explanations of why things went wrong, excuses; the opposite of 'justification' |
| Anxious | any expression of uncertainty or anxiety |

Mr Kiewiet had feedback sessions with three students respectively.  In all three cases the feedback sessions were teacher monologues, which consisted mainly of suggesting and directing and in some instances supporting. All three student teachers were silent for the entire session.

Mr Mhlopo had a post-conference lesson with one student teacher.   Initially he did not address the student teacher but spoke about her in the third person, using the observation sheet as a guide. He showed supporting behaviour when he commented positively on her classroom confidence and presence, use of teaching aids and classroom management. He then asked her directly whether she had any questions. The student asked him advice on certain aspects of strategy to which he replied. An omission in the John and Gilchrist framework is that it does not cover this aspect of student-teacher dialogue, which I would term 'soliciting'.

Mr Nikani, a teacher at the same school as Mrs Yaphi, had a more open style. He asked questions and encouraged the student to reflect on her lesson in general. There was one instance of reporting but no instance of suggesting and directing. The student's response was minimal.  There were two instances of rationalising on the part of the student.

Mrs Yaphi initially spoke about the student in the third person, and did not address her directly.  She also used the observation sheet to guide her comments.  Only upon the completion of this did she address the student and ask her how she felt about the lesson. Her feedback was also a near monologue, which involved directing and suggesting.  There was one instance of support.  The student teacher remained silent for practically the whole session.

Similarly, when recording a post-lesson conference between a lecturer from the academy and a student teacher, the pattern repeated itself. That is, the feedback session was a monologue consisting mainly of suggesting and directing.

### 3.5.3    Discussion

Clearly, the notion of a reflexive democratic practice seems to be foreign and alien to the traditional hierarchical patterns that play themselves out at the schools, and dare I say it, in the academy. The fact that the students were passive also throws a light on the kinds of hierarchical practices and traditions that they have experienced in their own lives, whether in schools and higher institutions of learning, or in their everyday lives that inhibit them from expressing and asserting themselves. My contention is that we need to develop practices that stimulate and encourage conversation.  In order to do this both the mentor teacher and the student teacher need to have shared practices or experiences which will serve as a platform to stimulate dialogue and discussion. Joint planning and team-teaching of lessons right at the beginning of the process could stimulate dialogue and conversation.  It is not surprising that the post-lesson conference is reduced to a monologue if the mentor teacher has been excluded from all the preceding steps leading up to the lesson.

Inherent in joint involvement in the development of the lesson is the notion of reflection. Both parties have to think about their own ideas on practice and reach a consensus about the ultimate choices made for teaching the lesson.  Sharing of ideas and joint decision-making heighten the democratic nature of the interaction as it involves a process which is inclusive and participative and which values the contribution made by the participants.  Braund (2001:189-200) points out that 'true' reflective practice is best when the exchange is two-way. He mentions a survey by Moyles, Suschitzky and Chapman (1998)[17] that shows that teachers are indeed well disposed to using mentoring as a means of raising self-awareness of their teaching. John and Gilchrist (1999: 101-111) recommend that mentor teachers should be sensitised to the approach where they engage with student teachers by suggesting and asking questions that would allow the student teacher to reflect.

Edwards and Protheroe (2003:227-242) counter posed mentoring based on an 'application of knowledge view of learning' rather than a participatory-social view of learning where learners appropriate the meanings and actions used by more expert members of the practice

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[17] Moyles, J, Suschitsky, W & Chapman, L 1998. *Mentoring and support systems in primary schools.* Leicester: School of Education, University of Leicester.

community through a process of peripheral participation and eventually become fully fledged community members able to contribute to current understandings while they take action in the field. They recommend team teaching where mentors work alongside student teachers, enabling them peripheral participation and access to teacher decision- making while teaching. They point out that a key feature of learning to teach in the participatory view of professional learning is the capacity to make increasingly informed interpretations of classrooms and to develop increasingly wide repertoires of appropriate responses. This takes the emphasis away from curriculum delivery and teacher performance (based on observation and feedback) and shifts it to pupil learning. I endorse this approach as it encourages conversation and reflection based on a shared practice. Mentor teachers need to be trained in skills that will develop reflection in the students.  These do not necessarily happen spontaneously.

The reality of teachers' busy lives could be a constraint in their spending time with a student teacher.  The student teachers should not be viewed as putting strain on the teacher's workload.  Instead, if we develop the kind of community of practice that will allow opportunities for critical engagement, it could heighten the potential for a reflexive democratic practice. The student teacher can then be viewed as an integral and helpful part of the school community rather than  as a burden.

There is increasing awareness in the literature that teacher development occurs in stages (Beeby, 1966; De Feiter, Vonk & Van den Akker, 1995; Furlong & Maynard, 1995).  Ralph (1993:30-38) developed a contextual supervision theory where he recommends that supervisors match their mentoring styles with the perceived developmental stage of the mentee. It might be useful to build progression into the mentoring programme in order to scaffold student teachers' experiences. The relationship initially might be asymmetrical in which the student teacher is a recipient of advice and information. As he or she gains confidence and skills there is a move towards greater independence in making professional decisions about aspects of pedagogy, classroom management, and school life in general. The nature of the conversations may also begin to approach a level where the relationship between the mentor teacher and the student teacher becomes more collegial in nature. Table 3.3 illustrates the changing nature of the relationship.

**Table 3.3    Scaffolding**

| Dependence | → Partial Dependency → | Independence |
|---|---|---|
| | | |
| Teacher assistant | | Greater independence |
| Partial responsibility | → | Greater responsibility |
| Unequal relationship | | Collegial /equal relationship |
| | | |
| | CHANGING NATURE OF CONVERSATIONS | |
| → | →           → | → |
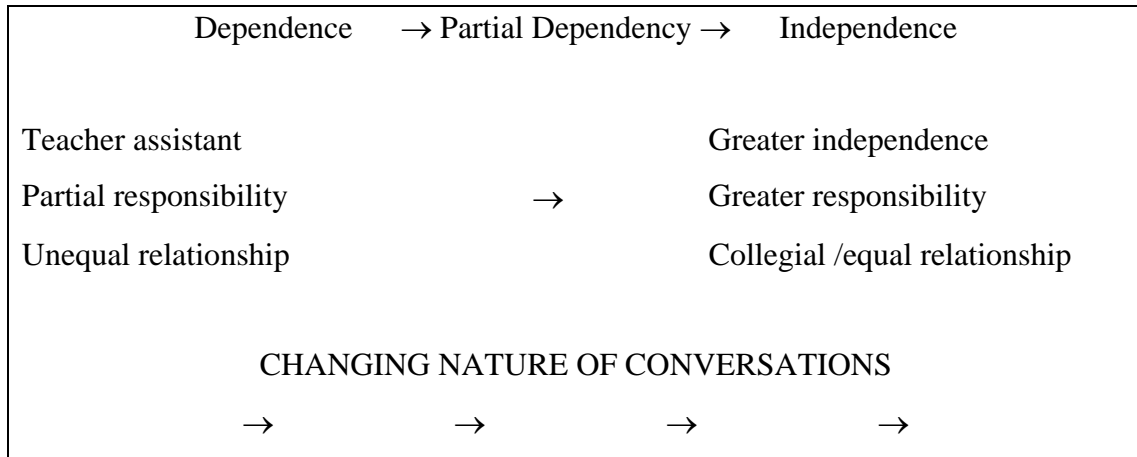

### 3.5.4    Analysis of video taped meeting between teachers from host schools and lecturers of the education department at CPUT

As has already been stated, the willingness to host schools is entirely voluntary. Schools do not receive any form of reward for their involvement in the professional development of the pre-service students.
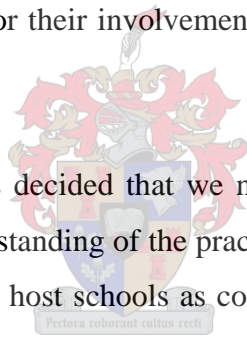
In a departmental meeting it was decided that we needed to meet with the host schools in order to develop a common understanding of the practice teaching component of the teacher's qualification. We would view the host schools as collaborative partners and ultimately work towards a shared vision of how to develop the programme further. Teachers from host schools were invited to share their insights and experiences with lecturers from the academy.

The teachers from the host schools were welcomed. The head of the education department at the then Peninsula Technikon informed the teachers of the extended period of practice teaching (six months) that our fourth-year students were obliged to do as part of their official requirement towards obtaining a degree in education. He indicated:  'It is important that we work much more collaboratively with schools; you can imagine how important the role of the teachers has become.' The teachers were then invited to share their experiences and concerns around hosting the practice teaching students. A discussion ensued around many aspects of hosting the student teachers which ranged from student discipline and conduct to teaching and learning requirements. They highlighted procedural, organisational and professional aspects as indicated below.

0rganisational and procedural aspects suggested by host teachers included:

- Train students to do basic filing and other administrative aspects.

- Develop portfolios for student teachers.

- Keep an attendance register.

- Affirm the code of conduct as expected for resident teachers.

- Set up a hotline between the school and the academy so that any problems or enquiries can be dealt with immediately.

The last suggestion facilitates better communication between the schools and the academy and increases the potential for more effective collaboration.

Professional aspects suggested by teachers were the following:

- Encourage students to be part of planning for the themes which are used by cluster schools.

- Ensure that students are familiar with the curriculum requirements for each grade.

- Ensure that students are informed about specific requirements for planning and assessing lessons.

The teachers' recommendation that student teachers participate in planning adds a democratic dimension to the deliberations. This could provide the students with an opportunity to engage critically with practising teachers on matters of teaching and learning. The advice given that the student teachers should be informed on various aspects of the curriculum requirements is sound, as knowledge about the curriculum can serve as a basis for critical engagement and thus heighten the potential for a reflexive democratic practice.

The teachers were informed of a task team of four lecturers who were working on the development of a practice teaching manual. This was a response to mentor teachers' request in Phase 1, who requested more guidelines as to their own role in the schools. The scaffolding and progression model as reported on in Phase 2 was then presented to them. One of the teachers responded to this approach in the following way: 'I support that we should incorporate scaffolding into the programme, so that we can support a student more.' The meeting ended on that note, with the teachers willing to try out the suggested model. All the teachers were given a mouse pad as a gift.

South African township schools have their own set of challenges, these are, heavy workloads, large classes, limited resources, poor socio-economic contexts and under-qualified teachers (Van Wyk, 2001:195-201), hence, the tendency to vacate classes when student teachers teach. These challenges leave teachers with very little time or inclination to assist student teachers effectively, let alone participate in reflective discourse. It might be necessary that the academy initiates opportunities for the teachers, lecturers and students to get together and begin to discuss and reflect on matters of professional development within the context of such challenges.

## 3.6    SUMMARY

Voices of the mentor teachers highlighted good organisation, reciprocity in terms of their own professional development and the willingness of ex-students to serve as mentors. The student voices clearly indicated that they wanted support and guidance in terms of classroom management and lesson presentation.

As already indicated, I consider key components of a reflexive democratic practice to be the promotion of an enabling environment conducive to collaborative endeavours, critical dialogue and conversation, and a considered contemplation of current practice leading to improved practice. Such instances of a reflexive democratic practice were evidenced to varying degrees.  This came through more strongly, albeit episodically, during the mentor interviews where the mentors highlighted aspects of collaborative action and improved practice when working with their mentees. The extent to which students teachers and mentor teachers engage with one another on matters of teaching and learning seem minimal at this stage, yet a willingness to move in that direction has been indicated by the teachers at the host schools and the lecturers at the academy.  Though a remote voice, the significant plea by a student teacher that mentor teachers and lecturers should work together more closely to enhance the professional development of student teachers should be heeded, as such collaborative endeavours characterise a key aspect of a reflexive democratic practice. Instances of a reflexive democratic practice were virtually absent during the post-lesson feedbacks. These tended to be monologues where the mentors prescribed and the students listened. The interaction between the schools and the academy highlights organisational and procedural aspects as being the chief concern of the teachers. The meeting between teachers from the host schools and lecturers from the academy laid a basis for future deliberations. The potential for a reflexive democratic practice will increase if teachers become true partners

in the association rather than remain periodic sounding boards for the academy. In the next chapter I shall revisit notions of reflexive democratic practice in the light of the analysis of the case study. I shall make a case for a conception of mentorship that draws on the idea of a 'community of practice' (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Wenger, 1998).

# CHAPTER 4

## A REFLEXIVE DEMOCRATIC PRACTICE AND THE NOTION OF COMMUNITY

### 4.1    INTRODUCTION

In this chapter, I shall show how the case study has prompted me to revisit notions of a reflexive democratic practice as outlined in Chapter 2, where I developed the conceptual framework for my research, in which I indicated that my main theoretical approach would involve an interpretive-critical analysis of a case study. I specified that I would use an interpretive approach to explore the narratives of student teachers and their mentors. I would then extend the boundaries of the interpretive approach to include the critical paradigm by considering notions of reflexivity and democratic practice.  I shall further outline how my idea of a reflexive democratic practice has evolved and expanded to include the notion of a community of practice (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Brown, 1994; Wenger, 1998).  I shall analyse my findings as presented in chapter 3 in terms of developing a community of practice, as I contend that such an orientation has the potential to enhance a reflexive democratic practice if it operates within the context of collegiality and critical enquiry in pursuit of transforming practices to ones that are more appropriate. I shall explore the idea of what it means to be a community and present a notion of community that has particular bearing on the development of a mentorship programme as outlined in my main research question. I shall further show how this expanded understanding has implications for collaborative partnerships as well as its implication for teaching and learning. I draw on the work of Barab, Barnett and Squire (2002:489-542) extensively as their construct of a community of teachers (CoT) is consistent with the notions of a reflexive democratic practice which incorporates transformative teaching and learning.

### 4.2    REVISITING NOTIONS OF A REFLECTIVE DEMOCRATIC PRACTICE IN THE  LIGHT OF THE CASE STUDY

In Chapter 3, I reported on a case study in which I explored instances of a reflexive democratic practice through an analysis of some of the voices of mentor teachers and student teachers. In my analysis I showed the extent to which elements of a reflexive, democratic practice is evidenced during their deliberations. I also analysed the nature of the interaction between members of the academy and members of the schools in pursuit of a common purpose, namely, the professional development of the student teachers.

On the one hand aspects of a reflexive democratic practice emerged through the voices of the mentor teachers and student teachers. The mentor teachers expressed a willingness to collaborate with the student teachers in order to improve their classroom practice as well as orientate them into various aspects of school life. They also indicated a desire to work closely with the lecturers at the academy in order to develop themselves professionally. Such joint endeavours could lay the basis for a reflexive democratic practice, as it has the potential to foster critical dialogue and communication which could lead to improved and more appropriate practice.

We further need to heed the voices of the students in terms of providing guidance with various aspects of classroom management and lesson presentations. Some form of scaffolding should be devised which will ease them into their new role as teachers. Support and guidance can be diminished as they become more confident and skilled. There have been instances evidenced in the literature where mentor teachers have adopted a 'sink or swim' approach to mentoring their student teachers (Templeton, 2003:163-175). However, the mentor has to be particularly skilled in being able to facilitate this approach. A more common trend in the literature recommends guidance and scaffolding to match the needs of the novice teachers as they proceed through various overlapping phases in their developmental needs (Calderhead, 1987; McIntyre, Hagger & Wilkin, 1993; Furlong & Maynard, 1995; Jonson , 2002).
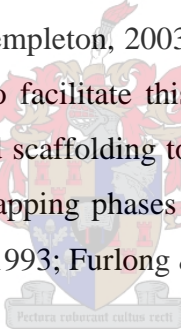
On the other hand, post-lesson feedback by mentor teachers indicates that the nature of the communication between the mentor teacher and the student teacher is still one-way. This lack of reflective dialogue hinders the development of a reflexive democratic practice. In an attempt to explain this phenomenon one can consider the hierarchical nature of the institutions, both the schools and the academy. Another reason may be the largely disciplinary-bound approach to teaching and learning, which militates against cross boundary dialogue (Bernstein, 1971:47-68), as well as the all-pervasive traditional pedagogy (Taylor & Vinjevold, 1999), despite utterances to engaging in more progressive approaches, interspersed with pockets of potentially transformative practice.

The teachers are still primarily concerned with organisational and procedural aspects such as time frames, duties, attendance and conduct of student teachers. If this is foremost on teachers' minds, then it is important that these aspects be addressed appropriately as an integral component of the reflexive practice cycle. However, this is not sufficient. Aspects of

professionalism and approaches to learning and teaching within the school contexts as well as the contexts of the academy should be an important component of their deliberations. Ex-students can act as an important link between the academy and the schools. Their familiarity with the practices at the academy will provide a common base for reflection and increase the potential for continuing the conversations even after they have graduated. Likewise, if in-service teachers feel that they are benefiting from the linkage in terms of enhancing their own professional development, they would be more willing to be part of this community of reflexive practitioners. Teachers in the schools concede that they are still grappling with the new curriculum and have indicated that they would like assistance in the methodologies associated with the new curriculum. An expectation uttered by a teacher from a host school '… things are changing in teaching, so I was feeling that the students coming from Tech[18] would have the latest books on OBE and I was actually hoping that the students would come and assist me as well, bring with them nice new books and lovely ideas for methodology'.

We in the academy and in the schools need to reflect and act on our own practices. An accommodating ethos, which encourages reflection, will not happen spontaneously. Those soft voices in the potentially transformative pockets need to begin to assert themselves and play a much stronger role in bringing about change in the institutions. They can be envisaged as conscious probes that make their voices heard at every opportunity, even if contentious. This may stimulate discussion and dialogue and compel people, even if unconsciously, to begin to reflect on their own practice. Robinson (2001:99-115), who envisaged similar intentions for a mentorship programme for teachers, shares this view of mentors as potential change agents. If this reflection is done consciously and continuously, then the nature of the conversations is more likely to become interactive rather than uni-directional. This, of necessity, could change the relationships that exist between students and lecturers. If lecturers allow space for students to air their own opinions, they may become less timid, and begin to take control of their own learning. Similarly, students will have the confidence to interact with the mentor teachers at a more interactive level. Those mentors who form part of the reflexive democratic process will not find it strange to be challenged or critiqued by students. This may sound like utopia, but it serves as a vision to work towards enabling more emancipatory practices, which would be more in line with the notion of a reflexive democratic practice.

Barab *et al.* (2002:489-542) note that traditionally many teacher education programmes have focused on a linear development path of progression from novice to expert, internalising and

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[18] Short for 'Technikon'.

entrenching existing practices. The current practice at our own institution tends to be the sort noted by Barab *et al*., where decisions made in terms of curriculum delivery are heavily grounded in the administrative component of the academy. Hence, throughput[19] and successful completion of courses are prioritised, as these have financial implications for the institution. It is convenient therefore, to maintain tried and tested methods than to embark on a course of action that is potentially transformative, if somewhat messy. Barab *et al*. (2002:489-542) cite alternative approaches which attempt to encourage transformative practices, such as programmes that teach against the grain in order to foster critical enquiry. They point out that this approach encourages the development of learning communities of pre-service teachers and practising teachers who are engaged in 'transformative' teaching. They refer to Cochran-Smith (1991)[20] who dubbed this 'collaborative resonance' and point out that those who adopt a collaborative resonance approach have concerns about power, equity, authority, culture and pedagogy in schooling.

Woods (1993:6-7) introduces an interesting term 'communitas'. This refers to the development of special bonds between people as they participate together in a shared endeavour. He illustrates this concept by referring to the development of a storybook by an adult with the assistance of 15 children He indicates that there was a strong sense of 'communitas' in which the participants discarded the normal roles and status and developed a special 'family feel' (1993:43). This levelling process, where people are no longer restricted in their deliberations by position and status, has a strong potential for transformative and creative action in which opportunities for the 'collaborative resonance' of Cochran-Smith (1991:279-310) are strengthened and hence potentially enhance the shift towards a reflexive democratic practice where participants are valued in the light of their contributions and not by their status. Such an approach has emancipating implications as people are liberated from being in awe of conventional restrictions like titles and positions of participants involved in the process. Instead, they are driven by a common incentive of the task at hand, in this case the professional development of the student teachers. At the same time, through a reflexive democratic practice, the possibility exists that the participants themselves are liberated from using stagnant and unsuitable teaching and learning methodologies and begin to engage with more empowering pedagogy. Such pedagogy will encourage participants to critically question and respond to the suitability of their practice within the context of their own schools.

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[19] The percentage of students who successfully complete the degree programme at the academy.
[20] Cochran-Smith, M 1991. Learning to teach against the grain. *Harvard Educational Review,* 51: 279-310.

## 4.3    DEMOCRATIC PRACTICES AND NOTIONS OF COMMUNITY

I shall now examine notions of community and indicate how certain aspects of community can more likely enhance democratic practices than others. The *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary of Current English* (1974:170) presents this definition (among others) of community: 'Group of persons having the same religion, race, occupation etc., or with common interest'. Another definition is: 'Condition of sharing, having things in common, being alike in some way'. This definition, which emphasises common interest and sharing, implies that people interact with each other in a relationship.

Community implies a social interaction in which community members have something in common, that is, shared practices, understandings, rituals, perceptions and so on.  The effect of the community on the individual and the contribution of the individual to the community is not the purpose of this study.  Suffice to say that the community can have constraining and empowering influences on the individual.  On the one hand, powerful social pressures can exist within a   community that leaves very little room to critique or debate practices that seem to be accepted without question.[21] On the other hand communities can provide a nurturing and supportive context in which individual members can thrive. Often, community members find themselves in these communities by default. Perhaps they were born into these communities. Communities that are forged by virtue of professional interest, as in the case of teachers who are willing to participate in a mentorship programme, can be potentially more open to a reflexive practice.  Participants join these communities through choice or persuasion.  This is the kind of community that I would like to focus on.

Jancis Long (2005:41-57) examines the role of community in facilitating or hindering the critical, cooperative democratic process by distinguishing between 'virtuous and vicious circles' of decision-making. Long identifies two vicious circles in which decision-making deteriorates into personal conflict leading to exclusionary policies on the one hand; and pressure for premature agreement leading to a de facto silencing of ideas on the other hand. In contrast Long recommends developing 'virtuous circles' of criticism that lead to cooperation by paying attention to sources of anxiety such as power, choice, desire, pressure, conflict, compromise and loss. Long points out that democratic decision-making produces powerful anxiety provoking emotions that can potentially contribute to the fragility of the democratic process. I contend that the extent of those anxieties will depend on the degree of

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[21] Some religious sects.

shared understanding among the participants as well as the underlying values and attitudes (often unarticulated and unconscious) to teaching and learning that they bring with them to their joint deliberations.

Nel Noddings (1996:245-267) questions whether there is a way to avoid the dark side of community, that is, its tendencies towards parochialism, conformity, exclusion, assimilation, distrust of outsiders and coercion. She suggests that the community itself should have built in protections against the undesirable factors. When considering education and community, Noddings recommends that we should try to establish some of the desirable factors associated with community, that is, a sense of belonging, of collective concern for each individual, of individual responsibility for the collective good, and of appreciation for the rituals and celebrations of the group – in short, a caring community. I think that a community in which its members are encouraged to reflect critically could be one way of counteracting oppressive and totalitarian tendencies and promoting democratic practices.

Yusef Waghid (2002:93) extends the notion of Fielding's (2000:399)[22] functional and personal dimensions of community to education and education policy implementation. He asserts that the personal dimension of community should gain ascendancy over the functional if education policy implementation is likely to make any contribution to shaping the human capacities of people. I agree that an approach that takes into account the 'humanness' of people, and the potential for them to make a contribution in a variety of ways would underpin democratic practices and accelerate educational development much more than policy initiatives driven by functional (instrumental) preoccupations. The latter technicist orientation tends to treat people as if they were machines or objects that need to be manipulated to bring about desired outcomes. The former orientation is sensitive to people's needs as human beings and has the potential to engage people cooperatively in a common endeavour on the basis of equality; that is, an orientation which considers participants to be of equal worth despite their differences in skills, knowledge and experience. Such collaborative endeavours that take the 'humanness' of people into account and value their contribution, have a greater potential for enhancing democratic practices as they promote equality, freedom of expression and inclusivity, which are significant aspects of democratic practices.

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[22] Fielding, M 2000. Community, philosophy and education policy: Against effectiveness ideology and the immiseration of contemporary schooling. *Journal of Education Policy*, 15(4): 397-415.

## 4.4    COMMUNITY OF PRACTICE

Communities of practice are examples of situated cognition (Lemke, 1997:37-56) providing opportunities for both novices and experts to learn and develop their practice through truly collaborative contexts, in this case the collaborative development of a mentorship programme for student teachers.  Each member of the 'community of practice', therefore, gains by interpreting, reflecting and forming meaning through and as a result of common experience. According to Wenger (1998:4), members are brought together by joining in common activities and by what they have learnt through their mutual engagement in these activities. In this respect, a community of practice is different from a community of interest in that it involves shared practice. Wenger notes that a community of practice emphasises learning that people have done together and that this shared learning and interests of its members are what keeps it together. 'A community of practice exists because it produces a shared practice as members engage in a collective process of learning.' (Wenger, 1998:4). Members can occupy different positions in the community and operate at various levels.  Some may be core members and others may operate on the periphery.

Barab *et al.* (2002:489-542) point out that many teacher educators have come to recognise that prospective teachers need experience as participants in collaborative learning communities. They cite instances where practising teachers, prospective teachers and teacher educators come together with the goal of developing relationships in which all members struggle with and construct the notions of what it means, not only to teach, but also how to transform current practice. They provide an account of a teacher preparation programme, termed 'community of teachers' whose core goal is fostering of community among members, as they work towards their secondary teacher's certification at the School of Education, Indiana University, USA. Participation was purely on a voluntary basis and was open to all education students at different levels of pre-service training. Hence, it functioned as a sub-group within the broader School of Education. The community held weekly seminars where the members came together to discuss various issues related to their growth as future teachers. All participants decided together on the topics to be discussed and the nature of the sessions. Students took turns leading weekly discussions, planning presentations, bringing information to the group and leading discussion related to teaching and learning.  The make-up of the community changed each semester, as new members joined and old members graduated. This is also our dilemma, that is, the changing nature of the participants. The challenge is to maintain a core of practitioners with a shared memory to serve as a basis for sustaining the

community. Such a core could potentially serve as a supportive network for existing as well as new members. If new members perceive the community as being reflective and critical of their own practice, then the likelihood of their being intimidated by constructive self-critique is diminished as the process is more likely to be perceived as developmental rather than judgemental.

Elements of a reflexive democratic practice seem inherent in the kind of community of practice envisaged by Barab *et al.* (2002:489-542). These are a collaborative exchange of ideas that stimulate critical enquiry and a considered contemplation on how to transform current practice. Such an orientation is more likely to promote participation and inclusivity as participants operate at a level of equality where their contributions to the community are valued, thus incorporating core components of a reflexive democratic practice, that is, reflexivity and democracy.

## 4.5 IMPLICATIONS OF A COMMUNITY OF PRACTICE IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE MENTORSHIP PROGRAMME

The dynamics of a community can range from being more hierarchical, more prescriptive, with participants having more defined identities, to more democratic, more interactive, with the identities of participants being more varied and flexible. The community of practice, however, should not be viewed as something static and complete, but constantly changing, depending on the biography of the participants, the context of the schools and the academy, and the nature of the relationships that exists among community members.

In analysing community dynamics, Barab *et al.* (2002:491-496) reflected on the core tensions which they identified as being central to community life. They added that the tensions should not be viewed as polar opposites existing along some linear continuum, but that they should be viewed as existing in continual relations with each other. In this way the elements of each tension are dialectical, with the challenge being to understand their interplay. They note that this dialectical nature of tensions is what Wenger[23] calls a duality. Wenger describes how the dimensions of a duality are in constant interaction. One of the tensions mentioned by Barab *et al.* (2002:489-542) is that of stability versus change. Additional tensions might be authority versus equal participation or different views of teaching and learning. All these aspects

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[23] Wenger, E 1998. *Communities of practice: Learning, meaning, and identity.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

interact with one another in a rich overlapping interplay, which underscores the limitations of viewing things in terms of two opposing opposites.

Barab *et al.* (2002:489-542) point out that in most teacher preparation programmes students inherit stable structures to be appropriated rather than created anew. The students do not participate in the design of these programmes. They argue that the power of the community of teachers was that it allowed itself to be continually remade, contextualised to the needs and interests of its members. They point out that it is not the created structures that are important, but that the crux of learning is actualised through the process of creation itself. This is a powerful assertion that is shared by George and Lubben (2002:659-672) in their attempt to facilitate teachers' professional development through a materials writing process, and is certainly worth exploring further. It could be that this is where the power resides, at the conceptualisation level, rather than at the implementation level. Instead of 'being done to', the students are 'doing with'. This 'doing with' has the potential to promote critical enquiry and interactive dialogue as people engage with one another actively, thus rendering increased learning possible.

Power dynamics can be discerned in terms of the nature of the conversations within the community, that is, the dominant voices that are emerging and those that are being suppressed. Whose voices are being heeded and how does this translate into practice? What are the influences that affect what people say and what they do? These may be the social, cultural or economic contexts of the participants as well as their own personal biographies. Barab *et al.* (2002:489-542) note that the type of discourse in which participants challenged one another and themselves, supported one another and solicited help from one another, assisted them in transcending traditional practices. This is consistent with Noddings' (1996:246-267) desirable factors associated with community. I agree with this approach to forging a community in which the participants feel free to critique and challenge, and ultimately be co-creators of the mentorship programme. This is in line with the notion of developing a mentorship programme through a reflexive democratic practice.

## 4.6    IMPLICATIONS FOR COLLABORATIVE PARTNERSHIPS

One of the challenges in building the collaborative partnership between the schools and the academy is the changing nature of participants, that is, the teachers in the schools, lecturers and students at the academy. Barab *et al.* (2002:523) speak about 'rolling cohorts' when

referring to old members leaving and new members joining. Joint and shared practices can be reflected upon more effectively if a sizeable number of participants with various combinations of shared experience, practice, knowledge, understandings and memory remain in the community. Community members over time develop common understandings that come about through joint enterprises and a shared agreement about plans of action, policies and shared goals. These provide continuity and lay the basis for the community of practice.

If participant teachers are inspired and motivated enough and actually feel that there is something in it for them such as professional development or job satisfaction, then they are more likely to be eager participants of the community of practice. These rewards are still at the philanthropic level, that is, altruistic and not economical. At this stage in our educational history, the chances of being offered financial rewards are limited, unless mentorship becomes prescribed policy by the National Department of Education (South Africa) with the concomitant support infrastructure that it can provide. Also, traditionally, over the years, the schools have accommodated our students as a matter of course – it has become common practice. Student teachers need to develop craft skills[24] as well as consciously develop an educational philosophy, that is, a conscious and recognised theoretical perspective on teaching and learning that he or she can relate to. If graduates from the academy can remain and continue to contribute to the community of practice, we can build up a core of reflexive practitioners who are interested in and are actually engaging in transformative practice.

It is my contention that reflection based on shared practices and experience can serve as a powerful base from which to launch and sustain collaborative, transformative practices. Such shared practices and experience could possibly present similar challenges to participating members of the community. These challenges can serve as immediate foci for dialogue, conversation and reflection. If accompanied with an emancipatory vision, then the potential for addressing these challenges in a way that would bring about transformative practice becomes even greater and the potential for sustaining a reflexive democratic practice is increased. Holden (2002:9-21), reporting on the role of mentoring in a teacher-led, school-based improvement programme, suggests that the process of mentoring itself is a vital aspect of any sustained drive towards the creation of what he calls 'learning communities' in schools. He firmly agrees with the view that the mentor benefits as much from the learning community as the mentee. I concur with Holden who posits that the accumulation of shared

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[24] Craft skills are those skills associated with being a teacher of a particular subject, that is, knowledge and skills that a teacher has to teach that subject effectively.

wisdom through ongoing critical conversations is the core driving force towards improved practices. The idea of a 'community of learners' is a natural extension of the 'community of practice' as individual members learn and develop as a result of their interaction in the community. Unfortunately in restrictive communities where there are repressive practices and rigid hierarchies, learning can be stunted, which limits the potential for engaging in a reflexive democratic practice.

## 4.7     REPRODUCING THE STATUS QUO VERSUS PUSHING FOR CHANGE

Initiating people into a culture of a community in which accepted practices are reproduced and the initiate is eventually accepted as a fully-fledged member of that community potentially could ignore the notion of a transforming practice. 'Welcome to the club', as it were. I should like to put forward the notion of a community of practice that can be essentially transformative. Such a community does not only look at reproducing accepted existing practices but also takes into account the transformative role of reflecting on those practices and transforming them to ones which are more emancipatory. This notion of a community of practice fits well within the critical paradigm as it potentially addresses the predicament of finding the balance between reproducing existing practices that might be anti-democratic, authoritarian and only beneficial to a certain group as opposed to forging practices that would be democratic and beneficial to a larger group. Finding the balance requires critical conversation and reflection as a guide to appropriate action.

## 4.8     SUMMARY

In this chapter I have argued that concerns for an emancipatory agenda can be addressed through a reflexive democratic practice within a community of practice. The potential for transformation is embedded in a process in which participants engage in deliberative and critical conversation, with the purpose of facilitating best practice, given the conditions in which they find themselves. It seems likely that the participants cannot remain unaffected by their deliberations. The possibility that they will examine their own practice in the light of critical and constructive engagement with others may lead to a change in their own practice. Such an approach has transformative possibilities for the development of a mentorship programme for teachers, when subject to ongoing and critical reflexivity within an environment conducive to democratic principles such as equality, freedom of expression and joint decision-making.

# CHAPTER 5

## DEVELOPING THE MENTORSHIP PROGRAMME WITHIN THE CONTEXT OF A COMMUNITY OF PRACTICE

### 5.1    INTRODUCTION

The motivation for doing this research as outlined in Chapter 1 was to inform the possibility of developing a mentorship programme for teachers through a reflexive democratic practice. The two main foci of my research have been an exploration of the literature on mentorship in education as well as a critical analysis of a case study, in which I analysed the voices of the key participants at the academy and the schools as they currently present themselves.

I have come full circle in terms of setting out the exploration of the development of the mentorship programme.  In Chapter 2, I put forward my notions and my understanding of reflexivity and of democratic practices.  During the case study certain findings have emerged which I will elucidate later on in the chapter, based on the voices that I have heard as presented by the mentor teachers, the student teachers and the interaction between the schools and the academy.

In this chapter I shall identify and elaborate on those elements that will serve as the guiding principles for the development of a mentorship programme, based on my exploration in Chapters 3 and 4. I shall further show that the development of the mentorship programme within the context of a community of practice has the possibility of stimulating practices which could promote reflexivity and democracy. This in turn has the potential for transforming teaching and learning towards practices that are more emancipatory. I will also indicate current practices in the teaching practice component of the course as it emerged from the case study and how these findings inform the development of the programme. Finally I shall offer possibilities for the development of the mentorship programme based on my expanded notions of a reflexive democratic practice within the context of a community of practice

## 5.2 CONSTITUTIVE MEANINGS FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE MENTORSHIP PROGRAMME

I shall argue that dialogue or critical conversation and imagination are the principle elements at the heart of reflexive democratic practice. I shall now elaborate on these constitutive meanings, within the context of a community of practice.

### 5.2.1 Critical conversations: a stimulant for a reflexive democratic practice

Critical conversation is a concrete way in which to articulate and make explicit thoughts and actions. It externalises what is presumed and presents possibilities for dispelling misunderstandings simply by bringing them out into the open. However, this is not sufficient. The context in which these conversations are happening should stimulate a reflexive practice. An environment, free from the constrictions of repressive authoritarian practices and rigid hierarchies in which people are encouraged to express their views and opinions and to critique and question existing practices, is a step towards emancipation. Such an environment will enable people to deliberatively engage with one another. Where people deliberate they engage critically, they question, they challenge, they listen, they reflect, they understand, and they begin to articulate meanings clearly, reasonably and lucidly.

Critical conversations also enable people to cope with changing contexts. This first decade of democratic rule in South Africa has presented teachers with particular challenges in terms of coping with the requirements of the new curriculum as well as the pressures of large classes, increased workloads and mass teacher exodus. Maxine Greene (1995:16) eloquently emphasises the importance of open-mindedness and dialogue when she talks about our changing contexts:

> My interpretations are provisional. I have partaken in the post-modern rejection of inclusive rational frameworks in which all problems, all uncertainties can be resolved. All we can do, I believe, is to cultivate multiple ways of seeing and multiple dialogues in a world where nothing stays the same.

The multiple ways of seeing that Greene (1995:16) alludes to, require imagination, that is, the willingness to shift from fixed perspectives and to put yourself in the place of others whose worlds may be different from your own. If you can imagine their worlds then you can critically engage in conversation with them. This act of imagination and critical conversation has transformative possibilities (Smith & Zeegers, 2002:5) for teaching and learning as well

as for the development of the mentorship programme as it enables participants to project what is possible and to envisage what does not exist. Ongoing reflexive practice implies that there is never an end, simply endless possibilities for reflection and action. Greene (1995:43) writes about 'dialogues always [being] incomplete' when referring to young people actively engaged in conversation. It is this kind of ongoing dialogue for action that has the potential to be nurtured and stimulated within a community of practice.

## 5.2.2   An imaginative community

An imaginative community emphasises an emergence of fresh and appropriate, imaginative action based on critical reflection, rather than a reproduction of existing practices which may no longer be suitable for our changing contexts. This emphasis on ongoing reflexive practice negates the development of a simplistic or finite mentorship model with its suggested notions of inflexibility and which supports the notion of a development or process when formulating the mentorship programme.

A developmental approach is more suited to the fluid contexts of the schools, the academy, the demands of the curriculum, and the socio-economic environments in which they play themselves out. A key component of this process is critical dialogue, which presents possibilities for consensus as well as for conflict. The nurturing environment of a community of practice that encourages differences has enabling implications for the types of decisions that are made and followed through. In this process, participants may not necessarily predict emerging dynamics or events that unfold but they'll potentially be in a stronger position to address challenges that may arise. Consequently, they may undergo transformation themselves as well as develop a deeper understanding of themselves as individuals and as a group. This transformation is essentially an emancipating process as participants become more aware of their own worth as well as the worth of others and as they begin to realise that they can make a difference in their immediate world.

Once again I draw on the ideas of Greene (1995:39) to highlight the importance of continuing dialogue. She infers that a democratic community (what I refer to as a community of practice) is one that is always in the making, marked by an emerging solidarity, a sharing of certain beliefs, and a dialogue about others: one that must remain open to newcomers. She encourages imaginative awareness that enables those involved to imagine alternative possibilities for their own becoming and their groups becoming. I agree with her emphasis on

process as this allows for ongoing reflection. This approach has implications for transforming teaching and learning, which I shall now outline below.

## 5.3    IMPLICATIONS FOR TEACHING AND LEARNING

Critical dialogue and imaginative conversation in the community as an accepted practice have the potential to spill over into classroom practices. If imaginative interaction is consciously emphasised and encouraged in the community, then it presents possibilities for teachers to carry over a related pedagogy to their own classrooms.  A pedagogy which encourages learners to participate, to actively share ideas, to speak up and elaborate on their own understandings of classroom issues is an empowering one. Such a pedagogy in which participants engage in collaborative and critical debate, addresses an emancipatory agenda as it liberates participants to develop to their own potential.  Greene (1995:5) asserts that dialogue of all sorts serves as the key to releasing the imagination. She elaborates on the types of dialogue as follows:  'Dialogue [is imaginative] among the young who come from different cultures and different modes of life, dialogue among people who have come together to solve problems that seem worth solving to all of them, dialogue among people undertaking shared tasks, protesting injustices, avoiding or overcoming dependencies or illnesses. When such dialogue is activated in classrooms, even the young are stirred to reach out on their own initiatives.'
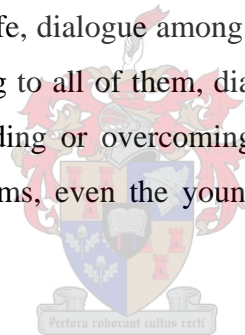
It is this stirring which accelerates and promotes learning.  Learners will then begin to take control of their own learning and critique, pursue and expand on what has been prompted in the classroom. This approach will move us closer to more emancipatory practices, despite the many and varied challenges in the classroom. I argue that this approach has the potential to help teachers cope in the classroom. By giving the learners a legitimate voice, the teacher can include them in addressing those challenges.  Smith and Zeegers (2002:4) refer to tensions which arise between the traditional forms of practice and the emergent forms and they indicate that these emergent forms incorporate effective practice. Taken further, one can think of emergent forms of practice as outlined by Smith and Zeegers (2002:4) to be a consequence of reflection and dialogue and hence an attempt to address existing needs and challenges.

Notions of reflexivity and the idea of a community of practice embrace notions of dialogue, of engaging the other critically, expecting the unexpected, listening and being attentive to the unsaid. Changing the ways we interact with one another, ways, which are democratic and

reflexive within the context of a community of practice, present transformative possibilities for the way we teach and the way we learn. This invariably has the potential for changing an institution or changing a classroom situation. Such episodes of transformation in the academy or the school have the potential to influence the institutional culture. An exploration of this is beyond the scope of this thesis but is certainly worth further investigation.

## 5.4 CURRENT PRACTICES AT THE ACADEMY

In providing guidelines for the formulation of the programme I need to step back a bit and analyse where we are at, as an academy, and how we can move towards a situation that will encourage more emancipatory practices. The initiative lies with the academy, as it is the academy that requires the cooperation and participation of teachers in host schools.

The nature of current practices at the institution for the fourth-year students mirrors the way in which the teaching practice component of the course is dealt with for the second- and third-year students. The fourth-year students are in the schools for six months, while the second- and third-year students are in the schools for six weeks only. The school placement for students is based on their own preferences as well as their major subject offerings. These subject offerings as well as the selection made by the practice teaching coordinator at the school, will determine which teachers the students work most closely with. Lecturers at the academy visit the schools to observe the student teachers teaching in the classroom. As already indicated, an observation sheet (see Appendix D) is used in which lecturers give written feedback on various aspects of the lesson. Finally the student is allocated a mark for his or her performance. Students have a minimum number of lessons that need to be assessed in order to complete the requirements for the teaching practice component of the course. They can supplement their quota by asking teachers to assess them for a certain number of lessons as well. Whom they ask is left to their own discretion. There is no system in place where teachers are taken through the criteria listed in the observation schedule, let alone contribute towards its creation. Teachers use the observation schedule to appraise students' performance in the classroom without prior initiation into its purpose.

Schools and student teachers are issued with a teaching practice manual (Peninsula Technikon, 2004), which indicates what the student teachers are required to do when they are there, as well as the expected role of the teachers. These guidelines mostly focus on organisational and procedural aspects of the teaching practice programme. Often, teachers do

not see the manual. The extent to which the teachers access the teaching practice manual is not known. No programme exists which focuses on nurturing and training those teachers who work closely with the student teachers. In the past this was not a priority, because of the short periods spent in the schools. Teacher development is accepted as being academy-based. With this extended six-month period in the schools for the fourth-year students, the implication is that at least half of the teacher development responsibility should be school-based. However, without official support infrastructure as evidenced in developed countries, the development potential of the student teachers is left to chance. The nature of the schools can vary from highly supportive and nurturing environments to contexts where the teachers themselves are battling to cope with the daily challenges that school life presents. Some schools may have a mentorship policy (Robinson, 2001:99-115), but the extent to which it is applied is not known. There has been no form of communication with the academy to that effect. Clearly, a critical appraisal of existing practices is needed.

## 5.5    AN APPRAISAL OF EXISTING PRACTICES

Nelleke Bak (2004:41-60) presents an interesting thesis in which she argues that the socialisation process of education is characterised by 'thin' democracy. As learners gain epistemic legitimacy, that is, they become more competent in dealing with the related concepts in a particular field, they are now in a position to use the tools they've learnt to argue, critique and challenge what was initially accepted. She refers to this as a process of individuation, which is characterised by a move toward a 'thick' democracy. I agree with Bak that an increased epistemic authority could potentially enable learners to question existing practices. However, an enabling environment is a necessary condition for the articulation of this critique. My contention is that the current environment at the academy does not foster democratic practices, as current practices at the academy are hierarchical and didactic and allow limited opportunity for student participation or critical reflection. Things are being done to and for the prospective mentors and students, rather than with them. The students, or the mentors for that matter, seldom participate in the design of these programmes. Michael Fielding (2004:306) notes this trend when he writes about students as co-researchers. He points out that initiatives that either exclude teachers or seek to engage them in less than central ways, often late on in the process in pursuit of external agendas, are unlikely to have anything more than limited success and stand little chance of sustainability, let alone transformation. He clarifies this further by indicating his concern for approaches that place heavy reliance on an external dynamic, often at the expense of internal commitment. It is my

view that developing the mentorship programme *with* rather than *for* the mentors and the mentees, will potentially increase the internal commitment of the participants and hence increase the possibility for sustainability and success.

Lubben, Campbell, Maphalala and Putsoa (1998:217-230) looked at the way in which industrialists involved in a materials writing project with schoolteachers changed the way they perceived their own roles, as the project proceeded, that is, from mere resource persons to co-creators of materials. Participation in a particular process may lead to a change in role perception as well as a change in actual roles displayed by participants as they become drawn into the core of the community. The effectiveness of the interaction and the quality of the programme can be characterised by the extent to which the role players are involved in its conceptualisation.

In terms of emancipatory practices, the academy is still heavily slanted in the opposite direction where decision-making is centralised and instances of a reflexive democratic practice are limited. The challenge is to move towards practices in the community that are more reflexive, and more democratic; in short, practices which are more emancipatory.

## 5.6    IMPLICATIONS FOR THE MENTORSHIP PROGRAMME

To increase the potential for more emancipatory practices, the relationship between the mentee and a mentor has to be imaginative. By imagination is meant that people connect with one another, they respond to one another, irrespective of the others' differences.  The community allows people to speak their differences, which is an entirely different approach to teaching and learning from the hierarchical, didactic approach that represents current practice.

Greene (1995:9-16) notes that there is a significant restructuring movement underway. The emergent movements she refers to are those movements that leave spaces for teachers to collaborate among themselves, with parents and teacher colleges. In short, the development of 'caring communities'. Yet she cautions that this is not sufficient. The nature of the curriculum also needs to be addressed to enable young people to participate in and address the challenges that the modern world presents. This would require that teachers treat their students as potential active learners who can best learn if they are faced with real tasks. These are the teachers who ask students to account for what they are saying and thinking as they try to become different and move beyond where they are. She notes that any encounter with actual

human beings who are trying to learn how to learn requires imagination on the part of the teacher. She points out that to learn and to teach, one must have an awareness of leaving something behind while reaching towards something new, and this kind of awareness must be linked to imagination. This kind of inspiring approach to teaching and learning acknowledges the contribution that all role players can bring to the learning environment and negates the approach where learners are treated as empty vessels that need to be filled with pre-digested knowledge. The teacher plays a particularly pivotal role in developing an enabling environment, which will encourage imaginative and critical conversation. In the power relations that play themselves out in the classroom, the teacher holds the key because the teacher needs to establish conditions in which the learner can learn. The teacher is the one who needs to act in 'speech and action' (Arendt, 1998:175-181). If the teacher cannot create conditions for liberation and imagination, then possibilities for transforming the classroom towards more emancipatory practices are severely hampered. Hence, the contribution of the teacher as a collaborative partner in the development of the mentorship programme needs to be acknowledged as being pivotal. The teacher's role as a mentor also needs to be acknowledged. This is confirmed by Roberts (2000:145-170) in his phenomenological reading of the literature on mentoring, in which he points out that the initiative lies with the mentor in making the relationship work. There is a duality in the relationship. It is mentor driven yet learner centred

## 5.7    FORGING A COMMUNITY

A community can only be forged (Price & Chen, 2003:105-117), not forced. Those members who feel most strongly and participate most eagerly in the community can be viewed as the core members. Those members who participate on the periphery are influenced by the core, but in turn influence the core. In this way the community can be vibrant rather than stagnant. All participants bring something to the community, which can potentially serve as a basis for critical conversation. Lecturers at the academy bring their own perspectives and expectations of the role of the school, as well as knowledge of student experiences at the academy. Teachers bring their intimate knowledge and experience of the schools, which may be organisational, social and professional. Students bring their own personal insights, experiences and expectations to the community.

A mentorship development programme that is co-developed by all role players, that is, teachers, students and lecturers, in which participants see themselves as an integral part of the

community, would more likely have the potential for continuous adaptation, based on changing needs and contexts. It would be more likely to promote imaginative and critical conversation as participants bring their own perspectives into the community. Such a programme embedded in a reflexive democratic practice should:

- involve all role players;
- formulate common goals and purposes as identified by the role players;
- encourage a nurturing environment;
- promote difference of opinion and constructive critique;
- embrace imagination;
- enhance transformative possibilities for more emancipatory teaching and learning; and
- take into account time constraints and the day to day demands of people's lives.

## 5.8 POSSIBILITIES FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE MENTORSHIP PROGRAMME

In formulating a mentorship programme based on a reflexive democratic practice, it seems important to incorporate some of the research findings as evidenced in Chapter 3 as well as the emerging perspectives on the community of practice. I will deal with the findings as they unfolded in the case study.

In Phase 1 and Phase 3, voices of the mentor teachers highlighted organisational and procedural aspects as being the chief concern of the teachers. Appointing a person or persons dedicated to the organisational aspects of the teaching practice component and who will be available to deal with any queries or problems that emerge as they occur could address their request for smooth organisation. Also, developing teaching practice guidelines which have been co-constructed by representatives from the schools, the student teachers and the academy, would be in line with the notion of a community of practice as outlined previously.

In Phase 1, mentor teachers indicated an expectation of some form of reciprocity in terms of their own professional development. This aspect needs to be explored more. A workshop dedicated to this may serve as a useful guide to identify aspects of development needed by members of the community. Again, it should not be assumed that the academy provides and the teachers receive. Critical dialogue and conversation within the community can shape the direction that it will take. Some mentor voices have indicated that they need guidance in addressing the requirements of the new OBE curriculum.

Phases 1 and 2 highlighted the willingness of ex-students to serve as mentors. It would seem that the basis for dialogue, conversation and reflection on practice has already been established through their common experiences at the academy. It might be useful to

- develop a database of willing ex-students who will serve as mentors;
- develop a database of teachers who have participated in any external professional development programme of the academy; and
- develop a database of teachers from host schools who are willing to participate in the community of practice.

In Phase 2 the student voices clearly indicated that they wanted support and guidance in terms of classroom management and lesson mediation. This has an implication for mentor training. However, the word 'training' implies prescription. A word more suited to the concept of a community of practice is 'development', which will be used in any subsequent discussion. Any mentor development programme should not only focus on these aspects of support for students, but also allow mentors to reflect on their own, taken-for-granted practice, and sensitise them to transformative possibilities for teaching and learning.

In Phase 3 it emerged that the nature of the conversations between the mentor and the student was largely ones where the mentor prescribes and the student listens. To a large extent the teacher monologues evidenced during post-lesson feedback was assessment-driven, as it necessitated a mark. This unfairly puts the teacher in a position of being an assessor rather than a mediator of professional development. To rate someone with a mark implies providing a judgement of that person's performance. This can serve as a barrier to developing collegial relationships in which problems are shared and addressed collaboratively. Jones (2000:78) points out that the pressure of assessment strengthens the concern that there is a danger for trainee teachers to adopt a strategy of 'playing it safe'. In order to avoid failure they may try to adhere too closely to their mentor's practices of teaching, depriving themselves of the experience to explore and exploit their potential. This relationship could stunt critical conversation and the sharing of ideas. The emphasis should shift towards more formative assessment practices in an enabling environment that will promote rather than constrain improved practice. The role of the lesson observation sheet should be open to critical appraisal by all the participant members of the community.

It is my recommendation that the findings emanating from the research should lay the basis for creating opportunities for critical engagement. Representatives of the academy (lecturers and students) and the schools should participate dialogically in developing the programme and form an integral part of delivery of any training sessions that will ensue. By incorporating all components of the triad (lecturers, teachers and students) in every aspect of the programme, from development to implementation, it addresses the concern that programmes are created for rather than with participants. Collaborative endeavours could maximise the potential for increased participation and more emancipatory practices, as they are more likely to present opportunities for reflection and critical conversation.

## 5.9 A COMMUNITY OF PRACTICE AND SUSTAINABILITY

The potential for sustainability can be enhanced if there remains a substantial core of participants with a shared purpose, experience, and memory who can carry on the central business of the community, namely, nurturing and supporting mentor teachers to develop practices that are reflexive and democratic. The lecturers at the academy and the mentor teachers represent a more constant presence than the student teachers who leave when they complete their qualification. Lecturers and teachers also leave, but their departure is circumstantial and not necessarily *en masse*. It might be worthwhile to invite eager students to remain in the community when they have qualified, and redefine their roles as mentors, rather than mentees. The value of ex-students assisting in the professional development of student teachers has already been outlined previously. Continuity and change do not reside in the relationship between the mentor and the mentee, but reside in the community of practice, which is continuously remaking itself.

This tension between continuity and change, as pointed out in Chapter 4, can co-exist in a community. Here are a few dualities as outlined by Barab *et al.* (2002:489-542), namely stability versus change, authority versus equal participation, and different views on teaching and learning. The purpose would not be to eliminate those tensions, but rather to address them. Additional tensions noted by Stanulis, Fallona and Pearson (2002:80) are the lack of time for collaborative conversation, lack of release support for observations, philosophical differences between novice and mentor, and unclear boundaries between support and evaluation. One way of sensitising community members to such tensions is to create space for ongoing reflection as a conscious element of the mentorship programme. An overarching dilemma may be reproducing the status quo versus pushing for change. This is the

predicament, reproducing existing practices that might be anti-democratic, authoritarian and only beneficial to a certain group as opposed to forging practices that would be democratic and beneficial to a larger group.   A way of addressing such tensions would be through a reflexive, democratic practice. Hence, incorporating aspects of the linear model of teacher development where students are guided by scaffolding experiences in a structured, linear way versus 'moving back and forth' (Greene, 1995:9-16), drawing on imagination and critical reflection while addressing needs as they present themselves, may all have their place in the conceptualisation and implementation of the mentorship programme.

## 5.10   LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER STUDY

The main purpose of the exploration was to inform the possibility of developing a mentorship programme through a reflexive democratic practice within a specific context, that is, a particular department within a particular institution, interacting with particular schools. Hence, the research findings cannot be generalisable, as they are context specific. However, the approach of reflection informing action as popularised by Schön (1983) can be applied to any situation and purpose where people are collaboratively and critically engaged in pursuit of a common endeavour.

This study presented the first phase of the action research cycle, which lays the basis for the development of the mentorship programme through a reflexive democratic practice within the context of a community of practice. Even though some of the findings emanating from the research have already been considered and addressed, such as the development of a teaching practice manual for mentor teachers and students as well as meeting with principals and teachers from the host schools to get their initial input on the teaching practice component of the programme, it would be advisable to research a second round of the cycle. Consistent with the notion of a community of practice, there should be a collaborative element to the research in which participants from the community take responsibility for the investigation. This does not mean that investigations of the process will stop after subsequent cycles. A reflexive democratic practice implies constant critical monitoring and deliberation to inform best practice as an essential component of the community. Some of the suggestions made in the study such as scaffolding student teachers' experiences, specifically building in techniques to encourage reflection into the mentorship programme, using ex-students as mentors and involving lecturers, teachers and students in conceptualising and developing the programme, are all aspects that are worth researching and have the potential to inform policy and practice.

This kind of collaboration as envisaged by the community of practice is very different to the current practices that exist in the academy, as indicated earlier in the thesis. It would be worth exploring whether this development would have an impact on the institutional culture at the academy or at selected schools. Similarly, the notion that the crux of learning is actualised through the process of creation itself (Barab *et al.,* 2002:489-542) can be explored by examining the learning accrued by those participants who play a major role in the co-development of the mentorship programme.

## 5.11    CONCLUSION

This thesis argued that critical dialogue and deliberation are at the core of practices that are more democratic, more reflexive. Critical conversation necessitates a social engagement in which the potential for more emancipatory practices can be enhanced within an imaginative community of practice. Such a community has transformative possibilities for teaching and learning. On the one hand, the voices emerging from the case study indicate a willingness by mentor teachers, students and lecturers to work together to improve the practice teaching component of the teacher development programme. This willingness to collaborate enhances the possibility of developing a mentorship programme through a reflexive democratic practice. On the other hand, the hierarchical practices at the academy and the conventional expectations of teachers, lecturers and students militate against this. It will be up to those soft voices in the 'transformative pockets' to assert themselves and maintain the critical dialogue that will stimulate the development of a reflexive democratic practice

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# APPENDICES

## APPENDIX A

### GENERAL INFORMATION

| NAME | SCHOOL | TEL(S) | TEL (H or C) | FAX(S) |
|------|--------|--------|--------------|--------|
|      |        |        |              |        |

### QUESTION 1

What were the circumstances that made you come to the mentor-training workshop? **Circle the appropriate response.**

    a.    Received an instruction from the principal/HOD/colleague.
    b.    Volunteered to come after the school received a fax about the workshop.
    c.    Was requested to attend by a Pentech lecturer.
    d.    Was informed by a colleague and agreed to come as well.
    e.    Other – Please specify
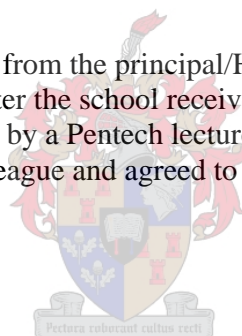
### QUESTION 2

Write down the grades and subjects that you teach at school by completing the table.

| Name | Grade | Learning area | Number of classes | Approximate class size |
|------|-------|---------------|-------------------|------------------------|
|      |       |               |                   |                        |

### QUESTION 3

Have you had any training in translation activities?  If yes, please explain where.

_____

_____

_____

**QUESTION 4**

What do you hope to gain from attending the workshop?

 

**QUESTION 5**

Is there anything that you would like us to address during the workshop?

 

**QUESTION 6**

What support do you think student teachers need?

 

**QUESTION 7**

How do you think you can support the student teachers?

 

**QUESTION 8**

What support do you think you need in order to do that?

# APPENDIX B

**INTERVIEW WITH MENTOR TEACHER ABOUT THEIR EXPERIENCE WITH THE STUDENT TEACHERS**

1. How many student teachers are you busy mentoring at the moment?
2. Which subjects are they doing?
3. How have you been finding your experience so far?
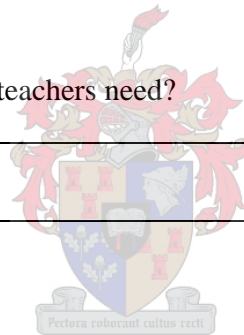4. Why did you decide to join the mentorship programme?
5. How long have you been teaching?
6. How do you find it?
7. What subjects do you teach?
8. Why was it that you attended all three mentorship programmes? What motivated you to come to all three programmes?
9. So have they been of any use to you, the three training workshops that we've had?
10. What about the translation activity part of it?
11. Have you been able to implement any of the suggestions that have been made in the programme when you were working with the student teachers?
12. And any other things that came out of the programme, have they affected or influenced you in any way?
13. Have you been able to assist student teachers with any of your own ideas, suggestions or skills that you have?
14. Have you have any difficulties in working with the student teachers that you can think of, any problems that you have encountered?
15. Does your school or colleagues support you in any way in your role as a mentor?
16. Are there any other teachers working with students in the school?
17. Describe your relationship with the student teachers.
18. Do you think you've actually managed to make them better teachers or do you think you have you helped one or two to improve on the way they teach in this short period (two weeks)?
19. Is there anything that you think you've learnt from them?
20. Do you feel that you have been enriched in any way by interacting with them?
21. What about other benefits. Can you think of more long-term benefits for you? Let's imagine that you are continuing to be involved in the mentorship programme.
22. What do you think, how can we as 'Pentech' support you people further in helping the student teachers, is there anything we can do from our side?
23. Anything else that you can think of that is concrete that we can assist with?
24. Are there any recommendations that you would like to make to us in developing the programme other than your specific ones that you spoke about just now?
25. Any questions from your side?
26. Thank you very much.

Discuss the following questions in your group by referring to a specific lesson that you taught during practice teaching.

One person can start talking. Others can interrupt if they had a similar experience or if they experienced something different. Try to make sure that you say your name before or after you have spoken.

## How can a mentor teacher help you to:

- plan your lessons


- organise your lesson / conduct your lesson


- manage your learners


- assess your learners skills, knowledge and understanding


- evaluate your own lesson


- improve your content knowledge


- develop different teaching and learning strategies.

# Lesson Evaluation Form

Date: ----------------------------------     School: ----------------------------------

Pre/ In-service Teacher ------------------------------------------------------------------

Student No: ----------------------------------     Programme: ------------------------

Medium of Instruction: ---------------------     Grade: -------------------------------

Subject: ---------------------------------------     Topic: -------------------------------

Preparation and planning:

------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------
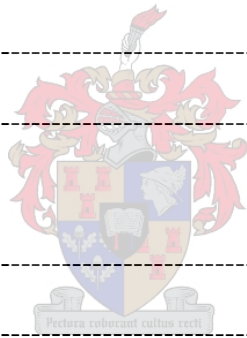
Teacher of subject and presence:

------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

Knowledge of subject matter:

------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

Communication and classroom interaction:

------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

Use of teaching and learning aids:

------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

Classroom management:

-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

Relevance of lesson to broarder social/ practical issues:

-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------


Pre/ In-service teacher's reflective ability in connection with stated objectives:

-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------
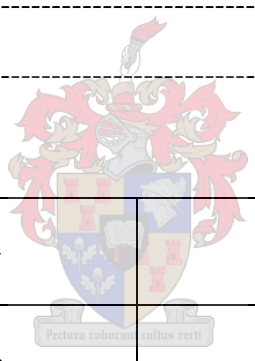
General comments:

-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

**EVALUATION:**

| E | G | S | NS |
|---|---|---|---|
| % | % | % | % |


**Evaluation Code:**  E - Excellent = 75% +                          G – Good = 60-74%
                                 S – Satisfactory = 50-59%                    NS – Not Satisfactory = 0-49%


………………………………………             ………………………….
**Lecturer/Teacher**                                             **Date**