

# The pedagogical skills gained by beginning teachers as a result of mentorship in government secondary schools in Tanzania

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## Abstract

This study investigated the pedagogical skills gained by beginning teachers as a result of mentorship services in government secondary schools in Tanzania, a case study of Rukwa region, specifically in Sumbawanga Municipality and Nkasi District. The study employed exploratory case study design and qualitative research approach in exploring teachers' experiences on the pedagogical skills gained by beginning teachers following to mentorship services. Data were collected through open-ended questionnaires and semi-structured interviews. Data were thematically analyzed. Findings show that as a result of school based mentorship services, beginning teachers gained pedagogical skills in: the subject content masteries; the teaching and learning materials preparation; the learner-centred teaching and learning methods application; and the students' assessment and feedback giving. The study concluded that considering the importance of school-based mentorships in enhancing beginning teachers' pedagogical skills, it is important that the government embraces, develops and enhances mentoring practices in government secondary schools despite the fact that it was done in a non-institutionalized formats and characterized by voluntary actions. On the basis of these research findings, the study recommends that it is worth for the ministries responsible for education to institutionalise school-based mentorship practices by releasing regulations, circulars and guidelines to enforce schools implement mentorship in a specific and systematic procedures which could stand as best practices in the education system instead of depending on personal desires and commitment. The ministries responsible for education should also prepare a national assessment tool to measure mentoring achievement across all schools in the country.

**Key words:** pedagogical skills, beginning teachers, mentorship, government secondary schools

## 1.0 Introduction

The first year of teaching is regarded to be the most challenging period in the teaching career. A number of studies have shown that in the first year of teaching, beginning teachers are facing number of problems related to teaching and learning. These include: weakness on lesson planning, preparation of teaching and learning materials, applying participatory teaching methods, maintaining discipline in the classroom, managing time and preparation of students' assessment, hence they need professional supports (Ali, 2017; Ally & Mabagala, 2022; Heeralal, 2014; Kasuga, 2019; Kayombo, 2019; Kitta and Fussy, 2013; Mgaiwa, 2018; Mosha, 2015). In this case, beginning teachers need mentorship from experienced teachers in order to grow professionally and personally. Mentorship services to beginning teachers is globally declared to be one of the cost-effective and sustainable professional support services which is usually provided within the working environment with three objectives: First, to solve professional challenges that they face in the first year of employment, second to improve retention and job performance at their work places and third to keep new teachers updated with the ever-changing teaching and learning needs (Alam, 2018; Dachi, 2018; Faruki, et al., 2019; Wasonga, et al., 2015). It is upon this significance that education systems worldwide including Tanzania, consider mentorship as a relevant instrument in enhancing beginning teachers' pedagogical skills and hence increase their teaching capacities and students' learning outcomes (Faruki, Haque & Islam, 2019; Dachi, 2018; Alam, 2018; Wasonga et al., 2015).

## 1.1 Development of Beginning Teachers Mentorship in Schools

The development of mentorship in schools draws back from the *Odyssey of Homer* story in Greece when mentoring was understood from the apprenticeship system perspective whereby the apprentices learnt skills from the master (Comer, et al., 2017). The meaning of mentorship has ever since evolved in many forms and practices and it is now perceived as a process of facilitating career development in possessing relevant knowledge and skills of carrying out professional activities on the basis of set standards (Agunloye, 2013; Clark & Byrnes, 2012; Darling-Hammond, 2013). Furthermore, mentorship in the education sector largely is performed to support newly employed teachers to learn teaching responsibilities and hence grow personally and professionally (Smith & Finch, 2010; Wallace Foundation, 2007). Since 1980s, many developed and developing countries globally have paid interest in mentoring newly appointed teachers following to the benefits obtained out of mentorship practices as identified by scholars Alam (2018), Dachi (2018), Faruki, et al., (2019), and Wasonga, et al., (2015). For those reasons, mentorship for beginning teachers has been a driving force towards achieving educational goals and through this process, mentorship has shown positive impact towards enhancing beginning teachers' pedagogical skills which enable them to teach effectively and contribute to students' academic performance in respective countries.

## 1.2 Pedagogical skills gained as a result of mentorship

Ali et al., (2018) unveil that one of the roles of mentorship is to enhance beginning teachers' pedagogical skills. It is the capacity increase in theory and practice of teaching and learning. Pedagogy enhancement informs increasing teaching strategies, teacher actions, and teacher judgment and decisions by taking into consideration the increased understanding in theories of learning, increased understanding of students and their needs, and the backgrounds and interests of individual students. Ali, et., al. (2018) further describe that the main purpose of enhancing pedagogy is to empower both teachers and their students to improve the quality of teaching and learning in the classroom situation. Beginning teachers must take mentorship services to increase the ability to critically analyse the ideologies, values, interests, and personalities that inform their roles as teachers and the cultural politics they promote in the classroom. According to Rahman, et al., (2020) enhancing pedagogy mean the adding value to teaching skills that teachers apply before, during and after instructional processes. The research findings of their study portrayed that the pedagogical skills enhancement is most effective in promoting learning and in particular highlights increased students' involvement as active participants in their own learning, the better they do. The fundamental of pedagogy enhancement remains the obvious purpose of improving the teacher's ability to make students have increased confidence in their individual competency; meet challenges; to make students' aptitude stronger to effectively manage comprehensive projects and self-efficacy; and to grow their inclusive self-concept (Smith & Finch, 2010).

On the other hand, Susilo (2011) describes pedagogical skills enhancement to be improving in the three aspects of teaching skills, namely: lesson planning, implementing teaching and learning processes, and assessing students' learning. Auerbach and Andrews (2018) are in line with Susilo (2011) by indicating that pedagogical skills enhancement involves the process of acquiring extra ability in lesson preparations, teaching method, motivating the students, classroom management and the assessment of the students. In emphasizing the importance of pedagogical skills enhancement, Retnowati (2013) advocates that pedagogical skills enhancement demonstrates the increased ability of teachers to organize learning materials and perform all activities involved in the teaching career effectively so it can be easily understood by the learners. With a student-centred teaching and learning approach, students take a much more active role, engaging in discussions with their teachers and peers during and after teaching and learning processes so as to master the required academic competences (Auerbach & Andrews, 2018). Therefore, Nind and Lewthwaite (2018) conclude that pedagogical skills include teaching-learning related skills like planning the lesson properly, managing the class, choosing appropriate strategy for instruction, supporting the students in their learning processes and provide feedback to students and other relevant authorities as may be required. Also, for the purpose of this study, pedagogical skills are perceived as abilities of a teacher to make lesson preparations, prepare teaching and learning materials including teaching aids, apply relevant teaching and learning approaches, control and manage class, identify and attend students' individual needs, assess and give feedback to students and stakeholders as pre-requisite tasks in the teaching profession.

It is a desire that beginning teachers, after mentorship are expected to demonstrate the ability to prepare lessons, master the content knowledge, manage learning processes, apply appropriate teaching and learning methods, conduct assessment and support individual students' needs (Ally & Mabagala, 2022; Alam, 2018; Dachi, 2018; Faruki, et al., 2019). In addition, Gay (2000) insists that caring is a foundational pillar of effective teaching and learning, and the lack of it deprives students' opportunities of acquiring the intended learning competences. For this reason, beginning teachers need to be exposed to ongoing, regular and contemporary new methodologies and approaches of teaching consonant equally to ever changing environment (United Republic of Tanzania, 1995, 2014). The school leaders and administrators need to create conducive teaching and learning environment from which beginning teachers should be attached to and be supported by experienced teachers to grow professionally and personally. Basically, school heads are responsible in ensuring that beginning teachers acquire relevant teaching competences within a working place in a reciprocal mode whereby teachers support each other (Ali, 2017). Whereas, Islam (2019) portrays that besides the support from school leaders, lack of professional trainings and pedagogical knowledge also impede the teachers from experimenting new forms of teaching-learning strategies in their classes. To confirm the argument, Brannan and Bleistein (2012) conducted a study to investigate the beginning teachers' perceptions on support enhancement. Findings revealed that beginning teachers are in need of support and what they want is "enhanced support in pedagogical ideas share-out, enhanced capacity in sourcing teaching resources, and diverse logistical knowledge provided by colleagues, mentors or both" (p. 534). They also want to receive additional feedback from mentors and affective support, which shows that they find the assistance useful to cope with professional challenges. They emphasized the importance of the "need to be heard" and appreciated when they were heard and received affirmation in their teaching practice.

As the response to improvement of education quality, there have been numerous mentorship initiatives in the last two decades to enhance pedagogical practices in Sub-Saharan Africa including Tanzania as a means to improve pedagogical skills (Makunja, 2016). Nevertheless, in the majority of African classrooms, pedagogical practices are described as authoritarian, teacher-dominated, and lecture-driven. Evidence suggests that this type of teaching merely enhances rote learning and does not support development of conceptual learning, critical thinking, and problem-solving skills (Kafyulilo, et al., 2013). In addition, Dziczkowski (2013) confirms that through mentoring, beginning teachers get an avenue of gaining the capacity to prepare schemes of work, lesson plans and lesson notes and the experienced teachers do frequent check-up of the schemes of work before allowing them to submit to the school heads for further approval. In line with this argument, Ashby, et al., (2008) reported evidence in mentoring practices at the University of Liverpool which made significant contribution to the career experiences of the mentees, widening their 'horizons for action' in terms of teaching and learning materials preparation and management. The authors added the argument that beginning teachers' performance was rated on a Likert scale and the experienced teachers rated the 80% of the beginning teachers who were engaged in the mentoring services to be excellent in the preparation of the schemes of work as compared to beginning teachers who did not undergo mentoring services in the preparation of the schemes of work, and were rated only 35% excellent in the preparation of the schemes of work. The authors recommended that the professional support from the experienced teachers are significant in providing potential realistic view and morale in teaching career among the beginning teachers, and they gain good performance in the preparation of the quality teaching and learning materials.

A review of literature on beginning teacher mentoring by Whisnant, et al., (2005) on the experienced teacher guidance on the lesson design and the use of student assessment data to guide beginning teachers in the planning of lesson. The authors affirm that beginning teachers were guided through to plan lessons by the experienced teachers. The findings show that the beginning teachers were left to perform the duty on their own. The follow up of the induction programme revealed that about 95% of the beginning teachers were rated good to excellent in competence gained in the use of the students' assessment data in the preparation of the lesson plan. From the findings authors concluded that induction programmes to beginning teachers is an effective way through which their teaching and learning competence levels can be raised. In this study these authors highly recommend mentoring programmes in secondary schools as a means through which beginning teachers can be supported professionally in order to grow professionally. In line with the argument, the study by Le-Maistre and Pare (2010) assert that beginning teachers can best survive their practice by effectively attaching themselves to the experienced teachers, where they can grow professionally and gain competences in the teaching career. It was a comparative based study where the beginning teachers who were directly attached to experienced teachers for support were rated against the beginning teachers who had no any attachment for support from the experienced teachers. The authors argue that beginning teachers who had professional support from the experienced teachers performed best as compared to beginning teachers who had no support from the experienced teachers. For this case therefore authors recommended for the attachment of beginning teachers to be attached to experienced teachers for professional support hence gain of competences in the teaching and learning practices.

Tanzania in particular, the study by Kafyulilo, et al., (2013) provide findings on the teachers' capacity in implementing the competence-based curriculum and hence they reported that beginning teachers require the ability to engage students and identify individual learner's needs. These authors argue that it is vital for the beginning teachers to gain competences from the experienced teachers in the ability to engage students in the learning processes and identify and attend to the individual students learning needs. They further added that it is from the experienced teachers that the beginning teachers will attach themselves and gain the competences in the individual learners' needs identification and attendance. Therefore, the implementation of the new curriculum requires the experienced teachers, to coach and do demonstrations to beginning teachers on how to spare time, take keen observation of the student and offer special treatment dependent on the nature of the individual needs. From this act, the beginning teachers would have gained competences in identifying and attending to student's individual learning needs.

In line with this argument, Jokolo (2004) reports on the gained ability of beginning teachers to manage, control and observe the classroom. Jokolo in her study reported the admission from some of the experienced teachers who argued that initially beginning teachers expressed concern to the experienced teachers to support them in the classroom management and control techniques. The author argues that beginning teachers expressed to experienced teachers the challenges of not having enough confidence in control of the students, being intimidated by direct interaction with students, not knowing how much leniency they could employ and how to manage their classes. From these observations, the author presents that beginning teachers were supported by the experienced teachers and at the time of the study, these experienced teachers rated majority of the beginning teachers excellent in the management, control and observation of the classroom activities, and including the classroom assessment and feedback giving. The study findings from Jokolo (2004) unveil the truth that school based professional supports which are usually given by experienced teachers enable beginning teachers to acquire teaching competences and gain abilities of solving challenges evolved around the teaching career.

## 1.5 Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study was to investigate the pedagogical skills gained by beginning teachers as a result of mentorship in government secondary schools in Tanzania.

### 1.5.1 Specific objectives

Specifically, the study addressed: i) the enhanced pedagogy in subject contents mastery skills, ii) the enhanced pedagogy in teaching and learning materials preparation skills, iii) the enhanced pedagogy in teaching and learning methods application skills, and iv) the enhanced pedagogy in students' assessment and feedback giving skills.

## 2.0 Study Methodology

Basing on the study methodology, the study adopted socio-cultural theory which describes school based mentoring as a demanding social interaction in communities of learning to enhance pedagogical skills (Rogers et al., 2019). Whilst, the application of the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) theory as described by Bhowmik, et al., (2013) and Kamarudin, et al., (2020), suited this study because it showed the role of experienced teachers (more knowledgeable ones) in mentoring beginning teachers to enhance pedagogical skills. This study was a qualitative inquiry which presumed the participants' personal constructs and interpretation of the phenomena under investigation (Yin, 2016; Creswell, 2007). Hence, the exploration of the participants' experiences, perspectives and views was done in their natural contexts (Silverman, 2013). The study was conducted in Rukwa region in Sumbawanga Municipality and Nkasi District. The study covered seven government secondary schools; where schools 1, 2, 3 and 4 were found in Sumbawanga Municipality and schools 5, 6 and 7 were found in Nkasi District. A total of 63 equivalents to 95.5% out of 66 planned participants participated in the study. Their participation based in categories of experienced teachers (28), beginning teachers (15), heads of departments (11), heads of schools (7) and District Secondary Education Officers (2).

The study administered open-ended questionnaires to experienced teachers whose beginning teachers were attached to. The aim was to obtain the practical experience on mentoring beginning teachers to enhance their pedagogical skills specifically to this research objective, the pedagogical skills gained out of mentorship. Also semi-structured interviews were done to beginning teachers, heads of departments, heads of schools and DSEOs to get deep understanding on the pedagogical skills gained due to mentorship. The interviews and follow up discussions were conducted in a mix of English and Kiswahili languages and direct quotations were translated into English by the researcher and then verified by the two supervisors. An average time for individual interview took between 40 and 60 minutes respectively. All participants involved in the study gave informed consent and agreed to be interviewed. Anonymity was observed as part of ethics in research.

More importantly, the criteria for examining the rigour in the study have traditionally been internal and external validity, reliability and objectivity (Creswell, 2007; Golafshani, 2003). Gall, et al. (2007) pose out that the term trustworthiness is appropriate for judging the quality of study in qualitative paradigms. The elements of the criteria in trustworthiness include: credibility, dependability (consistency), transferability (applicability) and conformability (neutrality). These elements were employed alongside with other strategies to ensure the quality of this particular study. Credibility is parallel to internal validity (Cohen, et al., 2000; Creswell, 2007). This was achieved, first, through the use multiple instruments of data collection (individual in-depth interviews and open-ended questionnaires) to collect data. Second, peer reviews were used to ensure credibility, where fellow researchers were given the tentative data and findings for their reviews and comments. Dependability corresponds to the reliability of the findings in quantitative study (Cohen, et al., 2000; Creswell, 2007). Dependability was guaranteed by asking clear questions relevant participants, triangulating the data, reducing biasness and subjectivity during the data collection, peer reviews, audit trail, and reporting the study process and the findings transparently. In conformability, parallel to objectivity criteria in the quantitative approach (Cohen, et al., 2000), the researcher confirmed the study findings and grounded them in raw data evidence. The integrity of raw data was maintained by using participants' direct words, including quotes, liberally.

In the case of transferability, it was guaranteed through recording actual words from participants. Transferability is equivalent to generalization of the findings in the quantitative study (Cohen, et al., 2000; Creswell, 2007). Although the location of the study might be similar to other places in Tanzania, the researcher's aim was not to generalize the findings of the study; instead, it was to gain deeper understanding on the pedagogical skills gained in which beginning teachers administered during field activities. However, if readers would find sufficient similarities between their contexts and the context of the study, then it would be reasonable for them to transfer the findings to their individual contexts. Finally, the data collected were analysed using the principles of thematic analysis. The approach involved six steps: familiarisation with the data, generation of tentative codes, elucidation of themes, review of themes, delineation of themes and production of the written report as presented by Bricki and Green (2007). From the questionnaires and interviews four themes were inductively developed as per study objectives. Prior to each interview and questionnaire, the researcher described the purpose and benefits of the study and steps to be taken to maintain confidentiality and anonymity. In addition, the researcher assured the participants that the information collected were for the research purpose only. The names of participants and school names were not mentioned in the study report.

### 3.0 Findings

#### 3.1 Enhanced pedagogy in subject contents mastery skills

Findings show that beginning teachers had enhanced pedagogical skills in subject matter mastery due to mentorship they were offered in schools. Beginning teachers reported that they had improved in the subject matter mastery skills. One beginning teacher commented:

My mentor went beyond the expectations... He made sure that I understood and mastered well the lesson notes making techniques as well as mastering the subject key points needed to be successful in the classroom presentations. I'm proud of my achievement and ever, since, I have been able to mentor on the mathematics subject lesson notes making techniques and even share out my personal notes with peers when we meet in the district education week forums (Beginning teacher 13, 2020).

Similarly, heads of departments reported that beginning teachers had improved in the mastery of the subject contents. One head of department justified that:

Experienced teachers mentored beginning teachers in searching for curriculum materials through internet using their personal smart phones [for those who possessed]. They also supported beginning teachers with text/and or reference books and lesson notes. Sometimes they even photocopied text books especially science books from either fellow teachers or neighbouring schools and issued them to beginning teachers. By exposing beginning teachers with relevant working documents, they gained competences on the mastery of subject contents and the pedagogy has been enhanced a lot. Beginning teachers are today working in the same competence as experienced teachers, and that is vivid in the quality of the teaching and learning materials they produce (Head of department 8, 2020).

In addition, head of schools also reported that beginning teachers had improved in the mastery of the subject contents. The head of school justified that:

The school based mentorship is correct and relevant educational tool used to empower beginning teachers to effectively acquire pedagogical skills. The mentorship results show that the beginning teachers have become aware of the weaknesses they had initially and right now they prepare a real comprehensive lesson notes and schemes of work. At this stage one can absolutely agree that mentoring had positive effects towards enhancing pedagogical skills among beginning teachers, and hence they have grown academically and professionally in pedagogy (Head of school 6, 2020).

On the whole, the findings show that eleven 11 (18%) out of 61 respondents on that particular theme admitted that beginning teachers had enhanced their pedagogical skills in the areas of subject contents mastery as a result of mentorship which offered beginning teachers a great opportunity of learning and masteries of the subjects they are teaching in schools. Therefore, beginning teachers are reported to be able to manage the pedagogical practices due to the mentorship they received initially in schools. Similar findings are disclosed in the study done by Warsame and Valles (2018) who evaluated the effectiveness of beginning teachers' induction support structures in the South Western US state, and reported that as a result of mentorship, beginning teachers were reported to have gained the content knowledge on the subjects they were teaching, and therefore, they were able to search on their own the curriculum materials through internet using their personal smart phones as they were directed by their mentor teachers. Along the same line of argument, the study by Salleh and Tan (2013) also presented that beginning teachers had lots of opportunities to engage in discussions on matters of content and pedagogical knowledge with their mentors and peers. Salleh and Tan stated that the practice of peer lesson observations has become a cultural norm in the teaching profession in China. These researchers' findings bring to the attention that conducive and permissive working environments enable teachers to interact freely and through that experienced teachers were able to help beginning teachers acclimatize with the competences related to teaching profession quickly. Warsame and Valles (2018), and Salleh and Tan (2013) similarly concluded that the gained pedagogy by beginning teachers is evidenced through practice and can be

evaluated by the observant and to the beginning teachers themselves as was the case with the current study, where the participants through different evidences as they provided supported that the beginning teachers have enhanced their pedagogical practices as a result of mentorship they got in schools.

### 3.2 Enhanced pedagogy in teaching and learning materials preparation skills

Findings show that beginning teachers had enhanced pedagogical skills in teaching and learning materials preparation due to mentorship they received in schools. During the interviews, beginning teachers reported that they had improved in the teaching and learning materials preparation skills as a result of mentorships. One beginning teacher admitted:

Because of mentorship, I had enhanced my abilities in preparing schemes of work, lesson plans, lesson notes and teaching aids particularly in practical activities and working with various chemicals in the laboratory (Beginning teacher 5, 2020).

Another beginning teacher from school 4 also reported that:

Initially, I was being guided, but now I am able to collect and use locally available materials such as boxes, water bottles, woods, nylons from the surrounding environment. I am now able to use these locally made materials for practical teachings and classroom demonstrations (Beginning teacher 8, 2020).

In another case, one beginning teacher from school 5 commented:

Initially, I was terrified when it came time for taking my students to perform practical activities in the laboratory because it needed serious preparations of specimen such as frogs, fish, grasshoppers and flowers which were to be collected from outside the school environment. I thank my senior biology teacher for coaching me how to find specimen from local environment and how to organize students in practical sessions in the laboratory (Beginning teacher 11, 2020).

The quotations made by the beginning teachers convey that mentoring on teaching and learning materials preparation had positive impact and had enhanced beginning teachers to have ability of preparing teaching and learning materials independently. These findings underscore the importance of providing mentoring to beginning teachers unlike if they were left to execute professional activities alone. They would have not admitted to have had the ability to perform the practical activities and the classroom demonstrations in its enhanced preciseness as they reported to be doing during interviews. Furthermore, 3 (4.9%) heads of departments reported that beginning teachers had improved in the teaching and learning materials preparation skills. One of the respondents stated:

Nowadays, the beginning teachers are preparing their schemes of work which clearly indicate the learning competences, topics and subtopics, timeframe to cover topics, teaching and learning resources to be used and the assessment plans, how students will be assessed. This is one of the efforts we've made as a department to ensure beginning teachers produce quality teaching and learning materials. It is through mentoring and close follow up that I have been doing tirelessly that have ensured this achievement (Head of department 9, 2020).

The above statement indicates that beginning teachers have gained competence in preparing schemes of work; hence they are able to align it with the teaching competences and produce quality lesson plans and notes. Consequently, heads of departments admitted that beginning teachers have also improved in the preparation of the lesson plans. One head of department from school seven (7) had this to say regarding the beginning teacher's gained competence in lesson plans preparation:

I am very proud of the achievement the beginning teacher has shown success. He has gained the capability of transforming the planned learning activities into workable actions which could be assessed. I have taken a cumbersome amount of time mentoring on the effective use of the teachers prepared lesson plans and it was almost on a daily basis guiding him during the teaching and learning processes on the transformation of the planned learning activities into workable actions (Head of department 11, 2020).

The statement implies that beginning teachers have gained the capacity to transform planned learning activities into workable actions; hence mentoring in schools supported beginning teachers in planning of the teaching activities and transforming them into workable actions. Furthermore, 2 (3.3%) heads of schools reported that beginning teachers had improved in the teaching and learning materials preparation skills. In general, the findings show that 20 (33%) of all categories of respondents in that particular theme admitted that beginning teachers had enhanced their pedagogical skills in the areas of teaching and learning materials preparation as a result of school based mentoring services they were offered initially. This denotes that in the teaching and learning materials preparation, beginning teachers had a lot to gain, since it was reported by the majority of respondents.

### 3.3 Enhanced pedagogy in teaching and learning methods application skills

The study findings show that beginning teachers had enhanced pedagogical skills in participatory teaching and learning methods application due to mentorship they were offered in schools. Beginning teachers reported that they had improved in the teaching and learning methods application skills as a result of mentorships. Beginning teachers thus, admitted to have gained the capacity applying learner-centred teaching approaches which go hand in hand with students' learning activities. One beginning teacher reported:

Today I am very much comfortable with making earlier plans of the teaching methods, preparing teaching aids and organizing the class for teaching and learning activities. Initially, it was a real challenge regarding the big number of students in the classroom coupled with the huge workload that I had on weekly basis. The support from the experienced teacher really was a deal in my pedagogical practice enhancement (Beginning teacher, 7; 2020).

The statement provided implies that beginning teachers are today comfortable with making prior plans of the teaching methods, such that they can prepare the teaching aids and organize the class for teaching and learning activities. In addition, heads of departments reported that beginning teachers had improved in the teaching and learning methods application skills. One head of department commented:

Mentoring services did set beginning teachers free from professional challenges which impeded their job performance and deprived their confidence in executing their roles as qualified professional teachers. For that matter the performance of beginning teachers were enhanced particularly in the application of the participatory teaching methods such as role-play, debates, discussions, practical, projects and the like. This area was very crucial and I keenly supervised its implementation as beginning teachers initially showed weaknesses in the implementation of the participatory teaching methods (Head of department 8, 2020).

The quotation given above implies that mentoring services in schools made beginning teachers to be free from professional challenges and they gained a lot of confidence in executing their roles as qualified professional teachers. In addition, head of department from school five affirmed that mentoring also supported beginning teachers in the selection of the appropriate teaching methods to apply by considering the nature of the classroom requirements, He stated:

Mentoring empowered beginning teachers with relevant knowledge and skills related to the teaching profession roles. Once we effectively implemented mentorship to beginning teachers, efficiency and effectiveness become part of their working culture. In terms of teaching methods, mentoring brought positive changes to beginning teachers as witnessed them being able to select and use the appropriate participatory teaching methods based on the nature of the classrooms assigned just as stated in the new curriculum (Head of department 9, 2020).

Therefore, the quoted statement implies that through mentoring beginning teachers became knowledgeable and skilled in teaching profession. They became aware of the teaching roles and have developed an inclusive working culture. The heads of school reported that beginning teachers had improved in the teaching and learning methods application skills. In general, the findings show that 19 (31%) respondents from all categories in this theme admitted that beginning teachers had enhanced their pedagogical skills in the areas of teaching and learning methods application as a result of school based mentoring services they were offered initially. This suggests that the majority of beginning teachers enhanced skills in the teaching and learning methods application.

### **3.4 Enhanced pedagogy in students' assessment and feedback giving skills**

Findings of the study show that beginning teachers had enhanced pedagogical skills in students' assessment and feedback giving due to mentorship they were offered in schools. Similarly, beginning teachers declared that they had improved in the students' assessment and feedback giving skills as a result of mentorships. One beginning teacher from school five reported:

Because of this school mentorship, I have improved in setting formative and summative tests and examination questions as per National Examinations Council of Tanzania format, marking the questions, awarding the scores as well as keeping students' academic records and providing feedback to students, school administration and parents (Beginning teacher, 11; 2020).

The quoted statement provides that as a result of school based mentorship; beginning teachers have improved their skills in conducting formative and summative assessment, keeping students' academic records and providing feedback to students. In line to this, the study findings by Ahea, et al., (2016) reported that mentoring should not compromise feedback giving, since it is an important skill for teachers in schools and has a major influence on the quality of the students' learning process. In addition, another beginning teacher also reported on participatory working culture as one effort which has made him enhance his pedagogical skills in the assessment of students and feedback giving. He had this said:

The culture of working together within the departments has helped me a lot in acquiring pedagogical skills in the areas of assessment. The teachers who participated in marking National Examinations became valuable resources to me because we shared the experiences and skills on how to set examinations questions appropriately (Beginning teacher, 14; 2020).

The statement provided indicates that beginning teachers together with experienced teachers had a culture of working together to connect theory and measurements in students' assessment. Hence, beginning teachers have had chances to participate in marking National Examinations and getting exposure to valid inferences about student learning and assessment. Contrary to the findings of this study, Fives and Barnes, (2017) presented that teachers worked together in a community of working culture, but they lacked connection between measurement theory and measurement construction, as a result beginning teachers relied on less effective or limiting assessment construction strategies instead of those that could provide sound information for making valid inferences about student learning and assessment.

On the other hand, heads of department reported that beginning teachers had improved in the students' assessment and feedback giving skills. Through face to face interview with heads of department on the areas of pedagogical skills improvement, they confidently mentioned the ability to set tests and examination questions as per NECTA formats and assess students in classrooms orally and in the written form. One head of department disclosed:

I can remember, initially the beginning teachers failed to use table of specifications in sorting out items to be examined. He even failed to set examination questions using appropriate action verbs. Thanks to mentoring services. He is now performing his duties happily with minimum supervision (Head of department 11, 2020).

The statement given above implies that as a result of mentorship in schools, beginning teachers have gained the ability to use table of specifications in sorting out items to be examined and the appropriate use of action verbs in examination questions setting. Furthermore, heads of school reported that beginning teachers had improved in the students' assessment and feedback giving skills. The heads of school stated that beginning teachers were then able to cope with school and departmental strategies on academic issues like finishing the syllabus on time, and they insisted on the change of behaviour among the beginning teachers as a result of school based mentorships. One head of school admitted that:

Beginning teachers have coped up well with the teaching strategies, even at the departmental levels they complete the syllabus on time. They are nowadays marking students' assignments on time, as compared to olden days of their reporting when they had a lot of delays in the preparation and completion of the assessment papers. The school based mentorship has been really a support that I can provide this evidence. They now meet the school plans (Head of school 7, 2020).

The statement provided implies that due to mentorship in schools, beginning teachers are able to complete the syllabus and mark students' assignments on time. In the students' assessment and feedback giving, 18.03% of the study participants admitted that beginning teachers had enhanced their pedagogical skills in the areas of students' assessment and feedback giving skills as a result of school based mentoring services that were offered to them. This finding is in line with the findings presented by Fives, et al., (2016) who stated that beginning teachers gain proficiency in students' assessment only when they had prior mentorship for assessment techniques. This signifies that in order to respond to the demands of beginning teachers to have greater assessment literacy, many school based mentorship programmes require beginning teachers to receive some mentorship in educational assessment as witness among the current study participants.

#### 4.0 Conclusion and Recommendations

Based on the study findings presented as per specific objectives, the following concluding remarks are made. First, because of mentorships in schools, beginning teachers are today working with same competence as experienced teachers as they prepare a comprehensive schemes of work, lesson plans and lesson notes that reflect the subject syllabus. Second, because of school based mentorships, beginning teachers make earlier plans of the teaching methods, prepare teaching aids and properly organize the class for teaching and learning activities. Third, because of mentoring in schools, beginning teachers implement well the learner- centred teaching strategies. They complete the syllabus in time, set and mark students' assignments and examinations within the teaching syllabus time frame.

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are made:

1. Mentoring in schools is contextually and voluntarily organised in schools informally. This has brought about variation in mentoring services from one school to school and from one mentor to another and hence there was no defined ways of enhancing beginning teachers' pedagogical skills. As a result, teachers missed techniques of keeping mentorship records in files, failed to effectively quantify the gain from the participation in schools' based mentorships. From this situation therefore, the study recommends that the teacher continuous professional development policy makers in collaboration with other educational stakeholders should prepare national assessment tool which will be common to all schools and be used to measure mentorship performance. This will also be used to compare mentoring effectiveness from one school to another or from one teacher mentor to another.

2. Mentorship in schools is faced by a number of challenges including limited time for mentorships, huge workloads in schools due to big number of lessons and the lack of national policy and circulars to guide mentorships in schools. In this situation, the study recommends that there should be deliberate efforts from the school administrators and decision makers to provide ample time for mentorships in schools, source and train adequate teachers who will support in the reduction of the mentoring workload.

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