

**The Extent to Which the Provision of Mentor Support
Services in Zimbabwe's 2-5-2 Teaching Practice Enhances
Continuous Improvement of Student Teachers'
Teaching Skills and Competences**

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ABSTRACT The study sought to determine the experiences and perceptions held by mentors, teaching practice lecturers and student teachers on the extent to which mentors are provided with support services to enhance continuous improvement of teaching skills and competences of student teachers in Zimbabwe's 2-5-2 teaching practice. The mixed methods design was used to collect data in two phases. The first phase used questionnaires to collect quantitative data while the second phase collected qualitative data through interviews, focus group discussions and document analysis. The researchers sampled 28 teaching practice lecturers, 100 mentors and 100 final year student teachers from the ten national primary teacher education institutions to participate in the first phase. Three teaching practice lecturers, three mentors and three focus groups of six students each were conveniently selected from neighbouring host schools for interviews in the second phase. The research findings revealed that mentorship was the mainstay of the 2-5-2 teaching practice yet mentors were not adequately provided with support services like in-service training, mentor handbooks, Department of Teacher Education (DTE) assessment/grading scale, regular communication and incentives. It also emerged that mentors were provided with assessment crit forms, though student teachers took the burden to photocopy them to facilitate their own assessment. The study recommended that Zimbabwe's 2-5-2 teacher education institutions provide mentors with adequate support services to enhance continuous improvement of teaching skills and competences.