Post-Teaching Observation Feedback in the United Arab Emirates: College Mentor and Student-

Teacher Perspectives

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Sarah Hyde

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Dedication

I would like to dedicate this thesis to my late mother, Sheila Hyde, who passed away in January 2022. She consistently asked me about my research and knew I had a thesis in me. Thank you, Mum, for always believing in me and encouraging me to do my best.

Abstract

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Sarah Hyde

School-based practice (SBP) has long been considered an integral component of effective initial teacher education programmes. During SBP, mentor feedback is generally perceived as integral to developing well-qualified teachers from student-teachers. Post-teaching observation feedback (PTOF), given when mentors meet with mentees to discuss recently observed teaching, is the focus of this research study. While PTOF tends to be considered crucial for student-teacher development, recent literature on the topic is Western oriented. This study, conducted at an Emirati female initial teacher education institution in the United Arab Emirates, seeks to investigate professional and programme development, evaluate a transition towards collaborative approaches, and give participants a voice in the process. It explores, develops and improves PTOF practice from the perspectives of Emirati and expatriate college mentors and female Emirati student-teachers.

This is an action research study comprising two cycles. Cycle 1 explored college mentor and student-teacher perspectives on PTOF practice at the initial teacher education institution. Data were collected from eight college mentors using qualitative questionnaires, and from 18 student-teachers during three focus group interviews (one for each teaching level year group). Cycle 1's findings informed a series of professional development sessions during which new practice guidelines were collaboratively developed with college mentors.

Cycle 2 evaluated the effectiveness of the professional development and practice following implementation of the new practice guidelines. Cycle 2 data were collected through six college mentor interviews and from 18 student-teachers during three focus group interviews (one for each teaching level year group). I adopted a thematic analysis approach to analyse data from both cycles. Because this study explored the perceptions of college mentors and student-teachers within a specific institution, the findings are not generalisable. However, they offer contextual evidence to enrich the views given in predominantly Western literature, and support practice development techniques others may wish to explore within the region.

Cycle 1's findings revealed that multiple factors affected giving and receiving PTOF. There was an overall lack of consistency to PTOF practice. College mentors mostly implemented either directive or collaborative theoretical approaches to mentoring and PTOF. This resulted in confusion and differing levels of developmental support for student-teachers. While student-teachers overwhelmingly preferred directive approaches, they did not consider the institutional requirement to grade each taught lesson as conducive to their development. The Covid-19 pandemic meant that Cycle 2 evaluated the implementation of the new practice guidelines while SBP and PTOF occurred online. Cycle 2's findings indicated a more consistent, structured approach to PTOF. A transition towards collaborative approaches to mentoring and PTOF was evidenced, although challenges to their implementation were apparent. Reflective practice, which underpins the initial teacher education programme at the institution, was perceived as predominately descriptive. The online delivery mode revealed challenges specific to female Emiratis. More time, along with contextual developmental support, is recommended to improve future PTOF. The findings of this study have implications for all stakeholders, specifically Management, college mentors, student-teachers, and school-based mentors.

Keywords: *Initial teacher education, lesson observation feedback, mentoring, reflective practice, Emirati student-teachers*

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Chapter 1: Introduction

1.0 Introduction

Learning through practice has long been considered an integral component of effective initial teacher education (ITE) programmes (Allen et al., 2019). Darling-Hammond et al. (2017) recognise that during school-based practice (SBP), mentor feedback is essential for student-teachers to develop into well-qualified teachers. Mentor feedback, particularly the oral feedback mentors provide after they observe a student teach during SBP, is the focus of this research study. This support, defined in this study as post-teaching observation feedback (PTOF), is the mentor's act of meeting with a mentee to discuss recently observed teaching. Bjørndal (2020) argues that PTOF is crucial for student-teacher development and that effective mentor/mentee PTOF needs to be collaborative, critical and reflective; Le and Vásquez (2011) suggest that PTOF is one of the most influential factors in student-teacher knowledge and growth. Because it is so fundamental to student-teacher development, Clarke et al. (2014) argue that providing PTOF is a focal mentor role. However, an issue of concern is that much of the recent PTOF literature is Western-centric. I therefore conducted this research study in the United Arab Emirates (UAE) because I wanted to understand if predominantly Western PTOF literature was applicable to the UAE ITE context.

This is an action research (AR) study consisting of two cycles. The first explores the perspectives of expatriate and Emirati college mentors and female Emirati student-teachers on PTOF practice at a federal ITE institution. Cycle 1's findings inform a series of professional development (PD) sessions, during which new practice guidelines were developed. Cycle 2 used participant perspective to evaluate the effectiveness of the PD and practice following the implementation of the new practice guidelines.

To ensure confidentiality, local ethical approval mandated that the institution was not to be named. It will be referred to as 'the institution' throughout this thesis.

To prepare the reader, this introductory chapter defines PTOF in relation to the research context. It then provides background to the research problem, followed by background to the study. Next, I discuss the research context and the rationale for conducting the study, followed by insight into my background and influences. Finally, I outline the six chapters of this thesis.

1.1 Abbreviations and definition of terms

The introduction described PTOF as the mentor's act of meeting with a mentee to discuss recently observed teaching. Studies on PTOF tend to use different terminology to define the action; examples include "feedback on practice" and "mentoring dialogue" (Hennissen et al., 2011), "post-lesson conferences" (Erbilgin, 2014), "post-observation meetings" (Glenn, 2006), and "supervisory conferences" (Akcan & Tatar, 2010). I adopted "PTOF" because it seems to define the action most precisely. In my experience, college mentors do not always observe a full lesson, and conferencing does not always occur, but the session usually involves oral feedback after a teaching observation.

The term public education is used in the UAE to refer to government-funded kindergartens, schools and tertiary institutions.

The following abbreviations are used in this study:

ADEC: Abu Dhabi Educational Council
AR: Action research
FGI: Focus group interview
HE: Higher education
ITE: Initial teacher education
MOE: Ministry of Education
NSM: New School Model
OECD: The Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development
PD: Professional development
PIS: Participant information sheet

PTOF: Post-teaching observation feedback

SBP: School-based practice

TA: Thematic analysis

UAE: United Arab Emirates

1.2 Research problem

I became aware of the research problem during my 16-year employment at the institution. My role involves mentoring student-teachers during SBP. I noticed apparently inconsistent mentoring and PTOF practice. Student-teachers whom I mentored suggested my mentoring and feedback practices differed from those of previous mentors with whom they had been paired. This anecdotal evidence was reinforced when I became head of department and oversaw SBP. I informally observed college mentors and student-teachers in schools and noticed differences in mentoring and PTOF provision. I also received informal feedback from student-teachers and college mentors about divergent PTOF practice. This led me to hypothesise that there were inconsistencies in PTOF practice at the institution, that resulted in differing levels of support for student-teacher development.

As I read the literature on the subject, I became aware that mentoring and PTOF studies had transitioned from directive to collaborative approaches over time. Bjørndal (2020) claims that effective PTOF should be collaborative, critical and reflective. However, the anecdotal evidence I obtained suggested that the PTOF at the institution did not always match these ideals. This institution implements a reflective practice model of ITE, so I felt that PTOF should be aligned with and include reflection on practice. Because current PTOF literature is predominantly from Western sources, I wanted to discover if collaborative, reflective mentoring and PTOF approaches were applicable to the research context. Ultimately, I wanted to explore, develop and improve PTOF practice.

1.3 Background

This AR study was conducted within the ITE department at an Emirati female higher education (HE) institution in the UAE. The UAE is a new country unique in terms of its demographics, its social-political context, the status of Emirati women and the public education system. I will examine these briefly to help explain the research setting and the background of the Emirati participants in this study, and address these factors in more depth when discussing the study's findings.

1.3.1 The United Arab Emirates

The UAE was founded following independence from the United Kingdom in 1971, making it one of the youngest countries in the Middle East. It is made up of seven emirates originally known as the Trucial States, with Abu Dhabi being the capital city. Arabic is the official language, although English is widely used in business. Islam is the official religion and Emiratis are primarily Sunni Muslims (Shulman, 2004). The UAE has a dual judicial system of Sharia (Islamic) and civil law. All social and political concerns are governed by Sharia law, while civil law deals with civil matters (UAE - Language Culture Customs & Etiquette, n.d).

The UAE has one of the fastest-growing populations in the world (Central Intelligence Agency, 2016). The 1975 census records a population of just over 500,000; by 2020 this had become approximately 9.9 million (Dubai Online, 2022). The population growth is due to the large influx of foreign and expatriate workers, and has resulted in a diverse population: 18% are Emirati citizens, with over 200 nationalities comprising the remainder (Goby & Alhadhrami, 2020). This inflow has resulted in a gender imbalance in the UAE population: approximately 70% of inhabitants are male and 30% are female (Shulman, 2004). However, the smaller permanent Emirati population is gender-balanced, at 50.5% female and 49.5% male (Basir, 2018). The population is centred around the three larger Emirates: Dubai (3.3 million), Abu Dhabi (just under 3 million), and the emirate where this research study is based (1.7 million) (Dubai Online, 2022).

According to Bertelsmann-Stiftung (2022), the UAE is politically stable, with a traditional, patriarchal leadership style in which political loyalty is organised around tribal elements. He

explains that while each emirate has its own nuances, the values and traditions of Emirati society are common across the UAE. Traditionally, the leader of Abu Dhabi is the country's president and the leader of Dubai is the prime minister, but this is not written into law (Shulman, 2004). At the federal level, the UAE is ruled by the Federal Supreme Council (FSC) which is made up of the ruling sheikhs from each of the seven emirates (Bertelsmann-Stiftung, 2022). The UAE also has a consultative parliament, the Federal National Council (FNC), to which almost a third of the national population is eligible to be elected. Every emirate is represented in the 40-member FNC, but the FNC does not produce, legislate or implement policy (Bertelsmann-Stiftung, 2022).

Bertelsmann-Stiftung (2022) acknowledges that while the UAE's ruling family has a high degree of legitimacy, the country severely restricts political opposition or any public criticism of government policies. He explains that in the UAE, rights and freedom of speech are tightly controlled. Under UAE law, it is illegal to publish defamatory comments and criminal charges have increased recently (Abdel-Nabi & Lester, 2019). Because this study quotes participants' perspectives, I had to consider defamation to ensure that this thesis would not infringe UAE law.

 Zakaria (2022) explains that privacy is taken seriously in the UAE. It is illegal to photograph or video people without permission, and offenders can receive large fines or jail terms. I therefore had to ensure that all participants consented to being recorded when I collected data. I discuss privacy concerns in more detail later in this thesis, with particular reference to videoing Emirati females.

    1.3.1.1 Family and culture. Family is central to Emirati society. Barragan et al. (2018) note that Emirati families tend to be patriarchist and close-knit. While Alzeer (2018) explains that Emirati family values are heavily influenced by Islam, Sharia law and tribal traditions. Hence, Williams et al. (2013) suggest that it is difficult to separate family values from Arab culture and Islam because they are so interwoven. UAE leaders encourage Emiratis to have large families, and seek to preserve and strengthen traditional Emirati family values (Zain, 2016). The *Cohesive Family 2021* document produced by the UAE government states, "We aim to be among the best countries in the world and this can only be achieved by strengthening families, which form the nucleus of society" ("Strong families, stronger country," 2016, p. 4). In the UAE,

arranged marriages are the norm among nationals, and Emiratis are expected to marry within their tribal kinship (UAE - Language Culture Customs & Etiquette, n.d). Emirati women tend to be married and have children younger than their Western counterparts. The national average age for an Emirati woman to marry is 24 (Serkal, 2018). While in 2017, the average age for European and North American women to first marry was 34 (Ortiz-Ospina & Roser, 2020). At this institution, approximately 35% of the current student-teachers are married (according to the admissions office; there are no official published figures) and 25% have children. Since the majority of student-teachers join this institution directly from school, it seems probable those who are married were married younger than the national average age of 24. This has implications for the student-teachers at this institution, due to their additional familial responsibilities.

1.3.1.2 Emirati women. Emirati women have greater status and more opportunities as UAE society develops, and UAE leaders endorse gender equality across education and employment (Dickson & Tennant, 2021). The World Economic Forum (2022) describe the UAE as a leading country in the region for gender equality. The UAE government heavily promotes female education, which is free and mostly gender-segregated in federally funded public institutions. Such initiatives provide greater opportunities for female Emiratis to study, and now Emirati women outnumber Emirati men in federal HE by three to one (Dickson & Tennant, 2021). At this institution, female students outnumber male students by two-thirds (Institution, 2021a). Development in female education has been so rapid that many Emirati students enrolled in HE are the first females in their families to study at tertiary level (Daleure et al., 2015). Dickson and Tennant (2021) suggest that the differences between the educational attainment of Emirati students today and their mothers and grandmothers can be enormous. A factor discussed in relation to the findings of this study.

The UAE government actively encourages Emirati women to work, and implements positive discrimination policies to promote their employment (Kelly, 2010). Female Emiratis are employed across all sectors, and make up two-thirds of government employees (Dickson & Tennant, 2021). Emirati women are prominent across business and entrepreneurship (Jabeen et al., 2015), and are frequently found in leadership positions (Al-Ali, 2013). However, certain sectors of UAE society are more conservative and traditional than others. Dickson and Tennant

(2021) suggest that female Emiratis within these sectors do not have the opportunities to choose careers or reach high-status positions; such choices are largely governed by their family. It is likely that the majority of student-teachers at the research setting fall into this category and represent more traditional Emiratis. Because (i) Emirati students studying education often do so because their families prefer them to be employed in an all-female environment (Sharif et al., 2014); and (ii) this institution's campus is considered to be in the most conservative emirate in the UAE (Mason, 2021), where most student-teachers reside.

1.3.1.3 Emiratisation. According to Al-Ali (2013), Emiratisation began as a social capital programme in the early 1990s, that aimed to overcome barriers to Emirati employment in the public and private sectors. He explains that Emiratisation was initially implemented through structural reform, but over the years specific measures have been put in place. At this institution, Emiratisation has resulted in Emiratis joining the faculty. When I first arrived in 2003, no Emirati faculty were employed in education; today, 50% of the education faculty are Emirati.

Emiratisation has been successfully implemented in the public sector and Emirati employment targets have been achieved (Al-Ali, 2013); nowadays, most Emiratisation incentives and quotas exist to encourage Emiratis to join private industry. Debusmann Jr (2019) found in 2018 that 0.5% of the private sector workforce comprised Emiratis, compared to 60% of the public sector. Pennington (2016) explains that Emirati preference for public sector employment over private continues primarily because of its higher salaries, shorter working hours and better working conditions. At this institution, almost all the student-teacher graduates are employed in UAE public sector schools because their undergraduate degree qualifies them to teach there.

1.3.1.4 Education. According to Gallagher (2019a), recognition of the finite nature of oil and gas reserves has triggered diversification to a knowledge-based economy, wherein a well-educated population is essential to sustain the UAE's economic development. She claims that despite the heavy importing of expatriate talent, it is increasingly understood that local Emirati intellectual resources will become the country's most valuable asset. Zaatari (2017) reports that the UAE Ministry of Education (MOE) views education as key to successfully transforming to a knowledge-based economy. This is why the modernisation of education now has a higher national priority than it did before.

The UAE education system is made up of both private and public schools, colleges, and universities, with the addition of a very small number of semi-governmental institutions. The regulatory bodies, curricula and funding for private and public sector schools are different. Private schools cater predominately to the expatriate community, whereas public schools serve mainly Emirati students. The majority of student-teachers at this institution received a public-school education. They also complete SBP in public schools in which, upon graduation, they are qualified to teach. Therefore, the following section provides background on the UAE public education system.

The UAE public education system is complex, changeable, and influenced by curricula, theory and pedagogy from other countries (Matsumoto, 2019). The "history of education in the UAE is a history of constant change" (p. 10). Over the years, numerous reforms have been implemented in an effort to modernise UAE public education (Chung, 2019). These international influences and reforms impact the research context, as I will now explain.

In the early twentieth century, education in the UAE region was mainly for boys, focused on Islamic studies, and was taught informally by an imam attached to a mosque (AlNaqbi, 2009). The development of the pearling industry supported growth in the region, and increased demand for education. In 1912, pearl traders opened the first private boys' schools in Dubai and Sharjah. More schools opened in the 1920s; however, when the pearling industry collapsed in the1940s, most of these schools closed. In the 1950s, with the discovery of oil and gas in other Gulf regions, the UAE economy and educational requirements grew again (Davidson, 2008). At the time, schools in the UAE region were funded by Kuwait and the first public school opened in Sharjah in 1953 (Ministry of Education, 2013). By the 1960s, other nearby states, including Egypt, Bahrain, India and Saudi Arabia, had opened schools in the UAE region. Most brought their own staff and implemented their own curricula and texts (Davidson, 2008).

In 1971, when oil was discovered and the UAE was formed, the MOE was established. The MOE began to unify the diverse mix of schools in the country and made primary education compulsory for all Emirati boys and girls (Ridge, 2009). In 1979, the MOE established the

national curriculum project; six years later, one taught in Arabic was implemented (Ridge, 2009). The period from the 1970s to the 1990s saw a huge expansion in the number of schools in the UAE, while after 1990 there was a new focus on raising the quality of education. Since the 1990s, economic and social change, along with international cultural influences, have resulted in numerous educational reforms across public education in the UAE. While the early reforms adopted curricula from neighbouring Arab countries, Western models became more influential after the 1990s (O'Sullivan, 2013). There have been four major changes to the public national curriculum since 1994, outlined in Table 1.

Table 1 *UAE public school major curricular reforms*

Year	Public school reform
1994	UAE Model Schools
2007	Madres Al Ghad (Schools of Tomorrow)
2010	New School Model
2017	Emirati School Model

Note: adapted from *Rethinking the Focus of Education Reform in the United Arab Emirates,* by B. J. Chung (2019).

In 1994, Model Schools were designed to develop science, English and technology skills; they taught maths and science in English. However, the model was gradually abandoned due to a lack of consistency across schools. In 1999, a senior government advisor, Mawgood (1999), warned that the current public education system was inefficient and wasteful, highlighting a need for transformation. At the same time, academic results in national and international standardised tests were weak (Gallagher, 2019a). Between 2007 and 2015, in Dubai and the northern emirates, 'Madares Al Ghad' (Schools of Tomorrow) that emphasised English and student-centred learning ran in 50 public schools (Jonny, 2015). In 2009, the Abu Dhabi Educational Council (ADEC) considered the educational reforms too slow and implemented the New School Model (NSM) across all Abu Dhabi public schools (Matsumoto, 2019). The NSM model adopted curricula and assessment methods from international best practice, emphasising science, technology, engineering and maths (Dickson, 2012). Thousands of teachers from English-speaking countries were employed to work alongside Emiratis in all Abu Dhabi public schools. Bilingual education occurred at the lower levels, while maths and science were taught in English at higher levels (Dickson, 2012).

The most recent reform, the Emirati School Model, was introduced in 2017. This model, a joint venture between ADEC and the MOE, implemented a standardised curriculum across all public schools countrywide. Maths and science were to be taught in English, as in Abu Dhabi's schools. However, the practice was new for Dubai and the northern emirates (where this research study is situated), as maths and science were previously taught in Arabic under the MOE curriculum (Kippels & Ridge, 2019). At the time of writing, uptake seems slow; I know from experience that some Dubai and northern emirate public schools still teach maths and science in Arabic. Ridge et al. (2017) acknowledged that the public-school curriculum was relatively narrow and offered limited choice to students; this remains true.

The UAE public education structure currently has four school levels plus HE, as outlined in Table 2. There are 619 public schools, and three public higher education institutions that offer undergraduate and postgraduate qualifications (UAE Government, 2020a). Public education is free for all Emiratis from kindergarten until the completion of undergraduate study (UAE Government, 2020b). The UAE's spend per capita on public education is high, being twice the average of the member countries of the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) (Bibolov et al., 2017).

Table 2 *UAE public education structure*

Level	Grades	Student age
Kindergarten	KG 1 and KG 2	4-5
Primary	Grades 1-4	6-10
Intermediate	Grades 5-8	11-14
Secondary	Grades 9-12	15-17
Tertiary (HE)	University/college	17+

Note: adapted from *Regulatory Authorities of K-12 Education*, by UAE Government (2020c)

Kippels and Ridge (2019) acknowledge that through these numerous reforms the UAE is actively looking to modernise its public education system and improve student performance. However, they argue that despite reform and high per-capita spend, public-school students continue to be

taught in teacher-centred classrooms and performance remains weak in international standardised tests.

While the public-school structure mostly segregates by gender, UAE public kindergartens have always been mixed. In 2018, the UAE government planned a gradual transition to mixed-gender primary schools (UAE Government, 2020d). However, parents raised concerns, so now primary schools can choose individually whether to be single or mixed gender (Rizvi & Dajani, 2018). Teachers in Dubai and the northern emirates' public kindergartens and primary schools are predominantly Emirati and all are female (Federal Competitiveness and Statistics Authority (FCSA), 2019). This gender-segregated sector is where the education graduates from this institution are qualified to work. Middle and secondary schools are single gender for both students and staff. While HE institutions are gender-segregated for students, both male and female staff work across all institutions. This means that publicly educated female students are unlikely to be taught by a male teacher until they reach tertiary level, a factor discussed in relation to male college mentors in chapter 2.

ITE institutions are relatively new in the UAE. Until the 21st century, qualified expatriate teachers were predominantly employed to teach in UAE public schools. The small percentage of Emirati teachers employed only needed to hold a high school certificate (Gardner, 1995). In 1979, the MOE established two-year ITE colleges to train Emirati teachers. However, by the mid-1980s the responsibility for teacher education was taken over by a federal university. Arts and science graduates were offered teaching positions in schools, despite having no pedagogical training (Gardner, 1995). While this initiative helped to build greater numbers of Emirati teachers in public schools, it did little to raise standards. By the turn of the century, there was a growing realisation that ITE required structured SBP and pedagogy (Loughrey et al., 1999). In response, new ITE programmes were developed in federal UAE HE institutions to include theory, research and SBP (Gallagher, 2019b). The ITE programme at this institution was established in 2000.

1.4 The research setting

This study was conducted in a UAE federally funded HE institution. This institution is the largest provider of HE in the UAE and has 16 gender-segregated campuses across the country. All Emiratis who meet the entry requirements are eligible to enrol, ensuring equal access across the population. There are currently just over 21,500 students enrolled, of whom approximately one third are male and two-thirds are female (Institution, 2021a). Male, female, Emirati and expatriate staff work on all campuses. This institution offers bachelor-level courses across six disciplines that are mostly taught in English. Table 3 shows the number of students enrolled in the six disciplines offered at this institution nationally. ITE is by far the smallest discipline, possibly because it is only offered at certain female campuses.

Table 3 *Number of students enrolled per discipline at this institution*

Discipline	Number of students enrolled
Applied media	1,411
Business	5,936
Computer information science	5,499
Education (ITE)	881
Engineering technology and sciences	5,194
Health sciences	2,604

Note: from Institution Fact Book 2021-22. (2021a)

The ITE programme began in August 2000 and was developed in conjunction with the University of Melbourne, Australia. Over the years its offerings and structure have changed; however, SBP has remained central to the curriculum. The current programme is an eight-semester (four-year) undergraduate bachelor's degree. It runs on five female campuses across four different emirates. Male, female, Emirati and expatriate staff work in the education programme on all five campuses. Twelve education faculty work on the campus at the research setting, evenly split between Emiratis and expatriates. All the Emirati faculty are graduates of the programme they now work on, and all live in the same emirate as the research campus. The expatriate faculty originate from five different countries across four continents. Three are male, and none live in the same emirate as the research campus. The majority of students join the education programme directly from school, although there are a small number of mature students. Most students live in the same emirate as the research setting, but none reside on the campus itself.

The institution is currently accredited to offer a bachelor's degree in early childhood education, which qualifies graduates to teach in kindergartens and up to grade 2 in UAE public schools. Previous offerings included primary and English language teaching, but these are being phased out and new education programmes are at the planning stage. Student-teachers study both core and general education subjects, and take an SBP course every semester. Its learning outcomes and week-by-week course delivery focus on practice and theory to support SBP. Each semester, student-teachers receive an SBP handbook, which is informative and provides tasks to complete during SBP. Table 4 outlines the number of days student teachers spend in schools each semester, along with the number of observations conducted by college mentors and school-based mentors. The length of these periods incrementally increases until the final semester, when 8 weeks are spent on SBP. In total, student teachers complete a total of 155 days in school. During SBP, education faculty work as college mentors observing student-teachers and conducting PTOF. School-based mentors (usually the class teacher) also observe student-teachers when they teach. The college mentors and student-teachers are the participants in this research study.

Table 4 *Overview of school-based practice and mentor observations*

Semester	Time spent in schools on SBP	Number of observations conducted by college mentors	Number of observations conducted by school-based mentors
1 (Year 1)	10 days	2	2
2 (Year 1)	12 days	2	2
3 (Year 2)	13 days	2	2
4 (Year 2)	15 days	2	2
5 (Year 3)	25 days	3	3
6 (Year 3)	20 days	3	3
7 (Year 4)	30 days	4	4
8 (Year 4)	40 days	4	4

Information about the structure of SBP at other UAE ITE institutions is not openly available. However, I am aware that there are differences. For example, Hojeij et al. (2021) explain that at their UAE based federal ITE institution, student-teachers participate in a total of four SBP placements in their last 4 semesters. In semester 7, student-teachers spend 10 days on SBP and in semester 8 student-teachers spend the full semester on SBP (Hojeij et al. (2021).

The education mission statement states that the education programme "[p]roduces future innovative educators who act as agents of change by applying new methodologies and paradigms in order to transform the delivery of instruction" (Institution, 2021b, Education section, para. 2). This statement implies that the education programme applies current pedagogy and theory to equip graduates to support the modernisation of teaching and learning in the public-school system, and is relevant to the findings of this study.

1.4.1 Impact of the Covid-19 pandemic

The Covid-19 pandemic significantly impacted this AR study. The pandemic reached the UAE during Cycle 1 of this study, when student-teachers and college mentors were physically in schools completing SBP. The UAE government immediately mandated that all learning and teaching be transferred online. Face-to-face SBP was halted and all teaching, lesson observations and PTOF moved online. Work from home, social distancing measures and online learning and teaching continued for the remainder of this study, which meant that all data had to be collected via online delivery modes.

1.5 Research aim

The aim of this study was to investigate professional and programme development, evaluate a transition towards collaborative approaches and give participants a voice in the process.
I used an AR approach consisting of two AR cycles. Cycle 1 of this study explored PTOF from the perspectives of college mentors and student-teachers. These findings informed PD sessions at the beginning of cycle 2. During which education faculty on the research campus developed new practice guidelines collaboratively. Cycle 2 then evaluated the impact of the PD and practice,

following implementation of the new practice guidelines, from the perspectives of college mentors and student-teachers.

1.6 Research rationale

There are no empirical studies on PTOF from the UAE or other Gulf states. Empirical research on ITE in the UAE is limited. The rationale for conducting this research study is to add to the field of knowledge on ITE in the UAE, and more specifically to provide new knowledge on PTOF practice.

Additionally, this study seeks to develop and improve PTOF practice from the perspectives of college mentors and student-teachers. If change is positive, it will contribute to the UAE's drive to transform the country into a knowledge economy. If PTOF practices develop as a result of this study, they will support the education mission statement to implement current international practice. Ultimately, it is hoped that the findings of this study will cause the four other campuses that run the education programme to implement similar changes. AR studies can then be carried out at those campuses.

1.7 The role of the researcher

I am a Western female, born and educated in the United Kingdom. While I initially trained and worked as a primary school teacher in the UK, I have taught elsewhere for almost 25 years. I worked as a teacher and teacher trainer in Brunei Darussalam, and in adult education and education management in Australia. I have worked in the UAE, at this institution, teaching female Emirati student-teachers for 16 years. I am currently an education lecturer, and former head of department. My roles and responsibilities include teaching education courses and working as a college mentor for SBP. None of the student-teachers I taught or mentored participated in this research study while it was ongoing.

I have a particular interest in the SBP that is central to the education programme curriculum. My experience suggests student-teachers require the support of a mentor. Additionally, I have found PTOF to be highly influential in developing student-teacher knowledge and practice. I feel that

PTOF development would directly benefit the education programme, college mentors and student-teachers.

1.7.1 Positionality

To identify their positionality, researchers need to locate themselves with reference to the research subject, the participants and the context (Savin-Baden & Major, 2013). According to Holmes (2020), researchers' positionality affects both how they conduct their study and its outcomes. As a Western female, I am viewed as an expatriate and an outsider in Emirati society. Even though I have experience of working with Emiratis, I am aware that my background and training is Western. As a Western female, I had to ensure I did not speak for the participants, who are mostly Emirati. I therefore had to make sure the findings represented the voices of the participants in this study. I wanted to explore and develop PTOF practice from a mostly non-Western perspective within a non-Western context. The methodology section explains how I approach this study as a social constructivist with pragmatic leanings. I am aware that this lens, along with my background, education and experience, informs how I carried out this study.

I transferred to the current campus just before I began this study. The participants know me as a colleague to the college mentors and as a lecturer to the student-teachers. These relationships involve different balances of power, of which I am aware. Additionally, due to my recent transfer, many of these relationships were newly formed at the onset of this study.

I am an insider researcher, and as such I have institutional knowledge. This provided me with immediate legitimacy and expediency of access. Faculty and students knew who I was, and I knew who to contact when I needed approvals from Management. As an insider my knowledge of this institution and Emirati culture helped me to know how to approach participants respectfully, how to be culturally appropriate, and how to use suitable language.

1.8 Thesis structure

Chapter 1 has outlined the aim, purpose and importance of this AR study. It has provided background into the research setting and context, along with a description of the development of public education in the UAE. Finally, the chapter offered insight into the researcher's background and positionality.

Chapter 2 presents a review of the literature on the structure of ITE, including the reflective practice ITE model central to this study. It explores concepts of mentoring and focuses on elements specific to the research setting. The chapter then reviews literature on PTOF, exploring recent international studies and highlighting the lack of research on PTOF in the Middle East.

Chapter 3 provides an overview of this study's research design and methodology. It justifies the use of AR and thematic data analysis and critiques the study design. The chapter then outlines both cycles' data collection methods.

Chapter 4 outlines the themes developed from Cycle 1 data analysis. It presents, interprets and discusses Cycle 1's findings thematically in relation to the research questions, then outlines how they inform the PD. I describe the PD sessions and present the new practice guidelines.

Chapter 5 outlines the themes developed from Cycle 2 data analysis. It presents, interprets and discusses Cycle 2's findings thematically in relation to the research questions.

Chapter 6 concludes this study. It offers a conceptual framework that outlines participant experiences of giving and receiving PTOF and discusses three key findings. I draw and present my conclusions regarding the research questions. I follow this by identifying the limitations of this study and the contributions it makes to practice, and I make recommendations for further PTOF development. Finally, the chapter identifies areas for future research, discusses contributions to knowledge and concludes with a reflection of my journey as a practitioner and researcher.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

2.0 Introduction

The purpose of this study is to explore and develop PTOF at a female Emirati ITE institution in the UAE. This chapter reviews the literature on critical components of PTOF relevant to this study and relates them to practice at this institution. Initially, it explores ITE structures and its predominant theoretical models, before reviewing the literature on reflective practice, concepts of mentoring, historical and recent mentoring approaches, and feedback (specifically PTOF). The Western context dominates studies on PTOF; there are no empirical studies on PTOF from the UAE or wider Gulf region. This review includes current studies and studies before 2013; the latter are from significant authors or relate to the UAE context and are relevant to understanding PTOF and/or the research context. Additionally, while this study focuses on college mentors, this review includes studies that focus on school-based mentors because their findings are relevant to the research context.

2.1 Initial teacher education structure

Two ITE organisational structures predominate: one concurrent and one consecutive (Cochran-Smith et al., 2015). The concurrent structure is implemented at this institution and is the focus of this research study. Zuzovsky and Donitsa-Schmidt (2017) explain that the concurrent structure consists of taught courses and simultaneous SBP that combine discipline content, educational theory and practice. It is multifaceted, providing student-teachers opportunities to develop content, pedagogy and discipline knowledge. The complexities of teaching are developed, reflected on and built on during periods of SBP. Constant reflection regarding learning and teaching is required. Student-teachers are supported during SBP by mentors who provide feedback. It is the effectiveness of these feedback practices that are the focus of this study.

Zuzovsky and Donitsa-Schmidt (2017) add that the consecutive ITE structure is offered to teacher candidates who have obtained an undergraduate degree, usually in the discipline they intend to teach in schools. It focuses on general education and pedagogy, along with shorter

periods of professional practice in schools. Successful completion leads to a teaching certificate. This structure is offered by some private HE providers in the UAE. Certain countries, including Australia and the USA, have shortened institutional training for the consecutive structure and student-teachers spend longer periods in schools (Darling-Hammond, 2017). This initiative is not currently offered in the UAE.

2.2 Theoretical models of ITE

According to Gallagher (2019a), there has been paradigm shift in ITE from behaviourism to social constructivism. She explains that historically, ITE practice has been dominated by four models: the craft or apprentice model, the applied science model, the reflective practice model, and the community of practice model. I will describe them briefly and explain their relevance to this institution.

Robinson and Mogliacci (2019) describe the craft or apprenticeship model as one of the oldest approaches to ITE. In it, the student-teacher works closely with an experienced teacher and gains knowledge through observation, imitation and practice of the more experienced teacher's teaching methods and techniques. This model stems from behaviourist theories of learning that stress the imitation of observable factors (Skinner, 1968). It is fixed and linear, implying little or no change over time. Roberts (1998) calls it traditionalist and model-based. He suggests that while this model initially provides student-teachers with confidence, ultimately they face situations where observed strategies are not effective and they are without the skills to teach successfully. Flores (2017) argues that this model does not meet the needs of teaching in today's dynamic educational contexts, where development should not depend on single models or learning by imitation. The craft model is not formally implemented at this institution; however, in my experience student-teachers frequently observe more experienced teachers and subsequently incorporate imitated practices in their teaching. Hojeij et al. (2021) found that observing teachers in action supported the development of Emirati student-teachers' teaching skills.

The applied science model is based on 19th and 20th century empirical science (Wallace, 1991). It involves experts teaching theoretical perspectives and student-teachers implementing what they learned during SBP. This suggests that expert knowledge leads to changes in practice, rather than the teacher. Wallace (1991) argues that the approach fails to consider the roles students and teachers play in the process of learning and teaching; student-teachers cannot be successful teachers if they apply learned theory in the same manner to every classroom situation. Ur (1992) argues that it separates theory and practice. The absence of recent sources citing this model suggests it is considered outdated. However, in my experience, the student-teachers at this institution apply models learned on campus during SBP. Hence, elements of this approach exist and appear beneficial to newer students as they build their knowledge of theory and practice. Such practice within the bounds of taught knowledge is typical of a novice practitioner (Benner, 1982).

Both the craft and applied science approaches to ITE leave gaps between theory and practice, whereas the more recent reflective practice approach combines both. Schön (1987) defined two types of professional knowledge: received knowledge and experiential knowledge. Received knowledge includes theories, facts and research, whereas experiential knowledge is knowledge gained through experience. The reflective practice model provides student-teachers with opportunities to make connections between theory and practice. In SBP, student-teachers construct their own reflective understanding while developing pedagogical skills. The OECD report (2017) concluded that the reflective practice model is the best-regarded approach to teacher education by teachers worldwide. It is the model implemented by the education programme at this institution. Successful elements of the earlier approaches are present in the reflective practice model, including input on campus and experience in schools. However, the reflective practice model is supported by college mentors as student-teachers make connections between theory and practice.

Gallagher (2019a) claims that the community of practice approach is a fourth ITE model. Student-teachers develop their teaching knowledge and skills by being a member of a professional learning community. At this institution, student-teachers work closely with college mentors and school teachers. School teachers (usually a class teacher) act as school-based

mentors during SBP. They are paired with one student-teacher and give official feedback on between two and four teaching observations. (The specific number is highlighted in Table 4 in Chapter 1). School-based mentors also give unofficial feedback during SBP. Because college and school-based mentors evaluate student-teacher performance during SBP, student-teachers are unlikely to be considered members of what Wenger (1998) calls the community of practice.

2.3 Reflective practice

According to Gadsby (2022), reflection is at the centre of all teacher education development. Reflective practice is central to this research study because reflecting on and for practice are key components of PTOF. Bjørndal (2020) asserts that reflection is critical for effective PTOF, because college mentors support student-teachers to develop their disposition, knowledge and skills by reflecting on their SBP. This justifies the following review of the literature on the concept of reflective practice, its application to ITE globally and to the UAE context.

2.3.1 Early concepts of reflective practice

The philosophers Dewey, Freire and Habermas established reflection as a learning tool (Atkins & Murphy, 1993). Clarà (2015) argues that there is a general consensus, built on the seminal works of Dewey (1933) and Schön (1983; 1987), that reflection is crucial to teacher education.

Dewey's (1933) interpretation of reflection developed from the belief that reflective thought arises as a result of confusion and doubt, which leads to enquiry and problem solving. Reflection, therefore, is a meaning-making process. That moves students from one experience to another by building a deeper understanding of the relationships and interconnectedness between each experience and idea. He claimed that reflection is rigorous and systematic, based on scientific enquiry, and needs to occur in the context of interaction with others. Schön (1983; 1987), an educational theorist, developed Dewey's work. Schön "emphasized context and experiential knowledge" (York-Barr et al., 2005, p. 4), identifying that reflective thinking could be implemented by professionals via reflective practice. Fendler (2003) sees Schön's concept of reflective practice with its focus on practitioner-based intuition as distinct from Dewey's

rational, scientific reflective thinking model. Schön (1987) observed that teachers did not receive the training required to succeed in the uncertain and unpredictable world of professional practice. The professional knowledge teachers received was insufficient for them to deal with what Schön (1987) famously referred to as "[t]he swampy lowlands, where situations are confusing messes incapable of technical solution and usually involve problems of greatest human concern" (p. 42). He argued that successful teachers do more than apply professional knowledge to difficult situations. Once they reach the stage he terms "professional artistry," teachers implement their "intuition, talent and wisdom" to manage such situations effectively (p. 200). Thus, reflective practitioners with professional artistry draw on their tacit knowledge, learn from experience and effectively deal with the situation they are in. To reach the expert level of professional artistry, practitioners need to reflect in action (reflect while the event occurs) and reflect on action (reflect on previous experiences) (Schön, 1987).

Rolfe et al. (2001) explain that reflection in action involves two components: teachers thinking about what they do, while they do it. Additionally, they think about how they do it, using practical knowledge to underpin practice. Thus, during reflection in action, teachers analyse and respond to experiences at the time they occur. In contrast, Burns and Bulman (2000) define reflection *on* action as "the retrospective contemplation of practice in order to uncover the knowledge used in a particular situation, by analysing and interpreting the information recalled" (p. 5). Consequently, when reflecting on action, teachers consciously review, analyse and evaluate previous teaching in order to gain insight to their actions and decisions. Killion and Todnem (1991) developed Schön's (1987) theory by adding a third element, which they call reflection "*for* action" (p. 14). To reflect for action, teachers reflect on what occurred in the past and how these actions can develop future teaching practices. My research is on reflection on and for action, seemingly the most common types of reflection practiced in ITE institutions. According to Lee and Shin (2009) they are the ones that tend to be explored by the mentor and mentee after a lesson has been taught, making them the focus of PTOF. Indeed, in my own practice as a college mentor I focus student-teachers on reflection on and for action during PTOF.

At this institution, the SBP course is complemented with a SBP handbook each semester. The handbook defines reflection as "reflection on practice" and states that "Trainees will be required to reflect on all aspects of their practice during their teaching practicum. Like any part of teaching, this should be based on sound educational theory that will be a key component of each practicum course." (Institution, 2021c, p. 8). However, the SBP handbook encourages student-teachers to reflect both 'on' and 'for' action. Thus, the institution's current definition of reflective practice may need revising. The SBP handbook states that the onus is on college mentors to "ensure that trainees have the proper theoretical background to lead them through the reflection process throughout each year of the program" (p. 10). However, college mentors are regularly paired with student-teachers who they have not taught the SBP course, so it is unclear how they can be responsible for this level of input.

2.3.2 Models of reflective practice in ITE

Dewey (1933) and Schön's (1987) work influenced future models of reflection. Models on reflective practice proliferated following Schön's description of professional artistry (Zwozdiak-Myers, 2009). These models help to explain how student-teachers implement reflective practice before, during, and after teaching to build connections between theory and practice. However, Lee and Shin (2009) explain that ITE programmes appear to address reflective practice differently. Yost and Mosca (2003) note that some ITE programmes focus on the reflection of classroom behaviour management, while Gadsby (2022) considers reflective journal writing essential to supporting reflective practice. Szabo et al. (2002) suggest that action research is an essential component of reflective practice in teacher education. This institution implements a combination of these elements. Models of reflective practice are taught, and during SBP student-teachers reflect on different elements of teaching. Student-teachers write reflective journals during SBP and in their final year they conduct an action research study.

Mackie (2020) claims that student-teachers should be introduced to reflection early in their ITE programme. At this institution, student-teachers are introduced to reflective practice in their first semester. Although reflection "is a vital part of teaching and is a key component of the teaching practice course as it underscores the program" (Institution, 2021c, p. 10), reflective practice

receives minimal overt input. Every semester it is taught after student-teachers return from SBP, but because student-teachers are expected to reflect on their practice *during* SBP, teaching it *afterwards* may be deemed questionable. A lack of teaching of reflective practice seems to be fairly standard in ITE: reflective practice tends to be embedded within ITE courses rather than mapped to a curriculum (Ward & McCotter, 2004). However, a number of authors advocate the explicit and deliberate teaching of reflective practice to student-teachers. Williams and Grudnoff (2011) conclude that reflection is not intuitive and must be taught. Similarly, Farrell (2019) states: "We cannot just 'tell' pre-service teachers to reflect without training them how to reflect" (p. 9). Mulryan-Kyne (2021) argues that greater emphasis on reflection and reflective practice in ITE coursework is needed. Conversely, Dyer and Taylor (2012) found that even with explicit teaching of reflective practice, student-teachers were unable to reflect without the support of a mentor. Their findings may have implications for this study, particularly as I perceive that the student-teachers at this institution may benefit from more explicit teaching of reflective practice. However, Russell (2013) warns that the explicit teaching of reflection in ITE is more harmful than helpful. His warning stems from his claim that college mentors lack clarity on the concept, fail to model reflective practice themselves and frequently fail to closely link reflective practice to professional learning. If this is accurate, developmental support might provide college mentors with greater clarity and enhance their teaching of reflective practice. These differing perspectives on the overt teaching of reflective practice meant that it was important for my study to explore participant perspectives on reflection during PTOF.

The institutional SBP handbook contains practical tasks that student-teachers undertake while in school, for which they then complete a written reflection. They also write a reflection on each lesson they teach. The handbook provides a series of questions to guide and engage student-teachers in reflective thinking. Student-teachers respond to these questions in writing after each observation task and each lesson taught. However, the questions are similar every semester. Various studies (Slade et al., 2019; Dervent, 2015) claim that reflective practice is a developmental process because it occurs at different levels of sophistication and complexity. However, the institution's questions do not appear to help student-teachers progressively develop their reflective skills. According to Dervent (2015) student-teachers tend to begin at a technical stage but move fairly quickly towards deeper critical reflective thinking, where they are able to

comprehend the classroom situation. To reach the more refined, multifaceted levels of teaching, he claims that reflective practice should be repeated again and again. In my experience, student-teachers at this institution can do this because they are placed in school every semester. However, it is difficult to ascertain exactly how and when student-teachers develop what Dervent (2015) calls deeper critical reflective thinking. Slade et al. (2019) found that a quarter of the student-teachers in their study did not progress beyond the technical stage of reflection. However, their study only focussed on first- and second-year student-teachers. Nevertheless, Slade et al. (2019) argue for the overt teaching of reflection to progress to the more complex refined levels of reflective practice. The concept of levels and progression of reflective practice are also seen in numerous earlier studies (Blomberg et al., 2014; Jay, 2003). Gadsby (2022) argues that the concept of linear progression is too simplistic for the complex, multi-faceted reflective practice undertaken by student-teachers. Yet, she recognises the value of levels of reflection to identify differing forms of student-teacher reflective practice. Tiainen et al. (2018) acknowledge that reflective practice is a long developmental process and suggest that student-teachers should initially learn how to reflect on campus while being supported to reflect over time during SBP. I concur with this, and also feel that Dervent's (2015) concept of a linear progression to reflective practice is useful. In my experience, student-teachers reflect at different levels as they learn to teach. However like Farell (2019), I feel that reflective practice needs to be taught to student-teachers overtly before they reflect on their own practice. I have observed that when I overtly guide student teachers to reflect, they are able to reflect on and for practice at more complex levels.

A comparison of the SBP course and the SBP handbook suggests that the teaching of reflective practice at the institution is misaligned. While the handbook introduces reflective practice models by Ward and McCotter (2004), Kolb (1984) and Schön (1987) in semester 1, the course first introduces models of reflective practice in semester 4. In the handbook, student-teachers are expected to reflect on core elements of their SBP every semester, but in the course they reflect on their own practice from semester 3. If, as the handbook suggests, student-teachers are expected to reflect on their teaching from semester 1, it appears that they are implicitly expected to understand how to undertake this. While head of department, I became aware that education faculty appear to support student-teacher's reflective practice rather inconsistently. This suggests

the absence of a standardised developmental approach to reflective practice at this institution, which in any case does not appear to heed Mathew et al.'s (2017) recommendation that student-teachers must apply models of reflective practice systematically and consistently in order to develop their teaching skills and knowledge effectively.

2.3.3 Reflective practice: definitions and prevalent issues

Beauchamp (2015) acknowledges that in the literature, reflection and reflective practice are problematic to define. Loughran (2002) sees reflection as understanding a context from different perspectives, while Quinton and Smallbone (2010) view it as a form of teacher assessment. Sellars (2014) suggests that due to the multiple terms used to define and qualify reflection – such as the reflective practitioner, reflective teaching, reflective practice, action researcher, etc. – it is impossible to produce a single definition. Gadsby (2022) recognises that there is no single accepted definition of reflection. She suggests that common themes permeate the literature. Namely that they all refer to an initial problem, express a desire to find out more, advocate the development of knowledge, and infer time as crucial for effective reflection to occur. While the reasons for multiple definitions and understandings of reflection are not within the scope of this study, they do affect ITE programmes underpinned by reflective practice. Clarà (2015) deems the term ambiguous, inadequate and even a barrier to teacher development. Mena et al. (2011) suggest that such ambiguity can present serious problems to ITE. This may be the case at this institution, where there appears to be an assumption that student-teachers and indeed college mentors implicitly know how to reflect on and for practice. In my experience, reflective practice during PTOF includes the common themes outlined by Gadsby (2022): a problem area is usually identified, and new knowledge, in the form of possible solutions, is explored. Because it is unclear if college mentors and student-teachers have similar experiences, their perceptions are explored in this study.

Gadsby (2022) claims that most academics perceive reflective practice as a transformative process, suggesting that student-teachers need to be aware of the knowledge required to inform and ultimately change practice. My institution's education mission statement describes student-teachers as future "agents of change" (Institution, 2021b, Education section, para. 2). To change

practice, Gadsby (2022) claims that the theoretical and practical elements of reflective practice require equal attention. Over- or underemphasising either one reduces student-teachers' ability to critically reflect, generating a barrier to effective reflective practice. It is unclear if the theoretical and practical elements of reflective practice are equally addressed during PTOF at this institution, hence it seems prudent to explore participant perspectives of reflective practice. Collin et al. (2013) suggest there is often a gap between theory and practice. Weber et al. (2018) indicate that student-teachers often reflect without addressing theory, while Gelfuso and Dennis (2014) found that student-teachers often fail to receive support to link practice to theory and that their reflective practice tends to be descriptive. I agree with Gelfuso and Dennis (2014) and Weber et. al (2018) because in my professional experience student-teachers at this institution often fail to support their reflective practice with theory. Collin et al. (2013) claim that because the concept of critical reflection is often not understood by those who promote it, reflection tends to be implemented differently in practice. In my experience college mentors possess different concepts of reflection and student-teachers are not asked to reflect on and for practice consistently. Thus, I concur with Collin et al. (2013) and Russell (2013) that if mentors understand and agree on the concepts of reflection and critical reflection, they will be better equipped to support student-teachers' critical reflections on practice.

Beauchamp (2015) claims that HE structures may inhibit student-teacher learning of effective reflective practice. While Enfield and Stasz (2012) suggest communities of practice are useful for student-teachers to learn about reflection, they argue that they are usually too hierarchical to afford comfortable learning. Earlier, I explained that the student-teachers at this institution tend not to participate in communities of practice during SBP, due to the hierarchal nature of the structure and their being assessed. Enfield and Stasz (2012) suggest that HE structures that provide one instructor to demonstrate reflection may not be as effective as those that incorporate co-teaching and model dialogic reflective practice. However, this institution does not co-teach reflective practice, so student-teachers are unlikely to experience dialogic reflective practice prior to SBP. While Collin and Karsenti (2011) also claim that reflection should be collaborative, they suggest this can be achieved through positive mentor/mentee relationships. Noffke and Brennan (2005) argued that reflection in ITE should be both an individual and a collaborative experience. This appears to be the situation at this institution, where student-teachers are

expected to complete written reflections of their teaching and learning individually after reflecting with their college mentor during PTOF.

2.3.4 Reflective practice in policy and teacher standards

Internationally, literature on reflective practice has informed education policy. Nowadays, policy documents appear to view reflective practice as an essential component of good teaching – so much so that reflection is usually mentioned in teacher standards. The UAE is no exception. Its teacher standards include 99 performance indicators that help to define attitudes and behaviours teachers should possess in order to be deemed professional. Seven performance indicators focus on reflection on practice (Ministry of Education, 2018). Glasswell and Ryan (2017) suggest that the inclusion of reflective practice in teacher standards helps to elevate the teacher role to the status of a profession. From my perspective, because reflective practice facilitates the development of new knowledge and skills, student-teachers' critical applications of theory to practice in school-based settings help to develop professionalism.

2.3.5 Reflective practice in the UAE

Reynolds (2011) claims that reflective practice has its origins in Western societies. However, Stockhausen (2007) acknowledges that reflective practice is frequently implemented in non-Western environments – something seen at this institution. Wanda et al. (2014) acknowledge that the impact of culture on reflective practice has long been debated, noting that many authors argue it is necessary to consider the cultural characteristics of a country when implementing reflective practice. Similarly, Blaik Hourani (2013) asserts that reflective practice is not done in isolation, arguing that context is paramount. Kawashima and Petrini (2004) claim that there are differences between how individuals think in Western and Eastern cultures, which may impact reflective practice. Stockhausen and Kawashima (2002) suggest that Western knowledge implemented in Eastern cultures tends not to be sensitive to local culture and values, while Hancock (1999) argues that some cultures are unaccustomed to reflective practice. Students from these cultures face challenges because of a dissonance between the requirements of reflective practice and their country's cultural dimensions.

Hofstede (2011) defines culture as societal norms consisting of value systems shared by the majority of the population, and identifies the dominant cultural characteristics of the UAE. Wanda et al. (2014) suggest that the dominant cultural characteristics of a society may become barriers to the successful implementation of reflective practice. While Hofstede's (2011) model helps to explain the impact of culture on reflective practice in this study, Venkateswaran and Ojha (2019) warn that the model has limitations. Several authors have critiqued Hofstede's research over the years (Roberts et al., 1984; Triandis, 1982): Ailon (2008) questions the underlying assumptions of Hofstede's research paradigm, while Kirkman et al. (2006) dispute the value-laden framework and its Westernised perspectives. More recently, papers by Brewer and Venaik (2014) and McSweeney et al. (2016) question the credibility of Hofstede's empirical research, going so far as to call for it to be abandoned. I adopt the perspective put forward by Venkateswaran and Ojha (2019), who suggest that Hofstede's model should be applied with caution. Thus, while not central to this study, I argue that the cautious application of Hofstede's (2011) cultural dimensions model is useful because it includes literature specific to the UAE.

According to Hofstede (2011), power distance is the degree to which members of society expect and accept unequal distribution of power. He considers the UAE to have a high-power distance construct. This indicates that leaders separate themselves and that separation is accepted by the population, due to their cultural heritage. Stockhausen (2007) argues that in high-power distance cultures, students tend to believe that providing learning is the responsibility of the teacher. Thus reflective practice may not be perceived as applicable. Hassan and Farahani (2018) found that teachers from Iran, which Hofstede (2011) considers to be a hierarchical country, considered their ability to reflect on practice as weak. In a study comparing American and Middle Eastern teachers, Marzban and Ashraafi (2016) found those from America had a greater perception and awareness of the need for reflection. Likewise, Khan et al. (2014) found that the concept of reflective thinking and practice was unfamiliar to student-teachers and instructors in a Pakistani ITE, though student-teachers and instructors at a similar institution in the United Kingdom were able to reflect adequately. A cause for concern is Richardson's (2004) claim that reflective practice is deemed inappropriate regarding the Islamic values and culture of the UAE, and therefore an unsuitable model for ITE in the UAE. In response, Clarke and Otaky's (2006) study

explored student teacher's oral and written reflective practice at a UAE federal ITE institution. Data was collected over a two-year period from student-teachers across six women's colleges. The study concluded that Emirati student-teachers are able to reflect as well as international students. However, Blaik Hourani (2013) discovered a number of issues Emirati student-teachers experienced when they produced written reflections. She explored the background of Emirati student-teachers at an ITE institution in Abu Dhabi. Blaik Hourani's (2013) study concluded that because Emiratis are not encouraged to reflect when growing up, they find reflecting on practice challenging. This study suggests that Emirati student-teachers may require developmental support to successfully implement reflective practice. Blaik Hourani's (2013) study resonates with my experience of teaching Emirati student teachers. I have found that the student teachers I teach often face challenges when reflecting on their teaching. This could be because similar to Blaik Hourani's (2013) study, my institution does not overtly teach reflection.

According to Hofstede (2011) uncertainty avoidance is the degree to which members of society tolerate unpredictability. He identifies the UAE as a strong uncertainty avoidance society. This indicates a preference for formalised policies and procedures, a resistance of change, and an intolerance of non-traditional ways. Wanda et al. (2014) argue that in such societies, students prefer structured learning and are concerned with providing correct responses to instructor questions. They further claim that in strong uncertainty avoidance societies, anxiety and negativity increase if reflection is implemented without clear guidelines. Elements of Wanda et al.'s (2014) study echo my experience of student teachers' reflecting on practice during SBP. I have found that most student-teachers require guidance from a mentor to reflect on practice. In my experience student teachers tend not to highlight developmental aspects of their teaching, preferring to focus on positive elements. Additionally, student-teachers often find it challenging to discuss alternative approaches to their teaching. Findings from these studies are relevant to this institution and the guidance it provides. They support my seeking of the participants' perspectives of reflecting on practice.

2.4 Mentoring

The importance of mentoring in ITE is well documented in literature (Aspfors & Fransson, 2015). Mentoring is central to this research study, as college mentors help student-teachers to

develop and learn during PTOF. This section reviews relevant literature on the concept of mentoring and mentor professional knowledge. It is followed by a review of literature on the importance of mentor roles and responsibilities, including relationships and collaboration. Finally, it explores studies related to the UAE context. However, I begin by outlining SBP and mentor allocation at this institution.

Allen et al. (2019) acknowledge that SBP is a necessary component to the success of ITE programmes, and that mentoring usually occurs within the school context. Ellis et al. (2020) report that internationally, most education authorities mandate that student-teachers train in schools for a specific number of days before graduating. As explained, Table 4 in chapter 1 provides an overview of this institution's SBP and mentor observations. The table highlights that student-teachers complete a minimum of 155 days in schools over their four-year undergraduate degree. Perhaps uniquely, the UAE's MOE does not stipulate a minimum number of days for ITE SBP. Similarly, there are no MOE guidelines or requirements regarding mentoring student-teachers during SBP. However, the MOE approves public-school placements every semester. Once approved, the school principal or a senior teacher allocates student-teachers to school-based mentors. This results in student-teachers being placed with a wide variety of school-based mentors, some highly experienced, others less so. The student-teachers are also placed with a college-based mentor from the education faculty. Some faculty teach the SBP course to the student-teachers they mentor; others are paired with a student-teacher they do not teach. The allocation depends on the number of student-teachers and college mentors, college mentor workloads, and school placement location. Although this study focuses on college mentors, it is worth acknowledging the varying levels of support student-teachers receive from their school-based mentor, because if this support is limited, the college mentor may have to provide additional input.

2.4.1 Concepts of mentoring

Aspfors and Fransson (2015) suggest that the notion of what constitutes a good mentor has changed over time. According to the Merriam-Webster.com dictionary (2006), mentors originate in ancient Greek tradition, with the term first appearing in Homer's epic poem *The Odyssey*. A

mentor in the Homeric tradition is a wise and trusted advisor (Anderson & Shannon, 1995), or a teacher, a role model, a counsellor and an encourager (Carruthers, 1993). Roberts's (1999) historical study of the term suggests a mentor comprises of an advisor, a teacher and a role model. However, Dawson's (2014) review of 30 years of mentoring research acknowledges that there is not an agreed definition of mentoring. Pennanen et al. (2016) even suggest that mentoring tends to be poorly defined and conceptualised. While there does not appear to be a unified definition of mentoring in the literature, Orland-Barak (2016) suggests that this could be due to different professions using different language to define mentoring, resulting in a disconnect between the term "mentoring" and what it actually means. She claims that ambiguity and confusion are compounded due to different mentoring "speak" and differing assumptions made about language used by those in different professions. This institution's SBP handbook does not offer a clear definition of mentoring, stating only that mentoring is an act that "…can include the roles of consulting, coaching and collaborating." (Institution, 2021c, p. 20). The handbook then provides a list of direct quotes to help explain what is meant by consulting, coaching and collaborating, suggesting a collaborative collegial mentoring approach. When speaking about mentoring, I generally define the college mentor as the college teacher who, along with the school-based mentor, provides support to develop the student-teacher's knowledge and skills during SBP. In my experience, the college mentor facilitates student-teachers making links to theory and practice – something I have found is not expected of a school-based mentor.

Concepts of mentoring in ITE have their basis in learning theories. Historically, they range from the mentor role being viewed as prescriptive (Wallace, 1991) to more collaborative, collegial and interactive (Bailey, 2006). Akcan and Tatar (2010) identified six mentor models that can be placed on a continuum from behaviourist, hierarchical and traditional to the social constructivist, collaborative model. The 1980s saw a move towards the mentor's role being one that supported reflection in action (Schön, 1983), promoting reflective practice through reflective dialogue. According to Wang and Odell (2002), during the 1990s mentors began to promote a more critical constructivist approach. Cochran-Smith and Lytle (2009) describe that by the end of the millennium mentors and mentees were becoming agents of change through an enquiry approach to mentoring. Mena et al. (2016) stress the importance of mentoring as a process that is participant-focused, collaborative and educative. More recently, Ellis et al. (2020) argue that

mentoring should not be the top-down, one-way process traditionally described; rather, they view mentoring as a reciprocal arrangement involving conversation, dialogue and the co-construction of knowledge. Burley and Pomphrey (2011) claim that such a view of mentoring resembles the constructivist model of learning, where knowledge is jointly constructed. Richter et al. (2013) explain that the mentor and mentee should collaborate, sharing ideas and perspectives to actively construct knowledge and meaning together. This institution's school-based handbook suggests mentoring is a collaborative endeavour, it is unclear what mentoring approaches are implemented during PTOF, supporting the exploration of participant perspectives in this research study. While the more recent definitions of mentoring suggest a collaborative mentor/mentee relationship, Mena et al. (2017) claim that in reality, many ITE mentors still implement the more traditional directive approach. Mena et al's (2017) study resonates with my professional experience. I have found that student teachers tend to expect more directive approaches to mentoring and PTOF during SBP.

2.4.2 Mentor professional knowledge

This institution does not provide a formal mentor professional development programme. Once appointed, all education faculty automatically take on the role of college mentor during SBP. However, Ngyuen (2017) claims that mentor development is essential to the success of mentoring programmes, and a number of studies support this notion (Dillon, 2017; Mena et al., 2016; Wexler, 2019). Orland-Barak (2016) argues that it is crucial that mentors are adequately trained and equipped to support and challenge student-teachers. Izadinia (2017) found that many ITE programmes (like this institution) fail to implement mentor professional development and preparation programmes. Mackie (2020) argues that there is a need for high-quality, consistent mentor education programmes to "promote an informed knowledge and understanding of the complex nature of mentoring in order to improve the quality and consistency of mentee learning experiences" (p. 263). Jones et al. (2022) conducted a study of 15 college mentors and 48 school-based mentors in Wales, United Kingdom. They found that if mentors do not receive professional training, they tend to draw on their own experiences of learning to teach. Jones et al. (2022) discovered that without adequate support, mentors often implement more traditional hierarchical mentoring models. These studies resonate with my professional experience. The

college mentors at this institution are from diverse backgrounds, so their experiences of *being* mentored – which they may then use *to* mentor – appear to differ widely. Talbot et al. (2018) suggest that a lack of mentor preparation and professional development exists in ITE because it is often thought that experienced teachers equate to quality mentors. Although Wexler (2019) argues it is wrong to make such an assumption, it appears to be made at this institution. This is concerning, because as Orland-Barak (2016) asserts, the roles of teacher and mentor are different. Coe et al. (2014) suggest the notion that effective teachers are necessarily effective mentors fails to consider the complexity of mentor roles and the pedagogical tools required for successful mentoring.

2.4.3 Mentor roles and responsibilities

Estyn (2018) describes the role of the mentor as multifaceted. According to Bullock (2017), it is important that mentor roles are clearly outlined so that mentors understand their responsibilities. However, Garvey et al. (2017) suggest the roles, responsibilities and standards for ITE mentors are not always clearly defined. Ellis et al. (2020) found that Australian educational authorities clearly defined mentor roles and standards, while Banville's (2002) American study revealed no clear roles, responsibilities or standards for mentors. At this institution, mentor roles and responsibilities are outlined in the SBP handbook along with mentoring guidelines. While these clarify the mentor's responsibilities, as with Banville's (2002) findings, the descriptions are broad and there are no standards. Caena (2014) claims that if mentor roles and responsibilities are clearly articulated, student-teachers are provided with more consistent mentor support during SBP. I am unsure if college mentors at this institution fully understand and effectively implement their roles and responsibilities. This is something I investigate in this study because according to Fletcher et al. (2021) a shared understanding of mentor roles and responsibilities provides clarity of expectations for all stakeholders.

2.4.4 Mentor/mentee relationships

Darling-Hammond et al. (2017) highlight the importance of the role mentors play in developing student-teachers into well qualified teachers. Ellis and Osborne (2015) argue that the mentoring relationship is critical and can make the difference between the success or failure of the school-

based experience. While Nolan (2017) argues that an effective mentor/mentee partnership involves building collegial and respectful relationships, Glover et al. (2022) stress that this takes time, which Wilson and Huynh (2020) assert may not be available during a short SBP placement. For mentoring relationships to be effective, mentors need to possess good interpersonal skills (Sheridan & Young, 2017), and acknowledge the challenges and emotional upheavals student-teachers face during SBP (Yuan & Lee, 2016). Parker et al. (2021) found that effective mentors should possess the key personal attributes of being empathetic, kind, open, supportive and willing. Ambrosetti et al. (2014) claim that student-teachers need to feel comfortable enough in the mentor/mentee relationship to be able to ask questions and openly discuss lesson observations. My experience aligns with Clark and Newberry's (2019) findings that if student-teachers perceive the mentor/mentee relationship as effective and mentor feedback as kind or helpful, the student-teacher is positively influenced. I have also found that similar to Glover et al.'s (2022) claim, a positive mentor/mentee relationship needs to be established before student-teacher development can occur. While Glover et al. (2022) suggest that positive relationships provide "emotional safety", making student-teachers comfortable enough to engage in what they define as critical conversations, my view is similar to Fletcher et al.'s (2021) acknowledgement that it can be challenging to maintain positive relationships during critical conversations. I have found that the student-teachers at this institution find it challenging to hold learning conversations during PTOF.

Fletcher et al. (2021) claim that mentor/mentee collaboration features strongly in student-teacher's satisfaction with their mentoring experience. Mena et al. (2017) explain that collaborative, interconnected and reciprocal mentoring partnerships are underpinned by constructivist mentoring models in which the mentor and mentee have equal power. Collaborative dialogues allow the mentor to communicate expectations and provide opportunities to discuss challenges and successes. Similarly, Izadinia (2015) argues that student-teachers need to participate in collaborative, open dialogues and share experiences with their mentors in order to develop knowledge and skills during school-based experience. Clutterbuck (2004) argues that a collaborative mentoring approach is "developmental and empowering" because student-teachers set agendas and reach their own conclusions (p. 13). While Jones et al. (2022) acknowledge that a collaborative mentoring approach can support immediate issues, it also

builds student-teachers' knowledge and skills for future practice. They explain that mentors challenge and help student-teachers to develop their own philosophy and apply their own approaches to future teaching. According to Clarke et al. (2014), mentors do this by supporting student-teachers to reflect on their practice and focus on pupil learning, which introduces the student-teacher to approaches that can be explored in their future teaching. Yuan and Lee (2016) argue that if more traditional mentoring models are implemented where power relationships are unequal, the mentee can be more exposed, exploited and vulnerable. Mackie (2020) argues that this can lead to relationships unravelling and progress in teaching breaking down. She stresses that mentoring relationships should be "more symmetrical" than the traditional hierarchical relationship with its associated power challenges (p. 276). Similar to Jones et al. (2021) I have found that during PTOF sessions I conducted a collaborative mentoring relationship can support both student-teachers' immediate issues and their future practice. However, both the mentor and mentee need to have the knowledge, skills and willingness to collaborate for the collaborative mentoring relationship to be effective.

2.4.4.1 Mentor/mentee relationships in the UAE. Jones et al. (2021) explain that collaborative relationships require an equal, open and democratic balance of power. However, Hofstede (2011) identifies the UAE as a high power distance society. Matsumoto (2019) suggests that the high-power distance construct manifests in Emiratis tending to accept power hierarchies, and claims that inequalities and subordination are culturally accepted. According to Alteneiji (2015), in a high-power distance culture everyone has an assumed position in the hierarchy. Hobson and van Nieuwerburgh (2022) acknowledge that mentoring relationships are often relatively hierarchical, and given the high-power distance construct of the UAE, inequalities in the college-mentor/student-teacher relationship could be perceived as more extreme and indeed more accepted. Clutterbuck (2004) warns that it is challenging to build trust and openness in a hierarchical mentoring relationship. This raises questions as to how applicable a collaborative, democratic mentoring model is at this institution.

Hofstede (2011) also defines the UAE as a collectivist society. Javidan et al. (2006) suggest that in collectivist societies, loyal commitment to a member group is paramount and relationships are seen as more important than tasks. Osula and Irvin (2009) assert that to be effective, mentors

mentoring students from collectivist societies need to focus on building relationships, which may at times be at the expense of scheduled task completion. They warn that if mentors focus on the task over and above building relationships, they will struggle to develop a trusting relationship, which is fundamental to successful mentoring. I originate from an individualist country; however, over time I have developed an appreciation of the importance Emirati student-teachers place on strong relationships and the time needed to build these. Bashir-Ali (2011) found that mentors in the UAE need to build collaborative relationships with their Emirati student-teacher mentees for the mentoring partnership to be deemed successful. She concludes that in order to build effective mentoring partnerships, an awareness of cultural nuance is important for expatriate mentors. These findings have implications for this study because half the college mentors are expatriates.

Similarly, Bock and Schulze's (2016) study of expatriate teachers mentoring Emirati school leaders found that challenges within the mentoring relationship were intensified by the cultural differences of the participants. They conclude that mentors primarily from individualist societies need to take more time to build trusting relationships with their Emirati mentees. The Western mentors in Bock and Schulze's (2016) study perceived that they had limited power when mentoring Emirati leaders; linguistic differences, limited social activity and limited opportunities for pedagogical and theoretical dialogue were all found to be additional barriers to building successful mentoring relationships. Bock and Schulze (2016) explain that change will not occur unless careful mentor selection and mentor training is implemented in future Emirati and expatriate mentoring programmes. At this institution, given the cultural differences between expatriate college mentors and Emirati student-teachers, this could mean an Emirati mentor and Emirati student-teacher mentee mentoring relationship being more effective. However, Kochan et al. (2015) found that multi-cultural mentoring can be beneficial to all participants because they explore differing views and perceptions of education. In my experience, student-teachers do not perceive there to be a division between expatriate and Emirati college mentor support. Rather, I have observed differences in mentoring approaches and mentoring style that do not come from national origins.

  2.4.4.2 Mentor/mentee gender. Another factor that may affect the mentor/mentee relationship at this institution is gender: a quarter of the college mentors are male expatriates.

Goby and Alhadhrami (2020) explain that in UAE society, Emirati females are prohibited from interacting with unrelated men. However, unrelated male mentors meet with student-teachers during SBP. While this is a professional relationship and the male mentors are known to the student-teachers as education faculty, it is unclear if or how different gender pairings impact the mentoring relationship. Hence, I will explore participant perceptions of male college mentor and student-teacher mentee pairings in this study. While I am not aware of student-teachers who have found male college mentors difficult to relate to, I do know that student-teachers at other campuses have requested female college mentors to observe them during SBP. This request has always been granted.

2.5 Feedback

The purpose of this study is to explore, develop and evaluate college mentor and student-teacher PTOF practice at this institution. Therefore feedback, more specifically PTOF, is at the core of this research study. This section initially reviews literature on the importance of mentor feedback in ITE. It acknowledges that literature on PTOF is limited and that there are no studies on PTOF from the UAE. It then explores literature on directive and collaborative PTOF, before reviewing literature on challenges to giving and receiving PTOF.

The importance of mentor feedback in ITE was acknowledged early last century, when Dewey (1933) argued that student-teachers could become miseducated if they are not supported by feedback from a mentor. Similarly, Darling-Hammond et al. (2005) claim that student-teachers require assistance to understand and develop, otherwise they may draw incorrect inferences from their SBP. O'Leary (2020) acknowledges that in ITE, mentor feedback is perceived as an important and influential element of the observation process; Bjørndal (2020) describes it as supporting student-teachers to develop into qualified teachers. Le and Vasquez (2011) even claim that mentor feedback is the most important factor in student-teacher development. Kukanauza de Mazeika (2001) suggests that if mentor feedback is not provided or is limited, student-teachers are more likely to struggle when they graduate and start to teach.

According to Akkuzu (2014), mentor feedback should help student-teachers link theory and practice; this principle underpins college mentors from the institution visiting students on

placement in schools. Clarke et al. (2014) claim that providing feedback should be the main focus of the mentor's role. However, this institution's SBP handbook does not indicate that this is essential. It merely states that mentors are expected to "Complete visits throughout the placement to observe, mentor, coach and evaluate their trainees" (Institution 2021c, p 5). While mentoring and coaching imply the provision of feedback, this is not explicit. This, and the fact that there are no institutional guidelines to support college mentors in giving (and student-teachers receiving) feedback, are a cause for concern, and in part motivated me to conduct this study.

2.5.1 Limited PTOF literature

While mentor feedback is viewed as significant in the literature, Wright (2016) suggests that there is limited research specifically on ITE PTOF, because empirical studies tend to focus on lesson observation rather than the PTOF stage. Earlier authors also commented on a lack of studies: Stevens and Lowing (2008) noted a lack of research on ITE mentor oral and written PTOF, while Akcan and Tatar (2010) found very few studies focussed on the content of PTOF sessions. O'Leary (2014) noticed that PTOF research mostly focuses on the school sector rather than ITE, while Jarrah (2020) suggests that the majority of literature on PTOF is concentrated in the field of teaching the English language. In the Middle East, PTOF appears to be vastly under-researched. Rehman and Al-Bargi (2014) commented that they could not find any studies from the region focussed on PTOF. Although empirical studies on teacher education in the UAE exist, Ibrahim (2013) noted a distinct lack of research focussing on what occurs during ITE SBP within the UAE. While Ibrahim's claim was made a decade ago, my own review of PTOF literature within the UAE reveals that it remains true. Talbot et al. (2018) conclude that the majority of recent studies on PTOF were conducted in Western contexts. Therefore, before recommending a standard practice based on evidence from Western contexts, it is prudent to first explore current practice and views about PTOF at this institution.

2.5.2 Evaluative, directive PTOF

At this institution, both the college mentor and the school-based mentor evaluate student-teachers during SBP. Individually, they formatively assess student-teachers after each observed lesson. As explained, Table 4 in chapter 1 highlights the number of observations mentors conduct each semester. College mentors and school-based mentors also complete a summative graded report together, which demonstrates the student-teacher's professional skills, knowledge and behaviours. It accounts for 40% of the SBP course grade. Davies and Harrison (1995) found that integration of the mentor role as an evaluator during SBP was first discussed in literature during the 1990s. Later, Fransson (2010) concluded that assessment and evaluation during SBP were not integral to a mentor's role. However, this institution's SBP handbook clearly specifies evaluation as an integral mentor role. It states that mentors are expected to "complete visits throughout the placement to observe […] and evaluate their trainees," (Institution, 2021c, p. 5).

Haigh and Ell (2014) claim that evaluation tends to focus on the mentees' ability to teach, but they highlight that there are numerous challenges involved in assessing this. Orland-Barak (2016) highlights that recent literature tends to focus holistically on student-teacher's readiness to teach, rather than specifically evaluating aspects of teaching lesson observations. In my experience this is different to the current situation at this institution, where college mentors are required to formatively grade individual observed lessons. These formative grades are used to guide student-teachers. I noticed that during the PTOF sessions I conducted, student-teachers asked what grade their observed lesson had received. Knowing that their teaching will be graded during an observation provides a particular context to the PTOF event, which may not be conducive to learning. Indeed, the National Association of Schoolmasters Union of Women Teachers (2020) claims that grading individual lessons is an inappropriate method to judge teacher performance. Interestingly, Entwistle and McCune (2004) found that students who prefer directive approaches to learning tend to be motivated by grades. Similarly, Hojeij et al. (2021) suggest that grades should be given for SBP to motivate Emirati student-teachers. However, these claims are not based on empirical evidence. Orland-Barak (2016) asserts that each mentor relies on their own experiences and points of reference when evaluating a student's ability to teach, which results in highly varied decision making. To mitigate this, Muijs et al.'s (2018) study explored how greater consistency can be achieved when grading individual lessons. They suggested that the International System for Teacher Observation and Feedback (ISTOF) supports

more reliability; however, they found at least six lessons needed to be observed to offer a degree of consistency. This is not feasible at this institution because of time constraints. Even in their final SBP placement, student-teachers are observed a maximum of four times by their college mentors. Coe et al. (2014) state that consistency is only effective when "pooling the results of observations by multiple observers of multiple lessons." (p. 4). This too is impractical at this institution. In Wales, United Kingdom, Jones et al. (2022) researched mentor perceptions regarding removing grades from individual lesson observations While one mentor in their study perceived grading formal lessons as useful because it led to less ambiguous feedback, most mentors found that removing grades focused PTOF towards dialogue and reflection. Differing perspectives such as these meant that it was important for this study to explore participant perspectives on awarding grades to individual observed lessons.

According to Charteris and Smardon (2014), early literature points to PTOF as being monological. The status of participants is unequal, with the mentor being regarded as the expert and the mentee a passive novice. Jones et al. (2021) explain that this hierarchical model has been largely criticised in teacher education discourse. Manning and Hobson (2017) claim that a monological directive approach to PTOF is considered neither valuable nor sustainable for student-teacher development. However, Wang and Odell (2002) claim that directive mentor feedback is effective for resolving classroom management and organisational challenges, and useful for student-teachers in the initial stages of their development. In my experience a directive approach supports student-teachers in the early stages of their learning to teach. I have also found that a directive PTOF approach is useful for resolving immediate issues. Critiquing the directive approach, Charteris and Smardon (2014) claim it fails to provide enough opportunity for reflection because discussions tend to be monodirectional, and Hobson (2016) argues that the more traditional direct PTOF approach does not allow opportunity for innovation or discovery. I agree with Charteris and Smardon (2014) and Hobson (2016). Because in my professional experience during directive PTOF sessions student teachers tend not to engage in discovery, innovative or reflective conversations.

In my experience the evaluative nature of PTOF at this institution may reflect a more directive approach to providing PTOF, thus constraining mentor/mentee discourse. Jones et al. (2018a) note that directive PTOF tends to be given during formal, criterion-based lesson observations.

However, at this institution each formative teaching observation is graded by the mentor using clearly defined criterion-based rubrics. Hobson and Malderez (2013, p. 94) define assessing while mentoring as "judgmentoring" and argue that the practice does not afford opportunities for reflection. Jones et al. (2021) acknowledge that power imbalances are experienced in the mentor/mentee relationship when assessing student-teacher performance. Suggesting that a supportive relationship that includes constructive feedback and listening can help to mitigate against "judgmentoring" (p. 4).

2.5.3 Collaborative, dialogical PTOF

Earlier, this literature review explored a transition from directive to collaborate mentoring practices. Perhaps logically, this transition is reflected in current discourse on PTOF. According to Jones et al. (2021), PTOF needs to be collaborative, dialogic and enquiry-based to be effective. In England and Wales, collaborative PTOF is reflected in ITE policy. Ofsted (2022) states that mentor PTOF should entail "focused and challenging discussion" (p.42). Ellis et al. (2020) stress the importance of the mentor and mentee collaborating and engaging in dialogue during PTOF to promote the construction of shared meaning. Similarly, Ambrosetti et al.'s (2014) study argues that collaborative, dialogic practices should be reciprocal, with both parties learning from one another. Glover et al. (2022) call this type of feedback "learning conversations." Grimmett et al. (2018) explain that dialogic PTOF initially involves the mentor and mentee exploring beliefs and values about education, then constructing new knowledge together, which eventually results in changes in practices. Bjørndal (2020) defines critical mentor PTOF as assertive or questioning feedback, which focuses on changing the student-teacher's practice or knowledge, and claims it is crucial during SBP. Similarly, Ellis et al. (2020) explain that effective PTOF should encourage student-teachers to be critical, reflective and enquiry-focused, in order to support them to develop and change their practices. This institution's education mission statement describes student-teachers as agents of change, which suggests critical feedback needs to occur in order to develop and change practice. If PTOF is not critical, Clarke et al. (2014) suggest, it tends to be positive rather than investigative and lacks necessary depth, limiting student-teacher developmental opportunities. Ellis et al. (2020) claim that providing critical PTOF is a key mentor responsibility because it enables student-teachers to reflect on practice. This institution implements a reflective practice ITE model, so it seems

logical that college mentors should encourage student-teachers to reflect on practice during PTOF. That said, Moody (2009) found that mentors may fail to provide the critical feedback needed for students to develop their reflective practice effectively. How and if college mentors give critical feedback during PTOF at this institution is currently unclear, making it a pertinent question to be explored in this study. While Vasquez (2004) recognises that a mentor's main role should be to encourage student-teachers to engage in collaborative reflective dialogue, he notes that in reality, student-teachers may prefer a more directive PTOF approach. Chamberlin (2000) supports this, claiming that no matter what the current approaches in literature suggest, student-teachers may feel less satisfied with reflective feedback in comparison to directive feedback. It is therefore possible that student-teachers at this institution may prefer directive, evaluative feedback, a factor this study investigates.

2.5.4 PTOF challenges

According to Bjørndal (2020), mentors find it challenging to give PTOF, particularly when it is critical. Indeed, Jones et al. (2021) suggest mentors may not have the skills to engage student-teachers in collaborative, dialogical "constructive conversations" (p. 9). Jeffries and Hornsey (2012) claim that mentors find it challenging to give critical feedback perceived as negative; however, they noticed that some mentors circumvent this by withholding it from their mentee. I am unsure if college mentors at this institution withhold negative feedback, though it would be unfortunate if they do. Kopec et al. (2015) found that when critical feedback is provided, it can create negative emotions in student-teachers that can be challenging for mentors to manage. My experience of PTOF is in line with Copland's (2010) assertion that giving critical PTOF can create tensions within the mentoring relationship. Brandt's (2008) study found that student-teachers implemented strategies to hide negative emotions when presented with critical feedback: some withdrew from the dialogue, while others failed to discuss information and problems with their mentor. Likewise, Yoon et al. (2013) revealed that student-teachers ignored or averted mentor feedback when critical feedback was received. To ascertain if challenges to giving and receiving PTOF are experienced at this institution, participant perspectives are explored in this study.

Earlier, I examined literature that suggests that without professional development, mentors tend to revert to their own experiences of learning to teach. However, Hudson (2010) claims that to some degree, mentors always bring their individual experiences and insights into PTOF. This is a practice made more prevalent, Clarke and Mena (2020) suggest, when there is limited institutional guidance. Caena (2014) suggests that institutional guidelines provide student-teachers with consistent levels of support during SBP. Given that there are no institutional PTOF guidelines, no mentor training and the college mentors originate from diverse backgrounds, this could result in varied PTOF practice. This is important because Hudson (2010) warns that inconsistent PTOF practice can have implications for student-teachers. Thus, this study explores perceived inconsistencies in PTOF practice, with the aim to develop practice if inconsistencies are discovered.

I am unsure how much time college mentors allocate to PTOF. However, Glover et al. (2022) conclude that lack of time is a constant challenge for mentors. I found limited research on the length of PTOF sessions. A study conducted by Copland et al. (2009) of certificate-level English language teacher training programmes found the average length of PTOF sessions to be between 45 minutes and an hour. However, the mentor tended to feed back to three or four student-teachers at the same time. I conducted an online search of available mentor guides published by universities. I found that the recommended average length for PTOF was around 30 minutes. Both the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (n.d.) and York St John University (2020) in England advise that PTOF sessions should last approximately 30 minutes, although the latter also add a mid-placement oral review lasting one hour. It is unclear how long PTOF sessions usually last at this institution, so this study explores how much time participants allocate to PTOF.

2.5.5 PTOF: not an isolated event

Two decades ago, Colley (2003) recognised that PTOF is largely carried out as an isolated PD practice, detached from other institutional practices and the wider socio-political context. As we have seen, many recent studies appear to adopt Gravett's (2020) view of feedback as a "binary, dialogic event between individuals" (p. 8). Such perspectives, according to Tai et al. (2023), fail

to take into account the broader social and material context. Similarly, Tyrer (2023) suggests that ITE mentor feedback is not an isolated event, but rather depends on multiple events occurring simultaneously. She points to events such as scheduling PTOF sessions and allocating a room for feedback. Some of these institutional practices, Tyrer (2023) claims, enable PTOF; others are "in competition dependant on power positions values and contextual priorities" (p.43). For example, Tyrer (2023) suggests that workload constraints may encourage college mentors to implement directive PTOF focused on developing student-teacher teaching skills, rather than collaborative approaches that develop and challenge effective practice. While Tai et al. (2023) and Tyrer (2023) adopted the theory of practice architectures, the theory of intersectionality, developed by Crenshaw (1991), also helps to identify how multiple factors impact experiences. Nichols and Stahl (2019) explain that intersectionality studies are concerned with the ways in which systems of inequity intersect to produce complex relations of power and advantage or disadvantage. They conducted a literature review of 50 studies that applied intersectionality theory to HE. Nichols and Stahl (2019) concluded that when viewed through the lens of intersectionality, HE is a multi-layered system of advantage and disadvantage. Claiming that academic participation intersects with social and personal aspects of HE experiences. Similarly, Collins and Bilge (2020) suggest that multiple overlapping and interconnected factors shape educational experiences. They propose that exploring the complexities of participant experiences through the lens of intersectionality can help to explain differing experiences and address issues of educational equity. In my experience, PTOF at this institution is dependent on multiple events, power relationships and institutional priorities. Thus, as I discuss in chapter 6, I consider that the theory of intersectionality can help to explain the findings of this study.

While Marquis et al. (2021) agree that the theory of intersectionality is useful, they argue that HE institutions need to do more to fully understand the "workings of intersecting systems of inequity impacting on participation and outcomes of students and faculty" (Nichols & Stahl, 2019 p. 1). To achieve an understanding of intersecting systems, Marquis et al. (2021) suggest HE institutions should explore pedagogical partnerships. Cook-Sather (2014) defines pedagogical partnerships as 'a collaborative, reciprocal process through which all participants have the opportunity to contribute equally, although not necessarily in the same ways, to curricular or pedagogical conceptualisation, decision-making, implementation, investigation, or analysis (p.

6). Healey et al. (2014) explain that fundamental features of pedagogical partnerships are engagement and the distribution of power and responsibility. Accordingly, they claim, pedagogical partnerships involve the active engagement of students and faculty, whereby all parties gain from the process of learning and working together. Healey et al. (2014) note that because partnerships require empowerment and accountability, student engagement is different from other forms of student engagement. They provide examples of students and faculty partnering on curriculum design and pedagogic development. When they partner on such tasks, Cook-Sather (2014) argues, greater equity is achieved, through building relationships based on respect and reciprocity. Thus, Marquis et al. (2021) claim, pedagogical partnerships are a departure from traditional hierarchical student faculty relationships. In my experience, this institution does not practice pedagogical partnerships. Matthews et al. (2023) explore pedagogical partnerships to enhance feedback practices within HE. They conclude that when faculty and students discuss feedback practices together, they develop shared notions of feedback practices that support learning and improve practice. However, Matthews et al. (2023) warn that discussions alone do not constitute partnerships. They found that an attention to power dynamics and a principle of equal, though different contributions was required to enable participants to implement shared responsibility, trust, and dialogue. Suggesting that there is much to be learned about how to create the conditions for effective pedagogical partnerships. While this study does not purport to establish pedagogical partnerships, it aims to give all participants a voice to express their perceptions of and suggestions for PTOF development. It is hoped that the findings of this study demonstrate the value of both college mentor and student-teacher perspectives to develop PTOF practice. With a view that both parties can perhaps act as co-creators on future PTOF development.

2.6 Summary

This literature review informed the research questions for this study. It acknowledged that recent discourse stresses collaborative, dialogical, enquiry-based mentoring and PTOF, albeit from a largely Western perspective. It explored studies from the UAE on reflective practice and mentoring while acknowledging that there is a gap in the literature on PTOF from the UAE and the wider Gulf region. Given that most PTOF studies were conducted in Western contexts,

caution is required when adopting them in the UAE context. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to provide insight into PTOF practice and development from the perspectives of participants studying and working in the UAE.

Chapter 3: Methodology

3.0 Introduction

The purpose of this study is to explore college mentor and student-teacher perceptions of PTOF practices before and following planned interventions. I wanted first to understand the current situation and then take an evidence-based approach to enhance practice. This chapter outlines the research questions, the research paradigm and the action research approach (AR) adopted. Offering justification for the methodological choices made. I discuss the participants, the sample, and the data collection tools for both cycles of this study.

3.1 Research questions

The six research questions are investigatory. The first three explore participants' pre-intervention perspectives on PTOF, and their findings inform the interventions. The latter three evaluate the interventions and practice following the implementation of new practice guidelines, from participant perspectives.

The exploratory cycle: Cycle 1

<u>Research question 1</u>
How do college mentors and student-teachers describe their current experiences of giving and receiving PTOF?
<u>Research question 2</u>
How do college mentors and student-teachers describe their theoretical approach to, and/or practice of, mentoring and giving or receiving PTOF?
<u>Research question 3</u>
What suggestions, if any, do college mentors and student-teachers have to develop PTOF?

The evaluation cycle: Cycle 2

Research questions 4, 5 and 6 relate to the post-intervention cycle.

Research question 4

How do college mentors and student-teachers describe their post-intervention experiences of PTOF?

Research question 5

In what ways, if at all, do college mentors and student-teachers perceive the interventions have altered their theoretical approach to, and/or practice of, mentoring and giving or receiving PTOF?

Research question 6

What suggestions, if any, do college mentors and student-teachers have to further develop PTOF practices?

3.2 Research paradigm

According to Creswell (2003), a research paradigm is a lens that guides a study. Kivunja and Kuyini (2017) describe four key research paradigms: positivist, constructivist, critical, and pragmatic. Gogus (2012) explains that while there are numerous types of constructivist paradigms, fundamentally constructivists believe that "humans generate knowledge and meaning from their experiences, mental structures, and beliefs that are used to interpret objects and events" (p. 783).

While I am guided by the social constructivism developed by Vygotsky (Vygotsky & Cole, 1978), I lean towards a pragmatic paradigm. I believe that humans create reality, truth is not absolute, and humans develop knowledge through collaboration and communication. According to Adams (2006), social constructivists believe that social worlds develop as a result of people's interactions. Kim (2001) explains that this approach emphasises culture and context to understand social occurrences. Thus, according to Schwandt (2000), knowledge is socially constructed, and meaning is understood by studying the viewpoints of participants within their context. My ontological position therefore led to the adoption of a particular epistemological

approach to this study, as I sought to understand and develop PTOF from participant perspectives within a particular campus at this institution.

While a social constructivist, my ontological stance also leans towards pragmatism. According to Kelemen and Rumens (2008), pragmatists consider concepts rather than abstract ideas, as the basis for thought and action. Thus, Saunders et al. (2016) explain that pragmatists believe reality is the practical outcome of ideas developed from action and experiences. Goldkuhl (2012) argues that pragmatism as a research paradigm is based on implementing the best methods to investigate real-world problems. As Creswell and Plano Clark (2011) explain, pragmatic researchers want to discover what works and what solves problems. Thus, my pragmatism led me to conduct a research study orientated towards investigating a practical problem. Connecting my social constructivist and pragmatic ontological stances enhanced the epistemological approach to this study, and combining them led me to adopt an AR approach.

3.3 The action research approach

According to Holly et al. (2005), AR is a rigorous methodology that explores practical issues with the aim of developing practice; Willis and Edwards (2014) claim it is often used in educational settings. McNiff and Whitehead (2006) note that AR has similarities with other research approaches in that it gathers evidence, generates knowledge, and can employ both qualitative and quantitative research methods. I selected AR because it was the most suitable approach for addressing the purpose of this study. As Hammond (2013) explains, a pragmatic approach like AR has an action orientation, while Trunk Širca and Shapiro (2007) claim that "action research fundamentally reflects constructivist thinking in its process and practice" (p.105). They argue that AR is a social enterprise and the processes developed by the action researcher are socially constructed. Thus, according to Trunk Širca and Shapiro (2007), AR is highly suited to social constructivist researchers. Adopting an AR approach allowed me to adapt my methods to suit the requirements of the research context. In turn, this gave me the freedom to use mixed methods of data collection. Ultimately, I only used qualitative methods within the AR approach because I was interested in the constructed knowledge of the participants. While this

AR study is context-specific, its findings may prove relevant to others in this institution and region.

Most authors recognise Kurt Lewin (1946) as the founding father of AR. Lewin (1946) viewed AR as a research method for understanding and changing social practices by involving practitioners in the research process. Because AR is practitioner-focused, the researcher is integral to the research process. Costley et al. (2010) argue that action researchers should be insiders because they research practice intrinsic to their workplace, making them, as McNiff and Whitehead (2006) assert, positioned to influence what happens. As an insider action researcher, I was able to draw on my institutional knowledge for the duration of the AR study. Willis and Edwards (2014) explain that AR allows the researcher to search for and try contextualised solutions to a problem, where participants find and evaluate solutions through iterative cycles as they develop their professional practice. Because I wanted to work, discuss and reflect with participants in order to collaborate and try contextually appropriate solutions, I felt that AR was the most suitable approach.

3.3.1 The action research model

I found Coghlan and Brannick's (2014) AR model to be the most suitable for this study because it supports the implementation of change to practice within an organisation and has been successfully applied to education institutions. Their model integrates Lewin's (1946) ideas with Shani and Pasmore's (2010) more recent 'Complete Model of Action Research'. I chose it because Coghlan and Brannick (2014) provide detailed guidance, and they outline how their model supports change in organisations with complex social settings. They discuss the challenges faced by insider researchers, including navigating politics and power issues, and include a "political entrepreneur" role in their model. This was particularly helpful regarding this institution: I knew I would need approval from senior management to implement any changes to practice, and 'political entrepreneurship' helped me navigate this process. Coghlan and Brannick's (2014) model includes a context and purpose stage followed by four phases in the AR cycle, which are presented in Figure 1 and which I follow with an explanation of their application here. In this study I conducted two AR cycles.

Figure 1 *The action research model*
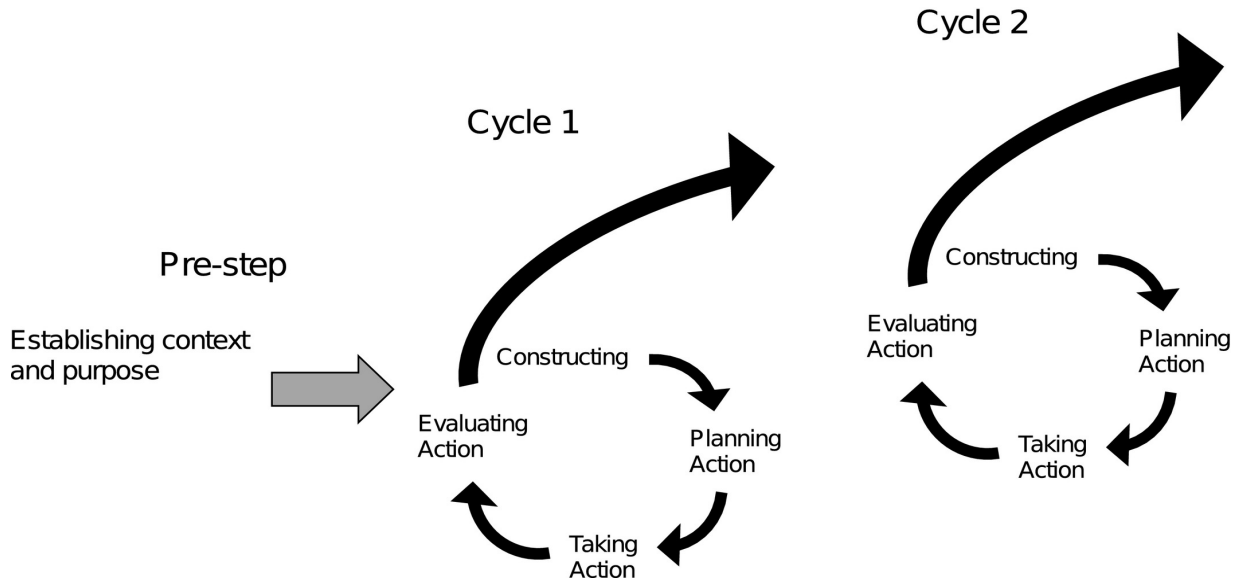
Note: reprinted from *Doing Action Research in Your Own Organization* by D. Coghlan and T. Brannick (2014).

For ease of reading, Table 5 provides a forward planner of the steps taken to conduct both cycles of this AR study, with reference to Coghlan and Brannick's (2014) AR model.

Table 5 *An outline of the action research cycles, and the steps implemented, with reference to Coghlan and Brannick's (2014) model*

Cycles	Steps			
Pre-cycle establishing context and purpose	Conducted an initial literature review and related it to the context. Established the purpose of the research: exploring, developing and improving PTOF from the perspectives of college mentors and student teachers at this institution.			
Cycle 1, the exploratory cycle. Cycle 1 explored current institutional PTOF practice from the perspectives of college mentors and student teachers.	**Constructing** Conducted a literature review. Observed practice, reflected on own practice. Spoke to colleagues about the proposed research study.	**Planning action** Developed a qualitative questionnaire to be administered online to college mentors. Developed a focus group interview protocol and focus group interview questions to be	**Taking action** Conducted pilot studies and made necessary changes to data collection process and tools. Collected data: From 8 college mentors using online questionnaires. From 18 student-	**Evaluating action** Analysed and interpreted data collected from 8 online questionnaires and from 3 focus group interviews using thematic data analysis.

	Articulated the practical and theoretical components of the study. Drafted a research proposal. Research proposal approved. Ethical approval to conduct the study granted.	asked to student teachers. Informed prospective participants of the research study. Sampling and recruitment of research participants. Recruited 8 college mentors and 18 student teachers.	teachers through three, year level Focus Group Interviews (FGI) (6 student-teachers in each FGI).	Evaluated findings in relation to relevant literature.
Cycle 2, the evaluation cycle Cycle 2 evaluated the effectiveness of the professional development and practice following implementation of the new practice guidelines.	**Constructing** The interventions: Professional development sessions. Cycle 1 findings informed cycle 2 constructing phase. Three professional development (PD) sessions held with college mentors to share and discuss cycle 1 findings, explore relevant literature, and develop new school-based practice guidelines. New practice guidelines developed. College mentors provided PD on the new practice guidelines to student-teachers. New practice guidelines implemented during school-based practice.	**Planning action** Developed an interview protocol and interview questions to ask college mentors. The interviews asked about the PD and implementation of the new practice guidelines. Developed a focus group interview protocol and focus group interview (FGI) questions. The FGI questions asked student teachers about the PD and implementation of the new practice guidelines. Informed prospective participants of cycle 2 of this research study. Sampling and recruitment of research participants. Recruited 6 college mentors and 18 student teachers.	**Taking action** Conducted pilot studies and made necessary changes to data collection process and tools. Collected data: From 6 college mentors using one to one semi structured interviews. From 18 student-teachers through three, year level focus group interviews (FGI) (6 student-teachers in each FGI)	**Evaluating action** Analysed data collected from 6 college mentor interviews and from 3 focus group interviews using thematic data analysis. Evaluated findings in relation to relevant literature. Developed a conceptual framework. Recommendations made to inform practice and future AR cycles.

3.3.2 Journaling in action research

Coghlan and Brannick (2014) describe the researcher consistently reflecting on each stage of the action research study to ascertain how the research is going and what the researcher is learning. In my case, I kept a journal as I reflected on my learning and the research study. For action researchers, Coghlan and Brannick (2014) explain that journaling provides opportunities to note down observations and experiences, then learn from them. It enables the action researcher to "integrate information and experiences which, when understood, help them understand their reasoning processes and consequent behaviour and so anticipate experiences before embarking on them" (Coghlan & Brannick, 2014 p. 44). Journaling supported a reflexive approach, as I differentiated between experiences and how I dealt with each experience. In turn this allowed me to anticipate future actions before I undertook them. As Coghlan and Brannick (2014) explain this circularity of action, fundamental to action research processes, makes use of the journal as a working tool. I found Schein's (1999) observation, reaction, judgement, intervention (ORJI) framework helpful. Using the ORJI model helped me to focus on how my thoughts impacted my behaviour. For example, I observed (O), then reacted (R) emotionally to my observation. I analysed, processed, and made judgements (J) about the observations and emotions. Journaling helped me to identify my feelings as initial reactions and my influencing judgements. I learnt to deal with my feelings, then chose whether to act on them. I journaled about frustrations, as well as about achievements and successes. Coghlan and Brannick (2014) explain that acknowledgement of feelings and making judgements as to their origins, are critical to learning and change. Finally, I intervened (I) in order to stimulate action. Thus, the process of journaling is a stimulus for personal development and social action (Coghlan & Brannick, 2014). Journaling promoted deeper self-awareness and helped to build my confidence through personal and professional insights. Similar to Mezirow's (1991) analysis of reflection, my journal included three forms of reflection: content, process and premise. I thought about content in terms of what was happening. I journaled about the process by thinking about strategies, procedures and how things were done. I also reflected on the culture of the institution and subcultures of the participants. This was valuable in terms of how issues were viewed and discussed. Reflecting on reflection supported my learning at every stage of this action research study. As I reflected and

developed my understanding of the research process, and this study, I made changes as necessary.

Coghlan and Brannick (2014) explain that journaling provides a systematic and regular kept record of dates, events and people. These elements were included in my journal and were valuable to this research study. My journal contained a mixture of brief notes and longer narratives. I also included sketches and mind maps, usually when I tried to make connections between data, actions and literature. I used headings to organise the journal and dated my writing. Journaling meant that I had an interpretive, self-evaluative account of my personal experiences, thoughts and feelings at every stage of this study. I found journaling helped to capture the immediacy of experiences, feelings and ideas before I forgot them. Table 6 details how I journaled at every stage of this action research study.

Table 6 *An overview of journaling throughout this action research study*

Stage of study	An overview of elements in my journal
Prior to beginning the research	- Decisions about my research topic, what I was interested in, gaps in literature. - Why I chose PTOF, my experiences of PTOF. - Potential participants and research questions. - People I wanted to speak to about my research/ people I spoke to. - Ideas about and beyond the scope of my research. Why I wanted to explore them. Why I thought some ideas were beyond the scope of this study.
Literature	- Thoughts, feelings, accomplishments, and ideas about: - Potential literature to read, gaps in literature and literature read. - Elements of PTOF to explore in literature. - UAE empirical studies. - Similarities and differences between literature, my institution, my experience, and cycle 1/cycle 2 findings.
Methodology and data collection	- Thoughts, feelings, accomplishments, and ideas about: - Advantages/disadvantages of action research. - Which data collection methods to use. Reasons for selecting questionnaires, focus group interviews and interviews. - Samples, sampling technique and participants.

	- Before and after interviews. Some of my notes were purely observational. For example, a participant laughed or was frustrated when they responded. How I managed the interview. Thoughts on changes for future interviews. Other notes were opinions or included personal emotional responses. For example, whether I believed a participant response. What was not talked about, and how much rapport was established. - Which data analysis method to use. Reasons for selecting thematic analysis. Thoughts about the process of analysing cycle 1 and cycle 2 data. - Methodological mistakes and successes.
Data analysis (cycle 1 and cycle 2 data)	- Thoughts, feelings, accomplishments, and ideas about: - What I thought I would find. - What I thought I was finding (as my research progressed). - Relationships across datasets and between cycle 1 and cycle 2 data. - Findings that did not make sense. - Areas that were interesting but did not directly relate to my research questions. - Linking findings to literature. - Conclusions, discussions and a conceptual framework.
Interventions: professional development sessions and new practice guidelines	- Thoughts, feelings, accomplishments, and ideas about: - The best method to develop PTOF in light of cycle 1 findings. - Implementing changes. - Before, during and after the professional development sessions.
Miscellaneous	- Most of my journaling fitted into the above categories. Elements that did not fit, were placed into a miscellaneous section eg: - Thoughts, feelings, accomplishments, and ideas about: - The impact of and changes required as a result of the global pandemic. - Meetings with people about my research.

3.4 Quality in action research

AR should not be judged by traditional criteria of reliability and validity but instead by its own quality criteria (Coghlan & Brannick, 2014). Quality AR is demonstrated by transparency at every stage of the AR cycle. "Rigour in action research refers to how data are generated,

gathered, explored and evaluated, [and] how events are questioned and interpreted through multiple action research cycles" (Coghlan & Brannick, 2014, p. 28). They identify four ways in which the action researcher can demonstrate quality in an AR study:

1. How each stage of the AR cycle was conducted. *In this thesis, I clearly explain the processes involved as I conducted each cycle of this AR study.*
2. How the action researcher's assumptions and interpretations are challenged and tested so that familiarity with the issues is exposed. *I acknowledge my positionality in this study. Additionally, as an insider researcher, my closeness and familiarity to the issues and to participants are exposed.*
3. How different views of what was happening were accessed. *This study clearly outlines how different participant perceptions of PTOF practice were accessed.*
4. How conclusions are supported by the development of theory or usable knowledge. *The discussion and interpretations of findings of this study are supported by relating them to the relevant literature. In chapter 6, I outline the new knowledge developed from this study and discuss its implications to practice.*

Coghlan and Brannick (2014) acknowledge that the value of AR lies not in the success of the change process, but rather in how the change was managed and how the study contributes to knowledge.

3.5 Anonymity and confidentiality

Issues of anonymity and confidentiality were crucial to this AR study. The online questionnaire used by college mentors neither requested nor used participants' names, gender, place of origin or other demographic details that could identify them. Because there were only eight questionnaire participants, I was aware that even limited biographic data could compromise anonymity. I omitted identifying information from participant quotes and context. I used alphanumerical codes to represent each college mentor (CM) participant, in the form CM/number.

While Cohen et al. (2011) acknowledge that anonymity cannot be guaranteed when conducting one-to-one interviews and focus group interviews (FGIs), the interviewer can "promise confidentiality" (Cohen et al., 2011, p. 9), which I did for all my interviewees. This meant that individuals would not be identified and data would be anonymised. While confidentiality is generally important in research (Cohen et al., 2011), it was of critical importance for this study because of the cultural context. Names were spoken in some of the FGIs and one-to-one interviews, but when I transcribed them I entered the word 'name' instead. I made clear to FGI participants that they should not discuss anything said in the interviews without the express permission of the other participants.

In order to protect participants' identities, the interview transcripts went through a process of anonymisation through the use of alphanumerical codes. Because FGIs are conversational and, in this study, were only audio recorded, I realised when reporting FGI data that I would need to refer to the participants from each FGI together, rather than attempt individual referrals. I use FGI2, FGI3 and FGI4 to refer to second-, third- and fourth-year FGIs, respectively. The college mentor interview data presented in this study is identified with the CM/number code explained above. Finally, Cycle 1 and Cycle 2 data are distinguished with the addition of .1 for Cycle 1 and .2 for Cycle 2, for example FGI2.1 and CM1.2.

3.6 Informed consent

Informed consent involves providing prospective participants information about the purpose of the study, confidentiality and voluntary participation (McLeod, 2003). Prospective participants can then make an informed decision about participation. Once I gained ethics approval from the institution and from the University of Liverpool's Virtual Programme Ethics Committee, the participant information sheet (PIS) was explained and emailed to prospective participants.

For Cycle 1, the college mentors received information about the research study during a department meeting. The PIS was explained and later emailed to all prospective participants to enable them to decide if they wanted to consent to participating in the research study. At the

beginning of the questionnaire, a sentence explained to participants that by submitting the questionnaire they gave their consent to participate in the research study.

For Cycle 1 and 2 student-teacher FGIs and Cycle 2 college mentor interviews, the PIS and participant consent forms were explained and disseminated to all prospective participants. All the participant consent forms were signed prior to the onset of the interviews. I made clear that all participation was voluntary and that participants were free to withdraw at any time. This was particularly important because I had the dual role of practitioner and researcher. In such cases, it is imperative that participant consent is gained without any undue pressure or coercion (Hearne, 2013). Due to the conversational nature of FGIs, it would be impossible to separate what each individual student-teacher said. Sim and Waterfield (2019) explain that FGI participants need to understand that they consent to their data *not* being removed once the FGI has been conducted, so this was a factor highlighted in the FGI participant information sheets. However, both the PIS and the consent form advised prospective FGI participants that every effort would be made to remove data if at all possible. Before the FGIs and interviews, participants were reminded that all information was confidential and would be stored securely.

3.7 Covid-19, FGIs and interviews

The global pandemic and mandatory social distancing measures meant that FGIs and interviews were conducted online via Zoom. Deakin and Wakefield (2014) argue that online interviews better support rapport building and are more flexible than face-to-face interviews. Jenner and Myers (2019) similarly found that participants share knowledge more readily online, suggesting participants' private environments were key. In collecting qualitative data using FGIs and interviews, I was aware that interactions, body language and facial expressions all play a role. Davies et al. (2020) explain that Zoom can erode some of these nuances as the interviewer may not be able to see or hear clearly what was said – a factor exacerbated by English not being the first language for the majority of the participants in this study. I would have preferred to conduct FGIs and interviews face-to-face in a neutral area on campus, but this was not possible because of the mandated social distancing measures of the time.

3.8 Pilot study

According to Ismail et al. (2017), a pilot test is essential for a well-planned research study. I conducted pilot tests before each round of data collection. Kallio et al. (2016) recommend that pilot tests include expert assessment and field testing. They explain that expert assessment involves a data collection instrument being critiqued by experts in the field, whereas field testing involves carrying out a 'practice' round of data collection. I used both for this study because Malmqvist et al. (2019) advise that using more than one pilot testing technique can enhance research instruments and improve the overall research. My doctoral supervisor and a colleague experienced in qualitative research were my experts. The field test process, and any changes made as a result of the pilot studies, are discussed for each research instrument later in this thesis.

3.9 Ethical approval

Ethics approval was initially granted locally through the institution. The research study was then approved by the University of Liverpool's Virtual Programme Ethics Committee (Appendix A).

3.10 Transcriptions

The verbatim transcriptions were compiled immediately after Cycle 1 and 2 student-teacher FGIs and Cycle 2 college mentor interviews. I used Temi (2020) an online transcription service initially, then manually checked and edited the transcripts. I then carried out what Sandelowski (1994) calls "cleaning up" the transcripts, editing out unnecessary detail such as hesitations and repetitions. I added punctuation to transcribed data but took care not to change meanings. I ensured that transcriptions could be understood and participant voices heard.

Each FGI and interview participant received a copy of the clean transcription to verify the accuracy of the data. Koelsch (2013) explains that doing so enhances the validity and trustworthiness of the transcript. He claims it empowers participants by giving them the opportunity to check the accuracy of what has been transcribed. None of the participants responded with any amendments to the transcripts, so I deemed them accurate. Additionally, I

reiterated to the FGI participants that the data on the FGI transcripts were confidential and should not be shared without the prior consent of all participants.

All data collected, including voice recordings, are stored in a locked cupboard and on my personal password-protected laptop. They will be kept for five years and then destroyed.

3.11 Data analysis strategy

I adopted thematic analysis (TA) to examine the data in this study. According to Braun and Clarke (2006), TA provides a "rich and detailed yet complex account of data" (p. 78) and is particularly useful for understanding participant perspectives (Brown & Stockman, 2013). I used Braun and Clarke's (2013, 2019) six-stage reflexive TA approach to guide each phase of the data analysis. I found that the six stages were not linear: the process was iterative as I moved backwards and forwards checking and rechecking data, codes, clusters and themes. My experience of the six stages is outlined below.

Stage 1: Become familiar with the data. The first stage reflects what the researcher brings to the data and does not involve systematic engagement with it (Braun & Clarke, 2013). Bingham and Witkowsky (2022) explain that many qualitative researchers begin with deductive themes to organise data into categories that maintain alignment with research questions. This is what I did, deductively developing three broad themes guided by my research questions, into which I organised the data. The first three research questions provided a framework for Cycle 1, while the latter three provided a framework for Cycle 2.

Initially, I organised the data using the hard copy method suggested by Braun and Clarke (2013) but found the sheer volume of data unwieldly. I therefore uploaded the transcripts to NVivo 12 to support the data analysis process. I input the deductive themes into NVivo 12 as parent nodes and organised the data I deemed relevant across these themes. At this stage, the remaining data were put into a "miscellaneous" category.

Stage 2: Generate initial codes (open coding). Once the data were organised into broad themes, I began the process of open coding, which involved breaking down the data. Braun and Clarke (2013) state that the aim of this stage is to develop "a comprehensive set of codes that differentiates between different concepts, issues and ideas in the data which has been applied consistently to the dataset" (p. 211). I systematically read through the data in each theme, developing and applying codes as I read it line by line. This is a classic form of qualitative coding (Bingham & Witkowsky, 2022). As I progressed through the data, I had to decide whether to apply a code I had already used or develop a new code. Braun and Clarke (2013) advise that all codes should be distinct, so I was careful to ensure that the codes did not overlap excessively. I modified the codes so they could incorporate newer data and I coded some data in more than one way. If I was unsure whether or not to code something in the data, I erred on the side of coding it. At this stage, I clustered codes that were similar. Once I had coded the data I felt were relevant to the pre-determined themes, I returned to the uncoded data. I did this because I (deductively) reasoned that the uncoded data was not relevant to my pre-determined themes. However, I wanted to ensure I captured everything, including things I did not think of when I designed the research questions. Thus, I analysed the remaining data through an inductive lens. This meant I looked for data under the overall topic of PTOF, not within the pre-ordained themes. This ensured that I searched for unexpected data that would otherwise have gone unnoticed. This process was iterative and took time. According to Bingham and Witkowsky (2022), using both deductive and inductive approaches supports a more organised, rigorous and analytically sound qualitative study. Once I completed the deductive and inductive rounds of coding, I went back and clustered similar codes. NVivio 12 helped keep the data organised. I input the open codes as child nodes and organised the data across these codes.

Stage 3: Search for themes (pattern coding). Once the data were coded, I began looking for patterns across the dataset, which meant actively searching for themes. In this study, these eventually became sub-themes. Braun and Clarke (2013) explain that pattern coding is more than identifying and reporting salient features of the data; it involves questioning and interpreting the patterns identified, and assumes that ideas that occur across a dataset capture something meaningful. Braun and Clarke (2013) advise that a good code contains one idea, whereas a theme has a central organising concept that contains many ideas or elements.

Searching for broad patterns across the coded data was an active process in which I reviewed the codes to find similarity and overlaps. I looked for concepts, topics, and issues that related to several codes, and which could be used as a central organising concept for a theme. This resulted in further clustering of the codes created during open coding to create provisional or candidate themes. This process helped me begin to summarise the data and resulted in fewer analytic concepts. I found some themes more prominent in certain data items then others. I put coded data that I felt didn't fit or cluster into the "miscellaneous" category, as I knew it may come to fit as my analysis progressed. By being selective I was answering my research questions. The analysis therefore did not represent everything that was said in the data.

Braun and Clarke (2013) warn that identifying patterns in qualitative survey data can be challenging because responses tend to be short and the questions provide a dominant structure. However, responses to the qualitative questionnaire I administered included narrative that supported my analysis. They also advise researchers to be careful not to confuse qualitative questionnaire questions with patterns. I managed this by not looking within a particular question but across the whole dataset when I determined themes.

Stage 4: Review candidate themes and integrate themes. Braun and Clarke (2013) describe this stage as one of "quality control" whereby the researcher checks that the "candidate themes fit well with the coded data and the dataset" (p. 233). My aim was to tell a story faithful to the data, and to have a set of candidate themes distinct from each other, that worked together and that related to the research questions. I returned to all the coded and uncoded data to check the fit of each candidate theme. During both cycles, I found I had to revise central organising concepts and move data from one candidate theme to another. I also collapsed and split themes.

Once I developed themes and sub-themes for each dataset, I began the process of integrating datasets to develop integrated themes. I produced integrated themes and sub-themes for both cycles. For each cycle, this involved combining the thematically organised data from the two datasets, and clustering, collapsing and renaming themes and sub-themes. Lambert and Loiselle

(2008) explain that when a researcher combines datasets, complementary viewpoints of the phenomenon are often revealed. For each cycle of this study, the college mentor and student-teacher perspectives were combined to provide a comprehensive understanding of participant perceptions of PTOF practice. I named the sub-themes to capture the essence of participant voices. Braun and Clarke (2013) explain that this allows the researcher to stay "close to the participants' language and concepts" (p. 260).

Stage 5: Define themes and develop the analysis. Braun and Clarke (2013) advise researchers to define themes in order to clarify what is "unique and specific" about each one (p.249). I did this by writing a short sentence about each theme and sub-theme. This helped to ensure every theme had a clear focus, scope and purpose. While each theme was relatively distinctive, together they provided an overall picture of central patterns in the data that answered the research questions. I then selected extracts from the coded data to illustrate the features of each theme and sub-theme and began to write a narrative around the extracts. I selected clear and compelling extracts to illustrate the analytical points I was making about the data. I also selected extracts from across the data to demonstrate the theme's breadth. When patterns were not evidenced across all data, this was explained in the narrative. While Braun and Clarke (2013) advise it is not good practice to include numbers when reporting patterns in qualitative research, Maxwell (2010) suggests otherwise. In this study I used qualifiers to indicate to the reader how prevalent the theme or sub-theme was across the dataset.

Stage 6: Write-up. The final stage was writing up this thesis. The process was not linear, because my analytic ideas and understanding developed as I wrote and edited. I link the findings to literature to show how my analysis contributes to and develops the field.

3.12 Cycle 1, the exploratory cycle

Two distinct research populations from this institution were eligible to participate in Cycle 1: college mentors and student-teachers. College mentors were invited to complete an online questionnaire and student-teachers were invited to participate in FGIs.

3.12.1 Sampling and recruitment: college mentors

Total population sampling was used to select college mentor participants for Cycle 1. According to Patton (2014), total population sampling is a type of purposive sampling whereby the entire population of interest is invited to participate in the study. The research population consisted of the 12 college mentors who work on the research campus. Recruitment to participate in Cycle 1 involved inviting these 12 college mentors to complete an online questionnaire. I introduced the study to the research population during an online department meeting. I explained the background of the study, the PIS and the online questionnaire. I informed the college mentors that participation in the research study was entirely voluntary, and sent a follow-up email inviting them to voluntarily participate in the study, attaching the PIS and a link to the online questionnaire.

3.12.2 Questionnaire justification

Hofstede (2011) sees the UAE as a collective society and Osula and Irvin (2009) claim members of collective societies tend to take time to build relationships. Because I had recently transferred to the research campus, I was aware that some college mentors might not openly discuss their practice with me one-to-one. I wanted to understand individual perspectives rather than the general consensus of the department, rendering FGIs an ineffective data collection tool. This left questionnaires as providing the opportunity for participants to give personal perspectives and not be influenced by other responses. I thought college mentors might be more likely to provide open and honest responses on an anonymous questionnaire, particularly because answers could indicate that college mentors were not fulfilling their job requirements. Additionally, I felt a questionnaire would be easy to administer, because Covid-19 social distancing measures had recently been implemented and everyone was working from home.

According to Braun et al. (2017) qualitative questionnaires have the ability to capture a range of perspectives and sense-making, which is useful when studying an under-researched area such as that addressed by this study. Braun et al. (2020) suggest that qualitative questionnaires surpass other data collection methods. Claiming that they can gain the perspectives of different groups

within a group and are just as effective at achieving this in smaller studies. This was a small-scale study with a diverse research population, and I wanted to capture all the college mentor perspectives on PTOF practice. Braun et al. (2020) suggest qualitative questionnaires should be used when they are the best fit for the participants, which I felt was the case for this study.

3.12.3 Questionnaire design

The questionnaire was designed to harvest perceptions of PTOF experiences and collect suggestions for PTOF development in the form of qualitative data. Because I assured the participants of confidentiality, it did not ask demographic questions. Braun et al. (2020) suggest that while qualitative questionnaires tend not to be widely used, they have the potential to provide in-depth understandings of social situations. The Neilsen Norman Group (2019) characterise qualitative questionnaires as using open-ended questions to glean respondents' perspectives and narratives. I wanted to explore participant opinions, experiences and personal accounts of PTOF. Initially I designed a questionnaire that contained only open-ended questions. However, the questionnaire had to be approved at an institutional level. This affected its design because the institutional questionnaire committee told me to include closed questions, suggesting that I would not receive a high response rate if the questionnaire were fully qualitative. Hence, my reasons for designing the questionnaire with closed and open questions were twofold: I wanted a high response rate and I had to gain institutional approval. Therefore, my questionnaire's design was the product of my aforementioned pragmatism.

Qualitative questionnaires frequently include closed questions to establish demographic elements (Neilsen Norman Group, 2019). The questionnaire included a question asking about length of service. However, I did not use this data when I realised it might identify participants. This was a learning experience for me. The five initial questions are quantitative, three questions offer multiple-choice responses about PTOF experiences, and the remaining questions are open-ended and explore PTOF experiences.

Questionnaire questions need to be simple, short and written in a language to which the participants are used (Tsang et al., 2017). Smyth (2016) stresses that the wording of each

question is vital because the questions are fixed and cannot be clarified for participants. I ensured that meaning was explicit and that questions could not be misinterpreted or misunderstood. The language used was familiar to college mentors, featuring abbreviations such as MCT (mentor college teacher) in current use at this institution. Table 7 itemises each questionnaire question and the response type. All participant responses were optional.

Table 7 *Cycle 1 questionnaire single item design*

	Question	Response type
1	How many years' experience do you have as an MCT?	Dropdown menu (only one option allowed)
2	In your current role as an MCT, which year-level students do you usually mentor in teaching practice?	Dropdown menu (only one option allowed)
3	Where in schools do you usually conduct post-teaching observation oral feedback sessions?	Dropdown menu (only one option allowed)
4	How long after the observed lesson do post-teaching observation oral feedback sessions usually occur?	Dropdown menu (only one option allowed)
5	How long do the post-teaching oral feedback sessions you conduct usually last?	Dropdown menu (only one option allowed)
6	Does the time taken to conduct post-teaching oral feedback sessions tend to be similar for all sessions?	Yes – move on to next question No – open-ended
7	Post-teaching oral feedback is usually carried out after the lesson observation. However, this may not always be possible. If this has happened to you, can you give the reasons why?	Yes - open-ended No – move on to next question
8	Please describe how you structure a typical post-teaching oral feedback session.	Open-ended
9	The current formative written lesson observation template requires MCTs to include grades. Please explain how you approach the subject of grades during the post-teaching oral feedback sessions.	Open-ended
10	Do students ever expect you to discuss grades during the post-teaching observation oral feedback sessions?	Yes – open-ended No – move on to next question
11	When observing students teach, do you make written lesson observation notes?	Yes – open-ended No – move on to next question

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	Question	Response type
12	When do you normally complete the formal MCT written lesson observation form?	Dropdown menu (only one answer allowed) If option 'D' chosen – open-ended
13	What steps do you take to ensure the student-teacher feels comfortable talking to you during post-teaching observation oral feedback sessions?	Open-ended
14	Please describe any support you have received to help you conduct post-teaching oral feedback sessions.	Open-ended
15	Are there any aspects of post-teaching oral feedback with which you would like support?	Open-ended
16	Which phrase best describes your approach to mentoring student-teachers in the teaching practice setting?	Dropdown menu (only one answer allowed) Open-ended explanation could be added
17	Please describe what you perceive to be the advantages and/or disadvantages of your approach to mentoring and post-teaching observation oral feedback.	Open-ended
18	Please describe what you as an MCT gain, if anything, from conducting post-teaching oral feedback sessions.	Open-ended
19	Please describe any challenges or constraints you have encountered when conducting post-teaching oral feedback sessions.	Open-ended
20	Do you have any suggestions to develop post-teaching observation oral feedback practices?	Open-ended
21	Do you have any additional comments regarding post-teaching observation oral feedback sessions?	Open-ended

The initial questions are closed, designed to be simple and easy to respond to, as I wanted to encourage participant response rate. I also hoped that these questions would encourage college mentors to focus on their PTOF experiences. The remaining questions are open-ended to elicit unrestricted responses from college mentors, and while questions 6, 7, 10 and 11 take a yes/no response, they ask for additional detail. The questions move from factual to explorative, descriptive and critical. As the questionnaire progresses, the questions become more demanding and require thought and time to respond. This was intentional because, as Cohen et al. (2011) explain, open-ended responses provide richer data. Questions 16 and 17 relate to theory, exploring mentoring and PTOF approaches. The final two questions are fairly typical of questionnaires and ask for suggestions and for additional comments.

3.12.4 Questionnaire pilot testing

I requested that two volunteers complete the pilot questionnaire. I emailed the research population, attached the questionnaire link and advised that the link would only be available to the first two respondents. Ismail et al. (2017) suggest it may be better recruiting participants who are not part of the research sample, as respondents may lose interest in the study if they complete the same questions twice. However, they also acknowledge that conducting the pilot test with the research sample creates familiarity with the questions and the research process. In this case, the research population is unique to the research context, so I felt that recruiting participants from outside the sample may not be conducive to highlighting issues specific to the context.

The pilot study demonstrated the effectiveness of the technology I used to administer the questionnaire. After testing, I moved one question up the questionnaire, so that both questions about grading occurred consecutively. I realised that two questions could be merged because they provided similar responses. I amended the wording of one question in order to simplify it. Because the questionnaire was anonymous, I am unsure if the pilot study participants took part in the main study; however, similarities in received responses suggest that at least one did.

I informed the pilot participants that all data gathered would be discarded and would not contribute to the research study. I subsequently realised that I could have informed the pilot

participants that their data would be used in the main study if no major amendments were made. This was a valuable learning experience, which I applied to future pilot studies.

3.12.5 Sampling and recruitment: student-teachers

Cycle 1's study population comprised the student-teachers on the research campus. I used purposive sampling to select representative student-teachers to invite. Purposive sampling is a technique used in qualitative studies to select the most information-rich participants (Patton, 2014). Creswell and Plano Clark (2011) explain that this involves identifying and selecting participants who have knowledge or experience in the study focus. I purposively selected all second-, third- and fourth-year student-teachers enrolled in the Bachelor of Education programme on the research campus and invited them via email to participate in an FGI for the study (n=80). First-year student-teachers were omitted because they had limited experience of PTOF, as were any student-teachers I taught or mentored.

A PIS and a participant consent form were attached to the email, making prospective participants aware of what they would be consenting to if they took part. Sim and Waterfield (2019) explain the necessity of doing this. I was aware that most student-teachers would not have participated in an FGI before, so I wanted to explain as clearly as possible all aspects of the research. I anticipated being able to meet with the student-teachers on campus in their classrooms to explain the research study: as an insider researcher I was aware that student-teachers may not read every email they receive. However, due to Covid-19, all classes occurred online, so it was impossible to visit classes in person. Nor was it technically straightforward for me to 'drop in' on another teacher's online class to address the student-teachers. I therefore recorded a short video explaining the aim of my research and the main elements of the PIS, FGIs and consent form. College mentors played the video during class after I sent the email invitation. I felt this two-pronged approach would help to explain the study and participation in it to the student-teachers. The student-teachers who responded to my email invite first from each year group were selected to participate in the FGIs. There were six students each from second, third and fourth years (n=18). I advised the next six student-teachers who responded from years 2 and 3 respectively

(n=12) that they were selected to take part in the pilot study. I also replied to those not needed for the research study that I would contact them if someone dropped out.

18 student-teachers participated in Cycle 1 and were divided equally into three focus groups by teaching year. The FGIs were so divided due to the student-teachers' differing levels of experience and knowledge of PTOF. FGI participants are more likely to engage and produce useful data if they are from a homogeneous group (Krueger & Casey, 2000). I divided the student-teachers into three FGI groups of six because Krueger and Casey (2000) suggest that two to four focus groups provide a more robust, holistic data sample, and that having six students in each is ideal for effective interpersonal interaction. Once assigned, I emailed each focus group participant to advise them of the FGI date and time. I re-sent the PIS and consent form and requested the signed consent form be returned ahead of the FGI. I also offered to answer any questions participants had via Zoom or email.

3.12.6 Focus group interview justification

Chestnutt and Robson (2001) explain that FGIs are group discussions that focus on a theme and are facilitated by an interviewer. Krueger and Casey (2000) describe an FGI as "a carefully planned discussion designed to obtain perceptions on a defined area of interest in a permissive, non-threatening environment" (p. 2). I chose to conduct FGIs with student-teachers rather than provide questionnaires because, according to Perkins (2011), student questionnaire response rate tends to be very low. I wanted to maximise insight into student-teacher experience and felt that conducting FGIs would encourage student-teachers to talk. Plummer (2017) highlights that FGIs are effective at producing data about participants' experiences, ideas and perceptions. My experience suggested that female Emirati student-teachers would be more likely to speak openly when supported by peers in a group. Rather than speaking one-to-one to an unknown Western teacher new to the campus, who had not had insufficient time to build strong relationships with them. Therefore, I felt FGIs would generate richer data than one-to-one interviews.

In this research study, the focus groups were divided by teaching year levels, meaning that the student-teachers in each FGI knew each other. I thought this familiarity, complemented by the

collective nature of UAE society (Hofstede, 2011), would facilitate discussion and generate richer data, as suggested by Rabiee and Thompson's (2000) study of Muslim women. More recently, Jones et al.'s (2018b) study showed that FGIs whose participants are familiar with one another are an effective data collection method. Stewart and Shamdasani (2014) highlight that FGIs have the advantage of allowing several participants to be interviewed at the same time, and they are unique because respondents can hear and respond to each other's viewpoints. I felt these factors would help to facilitate and build discussion between the student-teachers and could provide data I might not gather through one-to-one interviews.

3.12.7 Focus group interview protocol and question design

Protocols are necessary to ensure consistency across FGIs (Harrell & Bradley, 2009). They help to ensure research questions are prioritised and adequate time is spent across the topic under discussion. The FGI protocol I designed includes an opening brief that I read to the participants. It explains the purpose of the research, how the FGI will be administered, assures participants of confidentiality, and advises them they do not have to answer any question they do not feel comfortable discussing. Muijeen et al. (2020) suggest that FGI questions and prompts should be prepared in advance to promote consistency. Per Harrell and Bradley (2009), I kept my research questions at the forefront of my mind as I designed the FGI questions and prompts. I acted on Turner's (2010) suggestions that FGI questions should be semi-structured, qualitative, and designed to have a natural flow to facilitate gathering the richest possible data. All the questions and prompts are included on the FGI protocol. There are two main questions with eight additional questions and possible follow-up prompts. The student-teachers speak English as a second or additional language, so I ensured the questions were short, clear, and included familiar language. The planned questions aimed to give participants as much opportunity as possible to talk about aspects they viewed as significant, enabling me to capture elements I had not previously contemplated. Table 8 outlines the questions and prompts and the justification for their inclusion.

Table 8 *Cycle 1 FGI questions, prompts and justification*

Question number/justification	Questions	Prompts
Q1 justification	To begin the FGI in a positive light; to encourage student-teachers to feel at ease and talk.	
Q1	Please talk about a PTOF session with your MCT that was really positive.	Can you tell me how MCTs help to make you feel comfortable to talk during PTOF sessions?
Q2 justification	The second FGI question and prompts were designed to be more thought provoking. The first two FGI questions were designed to answer RQs 1 and 2, which focus on current experiences of receiving PTOF.	
Q2	Can you now please talk about a PTOF session with your MCT that didn't go as well as the experience you just described?	Have you ever felt uncomfortable to talk to an MCT and can you explain why?
Q3-Q6 justification	FGI questions 3 – 6 and their prompts were written to ensure I captured as rich a data set as possible from the participants and were also designed to answer RQs 1 and 2. They were only asked if responses to FGI questions 1 and 2 didn't include this information.	
Q3	What steps are involved during PTOF sessions?	How did MCTs start sessions? How did MCTs end sessions? Who did most of the talking? What did you mostly talk about?
Q4	Please tell me where PTOF with your MCT took place.	Is there anywhere you would prefer them to take place?
Question number/justification	**Questions**	**Prompts**
Q5	How long did PTOF with your MCTs usually last?	Do you feel this is the right amount of time, or would you prefer sessions to be longer or shorter?

Q6	Can you tell me if you always had PTOF with your MCT after every observed lesson?	How did you receive feedback if you didn't talk with your MCT?
Q7-9 justification	FGI questions 7-9 were designed to answer RQ 3, which asks for suggestions to develop PTOF practices.	
Q7	If you could offer advice to the MCT conducting your PTOF, what would you say?	
Q8	Imagine you are in charge of the education programme and could make one change to make PTOF better. What would you do?	
Q9	Can you tell me anything about PTOF you haven't found helpful?	
Q10 justification	The final FGI question provides an opportunity for participants to discuss elements that have not come up in the earlier part of the interview.	
Q10	Do you have any other information about PTOF you would like to share?	

3.12.8 Focus group interview pilot testing

After receiving expert advice on the FGI protocol, I made a number of changes. Initially, the FGI questions were designed with a more one-to-one interview process in mind. I did not focus on encouraging conversation enough. I therefore re-formulated the questions to encourage participants to talk together. My experts also advised me to try and think more in terms of the participants and ask the questions that would encourage them to talk about their PTOF experiences, as per Barriball and While's (1994) advice. As a result, I added questions 7 and 8, which aimed to promote deeper thinking and conversation about possible improvements to PTOF.

I conducted two pilot FGIs with student-teachers from two different teaching years. The FGI pilot participants were allocated from the additional student-teachers who initially volunteered to join the FGIs. I emailed the six student-teachers from year 2 and six from year 3 (n=12) and invited them to join a pilot FGI. In the email I explained that while this was a practice FGI, their responses might be used in the final research study if I did not make major changes to the methodology. Per Thabane et al.'s (2010) recommendations, I ensured all the pilot study participants signed the participant consent form. I did not have enough fourth-year student-teachers respond to allocate them to a pilot and main FGI without overlap, so they were not included in the pilot FGIs.

Due to Covid-19, all FGIs were conducted online via Zoom. The two pilot FGIs helped to refine the logistics of conducting online FGIs and develop my moderation skills. After conducting the first pilot FGI, I realised I had to manage the participants more than I would in a face-to-face situation. I initially found that participants spoke over each other, so I started directing questions to different participants to encourage conversation. I also found certain participants to be more vocal than others, indicating the necessity of verbally managing these situations as non-verbal communication was not effective in online FGIs.

I did not amend any questions or prompts after field testing the FGIs. Although the FGIs were not videoed, three participants opted not to switch on their cameras. I realised that I needed to clarify in the main study invitation that participants would be required to switch on cameras. Three pilot study participants did not join the sessions, so the second-year pilot FGI was conducted with four participants and the third-year with five. In each instance, the participants forgot that the FGI had been scheduled. As such, I decided to send two reminder emails to the main FGI study participants beforehand: one two days before and another one day before. Two pilot participants had issues with internet bandwidth and dropped in and out of the FGI. In an attempt to mitigate this, I advised all main FGI participants to inform their families that they would need access to the full bandwidth at the FGI's specified time.

3.12.9 Recording focus group interviews

I was aware that some of the participants would likely not show their faces online if the FGI was videoed. One option was to turn off all the participant cameras. However, I felt it would facilitate more effective interpersonal communication if all participants showed their faces during the FGIs. Harrell and Bradley (2009) suggest that FGIs without visual contact do not satisfy the basic requirements of an FGI, which must include both verbal and non-verbal participation. I therefore decided to audio record on a separate device, as Zoom did not have the capacity to record only audio, so that participants could switch on their cameras and visually interact with one another.

3.12.10 Focus group interview moderator role

The moderator's role in FGIs is crucial in ensuring rich and valid data is collected from the participants (Stewart & Shamdasani, 2014). I organised, carried out and controlled the FGIs. Hohenthal et al. (2015) suggest that the moderator needs to facilitate discussion between participants, while Redmond and Curtis (2009) recommend that FGI moderators be non-judgmental, good listeners, sensitive to participants' needs, and knowledgeable about the study. Given that I had worked with Emirati student-teachers for several years and designed the study, I felt confident and experienced enough to adopt the moderator role.

At the start of each FGI I welcomed the participants, thanked them for their time and ensured that they had all submitted their consent forms. I then read the brief instruction from the FGI protocol. While some participants contributed more than others, as the moderator I ensured that everyone had the opportunity to speak as freely as possible. Engagement and interaction are essential elements of successful FGIs (Kenny (2005). To avoid participants talking over one another, I directed questions to one participant initially and where necessary I 'moved around the screen' to ensure all participants had the opportunity to respond. As both the moderator and the researcher, I was mindful of the purpose of the FGI. While I was aware that off-topic conversations may lead to useful insights, I needed to gather data relevant to my research questions. Because the FGI time was limited, on occasion I had to prompt, re-focus discussion and rephrase questions. Overall, the FGIs demonstrated spontaneity and conversations flowed naturally. Gaiser (2016) suggests that such naturalness during an FGI demonstrates it functioning well. I ended each FGI with a debrief, asking each participant what the most important points of the discussion were to them. I summed up what I had heard and checked that this was correct with the participants. I explained that the participants would receive a transcript of the FGI conversation to check, thanked them for their participation and concluded the FGI. Each FGI lasted around an hour, as Breen (2006) suggests that any longer and participants tend to lose focus.

3.13 Cycle 2, the evaluation cycle

The same two distinct research populations in Cycle 1 – college mentors and student-teachers – were eligible to participate in Cycle 2. College mentors were invited to participate in an interview and student-teachers were once again invited to participate in FGIs.

3.13.1 Sampling and recruitment, college mentors

As with Cycle 1, I used total population sampling to select college mentor participants for Cycle 2. Thus, the Cycle 2 research population consisted of all 12 college mentors working on the research campus. Recruitment involved inviting these 12 college mentors to participate in one-

to-one interviews. Once SBP finished, I outlined Cycle 2 during a department meeting, explaining that participation was entirely voluntary. I described the one-to-one interviews, the PIS and the informed consent form. I also assured prospective participants of confidentiality. After the meeting, I sent a follow-up email inviting all college mentors to participate in the study. I attached the PIS and participant consent form so that prospective participants were aware of what they would be consenting to if they chose to take part.

Due to time and resources, I explained that I would interview the first six college mentors to reply to my email; they would comprise the Cycle 2 sample. I also advised that the next two responders would be pilot study participants. I was surprised by how willing the college mentors were to participate; eight replied to me almost immediately. I replied to all other respondents, thanking them for their interest and advising them that I would contact them again if someone dropped out of the study.

3.13.2 Interview justification

By this stage of the study, I had worked with the college mentors for over a year, so felt confident they would respond openly and honestly to me in a one-to-one interview situation. This was important because Vandermause and Fleming (2011) advise interviews require trust between the researcher and participant. I wanted to understand individual perspectives, so I felt that FGIs would not be an effective data collection tool. The one-to-one interview offered college mentors the opportunity to provide personal perspectives and not be influenced by other responses, which could occur in FGIs.

3.13.3 Interview protocol and question design

An interview protocol ensures consistency across interviews, helps to prioritise research questions and ensures adequate time is spent on the topic under discussion (Patton, 2014). I used Patton's (2014) interview protocol refinement (IPR) framework to systematically develop and refine the protocol. This four-step process strengthened the reliability of the interview protocol and improved data quality. Stage one ensured the interview questions aligned with my research

questions. In stage two I constructed enquiry-based conversations and during stage three I received feedback on the protocol. The final stage involved conducting pilot interviews.

The goal of the interviews was to gain insight into college mentor perspectives on the interventions and practice following intervention implementation. To achieve this, I used standardised open-ended interviews. Turner (2010) suggests that they are the most popular form of interview because they allow participants the opportunity to express their perceptions and viewpoints. In standardised open-ended interviews, participants are asked the same questions but have the option of providing as much information as they want (Gall et al., 2006). Justifying my decision as I wanted consistency across the interviews. Galletta (2012) points out that standardised open-ended interviews enable reciprocity. A factor that would allow me to ask follow-up questions based on the responses.

Creating effective questions to gain the richest possible data is one of the most crucial elements of interview design (Turner, 2010). I did this by constructing questions that encouraged enquiry-based conversations. Doing so helped to meet stage two of Patton's (2014) IPR. Boyce and Neale (2006) recommend that questions should be open-ended to encourage participants to use their own terminology, while Rabionet (2011) notes that carefully designed questions allow participants to tell their own stories. Boyce and Neale (2006) advise that questions should be neutral, worded clearly and use terms specific to participants. This was important as over half of the college mentors spoke English as a second or additional language.

The questions and prompts were prepared in advance, and I kept my research questions at the forefront of my mind as I designed them. The interview consisted of six open-ended questions and prompts, outlined in Table 9. The initial question was intended to be easy to answer. Jacob and Furgerson (2012) suggest initial questions should be familiar but central to the research. The questions then became more in-depth, requiring more thought. Whiting (2008) suggests that this question order is likely to provide richer data. Research questions 4, 5 and 6 relate to Cycle 2 and are mapped to the interview questions in Table 9.

Table 9 *Cycle 2 interview questions mapped to research questions*

Interview questions	Research question
1. Let's talk about the professional development sessions you attended at the beginning of the academic year. I'd like to know what you found useful about those sessions?	RQ4, RQ5
2. Were there any parts of the professional development sessions you attended earlier in the semester that you thought could be improved?	RQ6
3. Now let's talk about the new practice guidelines. They were developed collaboratively during the professional development sessions you attended. All MCTs at [campus name] implemented them during teaching practice this semester. **Prompts:** What did you find helpful? Was there anything you think could be improved?	RQ4, RQ5 and RQ6
4. Please tell me about the PTOF sessions you conducted this semester. **Prompts:** Did you do anything differently from previous semesters? What do you think worked well? Was there anything you felt didn't work so well?	RQ4, RQ5
5. Is there any element of PTOF you think you might try to do differently next time?	RQ6
6. Is there anything else you think we can do to enhance PTOF feedback?	RQ6

To ensure the same important information was given across the interviews (Jacob & Furgerson, 2012) and none of it was forgotten, I prepared a script that I read out at the onset of each interview. The script included the purpose of the interview, checked participants had signed the informed consent form and assured participants of confidentiality. I also asked for permission to audio record the interview.

3.13.4 Interview pilot testing

Stages three and four of Patton's (2014) framework involve receiving feedback on the interview protocol and conducting pilot interviews. Once I received feedback from my experts, I changed the wording of two questions to make them more specific in terms of when events took place.

I conducted two pilot interviews using Zoom. I advised the participants that I would incorporate their data in the main study if no major methodological changes were made. I added to the beginning and end of the protocol script but did not change any questions or prompts following the pilot interviews. Not being aware of teachers or college mentors at the institution switching off cameras while teaching, I had thought that they would be comfortable with Zoom cameras being on and interviews being directly recorded. This was not accurate because one pilot participant requested leaving their camera off if the interview was videoed. Despite Emirati sensitivities regarding camera use, I wanted interview participants to be as comfortable as possible and I wanted to see them. As Zoom does not have the option to record only audio, I recorded all the interviews using a separate audio recording device, as I did for Cycle 1 FGIs. This meant that cameras could be switched on. I added a reminder to the opening script that participants consented to the audio recording and checked they agreed to this at the beginning of each interview.

The pilot studies helped to refine my moderation skills. While I asked standardised open-ended questions, pilot participants sometimes offered tangential responses and I had to focus them using the prompts and additional follow-up questions. Creswell (2009) acknowledges that researchers often have to focus participants, reframe questions, and ask follow-up prompts to ensure they obtain optimal responses. I realised that although the questions were standardised, at times they had to be reframed and/or I didn't need to ask them all. One participant answered most of my questions in their initial response. I also recognised that the question order may sometimes change to better suit the conversation flow.

3.13.5 Interviews

The six interviews were conducted over a two-week period via Zoom. I read the opening script and answered any questions participants had. I ensured I covered all the questions, though not

necessarily in the order on the interview protocol. I only asked questions if they had not been covered in earlier responses. During each interview, I asked a number of follow-up questions to ensure participants elaborated as much as possible on the points they made. The interviews were conducted wholly successfully and lasted between 45-60 minutes.

3.13.6 Methods of data collection with student-teachers

Because I conducted FGIs during Cycle 1, only factors unique to Cycle 2 are described here. The representative sample of student-teachers was slightly larger (n=88); however, the same purposive sampling approach was used to select second-, third- and fourth-year student-teachers to participate in Cycle 2. I struggled to attract participants due to poor FGI timing: they occurred at the end of the semester, when student-teachers had final assessments and exams. They were then due a three-week break. I did not want to delay the FGIs because I felt participants might forget details of their SBP over the break. Consequently, I conducted only one pilot study, using third-year student-teachers. However, 18 student-teachers participated in the main study for Cycle 2. They were again divided equally into three focus groups by teaching year.

3.13.7 Focus group interview question design

The FGI protocol I designed for Cycle 2 was similar to Cycle 1's, so is not repeated here. Cycle 2's FGIs posed five questions with six possible follow-up prompts. Question 1 asks about perceived PTOF differences compared to previous semesters. As I developed the questions before SBP and PTOF were transferred online, I debated whether to refocus this question. I anticipated that student-teachers would compare face-to-face and online PTOF. However, I realised data would be useful because Management were reviewing post-pandemic continued online learning and teaching possibilities, so I kept question 1 in its original format. Question 2 focused on the new practice guidelines. Question 3 had to be revised to reflect online delivery; it focused on the developmental support student-teachers received prior to SBP. Table 10 outlines the FGI questions and prompts and justifies them in relation to the research questions.

Table 10 *Cycle 2 FGI questions mapped to research questions*

FGI question number/justification	Questions	Prompts
Q1 justification	Q1 and prompts were designed to encourage conversation; the follow-up prompts were designed to focus student-teachers. They link to RQs 4 and 5.	
Q1	Please talk about any differences you noticed during the PTOF sessions with your MCT this semester, compared to previous semesters	Prompt: What did you find helpful for your development and learning? Prompt: What did you find less helpful for your development and learning?
Q2 justification	Q2 and prompt were designed to be more thought-provoking and gather rich data. They link to RQs 4 and 5	
Q2	What do you think of the new practice guidelines implemented during teaching practice this semester?	Prompt: Is there anything in the guidelines you would change?
Q3 justification	Q3 was designed to capture rich, focused data. The follow up prompts were designed to be more thought-provoking. They link to RQs 4 and 5.	
Q3	Before teaching practice, you were given information including a video about the new practice guidelines. Then your MCT explained the new guidelines to you and helped you to receive feedback. How do you feel this helped you to prepare for PTOF sessions?	Prompt: What was most helpful? Prompt: Was there anything you didn't feel was useful? Prompt: Was there anything you would add to prepare you better?
Q4 and Q5 justification	Qs 4 and 5 were designed to be forward thinking and capture additional information. They link to RQ 6.	
Q4	Do you have any suggestions to further develop PTOF?	
Q5	Is there anything else you would like to add?	

3.13.8 Focus group interview pilot testing

Cycle 2's FGI protocol was developed after I received and acted on feedback from Cycle 1's. I therefore felt I had a better understanding of the nature of FGIs, question types and the required script. This resulted in minimal changes being made to Cycle 2's FGI protocol. Following expert

feedback, I added an additional prompt to question 3. The pilot test followed the same procedure as for Cycle 1. It was beneficial in terms of testing the questions. The student-teachers struggled to recall the development support they received. I realised this was not an ideal opening question, so I switched question 1 and question 3 and added more description to the beginning of question 3. No other changes to questions or prompts were made.

3.14 Summary

This chapter outlined my research questions and justified the study's methodology and data analysis strategy. I identified the reasons for choosing an AR approach and discussed the application of Coghlan and Brannick's (2014) AR model. Finally, I explained the participants and methods of data collection for both cycles.

The next chapter presents, interprets and discuses Cycle 1's findings. It outlines how they informed the interventions and provides an overview of the PD and the new practice guidelines.

Chapter 4: Cycle 1 findings and interventions

4.0 Introduction

The purpose of Cycle 1 was to gain an understanding of institutional PTOF practice. It sought to answer research questions 1, 2 and 3. The experiences of eight college mentors and 18 student-teachers recorded in the findings presented in this chapter provide an account of their perspectives on PTOF and their suggestions for future PTOF development. The findings represent the data analysis strategy outlined in chapter 3, organised by research question and presented thematically. The themes and sub-themes are outlined below. Where relevant, the findings are accompanied by an explanation of how they informed the series of PD sessions, which are outlined towards the end of the chapter.

At the time of data collection, working or studying from home was mandated for all college mentors and student-teachers due to Covid-19. However, the most recent period of SBP prior to data collection began under pre-pandemic conditions. Students went to schools to teach, and college mentors observed lessons in classrooms and provided face-to-face PTOF for between three and six weeks (depending on their year of study). SBP was abruptly halted, then transferred online when Covid-19 lockdowns were implemented by the UAE authorities. Student-teachers and college mentors completed the remainder of their school teaching, observations and PTOF online. For most, this was a period of one to two weeks. The analysis of Cycle 1 data revealed that participants focused exclusively on their pre-pandemic PTOF experiences.

4.1 Themes and sub-themes

Cycle 1 data analysis followed the data analysis strategy outlined in chapter 3. Table 11 presents the themes and sub-themes developed from the analysis of the questionnaire data.

Table 11 *Cycle 1 questionnaire data analysis: themes and sub-themes*

Questionnaire themes	Questionnaire sub-themes
College mentor perceptions of giving PTOF	A lack of clarity, no guidelines PTOF: Positive beginnings, improvement needs and future suggestions Hasty PTOF Support for school-based mentors Private PTOF Mentor/mentee pairing
College mentor theoretical approaches to, and/or practice of, mentoring and giving PTOF	Grades: a motivator/distractor Guiding Showing and telling Improvement and reflective practice
College mentor suggestions to develop PTOF	Curriculum development Professional development More time

Table 12 presents the themes and sub-themes developed from the analysis of the FGI data.

Table 12 *Cycle 1 FGI data analysis; themes and sub-themes*

FGI themes	FGI sub-themes
Student-teacher perceptions of receiving PTOF	Unclear expectations Rushed PTOF Substitute oral with written PTOF PTOF: Positive beginnings and improvements for the next lesson Feedback more effective when it is private Private PTOF College-mentor/student teacher pairing Language and tone of PTOF
Student-teacher theoretical approaches to, and/or practice of, mentoring and receiving PTOF	Feedback is more supportive than grades Helping to find out Showing and telling Improvement and reflection
Student-teacher suggestions to develop PTOF	College mentor consistency Clear expectations Longer PTOF

4.2 Integrated themes and sub-themes

Once I had analysed the two datasets separately, I merged them to produce a list of integrated themes and sub-themes. No themes or sub-themes were removed; they were all merged. The names of the sub-themes represents the integrated participant voices. The integrated themes and sub-themes form the basis of Cycle 1's findings and are outlined in Table 13.

Table 13 *Cycle 1 integrated themes and sub-themes*

Integrated themes	Integrated sub-themes
College mentor and student-teacher perceptions of giving and receiving PTOF	Confusion, a lack of guidance and unclear expectations PTOF: Positive beginnings, improvement needs and suggestions for future lessons Hasty, rushed PTOF Support for school-based mentors Feedback more effective when it's private College-mentor/student-teacher pairing Language and tone of PTOF
College mentor and student-teacher theoretical approaches to, and/or practice of, mentoring and giving and receiving PTOF	Grades, a motivator/distractor Showing and telling Guiding Improvement and reflective practice
College mentor and student-teacher suggestions to develop PTOF	Professional development

4.3 College mentor and student-teacher perceptions of giving and receiving PTOF

The first theme consists of participant pre-intervention experiences of PTOF. It includes an overall perception of confusion and lack of time to conduct PTOF. The PTOF structure and a preference for private PTOF are discussed, along with mentor/mentee pairing. Finally, it includes PTOF language and tone.

4.3.1 Confusion, a lack of guidance and unclear expectations

The first sub-theme refers to the majority of participants describing PTOF as lacking clarity and creating unclear expectations. The evidence suggests that over half the college mentors were unsure what they should focus on during PTOF. Most of the college mentors mentioned that there were no PTOF guidelines or structure available. These findings do not reflect Hojeij et al.'s (2021) recommendation that SBP in the UAE should be clearly structured. One college mentor

mentioned that assessment rubrics supported giving PTOF; however, they indicated that more guidance and a PTOF structure was needed:

> I do my best, but there's no guidance on what we should give feedback on. (CM1.1)

> There is a lack of clarity when expectations are set out. I know I need to observe but it's unclear… so I don't know what feedback to give. The rubric helps but it's not enough. (CM4.1)

> Sometimes I'm not sure what I'm meant to observe and give feedback on. I don't really know what to look for; a structure would help. (CM6.1)

Student-teachers across all year groups were unclear on what was expected of them during SBP. These findings repeat those of Aderibigbe et al.'s (2018) study, which found that student-teachers failed to understand their roles and expectations. Student-teachers tend to be paired with different college mentors each semester. Most student-teachers explained that they received varied PTOF from different college mentors They found that each college mentor had a different focus during the lesson observation, which resulted in confusing PTOF:

> I get confused, I don't know what we need to talk about or what my Miss [college mentor] wants. (FGI2.1)

> Every mentor is different, basically they're looking for different things… (FGI3.1)

> Every semester we're meeting with different mentors; each mentor has their own set of criteria. Even if there's a fixed criterion, they have different things that they're giving feedback about. (FGI4.1)

The student-teacher perception that each college mentor had a different focus could be explained by Hudson's (2010) assertion that mentors bring their individual experiences and insights into PTOF. The diversity of college mentor backgrounds likely added to different points of reference.

However, this factor appears to be exacerbated by the lack of institutional guidelines: Clarke and Mena (2020), for example, found that mentors often draw on their own experiences if they have limited intuitional guidance.

Hudson (2010) asserted that inconsistent PTOF practice can have implications for student-teachers. The findings in this study suggest that inconsistencies in mentor practice resulted in confused student-teachers, which is not conducive to their development. Hudson (2010) advises that institutions need to implement equitable and reliable mentoring and feedback practices, using valid and reliable tools, to guide mentors to give useful PTOF. Caena (2014) suggests having institutional guidelines provides student-teachers with consistent levels of support during SBP. Therefore, establishing PTOF guidelines was discussed during the PD, with the aim of ensuring student-teachers receive consistent, quality PTOF.

4.3.2 PTOF: Positive beginnings, improvement needs and suggestions for future lessons

The second sub-theme refers to the structure of PTOF meetings. The findings show that most participants began PTOF positively, transitioned to developmental needs and ended with actionable tasks. However, within this broad structure, participants commented on inconsistencies in relation to holding meetings before SBP and student-teacher self-reflection. All college mentors explained that they began PTOF by focusing on what went well in the observed lesson:

> It has always been a habit of mine to begin the feedback session by pointing out all the positive things from the observation. (CM2.1)

> I start with giving chance to students to describe what went well. We then have a discussion about why it went well. (CM5.1)

Student-teachers unanimously preferred to begin PTOF on a positive note. None described any experience when this did not happen. Harms and Roebuck (2010) claim that beginning PTOF positively is best practice; therefore, it was encouraged and formalised during the PD:

> She begins with what she likes in my class. And I think it's very important to me. (FGI2.1)

> She told me the positive things I did in my lesson; I really like this… (FGI4.1)

Most participants said that they discussed areas for improvement after beginning PTOF positively. This echoes Harms and Roebuck's (2010) recommended PTOF structure:

> I usually support them with telling them what went wrong and then I tell them how to improve. (CM4.1)

A 'model' of college mentors pointing out errors and directly informing student-teachers how to improve was evident in most student-teacher comments:

> Then my MCT told me, this point needs to be developed and how to improve. (FG3.1)

> Then she started talking about all the points that I need to improve and my lesson which really helped me. I like that she's focussing on specific details. (FGI4.1)

Approximately half the college mentors indicated that they ended PTOF with suggestions related to improving the next lesson. Most student-teacher comments corroborated this practice. However, the number of development suggestions varied and did not always align with McGlynn's (2018) recommendation to end PTOF with three or four action points:

> I finish with giving a suggestion to improve the next lesson. (CM6.1)

> I try to give them three or four things to work on in their upcoming lessons and in the next lesson I will observe. (CM7.1)

My Miss, she give me [i.e., highlighted] weaknesses and how to improve for the lesson. (FGI2.1)

She tells us the point we have to develop in ourselves for the next lesson. (FGI4.1)

A quarter of the college mentors and a few student-teachers indicated that PTOF ended with motivating and encouraging comments. While this practice echoes the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (n.d.) recommendation to end PTOF with encouragement, it did not appear to be widely implemented:

I like to motivate and encourage them at the end. (CM4.1)

Three college mentors also discussed holding meetings with student-teachers before SBP began. However, student-teachers did not mention these meetings, suggesting this practice was not widespread. College mentors indicated that the aim of these meetings was to prepare student-teachers for their upcoming SBP and build relationships:

If I don't teach the students, I prefer to meet them before TP [school-based practice] starts. It helps to discuss what I expect from them. (CM1.1)

I like to try to prepare the students as best as possible before they leave to go to TP. (CM3.1)

I always meet my TP students before school starts, to get to know them. (CM8.1)

Additionally, one college mentor and student-teachers from years three and four discussed writing a self-reflection of the observed lesson before PTOF. The college mentor explained that after the lesson observation they asked the student-teacher to complete a written self-reflection focusing on areas of strength and development:

> Before we meet, I ask the students to reflect; to highlight in writing their strengths, weaknesses and what they will change if they teach the lesson again. They bring these notes when we meet for feedback. (CM3.1)

The student-teachers found writing self-reflection beneficial. It gave them time to focus their thoughts on their strengths and areas for development before discussing them with their college mentors:

> I think it's better when after each lesson the student evaluates herself and the teacher discusses her evaluation with her. (FGI3.1)

> I think student evaluation is [as] important as MCT evaluation. It helps me to think more. (FGI4.1)

The findings demonstrate consensus on the general structure of PTOF. However, self-reflection and meetings before SBP were implemented inconsistently. Student-teachers mostly did not know what was expected of them, despite Aderibigbe et al. (2018) stressing the importance of stakeholders understanding expectations from the onset of SBP. Hence, a standardised approach to holding meetings before SBP was discussed during the PD. The other findings were also presented and discussed during the PD, with the aim of collaboratively developing a more consistent PTOF structure.

4.3.3 Hasty, rushed PTOF

The third sub-theme refers to a lack of time for PTOF, which almost all participants perceived as an issue. This is not unusual: Glover et al. (2022) conclude that lack of time is a constant challenge for mentors. College mentors spoke of hasty PTOF sessions, while student-teachers perceived their college mentors as rushed. There was consensus among college mentors that their workload during SBP was too heavy. They all felt that they had too many student-teachers to observe and provide with PTOF, resulting in difficulty meeting the demands of observation and feedback schedules:

…the number of observations we have to do in the short timeframe is very difficult. (CM2.1)

We are expected to visit students so many times [4x], which is difficult when you have a large cohort of students to visit, observe, [and] feed back [on]. (CM3.1)

All the college mentors explained that they had to juggle priorities due to time constraints. Almost half highlighted that they had to travel long distances between schools, often in busy traffic. Additionally, most had to continue teaching courses, which meant they had to return to campus between lesson observations:

…too many students to observe given the timeframe and having to sit in traffic to return to college to teach. (CM5.1)

I constantly feel I don't have time, running and driving from one observation to another. (CM7.1)

We often have to travel long distances between schools, as well as teach back at campus and the traffic is so busy. Sometimes it's not physically possible to travel, observe and provide feedback. (CM8.1)

The majority of student-teachers recognised that college mentors lacked time to give PTOF. They perceived PTOF sessions as frequently rushed, which was viewed negatively:

The MCT usually has too many students and not enough time for feedback. (FGI2.1)

I really wanted to get the feedback when the MCT is not in a rush...usually though she discusses quickly and there is not enough time for feedback. (FGI3.1)

To calculate how many lesson observations college mentors conduct, an institutional formula is applied to workload scheduling. The formula is based on credit-hours and lesson observations. A full-time teaching load equates to 15 credit-hours; one course is 3 credit-hours. Therefore, all full-time faculty teach the equivalent of 5 courses. Credit-hours are allocated for positions of responsibility, which reduces the teaching load for some faculty. 16 lesson observations (one observation includes pre-, during and post-observation activities) equates to one credit-hour. It is unclear how this formula was devised, or how much time for PTOF is allocated in this model. The total number of observations scheduled depends on the number of courses taught and the additional responsibilities held. As an insider researcher I was aware that the 15 credit-hour workload could not be changed. However, recommendations to the observation schedule could be made and were explored during the PD.

On average, college mentors spent between 15 and 30 minutes on PTOF sessions; however, all indicated that they would prefer to allocate more time. Internationally, the average time spent on PTOF is approximately 30 minutes (Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, n.d.; York St John University, 2020). While this study found that the time allocated to PTOF is broadly comparable to international practice, it is on the shorter side. Most college mentors recognised that time spent on PTOF depended on observation and teaching schedules and student-teacher needs, echoing Tyrer's (2023) claim that institutional factors impact PTOF:

> We are often on a very heavy mentoring schedule with lots of students, so there is not always the same amount of time. Some students need more time. I wish I had 30 to 45 minutes for all students. (CM3.1)

Half the college mentors equated the time taken for PTOF with how much additional support student-teachers needed. They considered longer PTOF sessions necessary when the observed lesson delivery was weak:

> Depends on the lesson taught. If lots of issues with the student's teaching, then it can take longer… (CM4.1)

> It depends on the student performance and the amount of feedback I need to give. (CM7.1)

While half the college mentors equated longer PTOF sessions with quality feedback, none elaborated why:

> It's the number of observations: less observations and more time will ensure better quality, I believe. (CM2.1)

Student-teachers in all FGIs explained that they needed more time in order to feel comfortable enough to discuss practice openly during PTOF:

> I feel more comfortable when they appear to be not in a rush or needing to tell me the feedback in a quick manner. (FGI3.1)

> But when they're able to have enough time to sit with me and talk to me about my lesson and ask me to reflect on how I feel I did feel more comfortable to speak and be more honest. (FGI4.1)

This acknowledgment by student-teachers that they needed time to feel comfortable and to communicate openly and honestly during PTOF accords with Hofstede's (2011) collective construct of UAE culture. The Emirati student-teacher comments echo those of Bock and Schulze (2016), who found that time is needed to build trusting relationships in collective cultures. Because this study indicated the time spent on PTOF was relatively short and that time is needed to build trusting relationships, it seems probable that more time needs to be allocated to PTOF.

Student-teachers from each FGI explained that when college mentors did not have time to give face-to-face PTOF, they substituted oral feedback with written PTOF. Interestingly, the student-teachers considered written feedback not as developmentally supportive as oral PTOF. This evidence appears to contradict Puttick and Wynn's (2021) findings that student-teachers tended

to find written feedback more valuable than oral feedback. This could be because according to O'Sullivan (2016) Emiratis tend to prefer oral engagement and usually have weaker English reading skills compared to speaking and listening skills:

> The MCT sends me the feedback when there is no time to discuss. (FGI3.1)

> She has too many girls to observe, sometimes she emails her feedback to us…I mean it's not as good to help us when we just read the feedback. (FGI4.1)

College mentors did not indicate that they substituted written PTOF for oral PTOF. While there is an informal expectation for all college mentors to provide oral PTOF, it is not included as a college mentor role or responsibility. Given the importance of mentor feedback for student-teacher development recorded in the literature (Bjørndal, 2020; O'Leary, 2020), and the importance student-teachers in this study placed on oral feedback, oral PTOF should be stipulated as a college mentor role – a factor discussed during the PD.

All participants recognised the value of conducting PTOF immediately after the observed lesson, as Scheeler et al. (2004) recommend. However, the majority of college mentors explained that limited time impacted how soon after the lesson observation they conducted PTOF:

> I also believe that students learn more from an immediate post-lesson feedback session. It gives them an opportunity to explain, clarify and explore other methods and approaches with their MCT. (CM1.1)

Two college mentors commented that they normally conducted PTOF the same day, while one explained that they waited until student-teachers returned to the institution, which could be four days later:

> Sometimes I have other observations happening in the same school, but I always make sure that it happens in the same day even if it was later in the day. (CM2.1)

> Many times, I postpone it till the students come back to college, as my observation schedule is usually back-to-back! (CM6.1)

Student-teachers unanimously preferred immediate PTOF, perceiving it to be more effective:

> The feedback should be immediate, so it can be effective for us. (FGI2.1)

> The feedback must be timely… the idea of delaying the feedback it's like it would not be as effective as if it was timely or near the moment. (FGI4.1)

Because there were inconsistencies in practice and no institutional guidance on how soon PTOF should be conducted after the lesson observation, a consistent approach was discussed during the PD.

4.3.4 Support for school-based mentors

Just over half of the college mentors explained that they spent additional time providing the mentor support usually expected of school-based mentors. They perceived that not all school-based mentors had the knowledge and/or skillset to mentor effectively. These findings reflect Gallagher's (2007) conclusions and Jones et al.'s (2021) more recent assertion that school-based mentors often lack the skillset to mentor and frequently require further support and training. One college mentor explained that they supported student-teachers to plan and to implement student-centred lessons, roles they perceived the school-based mentor should have provided:

> The MSTs [school-based mentors] I've worked with don't really know how to mentor. I think they're just told they have to be a mentor. They don't know our program, so I've had to provide support, especially for planning student-based learning. I'm not 100% sure some of these MSTs know what this is. It all takes extra time when we're already doing too many observations. (CM3.1)

The student-teacher comments mostly focused on college mentors rather than school-based mentors. When school-based mentors were discussed, the student-teachers mostly perceived them as supportive. One second-year student-teacher explained that she was encouraged to apply teaching strategies similar to those she observed her school-based mentor implement. These findings are reflective of the craft model of ITE, which is underpinned by behaviourist theories of learning (Skinner, 1968). According to Flores (2017), this practice does not support the dynamic nature of today's teaching environment, and thus is unlikely to support student-teachers' future teaching:

> My MST told me to do like she does. I use the same classroom management and it was good; the children were all responding to me. (FGI2.1)

This institution does not have input into school-based mentor allocation. Therefore, it is likely that college mentors will need to continue to provide support. Particularly as there is no formal institutional developmental support for school-based mentors. Because the college mentor roles and responsibilities do not indicate a requirement to provide school-based mentor support, this is an additional college mentor role. Hence, supporting school-based mentors was addressed during the PD.

4.3.5 Feedback is more effective when it is private

All participants preferred to give and receive PTOF during one-to-one meetings in a private room. This accords with Hopkins et al.'s (2019) findings that feedback should occur in a quiet place without interruptions:

> From the Emirati culture and perspective, student acceptance of feedback is way more effective when there are less people. (CM1.1)

However, there was no consistency regarding where PTOF sessions actually took place: some schools provided meeting rooms and others spare classrooms. Most of the college mentors commented that they had difficulty finding space in schools to conduct PTOF. These findings

reflect Tyrer's (2023) conclusion that PTOF depends on external variables, in this instance room allocation:

> The location of the feedback sessions varies and is dependent on the school and environment. (CM3.1)

> Some schools are very supportive and offer boardrooms and meeting rooms, while others are not as aware, and you have to make do. (CM4.1)

Student-teacher comments indicated that when there was no private space, PTOF was conducted in a corridor or in the same classroom as the observation:

> When there's no space we've met in the corridor. (FGI3.1)

Because there was no consistent approach to request and act on private feedback from schools, this was discussed during the PD. However, it was not acted-on immediately because the next period of SBP occurred online.

4.3.6 College-mentor/student-teacher pairing

The fifth sub-theme revealed the importance placed on the mentor/mentee pairing. All the student-teachers preferred to be paired with a college mentor who had previously taught them. One with whom they had already built a relationship and who was more aware of their abilities. These findings are perhaps supportive of Wilson and Huynh's (2020) assertion that a short SBP placement does not necessarily afford the time needed to build a strong mentor/mentee relationship. The student-teacher comments indicated that when they were paired with a college mentor they had not previously met, it negatively affected the mentoring relationship. They were more anxious and less willing to talk openly, particularly during initial PTOF sessions. This suggests that the time to build the mentor/mentee relationships was perceived as significant. Echoing Osula and Irvin's (2009) claim that in collective societies, time is needed to build trusting relationships:

> Well, she's [college mentor] not always my teacher so maybe I've never seen her around the college before…Last TP, the first time I met her was when she visited me in school. I think it's a little bit harder, especially in the beginning when I've never met her before. (FGI3.1)

> I feel more worried to talk when my MCT isn't my teacher. I think she can understand better when she's my teacher. She knows how to help more. (FGI4.1)

This institution employs male college mentors. In this study none of the student-teachers described being paired with a male college mentor as problematic. The two student-teachers who spoke about a male college mentor with whom they had been paired explained that he was also their teacher. This could suggest that already knowing the mentor supported their acceptance of being paired with him:

> When I have the [male mentor] its fine, he helps me and sits with me. No problems, it's just like when we're in class. (FGI4.1)

Pairing college mentors and student-teachers was discussed during the PD. However, I acknowledge that major changes to observation scheduling would need to be made to enable student-teachers to be paired with a college mentor who teaches them.

4.3.7 Language and tone of PTOF

The final sub-theme captures the language and general tone of PTOF. All college mentors provided examples of how they were kind, empathetic, supportive, and tried to instil confidence in student-teachers during PTOF. These findings reflect a number of the key attributes Parker et al. (2021) recommend that effective mentors should possess:

> Be sensitive to the individual needs of the student. Ask questions about the school and how they feel about it. (CM2.1)

I like to encourage and motivate them to do their best. I'm always positive. (CM4.1)

…make them feel confident and more comfortable during feedback. (CM5.1)

The student-teachers' comments corroborated the college mentors'. They mostly recognised the same key attributes mentioned by the college mentors, and described the college mentors as helpful, kind, and offering assurance, encouragement and support. According to Wilson and Huynh (2020) such support helps to first build self-esteem in student-teachers and then student-teacher coping strategies. Better coping strategies were not evidenced in these findings. However, the key attributes evidenced suggest that the college mentors provided support to build better coping strategies in student-teachers:

She was so helpful. She told me what to do…how to manage the kids…and showed me different activities I can use in my next lesson. (FGI4.1)

The student-teachers, perhaps unsurprisingly, preferred positive oral PTOF. A few explained that college mentors should be considerate of their feelings when they gave feedback. Comments indicated that if the language and tone was positive, they were more accepting of feedback. As one fourth-year student-teacher explained:

She didn't say a word that could harm me or that could make me sad. She was […] reframing the words in a positive way, so I can accept her advice and do these improvements. (FGI4.1)

When feedback was perceived as negative, most student-teachers felt it was detrimental to their development, explaining that they struggled to manage their emotions. This is reflective of both Copland's (2010) and Fletcher et al.'s (2021) claims that when such feedback is given and received, it can create tensions and make the maintenance of positive mentor/mentee relationships more challenging. These findings indicate that the student-teachers possibly needed

more support to receive (and/or college mentors needed more support to give) such feedback, which was something explored in the PD sessions:

> So, they have to think of their words before they just say it to us if it's negative, because it will affect us. (FGI2.1)

> One of the MCTs actually give me, he said one word. Okay. But like, it's stuck on my mind. And I really feel down because of this word. (FGI3.1)

> They need to think before they say the word because, you know, sometimes you really work hard doing things and you got negative things. You will become down and you will not plan and create for the next lesson. (FGI4.1)

Interestingly, a number of student-teachers perceived the accompanying written lesson observation feedback that they received after oral PTOF as sometimes less positive than the spoken PTOF. A few student-teachers from FGI2 and FGI3 explained that on occasion the written feedback did not correlate with what college mentors said during PTOF. They expressed concern about this:

> My teacher was writing bad points that she didn't even tell us about in the feedback. (FGI2.1)

> A negative aspect that I noticed is that some Miss says to us things that we do well, but when we read later we get many things we should improve. But they don't give us in discussion. (FGI3.1)

Jeffries and Hornsey (2012) suggest that one strategy mentors implement to cope with negative feedback during PTOF is to withhold it from their mentee. It is unclear if student-teachers misinterpreted oral PTOF. Or if college mentors withheld oral developmental feedback, opting to provide it only in written form. While written feedback is not within the scope of this study, this perceived inconsistency between oral and written feedback was highlighted during the PD.

College mentors need to be aware of what student-teachers comprehend during PTOF and ensure consistency between oral and written feedback. The student-teachers all have English as a second (or third) language, so language could be misinterpreted. This provides further evidence to suggest participants perhaps need more support, so that they are equipped with the knowledge and skills to give and receive PTOF feedback. The PD sessions offered developmental support.

4.4 College mentor and student-teacher theoretical approaches to, and/or practice of, mentoring and giving/receiving PTOF

The second theme is participant perspectives on theoretical approaches implemented when PTOF was given or received. It includes directive and collaborative approaches along with the practice of grading individual observed lessons. I explain how these sub-themes informed the PD, after which I discuss participant comments on critical and reflective PTOF and explain how these findings informed the PD.

4.4.1 Showing and telling

This sub-theme reveals that half the college mentors indicated they implemented a more directive approach to mentoring and giving PTOF. They explained that they corrected performance and provided student-teachers with direct instruction to develop and improve their teaching skills for the next taught lesson. This practice is perhaps not unusual given Mena et al.'s (2017) assertion that many mentors still implement a more traditional, directive approach to mentoring. While Wand and Odell (2002) claim that direct instruction is useful for student-teachers in the early stages of development, evidence in this study indicates the practice was implemented across all student-teacher year groups. The findings indicate that these college mentors supported student-teachers to address immediate issues; however, Jones et al. (2022) acknowledge that this approach does not build student-teachers' knowledge and skills for future practice:

> I believe that we learn from our mistakes; therefore, I prefer to correct their mistakes.
> (CM1.1)

I show the student how to correct errors so they teach better next lesson. (CM2.1)

I advise of improvements for the next lesson observation. (CM4.1)

She tells me that I still forget rules. I need to stress and use different strategies, such as the classroom rules. And she told me…I need give the rewards for the students. (FGI2.1)

My MCT told me I need to start the lesson more effectively…she gave me strategies; she told me what to say…(FGI3.1)

Student-teachers from each year group overwhelmingly indicated that they liked and wanted the directive approach to mentoring and PTOF. It is notable that this desire to be 'directly told' how to improve appeared equally strongly across all year groups. This is perhaps unsurprising given Vasquez's (2004) suggestion that in reality most student-teachers may prefer a directive approach to PTOF:

…give us everything we need to know about the class or how to teach. (FGI3.1)

It is better when the Miss tells us what to say so we can improve for our next lesson. (FGI4.1)

According to Charteris and Smardon (2014) directive approaches tend to be monological, incorporate an unequal balance of power, and have the mentee be passive. The student-teachers appeared to accept the power dynamics and assumed that the college mentors were more knowledgeable. These findings may support Matsumoto's (2019) claim that Emiratis culturally accept power hierarchies. Although the findings suggest that the college mentors mostly gave linear feedback and assumed more power, the student-teachers usually appeared not to be passive. The evidence demonstrates that the student-teachers in this study actively asked for help and direction from college mentors. While the evidence indicates that the student-teachers perhaps passively and unquestioningly accepted college mentor knowledge, the student-teachers actively sought to develop and improve their practice.

4.4.2 Guiding and helping

The next sub-theme indicates that half of the college mentors preferred a mixed or more collaborative approach to mentoring and giving PTOF. Effective PTOF needs to be collaborative, dialogical and enquiry-based (Jones et al. (2021), promoting the construction of new knowledge (Ellis et al., 2020). College mentor comments indicated that they supported student-teachers to reflect and build new knowledge:

> I believe that students need to be informed about the areas that they need to improve and guide them to learn how they can build upon their errors by finding [and] seeking more suitable and appropriate methods and approaches. (CM3.1)

However, collaborative approaches were unusual across the student-teacher dataset. Only one third-year student-teacher and one from year 4 spoke of collaboration during PTOF:

> She helped me to find out where I need to develop, and which point need to be developed… And she gave me some ideas. She will ask you questions and explain how to go and search for it. (FGI3.1)

The third-year student-teacher quoted above appeared to recognise the college mentor's approach as more collaborative. However, as she comments below, her friends paired with the same college mentor felt the mentor was being 'lazy', because the college mentor guided student-teachers to reflect and develop, rather than 'telling' them how to improve directly. These findings support Chamberlin's (2000) assertion that student-teachers may feel less satisfied with collaborative feedback compared to directive PTOF. Findings such as these indicate that perhaps the student-teachers need more support to understand the collaborative approach and to receive collaborative, dialogic feedback:

> …Some girls, they get mad. They don't accept this. They thought like she's lazy... because she's [seemingly] not doing her job. They want to know only how to improve. (FGI3.1)

4.4.3 Grades: a motivator/distractor

This sub-theme refers to grading individual observed lessons, which at the time was an institutional requirement. Evidence shows that half the college mentors felt grading individual lessons and discussing grades during PTOF sessions motivated student-teachers and supported their development. This seems to correlate with half the college mentors preferring more directive approaches to mentoring and PTOF:

> Grading each lesson will motivate them to improve some areas in their teaching to get better grades next time. (CM4.1)

> Grades are useful because students are eager to know how their performance was in the lesson. I give them the grade and show them what it says related to that grade in the rubric. (CM6.1)

These college mentor perceptions reflect Hojeij et al.'s (2021) suggestion that grades should be given for SBP to motivate student-teachers. Conversely, most of the student-teacher comments indicated that they found individual lesson grades demotivating, distracting and unconducive to their development. The student-teacher findings contradict Entwistle and McCune's (2004) conclusion that students who prefer directive approaches to learning tend to be motivated by grades:

> We would not be a good teacher if we focus only on, we want a good grade. (FGI2.1)

> I got the feedback from the teacher, from the MCT, because the feedback will help me to improve myself and the grade will not let me to be a good teacher in the future. (FGI3.1)

> I think the grade's maybe one of the last things that comes to mind, because first I want to know how I did, how I can improve my teaching and maybe we just shouldn't base everything on that grade. (FGI4.1)

Similarly, just under half the college mentors indicated that they preferred not to grade individual lessons, believing that grades distracted from developmental feedback. These college mentor and student-teacher comments support Fletcher et al.'s (2021) assertion that assessing student-teachers while mentoring negatively impacts development:

> The grades make it difficult to focus on improvement and progression. (CM5.1)

> Students usually ask for grades, I find it distracts from the support I am trying to give, sometimes I don't assign a grade because of this. (CM8.1)

While the findings indicated that both directive and collaborative approaches to mentoring and PTOF are implemented at the institution, there appeared to be no consistent approach to their application. Given the lack of time indicated earlier, these findings do not seem to reflect Tyrer's (2023) claim that a lack of time encourages college mentors to implement directive approaches to PTOF. Rather, in this study, the college mentors seemed to implement their preferred approach as and when they chose, and not necessarily when it was developmentally appropriate for the student-teacher. It is likely that the implementation of juxtaposed approaches to mentoring and giving PTOF in a seemingly *ad hoc* manner added to the student-teacher confusion evidenced earlier. The evidence suggests that grading individual lessons may not be conducive to student-teacher development. Grading may distract from more collaborative approaches, perhaps influencing directive approaches to mentoring and PTOF. These findings, along with recent relevant literature, were presented and discussed during the PD, in which the aim was to develop a consistent approach to giving and receiving PTOF more developmentally conducive to student-teacher development and learning.

4.4.4 Improvement and reflective practice

The next sub-theme explores critical and reflective PTOF. In this study I use Bjørndal's (2020) definition of critical feedback to describe feedback that is assertive and questioning. Ellis et al. (2020) claim that critical feedback encourages student-teachers to engage in reflective practice

dialogue. Cycle 1 showed limited evidence of 'critical' feedback, which, given Ellis et al.'s (2020) claim, suggests student-teachers were not usually engaged in reflective dialogue. As presented earlier, this study evidenced that PTOF started with positives, and student-teachers found less positive feedback challenging to receive. These findings support Clarke et al.'s (2014) claim that if PTOF is not critical, it tends to be positive rather than investigative and lacks necessary depth, limiting student-teacher developmental opportunities. The evidence presented below indicates that when developmental feedback was given, it tended to be directive. Most student-teachers explained that college mentors pointed out elements of their teaching they needed to develop, then directly told them how to improve. According to Charteris and Smardon (2014), this approach indicates a lack of critical, reflective PTOF:

> Then my MCT told me, this point needs to be developed and how to improve. (FGI3.1)

> She started talking about all the points that I need to improve and my lesson, which really helped me, especially that she's focusing on specific details. (FGI4.1)

While student-teachers used the word 'reflection' in their discussion, their ensuing comments did not normally indicate that they reflected on practice. Evidence suggests the word reflection was mostly used by college mentors to ask student-teachers to describe their lesson. One student-teacher explains that she was asked to reflect, but then directly given the information she was asked to reflect on and the support to improve.

> Then my Miss tells me to reflect on my lesson…she always tells me how I did well and how to improve. (FG13.1)

According to Ellis et al. (2020), the dialogic nature of critical and reflective feedback requires mentor/mentee collaboration. However, the student-teachers in this study mostly spoke of linear dialogue and directive feedback that did not appear to support reflection on practice. While half the college mentors advised that they implemented more collaborative approaches, only two college mentors described providing opportunities for student-teachers to reflect, implying a more critical and collaborative approach.

> I start with giving students the chance to point out what went well and what didn't. Then I ask questions to encourage them to link to courses we've studied, scaffolding them to link theory to practice. (CM3.1)

> I try to get their reflection of where they can develop, which is very important. (CM8.1)

This institution has a reflective practice model of ITE and the mission of the education department is for student-teachers to be "agents of change" (Institution, 2021b). Effective PTOF should encourage student-teachers to be critical, reflective and enquiry-focused in order to support them to develop and change their practices (Ellis et al., 2020). This was mostly not evident in Cycle 1's findings. Ellis et al. (2020) argue that providing critical PTOF should be a key mentor responsibility because it supports student-teachers to reflect, develop and change practice. Thus, if the institution wants student-teachers to reflect and change practice, then more collaborative mentoring and PTOF approaches that incorporate critical and reflective dialogues should be implemented consistently. These findings, along with literature on collaborative approaches to mentoring and PTOF, were presented and discussed during the PD.

4.5 Professional development

The final theme captures suggestions to improve PTOF practice. Every college mentor stated that they had never received any formal institutional mentor PD. This is concerning because mentor PD is critical to the success of mentoring (Mena et al., 2017; Ngyuen, 2017; Wexler, 2019). However, half the college mentors indicated they received informal developmental support in the form of shadowing and meeting with experienced college mentors. Two college mentors felt that they did not need any developmental support to mentor or provide feedback; neither explained why. All the other college mentors indicated that PD would be useful for themselves, other college mentors and/or the student-teachers.

> I would like professional development on this area. I think all faculty and MCT's would benefit from this and obviously this would help the teacher trainees. (CM4.1)

> I would love to attend training myself, as well as offer training to students as well. (CM5.1)

If mentors are not adequately supported, they may not have the skills to support and challenge student-teachers (Orland-Barak, 2016). This was perhaps reflected in the lack of critical and reflective feedback evidenced in this study. Clarke and Mena's (2020) warning that mentors tend to draw on their own experiences if they do not receive institutional PD may be relevant to the juxtaposed approaches to mentoring and PTOF evidenced. College mentors in this study appeared to implement their preferred approaches as and when they chose.

Most college mentors wanted more time, PTOF guidelines, support to conduct dialogues during PTOF and a clear PTOF structure for each year-level. A few also suggested development for school-based mentors.

> I would like some guidelines so we know what we should be saying. (CM1.1)

> I think we all need some structure and expectations, particularly for year groups I don't normally teach. (CM6.1)

Student-teacher suggestions for PTOF development mostly focused on how college mentors could better support and guide them. They all wanted college mentors to implement a more consistent approach to mentoring and PTOF, and suggested expectations should be established before school-based practice began. These student-teacher suggestions for consistency, structure and clear expectations appear to reflect Zeichner's (2010) finding that if ITE programmes are not clearly structured, student-teachers tend to feel unprepared for SBP. An additional suggestion, explained earlier, was that the majority of student-teachers wanted to be mentored by their SBP course teacher. Additionally, as discussed earlier, most participants wanted more time. All these suggestions were raised during the PD.

4.6 The interventions: professional development sessions

Based on the exploratory cycle's findings, I believed that a series of PD sessions would be the most effective way to develop PTOF practice. The aim of the PD was threefold: to present and discuss Cycle 1's findings along with relevant current literature; to collaboratively produce new practice guidelines; and to ensure participants had the knowledge and skills to effectively implement the guidelines. All the PD was conducted online due to the pandemic. Table 5 on page 63 outlined that this phase of the action research study is positioned at the beginning of cycle 2, the "constructing stage" (Coghlan & Brannick, 2014, p. 10). It is positioned here because this phase is focussed on collaboratively constructing new practice guidelines in light of cycle 1 findings. Thus, it forms part of the of the action research spiral. Cycle 1 findings informed cycle 2's constructing stage. Coghlan and Brannick (2014) explain that this stage is collaborative. The action researcher "engages relevant others in the process of constructing" Coghlan & Brannick, 2014, p. 10). Thus, I was not the expert who decided how to develop PTOF apart from others.

4.6.1 College mentor professional development

Using Zoom, I conducted three PD sessions with college mentors over a four-week period. All the college mentors attended all three sessions. The timeframe was relatively short because the PD had to be completed before the next period of SBP began. In an attempt to ensure all voices were heard, college mentors were encouraged to offer suggestions, raise concerns, and ask questions outside the PD sessions. Additionally, documents were uploaded to a collaborative platform and breakout rooms were used during the second PD session.

In the first session, the findings and relevant current literature were presented and discussed. Sessions two and three focused on collaboratively developing new practice guidelines. During this stage, a process of what Van Meter and Stevens (2000) call collaborative elaboration transpired, with PD participants sharing perspectives and jointly constructing knowledge. I feel this collaboration helped to ensure the new practice guidelines were contextually appropriate.

The first session reinforced that approximately half the college mentors assumed student-teachers were motivated by and valued grades for individual observed lessons. These college mentors strongly suggested that student-teachers would complain, become demotivated, and their development would be affected if grades were removed. The findings provided evidence that student-teachers found grades demotivating but college mentor feedback more developmentally supportive. I also presented current literature and international practice that discourages grading individual observed lessons.

Collaborative and directive approaches to mentoring and giving and receiving PTOF also provoked discission. Approximately half the college mentors felt they needed to 'tell' student-teachers how to develop their teaching. I presented recent literature, provided readings and showed videos of current international practice. College mentors wanted support to develop their knowledge and skills to implement collaborative approaches to mentoring and PTOF.

During the PD, most college mentors explained that they felt the lesson observation template did not adequately support their PTOF. They made suggestions to amend it. Although this factor did not emerge from the findings of this study, I wanted to develop practice as much as possible. Hence, I facilitated changes to the lesson observation template as a result of the PD rather than as a result of Cycle 1's findings.

We decided what changes could be implemented immediately, the processes involved, and what support was needed to effect change. The next SBP would be fully online, so all immediate changes were made to accommodate online delivery. Recommendations for future face-to-face SBP are discussed in chapter 6. I facilitated all the PD sessions, taking notes, summarising feedback, drafting documents and organising approval of changes. Table 14 provides a summary of session 1, in which the bold type highlights how it was informed by Cycle 1's findings.

Table 14 *Summary of professional development session 1, informed by Cycle 1's findings*

College mentor PD Session 1 (2 hours)	
Introduction	An overview of the research study
Findings; current literature; what is happening on our campus?	Summary of Cycle 1's findings, mentoring and PTOF current literature. Discussion of roles, responsibilities, and the SBP curriculum
Development of current practices	- Discussion: what changes can be made now, and which are better suited to future implementation? **Feedback: more effective when it's private.** All current SBP to be conducted online, PTOF sessions to be conducted via Zoom. Immediacy discussed. Process for allocating rooms when SBP is not online **Hasty, rushed PTOF; Support for school-based mentors; college-mentor/student-teacher pairing.** Unlikely changes to current workloads can be made (future recommendations suggested). Agreed online PTOF would support time and workload issues this semester. Action needed regarding how to implement online PTOF. **Language and tone of PTOF.** Agreement that PTOF sessions start positively. Further developmental support requested to give constructive, critical, reflective feedback. Suggestions of role play and question bank [continue via Google Doc]. **Showing and telling; Guiding; Improvement and reflective practice.** Differences in approaches evident, international current practices explored and reflective practice discussed in line with the curriculum. Agreed we need to be more consistent as a department, but how? Suggestions made [continue via Google Doc]. **Grades: a motivator/distractor.** Agreement to pilot removal of grades for one semester if Management approval gained. Discussion of rubrics ongoing. Self-evaluation useful but felt not appropriate for all year levels. **Confusion, a lack of guidance and unclear expectations; Positive beginnings, improvement needs and suggestions for future lessons.** Agreed to start positive, then work on developmental needs. Focus on reflection *on* action and *for* action; support to provide evidence-based critical feedback. Agreed to end with developmental goals. Discussion related to managing differing expectations. Suggestions made [continue via Google Doc]. **Professional development**. Agreed not enough time for additional PD now. Future recommendation. - Initial suggestions for new practice guidelines, detailed in the Google Doc. College mentors review and submit further suggestions before session two. **Written feedback (added)** Simplified format requested. Suggestions made [continue via Google Doc].

By the end of the PD series, the education team had collaboratively produced new PTOF guidelines. Six major changes were agreed for immediate implementation. Table 15 presents the new practice guidelines, mapped to Cycle 1's findings. There was an understanding that college mentors would ask questions and encourage collaboration, dialogue and reflection on and for practice. Pre-SBP meetings were introduced to develop relationships and establish expectations. A new formative lesson observation form without grades was introduced; however, the summative graded SBP observation form still had to be completed. A PTOF structure was agreed. A list of possible questions and prompts to use during PTOF was provided, along with additional reading, links to videos and one-to-one guidance. The new guidelines aimed to offer greater consistency to mentoring and giving and receiving PTOF. As well as to implement a less judgmental, more collaborative and reflective approach to supporting student-teacher development. The new practice guidelines were approved by Management to be implemented at the research campus as a pilot study during the upcoming period of online SBP.

Table 15 *Summary of the new practice guidelines, mapped to Cycle 1's findings*

Summary of the new practice guidelines	Cycle 1 sub-theme
Schedule PTOF for as soon as possible after the observation and no later than 36 hours after the observed lesson.	Hasty, rushed PTOF
Conduct PTOF in a private environment. Meetings can be conducted via Zoom with cameras switched on (where possible).	Feedback: more effective when it's private
Pre-SBP meetings to be held to meet student-teachers and to clarify expectations.	Confusion, a lack of guidance and unclear expectations PTOF: Positive beginnings, improvement needs and suggestions for future lessons Language and tone of PTOF
PTOF sessions ideally to last between 20 and 30 minutes (or longer if necessary).	Hasty, rushed PTOF
No longer grade formative observed lessons	Grades, a motivator/distractor
Follow the structure below for each lesson observation and PTOF	
Before the observation • Meet the student-teacher (in online class or via Zoom). Clarify expectations. Clarify the purpose of the observation (link to the teaching practice competencies for that semester). • Check the student-teacher lesson plan; clarify the lesson aims. • Discuss the focus for the observation. Agree on objectives; ensure they link to the teaching practice competencies. **During lesson observation** • Use the new formative lesson observation form for all observations. **PTOF**	Confusion, a lack of guidance and unclear expectations PTOF: Positive beginnings, improvement needs and suggestions for future lessons Language and tone of PTOF Showing and telling Guiding Improvement and reflective practice
a. Begin positively. Elicit from the student-teacher what they thought went well and why.	
b. Look at the lesson plan objectives. Encourage the student-teacher to explain why they were met/not met.	
c. Draw out areas for development through reflection on action. Ask questions and encourage the student-teacher to explain what she would do differently in the future and why. Scaffold links to coursework. Try to avoid using value labels. Be specific; give clear evidenced examples from your	

	observation; ask questions to encourage critical thinking related to theory. Allow time for the student-teacher to reflect on their experiences	
d.	Look at the agreed objectives and ensure they have been discussed.	
e.	Encourage student-teachers to set 2-4 developmental goals and record these on the feedback form. End the session positively by reiterating what the student-teacher is doing well.	

4.6.2 Student-teacher professional development

College mentors facilitated the student-teacher PD because due to the pandemic all teaching and learning were online. I was therefore unable to 'drop in' on online classes I did not teach. As an inside researcher, I knew it was unlikely that all student-teachers (n=132) would attend online PD outside scheduled class time. Therefore, I used a format similar to when I explained this research study to prospective student-teacher participants. A simplified version of the new practice guidelines was emailed to all student-teachers. I recorded a video to explain the research, the findings and the changes being made to school-based experience this semester. College mentors played the video during class, explained the changes and provided developmental support. They answered student-teacher questions and requested feedback and suggestions. The gap between the introduction of the new guidelines and their implementation during SBP was between two and four weeks (depending on the study-year level). Student-teachers needed to understand and have the skills to apply and implement the new guidelines during their next period of SBP. I facilitated the process by providing resources and support.

4.7 Summary

This chapter discussed the Cycle 1 findings obtained from questionnaire data from eight college mentors and FGI data from 18 student-teachers. The questionnaire and FGIs were used to explore and understand current PTOF practice at the institution. The findings were presented thematically in relation to the research questions, and I outlined how they informed the PD. The new practice guidelines were collaboratively developed with college mentors to standardise approaches, to encourage collaboration and to implement a less judgemental approach to mentoring and PTOF. They were enacted during the next period of SBP, which was fully online. The PD and practice following implementation of the new practice guidelines were evaluated in Cycle 2 of this study and are discussed in the next chapter.

Chapter 5: Cycle 2 findings

5.0 Introduction

The purpose of Cycle 2 was to conduct PD and develop new practice guidelines. Then evaluate the PD and practice following implementation of the new guidelines. This chapter presents, interprets and discusses Cycle 2's findings. It aims to answer research questions 4, 5 and 6. The findings in this chapter provide an account of the experiences of six college mentors and 18 student-teachers regarding PD and practice following implementation of the new guidelines. The findings represent the data analysis strategy outlined in chapter 3; they are organised by research question and presented thematically. The themes and sub-themes are outlined below. Where applicable, Cycle 1 and Cycle 2 findings are compared and contrasted. Conclusions and key findings are further discussed in chapter 6.

5.1 Themes and sub-themes

Cycle 2 data analysis followed the data analysis strategy outlined in chapter 3. Table 13 presents the themes and sub-themes developed from the analysis of the interview data.

Table 16 *Cycle 2 interview data analysis: themes and sub-themes*

Interview themes	Interview sub-themes
College mentor perceptions of PTOF after interventions	Helpful PTOF format Conversion to online PTOF Not enough time School-based mentors need more help Better guidelines to write feedback
College mentor perceptions of altered theoretical approaches to, and/or practice of, mentoring and giving PTOF	Removal of grades an eye-opener Collaborative PTOF Reflective practice, guidance is needed Greater focus on how to improve student teaching
College mentor suggestions to further develop PTOF practices	Professional development

Table 14 presents the themes and sub-themes developed from Cycle 2 FGI data analysis.

Table 17 *Cycle 2 FGI data analysis; themes and sub-themes*

FGI themes	FGI sub-themes
Student-teacher perceptions of PTOF after interventions	Knowing what to expect Positive beginnings and endings Online PTOF Too busy observing others College mentor helps instead of the school-based mentor Written feedback instead of spoken
Student-teacher perceptions of altered theoretical approaches to, and/or practice of, mentoring and receiving PTOF	Discussing and feeling comfortable Collaboration, 'a little bit nice' Reflection, having guidance is really important
Student-teacher suggestions to further develop PTOF practices	College mentor support Keep PTOF online

5.2 Integrated themes

As for Cycle 1, I merged the two datasets after analysing them individually to produce a list of integrated themes and sub-themes. No themes or sub-themes were removed; all were merged. The naming of the integrated themes represents the integrated participant voices. The integrated themes and sub-themes form the basis of Cycle 2's findings and are outlined in Table 15.

Table 18 *Cycle 2 integrated themes and sub-themes*

Integrated themes	Integrated sub-themes
College mentor and student-teacher perceptions of PTOF after interventions	Helpful PTOF format, knowing what to expect Conversion to online PTOF Not enough time, too busy observing others School-based mentors need more help Better guidelines to write feedback
College mentor and student-teacher perceptions of altered theoretical approaches to, and/or practice of, mentoring and giving and receiving PTOF	Removal of grades an eye-opener Collaboration, 'a little bit nice' Reflective practice, guidance is really important Greater focus on how to improve teaching
College mentor and student-teacher suggestions to further develop PTOF practices	Future PTOF development

At the onset of this AR study, I anticipated comparing and contrasting the two cycles' findings to determine improvement to practice. The global pandemic and subsequent move to online PTOF meant that direct comparisons were not always possible. However, the findings specific to online PTOF offer insights because Management plan to continue learning and teaching online.

5.3 College mentor and student-teacher perceptions of PTOF after interventions

The first theme comprises participant perceptions of practice following the PD and implementation of the new practice guidelines. It includes perceptions of the structure of PTOF, the online delivery mode, time allocation, and school-based mentor support. Participant comments on the revised lesson observation template and written feedback are also included.

5.3.1 Helpful PTOF format, knowing what to expect

The first sub-theme presents participants' perceptions of the structure of PTOF sessions, which include meetings held before SBP, and the beginnings and endings of PTOF sessions. It does not include areas for improvement, which are presented under the second theme.

Overall, most participants indicated that the PD and new practice guidelines resulted in more structured and consistent practice than in Cycle 1. It was notable that meetings held before SBP and the beginnings and endings of PTOF sessions were more consistent. Most of the college mentors explained that the new guidelines were supportive and gave them greater confidence to give structured feedback in the agreed format. These findings reinforce Hojeij et al.'s (2021) conclusion that SBP needs to be clearly structured and reflect Caena's (2014) assertion that practice guidelines need to be applied consistently:

> …the format…that you've given me was very helpful. (CM2.2)

> Before the order of my feedback was all over [the place]. Now with the questions and guide I could go into details and end with action. I just felt more confident as I gave feedback, I knew what to do. (CM4.2)

Unlike in Cycle 1, meetings were usually held before SBP; these were identified as a college mentor function in the new guidelines. Cycle 2 evidenced that college mentors understood they had a responsibility to conduct meetings in which they outlined expectations before SBP began. These results reflect Bullock (2017), who stressed the importance of college mentors' awareness of their responsibilities. Similarly Glover et al., (2022), for whom mentors understanding their roles and responsibilities was key to ensuring student-teachers knew what to expect during SBP. While Cycle 1 found that student-teachers tended to be unprepared for SBP, Cycle 2's findings suggest that holding meetings before SBP enables student-teachers to know what to expect. This demonstrates that the new practice guidelines supported college mentors to prepare student-teachers for their SBP:

> I'm trying before teaching practice as much as possible to prepare them, so they know what they expect. (CM3.2)

> In these meetings I would show them, these might be the questions that I might ask. I tell them you make use of them as your guide questions, so you know what are the things that are expected from you. (CM6.2)

On the whole, student-teachers were positive about having meetings prior to SBP. They found them helpful in terms of building relationships with college mentors and establishing SBP expectations. These results reflect Aderibigbe et al.'s (2018) findings on the importance of ensuring student-teachers understand what to expect from the outset of SBP. Most of the student-teachers appreciated the opportunity to meet their college mentor before SBP. Building strong relationships in collective societies tends to be viewed as more important than the task (Javidan et al., 2006). Hence, spending time during these meetings to build college-mentor/student-teacher relationships could be significant for successful PTOF. The positive student-teacher comments provide strong evidence of the impact the PD and new practice guidelines had on student practice:

> It was good. I mean, I never knew my college mentor before so I liked meeting her before we started teaching. It helps me to know what will happen when I teach and after when we discuss. (FGI2.2)

> My college mentor … talk[s with me] beforehand, and she tells me anything we will do, some questions she might ask… This is a really good way, I kind of know a little bit what to expect. (FGI3.2)

> I prefer meeting her before the teaching practice. It's better in my opinion to know her. (FGI4.2)

However, the findings indicated that a few college mentors struggled to arrange online meetings with student-teachers they did not teach before they began SBP. A lack of time, or student-teachers not turning up, were reasons given for not conducting the meetings. It is notable that these college mentors tried their best to hold the meetings. Most student-teachers had positive perceptions of the meetings. Therefore, it is to be hoped that in future more student-teachers will see the benefit these meetings have on their practice. Thus make every effort to attend them.

I emailed the students a meeting time before TP [school-based practice]. If they didn't show up, I sent a reminder but some never responded to me…So no, I didn't hold meetings with some. (CM4.2)

It was sometimes challenging to organise meetings before TP [SBP] with those I didn't teach. First, I didn't know them, I mean I've never even seen them even online. Yes, some were great communicators and replied but others… I had to follow to remind and remind them. (CM6.2)

Most college mentors recognised the importance of taking the time needed to build the mentor/mentee relationship. Despite holding meetings before SBP, they perceived mentoring the student-teachers to whom they taught the SBP course as more effective. They explained that they were able to build stronger relationships over a longer period of time, so the meetings were logistically easier to schedule and more time-efficient. These perceptions match Osula and Irvin's (2009) findings regarding the importance of building strong relationships over time in collectivist cultures. As with Cycle 1's findings, most student-teachers preferred their SBP course teacher to be their college mentor, with whom they had more time to build a relationship and who was more familiar with their ability. These findings offer Management further evidence that it is more effective to pair college mentors with student-teachers they teach. As Wilson and Huynh (2020) concluded, a short SBP placement does not help to facilitate a strong mentor/mentee relationship:

Wow it was just so much easier when I observed the students I taught… We all knew each other, there were like less surprises… (CM1.2)

I prefer it when my MCT is my teacher, I know her, she knows me. She knows what I teach and my level. (FGI2.2)

Like Cycle 1, Cycle 2's findings revealed that PTOF sessions always began positively. Most college mentors recognised that this format supported student-teachers to discuss what went well in the observed lesson. As one college mentor explained:

> It was good, but I've always done this…It really helps the student open up to talk to reflect and think about what they did well. (CM6.2)

Student-teacher comments were similar to Cycle 1; they all preferred to begin PTOF positively. Harms and Roebuck (2010) suggest that beginning PTOF sessions positively is effective and considered best practice. It is advised in international mentor guidelines (Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, n.d.; York St John University, 2020):

> We begin on Zoom and talk about my areas of strengths…My MCT asks me what I do well and we talk, yes we talk and it's a little bit good. (FGI2.2)

Cycle 1 findings indicated a lack of consistency when ending PTOF sessions. The new practice guidelines specified that student-teachers should set two to four developmental goals at the end of PTOF sessions. Comments from college mentors and student-teachers suggested that this was mostly accomplished, matching McGlynn's (2018) suggestion of no more than three or four action points. This is further evidence of the impact the new practice guidelines had on implementing more consistent practice:

> I might give them two goals, sometimes a third one if they're really struggling…
> it depends on the student. (CM3.2)

> We finish with my weakness areas, and she gives me three to do for next time. (FGI3.2)

> We end with actions for next time so I can improve. She gave me three points I need to improve on. (FGI2.2)

The findings also revealed that PTOF sessions mostly ended with a summary of the meeting, along with positive motivation, which was in accordance with the new PTOF guidelines. These findings echo the recommendation of the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (n.d.) that mentors spend five minutes at the end of lesson observations to summarise the meeting and end on a positive note. Offering further evidence that the new practice guidelines supported more consistent practice and are in line with international mentoring feedback practice:

> At the end, my Miss summed up what we discussed. Then she encouraged me to do my best. It was good and helpful and made sure I understood. (FGI3.2)

5.3.2 Conversion to online PTOF

The second sub-theme includes participant perceptions of conducting PTOF online via Zoom. More in-depth discussion of Emirati female student-teachers conducting PTOF online from home and switching off laptop cameras occurs in the final chapter; here I present only the findings.

Although this was the first time that PTOF was delivered online, the findings suggest that the transition to online delivery occurred smoothly. The student-teachers had been studying online for several months when school-based practice commenced. They all had access to laptops and home internet connections. Barrot et al., (2021) acknowledge that students in countries with more advanced infrastructure fared much better learning online during the pandemic than those without. As one student-teacher summarises:

> Online I think everything went well. (FGI4.2)

The majority of participants preferred the convenience and flexibility of online PTOF. These findings are similar to Albmuraqab's (2020) conclusions regarding UAE students studying online during the pandemic:

> We converted to online, it was really useful and saved time. (CM5.2)

> It just really made it all easier, it was better in my opinion than waiting and sitting in the school. (CM6.2)

> I liked doing the feedback using Zoom. I could always talk to my Miss. Before, she sometimes had to talk with other students and observe other lessons and there's not enough time. (FGI3.2)

Although the majority of participants preferred the convenience and flexibility of online PTOF, the findings revealed challenges to effective implementation. A few of the college mentors explained that the student-teachers could not always connect. The findings revealed that the technology did not always work. The student-teachers all had home internet. However, several explained that when their siblings studied and/or worked online at the same time, it could cause bandwidth issues. These challenges are not unique to the UAE. Humphrey and Wiles (2021) found that connectivity issues in the USA affected online communication much more than hardware malfunction. Muthuprasad et al. (2021) concluded that connectivity issues created challenges to student learning:

> She always had problems with the connection, even with no camera. One, two, three times we just couldn't connect. (CM2.2)

> Sometimes it's a bit challenging, you know especially when my brothers and sisters they also need internet. (FGI2.2)

Over half the college mentors described PTOF meetings where they struggled to get their message across to a student-teacher in the online environment.

> I just think the actual physical contact with the student works well, to really understand what I'm trying to say. (CM3.2)

Around half of the student-teachers explained that they felt they needed face-to face feedback for clarification and explanation. This is perhaps unsurprising, given Weller's (2020) argument that clear interaction between the mentor and student-teacher is necessary during PTOF. The evidence indicates that it may have been harder for student-teachers to show a lack of comprehension online. Echoing Steeves' (2021) claims that student-teachers demonstrate learning to mentors through facial expression and body language, both of which are more challenging to view online. The student-teachers said that speaking to their college mentor face-to-face made communication 'easier'.

> I think face-to-face feedback is really important. We get to have the points clarified, if we don't understand something, then we can have further explanation. (FGI4.2)

> Before it was easier, I could understand her better, I mean I could see what she really means. (FGI3.2)

I now explore participant perspectives of conducting PTOF from the home environment when PTOF was transferred online. It is noteworthy that several student-teachers across the dataset explained that they had to care for siblings and/or their own children, oversee housemaids and organise domestic duties while conducting PTOF and studying online. Despite most if not all student-teacher households employing domestic help, the evidence suggests that the role of overseeing maids, childcare and housework appeared to fall to student-teachers rather than to their brothers or husbands. These findings reflect Dickson and Tennent's (2021) conclusion that childcare is not perceived as an Emirati male role:

> There was me, my younger sisters and my brother all sharing the big table and online together…Many times I'm helping them to learn and doing my studies. (FGI3.2)

> And my baby…I tell my Miss she's always wanting me when I'm home studying... I can't ask my husband to care for her. (FGI3.2)

> Of course, there are always the maids, but we still need to organise them. (FGI4.2)

I'm the eldest girl, so it's also my responsibility to look after the kids and the house. (FGI4.2)

Most of the college mentors corroborated the student-teacher comments, noting that the student-teacher home environment was not always ideal for study. College mentors spoke of noisy environments where student-teachers nursed babies or managed children during PTOF:

Well more than one of my students had a child with her when we spoke. We managed to complete the feedback but these students couldn't really focus on the feedback. (CM3.2)

I often heard children, the tv and life going on in the background as we completed online feedback. It was distracting for me never mind the students who were teaching and studying with the constant background noise. (CM6.2)

The methodology chapter highlighted cultural sensitivities regarding online camera use. The findings demonstrate that around half of the college mentors requested student-teachers switch on their cameras during online PTOF. To encourage this, PTOF was not recorded. Despite encouragement, student-teachers mostly joined PTOF meetings with their cameras switched off. One college mentor commented that they asked for the camera to be switched on but did not feel they could insist on mandatory camera use:

Well, you know, I didn't feel I could tell…mandate, she turns on the camera, it's not up to me. It did make communicating harder though. (CM3.2)

The student-teachers mostly explained that they could not switch on their cameras because their family would not allow them to:

I told my Miss, I can't if my father is here, I just can't open the camera. I can't show my face. (FGI3.2)

> We can't use the camera my family don't allow me to use it. (FGI4.2)

One college mentor commented that the student-teacher they mentored did not want her college mentor to switch on their camera because her husband was at home:

> My student told me teacher, my husband is in the same room we I cannot open our cameras…So I said, okay, well, don't worry. I won't be opening my camera. But the problem is that since I did not open my camera it was hard for her to really understand what I was saying. (CM1.2)

The evidence indicates that participants struggled to understand one another when cameras were switched off and non-verbal cues removed. These findings perhaps support McBrien et al.'s (2020) conclusion that when cameras are switched off and there are no non-verbal cues, participants receive a reduced educational experience:

> I think when she didn't open her camera it was harder to discuss, you know talk deeper and reflect. I prefer talking to her face in the class in school. I can help more. (CM2.2)

> Yes, we did talk… it was OK but it really makes a difference when you talk with a screen...It's just, well, harder to talk for longer and to help her. (CM3.2)

> It was just difficult, [when the camera was switched off] I couldn't gauge her understanding, no smiles or looks of confusion. I tried but I'm really not sure she got it. (CM6.2)

A further issue was evidenced by two college mentors indicating that they had held PTOF sessions without their cameras switched on. Their reasoning was that their image could be captured and used elsewhere without their knowledge or permission. This reflects Hojeij and Baroudi's (2021) finding that Emirati female teachers prefer to switch off their cameras to protect their privacy, in line with UAE cultural norms:

> No, I didn't open the camera. She can copy my image and use it and it could become very difficult for me and for my family. (CM4.2)

These findings suggest that studying online from home and switching off laptop cameras were not always conducive to student-teacher development and learning. This is concerning because this institution plans to transfer approximately 50% of the education courses to 100% online delivery. These findings are therefore discussed in the next chapter.

5.3.3 Not enough time, too busy observing others

The third sub-theme refers to a lack of time to conduct PTOF, which was also an issue in Cycle 1. Despite online SBP, thus no commuting requirements, the evidence demonstrates that a lack of time remained an issue in Cycle 2. While these findings reflect Glover et al.'s (2022) acknowledgement that a lack of time is a constant challenge for mentors, the main concern evidenced in this study was that college mentors had too many observations to conduct. College mentor comments largely reflected those from Cycle 1, though their language was more emotive, with frustration and desperation more apparent:

> I want to support her more but I'm doing observation after observation and have no time. (CM1.2)

> Sometimes there were six observations in a day, its beyond what anyone can do. (CM3.2)

> I'm expected to conduct 86 observations, plus teach classes…It's just all too much, I can't do it. (CM6.2)

The findings evidence large discrepancies in the number of observations college mentors were allocated. One was scheduled 20 observations; another 60; another 86. In chapter 4, I outlined the institution's formula used to calculate lesson observation schedules. Cycle 2's findings demonstrated that college mentors struggled to manage observation loads despite not spending time commuting, which suggests serious flaws in the formula. One college mentor perceived that without enough time, PTOF is not helpful:

> If we do not actually find enough time, quality time in providing feedback to our students, then it's still not useful. (CM1.2)

A few college mentors explained that they needed time to talk generally and then discuss feedback in depth, indicating they needed more time for what they perceived as 'quality' feedback. This situation reflects Tyrer's (2023) assertion that institutional practices affect PTOF. Tyrer (2023) suggests time limitations may encourage college mentors to implement directive rather than collaborative PTOF, and in this study, although college mentors appeared to be trying to implement collaborative approaches, time constrained them:

> I ask her about the school, about everything, before we discuss the feedback in detail. It all takes time. (CM2.2)

> We really need to find time to extend meetings if we want to really provide quality reflective feedback assistance to our students. I think that's the most important thing. (CM.3.2)

> We're not allocated enough time to meet, talk and work through such feedback. (CM6.2)

Cycle 1 indicated that the time college mentors allocated to PTOF was on the shorter side of international practice. However, there is strong evidence across both cycles that more time is needed. Drawing on Glover et al.'s (2022) advice that mentors need to be given an adequate amount of time, it appears this institution needs to allocate more time for PTOF.

As with Cycle 1, the majority of participants commented that PTOF did not occur immediately after lesson observation. During the PD it was acknowledged that doing so would not always be possible. Thus, the new practice guidelines recommended PTOF sessions be conducted within 36 hours of the observed lesson, although ideally conducted immediately afterward. The student-teachers mostly perceived that college mentors were too busy with other observations to conduct PTOF immediately after their observed lesson:

My Miss, she says to meet on Zoom sometime [in the] afternoon to discuss. (FGI2.2)

She's usually observing other girls when I finish. (FGI3.2)

The majority of college mentors explained that they had too many back-to-back observations to be able to consistently conduct PTOF immediately after observed lessons. However, the findings suggest that the new guidelines were adhered to, because student-teachers did not allude to waiting more than 36 hours for PTOF sessions. It seems unlikely that college mentors will always be able to conduct PTOF immediately after the observed lesson unless observation schedules incorporate time for immediate PTOF.

5.3.4 School-based mentors need more help

A recurring sub-theme theme was that college mentors were asked to provide mentor support usually expected of school-based mentors. College mentors considered providing such support an additional burden on their time:

I think because of MS Teams the students well they didn't get the chance to sit with their school-based mentor and it's like they need more help, they were always asking me to check and wanted ideas for teaching lessons online. (CM3.2)

I think the school-based mentors struggled you know with online (teaching) so having our students – well, it was too much...so yes I think I spent more time helping the students because the school-based mentor was just too busy. (CM6.2)

In contrast to Cycle 1's findings, student-teachers revealed that they felt there was a lack of school-based mentor support during online SBP. Student-teachers from every year group said that they mostly communicated with their school-based mentor through text-based instant messaging services. This explains why they needed additional support and relied on college mentors to provide it:

> It was hard to plan when I just messaged my school Miss. My Miss [college mentor] helped me, she met me online and we discussed the lesson. (FGI2.2)

> My school-based mentor she just talk with me using WhatsApp…. I asked my other college mentor to give me advice. (FGI3.2)

College mentors providing school-based mentor support was more prominent in Cycle 2 than in Cycle 1. Therefore, it may be a chronic issue made more prevalent by online SBP. This institution does not provide school-based mentors with any formal developmental support. However, the findings in this study appear similar to Glover et al.'s (2022) conclusions that school-based mentors require professional development, and indicate that school-based mentors require support and development so they can support student-teachers more effectively.

5.3.5 Better guidelines for writing feedback

This sub-theme refers to participant perceptions of the new lesson observation form and inconsistences between written and oral PTOF. Cycle 2's findings indicated that all the college mentors preferred the new formative lesson observation template:

> I already noticed we have better guidelines of how we write feedback for students. (CM2.2)

> Before, I was…never really knowing what to write. It was like a little bit confusing before but now it's better. (CM4.2)

The findings suggest that the new written observation template supported college mentors in giving evidence based PTOF. Two college mentors said that they discussed written evidence from the observation during the PTOF session. Student-teachers did not comment on this practice, so it is unclear if they perceived it supporting their development. However, Windsor et

al. (2020) suggest that when observational evidence is used to inform PTOF, teaching skills are developed:

> It helped to point out specifics to her. I could read from the observation form when we discussed it together. (CM1.2)

> It made more sense and was easier to talk with her through the lesson. Sometimes I even quoted what she said. This was a bit surprising, sometimes when she doesn't realise what she said. (CM2.2)

A third of the college mentors questioned the usefulness of written feedback, commenting that student-teachers paid little attention to it and doubted it was even read. This is not unusual: according to Barton et al. (2016), mentors are often left in the dark as to whether students have read, understood, or acted on written feedback, which suggests that time spent writing it is inefficiently used. This was certainly how one college mentor felt:

> I write as much as I can, in the feedback, but their translation of it or their interpretation of it may not be understood. Sometimes they don't even read it I suspect. (CM3.2)

Cycle 1's findings demonstrated that the student-teachers found oral PTOF more developmentally supportive than written PTOF, despite Puttick and Wynn (2021) finding that student-teachers often find written feedback more valuable than oral feedback. Lopez-Real et al. (2001) acknowledge that student-teachers may struggle to recollect oral PTOF, while written feedback can be reflected on and referred to at any time. At least one college mentor discussed the written feedback during PTOF sessions. Given that English is not the student-teachers' first language, implementing this two-pronged approach may support student-teacher understanding of the written feedback.

> It takes time to write the feedback, and I think it only really helps if we can discuss it with them. (CM1.2)

While inconsistencies between oral and written feedback emerged as an issue in Cycle 1 and were discussed during the PD, they did not appear across Cycle 2's datasets. The absence of inconsistencies between oral and written PTOF is likely evidence of the effectiveness of the PD.

A repeated concern was that PTOF sessions were not conducted, with written feedback substituting. In Cycle 1, only student-teachers commented on this occurring. In Cycle 2, a few college mentors and two student-teachers commented on oral feedback being substituted with written feedback. One college mentor spoke about what student-teachers had said, rather than reporting their own experience:

> I had a few students who actually complained to me. There were some college mentors that instead of setting a Zoom meeting with them, sharing the feedback, a personal dialogue, they just send the feedback through email. (CM1.2)

While two college mentors spoke of not giving oral feedback, both indicated that they were trying to provide PTOF. One did not have enough time, while the other had student-teachers struggling to connect:

> I found I wasted too much time, she couldn't connect, so I rescheduled…this happened again and again, then I have too many to do and end up not meeting online. So I sent them the written feedback instead. (CM3.2)

> When it's piling up and I was doing live observations and watching recordings, there was just no time. So their spoken feedback with me dropped by. (CM6.2)

One third-year and one fourth-year student-teacher explained that their college mentor sent written feedback and no oral PTOF was given:

> The MCT she just sent me… it every time by email. We didn't discuss together. (FGI4.2)

The new practice guidelines state that conducting oral PTOF is a collage mentor role; as such, it should be given. Further investigation is required to understand how prevalent substituting written feedback for oral feedback is, and if there are reasons other than time and connectivity for not carrying out this role.

5.4 College mentor and student-teacher perceptions of altered theoretical approaches to, and/or practice of, mentoring and giving and receiving PTOF

The second theme explores participant perceptions of changes to theoretical approaches to mentoring and giving and receiving PTOF. This theme includes perceptions of the impact of removing grades from individual observed lessons, a transition towards a collaborative approach, reflective practice, and developmental feedback. The latter three sub-themes are discussed further in chapter 6.

5.4.1 Removal of grades, an eye-opener

During the PD it was agreed to remove grades for individual lesson observations. Almost half the college mentors noticed that student-teachers initially expected a grade during PTOF. This expectation may indicate that student-teachers were not adequately prepared during the PD to understand either that grades were not going to be given or the reason for their removal:

> During my first sharing of feedback they were a bit pushy and said, please give me the grade. (CM1.2)

> I told her, I cannot say a grade because we need to go through and discuss together how you feel you develop as a teacher. (CM3.2)

While PTOF tends to be evaluative, a few college mentors indicated that they wanted to quantify individual formative lesson observations. Although these college mentors did not give a grade, their desire to quantify lesson observations suggests that they found the grading system useful to

guide student-teachers. Jones et al. (2022) similarly found that mentors may still prefer a grading system, perceiving it to give less ambiguous feedback:

> Maybe we should not classify them with grades or A, B, C, D. You may say excellent, average or below or something like this. In my opinion it helps the student to know her achievement. (CM2.2)

> I use the rubric and I show her, then she can still work out a grade, she can see where she is on the rubric. (CM6.2)

However, most of the college mentors perceived that the removal of grades promoted collaboration and dialogue during PTOF, in turn supporting student-teacher development. These findings indicate a shift in the beliefs of some college mentors. Cycle 1 found that half the college mentors valued grades and believed they motivated student-teachers, whereas Cycle 2's findings provided strong evidence that not grading individual lessons promoted collaboration and dialogue. These findings mirror those of Jones et al. (2022), whose study similarly divided opinion regarding grading lessons. They found that their mentors mostly recognised that the removal of grades refocused PTOF towards dialogue and reflection. That study and this one echo Aderibigbe et al.'s (2018) conclusion that collaboration is valuable for student-teacher development and learning. Interestingly, as evidenced in Cycle 1, student-teachers already perceived that mentor feedback supported their development more than grades:

> I said, focus on the feedback, I am not grading you. And then when they realise that it's very nice that we can share and discuss together. The more that I have witnessed, not just a gradual, but drastic changes and lots more learning for some. (CM1.2)

> This approach is an eye-opener for me. I liked the approach of not giving them the grade. They have to pay attention to the feedback, and we talk together about the things that they need to improve. (CM4.2)

5.4.2 Collaboration, 'a little bit nice'

This sub-theme explores participant perspectives on the transition towards a collaborative approach to mentoring and PTOF. Cycle 1 found that student-teachers rarely spoke of collaboration, whereas Cycle 2's findings revealed that student-teachers across the dataset commented on collaborative PTOF. This suggests there was more collaboration during PTOF after the interventions. This is important because this institution implements a reflective practice ITE model to which, Ellis and Osborne (2015) assert, collaborative mentoring approaches are fundamental. Additionally, Glover et al. (2022) stress that collaboration is critical for effective mentoring. When the student-teachers spoke of collaboratively conversing with their college mentor, they mostly used positive vocabulary. This evidence mirrors Jones et al.'s (2022) findings that student-teachers were positive about increased dialogue. These findings also reflect Fletcher et al.'s (2021) conclusion that collaboration features in student-teachers' satisfaction with their mentoring experience:

> Yes, my Miss [and I] discuss together on Zoom. It was a little bit nice… you know when we discuss together. (FGI2.2)

> It was different. My MCT scheduled a Zoom meeting after I taught, and we talked together about the lesson… I like how she talk together with me. (FGI3.2)

> We discussed what strategies they might use, what would improve my lesson and what tools I can incorporate. So that helped me plan better. (FGI4.2)

Student-teachers mostly claimed that they felt more comfortable and relaxed during PTOF:

> I feel more you know a little bit happy, relaxing at my house…on Zoom. (FGI3.2)

> She made me feel more comfortable to talk, it helped me to think more about my teaching. (FGI4.2)

While it is difficult to ascertain exactly why student-teachers felt more comfortable, it seems probable that the implementation of college mentor collaborative approaches was a contributing factor. College mentors recognised the importance of student-teachers feeling comfortable, perceiving this to enhance honest, open communication during PTOF:

> When they are back at the screen, they feel more comfortable… We want them to be comfortable, especially when reflecting because if they are uncomfortable, then, being very honest is too difficult. (CM4.2)

> The students, they liked that they are not in front of you. So they felt more comfortable during PTOF. (CM5.2)

These findings support Glover et al.'s (2022) conclusion that mentoring is most effective when student-teachers feel emotionally safe. However, the evidence revealed that participants mostly attributed greater comfort to the online delivery mode. Nevertheless, the student-teacher perceptions of feeling more comfortable during PTOF could also reflect a transition towards a more collaborative approach to PTOF. Afterall, Yuan and Lee (2016) claim that in a collaborative mentoring relationship, participants tend to feel more comfortable with one another.

Most college mentors indicated that they tried to implement a more collaborative approach to mentoring and PTOF. However, these college mentors perceived that most student-teachers expected and indeed wanted direction, particularly to develop and improve their teaching. One college mentor explained that they tried to encourage collaboration:

> We needed to talk and discuss but she was, well she just wanted me to tell her. The discussion was too just too difficult, I asked questions, but it just didn't feel very effective. (CM5.2)

College mentors tried to implement more collaborative approaches and student-teachers appeared positive about certain aspects of the collaborative approach to mentoring and PTOF.

However, student-teachers across all FGIs largely wanted college mentors to provide direct instruction on how to develop knowledge and improve teaching skills. Possible reasons for this are explored in chapter 6. The evidence presented here suggests there was a lack of what Glover et al. (2022) call learning conversations, a factor explored in sub-theme 5.5.4:

> It is most helpful when she tells me what to do how to improve. Then I can improve for my next lesson. (FGI2.2)

> My Miss wants to talk, she asks me but I want my Miss to help to improve my lesson for next time. She needs to tell me more [about] the activities. (FGI3.2)

5.4.3 Reflective practice, guidance is really important

This sub-theme explores participant perspectives on reflecting on and for practice during PTOF. Cycle 1's findings suggested that the directive approach to mentoring and PTOF implemented by half the college mentors was not conducive to reflective practice. Despite college mentors trying to implement collaborative approaches and student-teachers beginning to transition towards collaboration, Cycle 2's findings were not conclusive on this transition supporting student-teachers to reflect on or for practice. Although most college mentor comments indicated that they encouraged student-teachers to reflect on practice, student-teachers mostly appeared to want to be told what to reflect on:

> I tried to get her to think about it, but she just kept more and more asking me what to do. It's like she doesn't want to think. (CM4.2)

> There are some students that…didn't come to a point where they pay attention to reflection, but rather they just expected me to tell them. (CM6.2)

Student-teachers at this institution are expected to reflect on practice from their first year onwards; however, they receive limited taught input to support this practice. Evidence from this study indicates that the majority of student-teachers needed support and guidance to develop

their reflective practice. While the literature debates the overt teaching of reflective practice, these findings are in line with Farrell's (2019) assertion that student-teachers need training in order to reflect. As one fourth-year student-teacher explained:

> In previous semesters, I got comments from my MCTs that I need to improve my reflections. So having guidance is really important to me and helped me to improve my reflections. (FGI4.2)

In the literature review, I explained that the institution does not delineate between levels of reflective practice. Instead, as student-teachers progress through the SBP course, course learning outcomes highlight elements of SBP on which to reflect. According to the SBP curriculum, third year student-teachers should reflect on the impact of relationships on teaching and learning, while in the fourth year they reflect on learning resources, the physical environment and sociocultural contexts. However, the findings did not indicate that student-teachers reflected on these elements.

The literature review also highlighted that this institution does not clearly define reflective practice. Cycle 2's findings indicated that a few college mentors spoke of thinking "deeply". It is unclear if these college mentors were discussing critical thinking generally or referring explicitly to reflection. Reflection, specifically the processes of analysing and making judgments about what has happened, is part of the critical thinking process (Colley et al., 2012). Thus, these findings perhaps align with Russell's (2013) assertion that mentors may lack clarity on the concept of reflective practice:

> We have to help them… to think about it deeply. (CM2.2)

> I help her to think more deeply about how she teaches. (CM4.2)

The findings mostly do not reflect Dervent's (2015) suggestion that reflective practice should be a developmental process. Student-teacher ability to reflect on practice appeared developmentally

similar across all year groups. Only one college mentor discussed reflection as a developmental process:

> We need to be developing a scale to reflect and give students guided questions at their level to reflect on. (CM3.2)

Despite encouraging student-teachers to reflect on practice, the findings indicated that most college mentors seemed to associate reflection with a description of the taught lesson, followed by supporting student-teachers to identify their strengths and areas for development.

> I asked her to reflect on what she did well and what she needs to improve. (CM3.2)

> Well, I start with a discussion of the lesson, you know what went well in her lesson then what she would do improve the lesson if she taught that lesson again. This scaffolds her to reflect. (CM6.2)

Student-teacher comments indicated that they mostly reflected on concrete actions, instructional activities, and the management of online classes. These comments and college mentors accounts suggest that reflective practice tended to be descriptive and indicate that mentors tended to replicate student-teachers' existing ideas. This practice, according to Jones et al. (2021), does not allow student-teachers to challenge aspects of practice and engage in more creative acts. Blomberg et al. (2014) describe this type of descriptive reflective practice as "level 1", the lowest level of reflection:

> She asks me about what I do well and I tell her I used my voice well to give instructions for the kids and they like the activity. (FGI2.2)

According to Blomberg et al. (2014), level 2 reflection requires student-teachers to make judgments about their learning; level 3, the deepest level of reflection, involves generalisations and links to professional knowledge. Elements of level 2 reflective practice were apparent, but not across the student-teacher dataset:

> My Miss asks me how the children learn. I tell her they can count now, before only to 10 but now all the way until 20. After my lesson, they understand… I support them with Nearpod and posting on our wall. (FGI3.2)

A few college mentors commented on the questions they asked student-teachers to elicit deeper reflective practice. They indicated that they asked student-teachers what they would do differently if they taught the lesson again, adding 'how' and 'why' questions to promote reflection:

> I do it in a lot of detail with them…following the format that we said, which I've always done. It almost always helps them to think deeper. What, why, how… (CM3.2)

However, I found no evidence of level 3 reflective practice in the findings. This is perhaps not unusual. This study's evidence aligns with Slade et al.'s (2019) conclusion that student-teachers may not progress beyond the initial stage of reflection. However, I suspect that PTOF dialogues would need to be recorded and analysed to fully ascertain levels of reflective practice present during PTOF sessions, an act not within the scope of this study.

As explained earlier, the institutional mission statement calls student-teachers "agents of change" (Institution, 2021a). To change practice, Gadsby (2022) claims that the theoretical and practical elements of reflective practice require equal attention. Over- or underemphasis of either reduces student-teacher ability to reflect critically. The evidence in this study indicates an underemphasis on the theoretical elements of reflective practice, not dissimilar to the situation reported by Gelfuso and Dennis (2014). They found that student-teachers often fail to support practice with theory, and reflective practice tends to be descriptive. Gadsby (2022) claims that this creates a barrier to effective reflective practice. Reflective practice underpins ITE at this institution; therefore, in chapter 6, I explore possible reasons why the student-teachers in this study mostly reflected on practice at a descriptive level.

5.4.4 Greater focus on how to improve teaching

This sub-theme explores participant perspectives on developmental feedback, including assertive and questioning feedback. As highlighted earlier, the findings in this study suggest that removing grades from individual lesson observations led to more collaboration and dialogue during PTOF:

> It was different. We focussed more on how to improve her teaching. Before, the grade just took over the discussion. (CM6.2)

The college mentor above recognised a shift of focus during PTOF from discussing grades to discussing "how to improve…teaching". Glover et al. (2022) define this type of mentor/mentee discussion as a learning conversation. This shift in focus appears to have increased the amount of critical feedback, by which I mean mentor feedback that is assertive and questioning (Bjørndal, 2020). In this study, there appeared to be a breakdown in collaborative approaches when more challenging learning conversations were held. The findings demonstrate that most student-teachers wanted college mentors to tell them directly how to develop and improve. The findings also suggest that approximately half of the college mentors found the student-teachers' reactions and emotions difficult to manage when assertive or questioning feedback was given. These findings mirror Kopec et al.'s (2015) conclusions that negative emotions can be difficult for mentors to deal with:

> Some students have an attitude they talk to us is a bad way when we're trying to help. (CM1.2)

> It was just hard when she gets upset, I feel so bad for her. (CM5.2)

Two college mentors commented that student-teachers withdrew from conversations when developmental, negative or questioning feedback was given. Perhaps unsurprisingly, the student-teachers did not comment on withdrawing from conversations or reacting negatively to feedback:

> I asked her questions about the areas to develop and she was just quiet… I think like maybe she was like a little bit embarrassed to talk too much. (CM4.2)

> She talked with me about the good points. But when we move onto the negative it's like I'm the only one discussing. I think it's hard for her to talk about the negative things. (CM5.2)

The findings reflect Copeland's (2010) conclusion that negative student-teacher emotions can affect the mentoring relationship. I realise that negative emotions are likely to be displayed or felt to some extent when critical feedback is discussed: Brandt (2008) suggests negative student reactions can occur in any society. However, this evidence suggests that perhaps the student-teachers did not possess enough knowledge or were not skilled enough to fully engage in and manage their emotions during learning conversations. In hindsight, the student-teachers could perhaps have been better prepared during the PD, a factor discussed in the next chapter.

It is also probable that the college mentors needed more intensive PD, particularly because half the college mentors indicated that holding learning conversations when assertive and questioning feedback was given was new and not easy. They felt that the previous system, in which a grade was given, was easier. The college mentors received input on giving critical and learning feedback during the PD and most explained that they found these resources useful. However, the college mentor comments suggest that, for reasons explored in chapter 6, more than half of them still found it challenging to give this type of PTOF:

> It was easier to give a grade but now I have to talk with her and explain and she gets upset. (CM.2.2)

> The resources really helped, especially the questions you gave us. But I think for me it's hard when I have to discuss what needs to change. I like the strategy to look at the goals and if she achieved them... I show her from her teaching how to improve. It helped when I give examples. (CM2.2)

> I used the sheet you gave us, it really helped to start the discussion when I talk about how to develop. (CM 5.2.)

5.5 Future PTOF development

The final theme encapsulates participant suggestions for future PTOF development. The findings revealed that the majority of participants hoped that online PTOF would continue or at least be an option when face-to-face learning and teaching resumed. Most participants liked the convenience and flexibility of online PTOF. From the college mentor perspective, this desire resulted from time issues. College mentors indicated that they often had too many observations to conduct and found themselves observing lessons one after another. The online option would allow PTOF to be conducted later but still in a timely way, at least on the same day of the lesson observation. Additionally, as previously explained, a number of student-teachers felt more comfortable discussing PTOF in their home environment, which could explain why they wanted to continue PTOF online:

> If we go back to life as before, I think we'll continue doing online. (CM1.2)

> Even when you know, we go out to the school, it might make it better [to] keep feedback online. It means I can meet to discuss the lesson afterwards without returning to the school. (CM4.2)

> I really prefer the online feedback... I like to discuss from my home. I hope we always do it like this. (FGI3.2)

Despite online SBP and no commuting, all college mentors indicated; as with Cycle 1, they wanted more time allocated to conduct PTOF. This suggests serious flaws in SBP scheduling. Senior management would need to modify faculty workloads at a system level for any change to occur:

> We really need less observations. (CM5.2)

Another suggestion, which also arose in Cycle 1's findings, was the college mentor request to provide developmental support to school-based mentors. Although student-teachers were generally positive about the support they received from school-based mentors in Cycle 1, they relied heavily on college mentors for support during Cycle 2. Despite this, student-teachers did not suggest that developmental support was needed for school-based mentors, although a number of college mentors suggested that supporting school-based mentors necessitated input on even basic elements of their roles. This suggests that future developmental support is required for school-based mentors:

> I really think the teachers in school need help to be better mentors to our students. I mean most are friendly… but if they knew how we scaffold students to plan and the kind of active activities we try to get students to do…I think it could be better. (CM4.2)

Most college mentors were positive about the PD and new guidelines, and most wanted further PD. At least half particularly requested help with phrasing questions, especially questions intended to give constructive feedback and to develop student-teachers' reflective practice. Additionally, a few requested strategies to manage challenging student-teacher emotions during PTOF.

College mentors collaboratively developed the new written lesson observation template during the PD sessions. Half the college mentors suggested it should be reviewed and modified for future. Additionally, two college mentors requested further developmental support to write feedback:

> I actually want to see how written feedback should be written. (CM5.2)

Student-teachers provided limited comments on further improving PTOF. As with Cycle 1, they tended to focus on how college mentors could better support and guide them.

5.6 Summary

This chapter presented, interpreted and discussed the findings obtained from interview data from six college mentors and FGI data from 18 student-teachers. Where possible, Cycle 1 and Cycle 2 findings were compared and contrasted. These findings informed a conceptual framework, which I discuss in the next chapter.
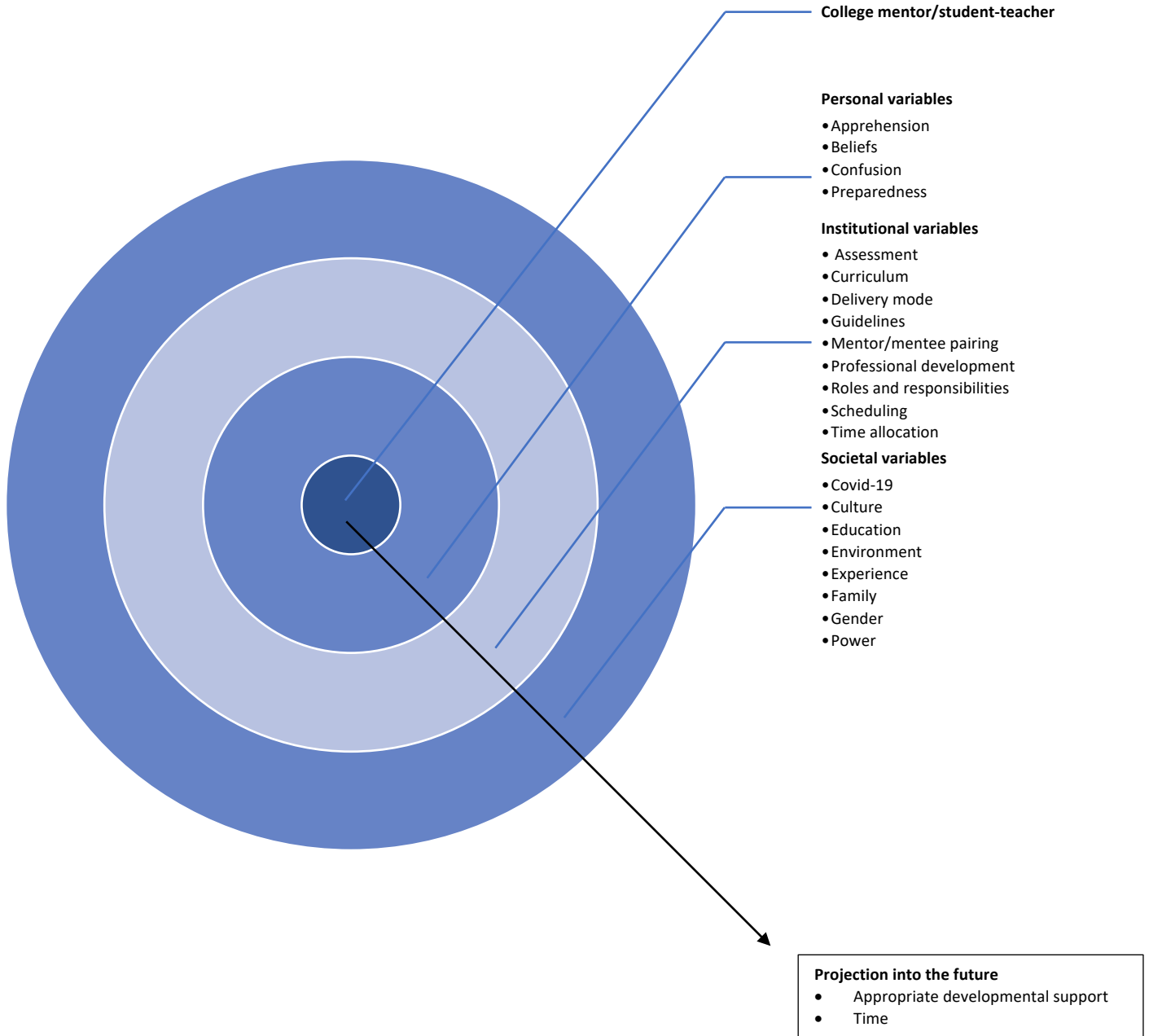
Chapter 6: Discussion and conclusions

6.0 Introduction

This final chapter reflects on this study in its entirety. The study investigated professional and programme development, evaluated a transition towards collaborative approaches and gave participants a voice in the process. Initially, I outline and discuss a conceptual framework that presents the factors that shape giving and receiving PTOF, as evidenced in this study. I then discuss three key findings: collaborative approaches and developmental feedback; reflective practice; and online PTOF. I consider these the key findings because they are critical for future PTOF development. I hope that the discussion of these findings helps stakeholders to make informed decisions as they develop PTOF practice. The chapter then draws conclusions regarding the research questions and describes the study's limitations. The contributions this study makes to practice are explored, and recommendations for further PTOF development are offered. Finally, areas for future research are identified and the chapter concludes with a reflection of my journey as a practitioner and a researcher.

6.1 A conceptual framework

It is worth reflecting on the fact that there are likely numerous factors that affect giving and receiving PTOF. However, Figure 2 offers a conceptual framework presenting the main factors – evidenced from both cycles of this study – that shape giving and receiving PTOF, categorising them into personal, institutional and societal variables. At the centre of the framework are the college mentors and student-teachers who give and receive PTOF. The inner circle signifies college mentor and student-teacher personal variables, including beliefs and preparedness. The next layer contains the institutional variables, including assessment, mentor/mentee pairing and observation schedules. The outer layer represents societal variables, including Covid-19, culture, education and family. The arrow indicates the future, which includes further PTOF developmental support and time. These factors frequently overlap and interconnect to shape participant experiences. In chapter 2, I outlined how the theory of intersectionality can help to explain that multiple factors affect participant experiences. I therefore discuss the findings of this study through the lens of intersectionality.

Figure 2 *Influences of internal and external variables on participant PTOF practice*

College mentor/student-teacher

Personal variables
• Apprehension
• Beliefs
• Confusion
• Preparedness

Institutional variables
• Assessment
• Curriculum
• Delivery mode
• Guidelines
• Mentor/mentee pairing
• Professional development
• Roles and responsibilities
• Scheduling
• Time allocation

Societal variables
• Covid-19
• Culture
• Education
• Environment
• Experience
• Family
• Gender
• Power

Projection into the future
• Appropriate developmental support
• Time

The aim of this AR study was to explore and develop PTOF. It investigated professional and programme development, evaluated a transition towards collaborative approaches and gave participants a voice in the process. The findings offer strong evidence to demonstrate that the PD and new practice guidelines gave participants a voice in programme development, and improved elements of PTOF practice. The new practice guidelines formalised a PTOF structure and introduced pre-SBP meetings. As a result, a more consistent approach to PTOF was realised. Roles and responsibilities were clearly defined, and expectations were established. Cycle 2's evidence revealed that participants felt less confused and more prepared for PTOF than they had during Cycle 1. It can thus be argued that when PD is offered and institutional practice changed, PTOF practice is positively affected. On the other hand, the findings also indicated that when PD was not offered, and institutional practice was not changed, there was no direct impact on PTOF practice. The institutional formula to schedule college mentor observation workloads was not amended. Nor was developmental support for school-based mentors offered. As a result, a lack both of time for PTOF and support for school-based mentors were seen as concerns in both cycles of this study.

However, the picture is more complex again. Covid-19 and the subsequent online practices also impacted participant perceptions of support for school-based mentors. Cycle 2's evidence suggests that the shift to online learning increased the amount of support college mentors had to provide to student-teachers over Cycle 1. Additionally, although the online delivery mode meant no travel time to schools – a potential easement of time concerns – Cycle 2 showed college mentors continuing to be frustrated about a lack of time to conduct PTOF. Thus, while a lack of time was considered a concern in both study cycles, the absence of commuting during the second cycle of this study meant that Cycle 2's findings indicated a greater need for changes to the institutional workload scheduling formula than Cycle 1's findings.

Despite offering PD and implementing new practice guidelines, the findings suggest that multiple factors intersected to impact PTOF practice. Resulting in three key findings in the areas of collaborative approaches and developmental feedback, reflective practice, and online PTOF.

6.1.1 Collaborative approaches and developmental feedback

This study evidenced a transition towards collaborative approaches to mentoring and PTOF. Cycle 2's findings indicated that most participants were positive about this transition. However, Cycle 2's evidence also revealed that a few college mentors and most student-teachers experienced challenges to implementing collaborative approaches. Around half the college mentors and most student-teachers expressed apprehension, a lack of preparedness and perhaps limited understanding of collaborative approaches. Additionally, most student-teachers still preferred a directive approach to mentoring and PTOF. An intersectional interpretation of the findings suggests that education and experience, along with culture and power, impacted the implementation of collaborative approaches.

The college mentor PD explored collaborative approaches to mentoring and PTOF. College mentors then disseminated knowledge of these approaches to student-teachers. The level and consistency of the developmental support received by student-teachers is unclear. The evidence suggests that the student-teachers did not appear to possess the understanding to fully engage in more collaborative, less directive mentoring relationships and PTOF. The high-power distance construct of Emirati society may have affected the effective implementation of collaborative approaches. A collaborative approach requires an equal balance of power that manifests in dialogue and is more democratic (Jones et al., 2021). Additionally, in a collaborative mentoring relationship, knowledge is shared and decisions and ideas are negotiated (Glickman et al., 2013). However, mirroring Matsumoto's (2019) claim that Emiratis tend to accept power hierarchies, Cycle 1's evidence found that most student-teachers accepted the mentor/mentee relationship as unequal. College mentors held the knowledge and power; student-teachers mostly wanted them to share this knowledge and tell them how to improve. Cycle 2 evidenced a shift towards student-teachers feeling more comfortable during PTOF and they were positive about collaborating with college mentors. This appears to be part of the process of transition towards collaborative approaches. Although the student-teachers still preferred elements of the directive approach, their experience was more positive. While the evidence from this study suggests student-teachers were transitioning towards collaboration: democracy, a dialogic approach and an equal balance of power were mostly not apparent in Cycle 2's findings. Thus, it is likely that

the student-teachers need additional support before they can collaborate more democratically to develop their knowledge and skills during PTOF. Bloxham and Campbell (2010) claim that students' lack of experience limits their ability to collaborate and engage in meaningful dialogue with mentors. This study's student-teachers have likely never experienced collaborative dialogic practice: so far as I know, it is not modelled on campus. Enfield and Stasz (2012) suggest that HE structures that provide one instructor (as at this institution) may not be as effective as those that incorporate co-teaching and model collaborative dialogic practice. It is therefore unsurprising that the student-teachers appeared to need more time and support; the lead-in time was only a matter of weeks. Ibrahim's (2013) study of newly qualified Emirati teachers found it took a year-long mentoring programme to successfully move from directive to effective collaboration. Additionally, hindsight suggests that the then-mandatory online delivery mode was perhaps not the most effective way to develop collaborative approaches, given the interpersonal and communicative nature of collaboration.

There are likely to be additional reasons student-teachers preferred directive PTOF approaches to support their development. This study suggests that the public-school education most student-teachers received likely influenced their effective implementation of collaborative approaches to mentoring and PTOF. James and Shammas' (2018) study of Emirati female HE students found that they gravitated towards the easiest options when completing work and were heavily dependent on teachers. They claimed students are passive learners who expect teachers "to serve them and accede to their demands" (p. 506). This perception of Emirati learners as passive is not isolated: studies by Gonzalez et al. (2008) and Madsen and Cook (2010) also describe Emirati students as passive learners. Both cycles of this study evidenced student-teacher requests for college mentors to 'tell' them how to improve during PTOF directly. While these findings suggest that the student-teachers did not necessarily engage in democratic partnerships, jointly enquire, or critically reflect, it does suggest a level of active participation. The student-teachers wanted to develop and improve their knowledge and teaching, and actively sought support from college mentors, via an approach with which they were familiar: directly asking for help. While this approach attends to immediate issues, it does not necessarily build student-teacher knowledge for future teaching, which Jones et al. (2022) assert is reflective of collaborative approaches. Hence, the findings in this study suggest that the student-teachers were not

necessarily passive in their development and learning. Rather, they did not have the skillset or understanding to actively collaborate with their college mentor to develop and change their practice. The Emirati student-teachers in this study are mostly products of an educational system that promotes directive learning. When students from directive education systems "move to a more active learning environment, it takes time for the transition, and they also need help and guidance to recognise and handle the differences and adapt" (Tran, 2013, p. 64). This study evidenced that even with minimal input, the student-teachers began to transition to elements of collaborative learning approaches. However, the student-teachers still preferred, or perhaps needed, high levels of college mentor support before they could lead their own learning to explore, question and ultimately change their practice. McLaughlin and Durrant (2017) concluded that Emirati HE students expect high levels of involvement from teachers as they work towards independence, and argue that a gradual structured approach working towards independence is likely to enhance Emirati student learning. Thus, it is likely that the implementation of collaborative approaches requires a more gradual and structured input, which can be considered for future PTOF development.

I outlined earlier that this institution's mission statement aims for student-teachers to be "agents of change" (Institution, 2021b). In order to develop and change student-teacher practice, Ellis et al. (2020) claim that mentors need to support student-teachers to hold critical enquiry-focused conversations during PTOF. However, evidence from this study suggests that college mentors could be better prepared to support student-teachers to engage in critical, learning conversations. Like Jones et al.'s (2021) suggestion that not all mentors possess the skillset to conduct what they call "constructive conversations" (p. 9), this study evidenced that at least half the college mentors needed more time and input to develop their skillset. This is perhaps unsurprising given Bjørndal's (2020) assertion that critical feedback is challenging to provide. Thus, offering future institutional PD should upskill college mentors to better support student-teachers to work towards greater independency.

6.1.2 Reflective practice

The findings of this study indicated that when student-teachers reflected on practice, their reflection tended to be descriptive. College mentors explained that they struggled to support student-teachers to reflect beyond descriptive levels. Drawing on Figure 2, this study suggests that culture, education, experience, family and power, along with personal beliefs, preparedness and perhaps apprehension, impacted reflective practice. With reference to these factors, I now explore possible reasons why the student-teachers in this study mostly reflected on practice at a descriptive level: acknowledging that this institution's curriculum and PD offerings, along with time and future development, could, perhaps, better support student-teachers to reflect on their practice.

Ellis et al. (2020) claim that effective PTOF requires participants to reflect on practice collaboratively. The literature review highlighted Richardson's (2004) and Clarke and Otaky's (2006) juxtaposed claims regarding Emirati ability to reflect. Cycle 2's findings indicated that student-teachers' reflective practice lies somewhere between these perspectives, aligning with Blaik Hourani's (2013) conclusion that Emirati student-teachers find reflecting on practice difficult because they are not taught reflective skills from a young age. College mentor comments echoed this claim, indicating that Emirati children tend not to reflect in the home environment, for reasons that are now explored.

Research once claimed that young children do not have the capacity to self-reflect (Flavell, 1977). However, perspectives have changed. Bühler-Niederberger (2010) argues that children can reflect on and to some degree understand experiences, though they require support to achieve this. According to the NAEYC (2020), carers need to provide support in the form of child-centred activities so children can discover, ask questions, and construct their own knowledge. One reason young Emirati children may not be encouraged to reflect could be their particular upbringing: According to Joseph (2018) Emiratis rely on housemaids to raise children. Al Sumaiti (2012) claims that Emirati children spend the majority of their time (between 30 and 70 hours a week, more than the global average for time spent at childcare centres) with housemaids. More than 94% of Emirati households employ housemaids who originate from Southeast Asia, do not speak Arabic, and have limited English skills, education and little or no childcare training (Al Sumaiti, 2012). Dillon (2019) notes that although nurseries exist for children from birth to

the age of four, Emirati families rarely use them. Salmon and Barrera (2021) suggest that to develop "thinking dispositions" (p. 5), carers need to support young children to discover their thought processes. This is achieved through rich interaction (The Center on the Developing Child, 2022). Salmon (2016) suggests that environments need to be set up so children are cognitively engaged, with carers asking questions and assisting thought processes, thus making thinking visible and encouraging reflection. It seems plausible that many young Emirati children are not encouraged to identify their thought processes, to be inquisitive, to reflect, and develop thinking that guides intellectual behaviour. Housemaids in the UAE may be reluctant or unable to question the children in their care. Perhaps unsurprisingly, Joseph (2018) concludes that "many studies indicated the negative impact of domestic workers on raising children" (p. 331). Bennett (2010) explains that the numbers of Emirati women entering the workforce means the reliance on housemaids rearing children is unlikely to change. Since 2010, there has been a 10% increase in Emirati women joining the workforce (The World Bank, 2022), so the situation is likely to continue.

If young Emirati children do not learn "thinking dispositions" in the home environment, then one might logically assume the responsibility should fall on schools. Evidence from this study suggests Emirati school children do not learn these thinking dispositions at school. Indeed, when one college mentor spoke about a lack of reflective thought, they stated that "…thinking more deeply… was the same at home and at school" (CM4.2). The majority of student-teachers attended public school before joining the institution. Yet despite the allocation of large funds and numerous reforms to improve student performance and modernise the public education system, Kippels and Ridge (2019) found that performance remains weak. They claim that public-school students continue to be taught primarily using traditional learning approaches. This means that from kindergarten to grade 12, public-school students tend to be taught in teacher-centred classrooms (Ashour & Fatima, 2016). Ibrahim and Alhosani (2020) explain that this results in the children not being "equipped with the problem solving and critical thinking skills necessary for academic success" (p. 11). Because reflection is part of the critical thinking process (Colley et al., 2012), it seems probable the UAE public-school system is not conducive to reflective practice. It is unsurprising that Sperrazza and Raddawi (2016) conclude that students who join

higher education directly from schools where traditional pedagogy is implemented find reflective and critical thinking new and challenging.

Given the emphasis on traditional teaching methods in the UAE public-school system, and the lack of reflection support in the Emirati home environment, it seems probable that student-teachers arrive at this institution without the skills to adequately reflect on their practice. Previously, this institution provided a foundation or bridging year before student-teachers began the education programme. The foundation programme supported academic skill development and implemented student-centred learning approaches (Ashour, 2020). The most recent public education reform, the Emirati School Model, was introduced in 2017. It aimed to equip "…students with skills needed to succeed in higher education… It also facilitates high school graduates to enrol directly in universities without having to go through a foundation year." (The United Arab Emirates Government portal, 2022, para 4). When the new school model was introduced, the foundation programme at the institution was abolished. The expectation was that the new school model would equip students with the skills for tertiary level education. However, Ashour (2020) argues that this plan was too ambitious; despite graduating high school, Emirati students do not appear to have the skills required for undergraduate study. Warner (2018) suggests that further systemic change to the UAE public-school provision is necessary, while Ibrahim and Alhosani (2020) argue that more needs to be done to equip UAE school students with the knowledge and skills to succeed in a student-centred tertiary education context. Given the constant change and lack of progress in public-school education, this seems unlikely to occur imminently.

If student-teachers do not learn how to reflect at home or at school, there needs to be a renewed focus on developing reflective practice skills at this institution. Emirati students can reflect as well as any international student (Clarke & Otaky, 2006), because all students have the capacity to develop higher-order thinking and reflection skills (Sperrazza & Raddawi, 2016). However, this institution's education programme provides limited overt teaching of reflective practice. This could be a reason why models of reflective practice were not apparent across datasets and may help to explain why the reflective practice evidenced in this study was mostly descriptive. This is concerning because Mathew et al. (2017) advise that mentors need to apply reflective practice

models systematically and consistently for student-teachers to develop their knowledge and teaching skills. If this institution wants student-teachers to be equipped with the skills to reflect beyond a descriptive level, which Gadsby (2022) argues is needed to develop knowledge and improve practice, evidence from this study suggests they need more overt, explicit instruction. To achieve this, curriculum development is required. Earlier, I explained that overt teaching of reflective practice is debated in the literature, and Ward and McCotter (2004) acknowledge it is not standard international practice in ITE. However, agreeing with Slade et al.'s (2019) recommendation, I suggest that there is a need for instruction to support student-teachers at this institution so that they can progress to the more complex, refined levels of reflective practice.

I suggested earlier that the college mentors could have been better prepared to help student-teachers to engage in critical, learning conversations. Similarly, the evidence suggests that they could have been better prepared to help student-teachers reflect beyond descriptive levels. Cycle 2's findings indicated that at least half of the college mentors requested future PD on questions to ask student-teachers to develop their reflective practice. Half the college mentors are Emirati and graduates of the education programme on which they now teach. They all received a public-school education and taught in public schools before their employment at this institution. Thus, it seems probable that their experiences of reflective practice may be similar to those of the student-teachers. The remaining college mentors originate from five different countries on four different continents. Wanda et al. (2014) suggest that the dominant cultural characteristics of a society may become barriers to the successful implementation of reflective practice. In the literature review, I highlighted comparative studies from high and low power distance countries that suggest reflective practice is more prevalent in the West. This could help to explain why some college mentors perceived that they supported student-teachers to reflect beyond descriptive levels while others did not. The findings from this study suggest that the college mentors did not possess a homogeneous concept of reflective practice. I acknowledged earlier that there is no single accepted definition of reflective practice. I also explained that there is no clear definition of reflective practice at this institution. Given that reflective practice is the ITE model adopted at this institution, and the college mentors have diverse backgrounds and experience, it seems wise to develop a common understanding of reflective practice understood by all college mentors and implemented in line with the education curriculum. Future PD could

then support college mentors to help student-teachers to reflect on practice more consistently and at agreed, developmentally-appropriate levels.

6.1.3 Challenges to online PTOF

Covid-19 was unanticipated at the onset of this AR study, and resulted in a sudden transfer to online learning and teaching halfway through. Student-teachers studied and taught from home. PTOF was conducted via Zoom, which necessitated the use of laptop cameras. Collins and Bilge (2020) claim that Covid-19 and the consequent transition to online learning highlighted inequities in education. On a global scale, as explained in chapter 5, the Emirati student-teachers in this study could be perceived as privileged because they all had access to laptops and home internet connections. However, the findings indicate that when learning and teaching were transferred online, Emirati culture, family, gender and the home environment all affected PTOF practice, resulting in challenges to student-teacher learning. I will now explain.

During Cycle 2, student-teachers from all year groups and several college mentors commented on constant distractions and a requirement for childcare during online PTOF. Home environments tended to be busy and noisy, and student-teachers struggled to focus on PTOF. While most if not all student-teacher households employed domestic help, the role of overseeing maids, childcare and housework appeared to fall to student-teachers. Several student-teachers explained that these factors made conducting PTOF from home challenging. These student-teachers suggested it was expected that they would undertake domestic responsibilities rather than their brothers or husbands. (Dickson & Tennant [2021] highlight that childcare is not considered an Emirati male role.) However, during Covid-19 this situation was not limited to Emirati women: women across the world spent a greater proportion of their time on domestic responsibilities then men (Thornton, 2020). Lyttelton et al.'s (2020) USA study found that women spent significantly more time than men on childcare, and children spent twice as much time with their mothers than their fathers during the pandemic. Farre et al.'s (2020) Spanish research and Zhou et al.'s (2020) UK study similarly reported increases in gender inequality during the pandemic. However, the transition to online learning and teaching appears to have magnified current gender inequalities within UAE households. Hurley (2020) argues that Emirati

homes are highly gendered environments. Mikoley (2021) describes Emirati men's tendency to occupy rooms at home that welcome outside guests, whereas Emirati women tend to stay in the private family rooms. As one student-teacher explained, "In the house the men don't sit with us – well, except my younger brothers" (FGI3.2).

Endemic gender inequality in the home environment has implications for Emirati female student-teachers as they spend more time studying from home. Goby (2020) claims that patriarchy, traditional female roles and the gender inequity of Islamic principles have a greater impact on the lives of Emirati women from conservative families than on those from progressive families. As it is likely that the student-teachers in this study are from more traditional Emirati families, the gender inequality at home is probably starker. This institution is situated in the most conservative emirate in the UAE (Mason, 2021), where the majority of its student-teachers reside. Sharif et al. (2014) argue that Emirati students studying education often do so because families prefer them to be employed in an all-female environment. As such, this undergraduate degree is more likely to be chosen for daughters and wives from more conservative families. My experience suggests the student-teachers are likely to be some of the first females in their families to be educated to tertiary level. Consequently, families may not realise what support student-teachers require to study effectively in the home environment. Dickson and Tennant (2021) suggest that Emirati families need to understand that their daughters require time and an environment conducive to study, a factor critically important when PTOF and learning more generally is online. If Management are aware of the challenges experienced by Emirati female student-teachers, more support could be offered.

Cycle 2 found that the majority of student-teachers opted not to switch on their cameras during online PTOF. When using technology, Hopkyns (2021) argues there are expectations for Emirati female students to adapt to Western norms on online sites. However, Bristol-Rhys (2010) asserts that showing faces on camera is culturally and religiously unacceptable among many Emirati families. He explains that because many Emirati families view women displaying their faces on camera as immodest, such behaviour can reflect negatively on the individual and her family. This suggests that even if a student-teacher wanted to show her face on camera, knowing such behaviour could bring shame to the family would likely influence her individual action. Several

student-teacher comments in Cycle 2 alluded to this. Hopkyns's (2021) study of female Emirati university students found that showing faces online "was seen as crossing a cultural and religious red line" (p. 458) that could result in parents removing daughters from a course, particularly if a male staff member were present. Dickson and Tennant (2021) claim that female Emiratis from more conservative families – which likely describes the student-teachers in this study – have limited freedom and their choices are largely governed by their family. This could help to explain why most student-teachers refused to show their faces on camera, especially when family members were present. This is a factor likely to be even more significant when male college mentors conduct PTOF.

Opting not to show faces during online PTOF has serious implications for practice. The new practice guidelines aimed to promote mentor/mentee collaboration and dialogue. Burley and Pomphrey (2011) explain that such approaches to mentoring are built on social constructivist theories of learning. The focus, claims Weller (2020), is on the interaction between the college mentor and student-teachers as learning is buttressed and meaning jointly constructed. According to Steeves (2021), student-teacher engagement indicating learning, is observed through facial expressions and body language. However, Cycle 2 found that college mentors and student-teachers struggled to understand one another when cameras were switched off and non-verbal cues removed. McBrien et al. (2020) argue that when cameras are switched off and there are no non-verbal cues, participants receive a reduced educational experience. Castelli and Sarvary (2021) argue that being able to see the student-teacher during online PTOF results in a more positive, effective learning experience; cameras *need* to be switched on for effective teaching and learning to occur. Evidence from this study raises concerns that Emirati female student-teachers who opt not to switch on cameras during online PTOF maybe disadvantaged.

A further issue discovered was that two college mentors also switched off their camera during PTOF sessions. Their reasoning was that their image could be captured and used elsewhere without their knowledge or permission. This reflects Hojeij and Baroudi's (2021) finding that Emirati female teachers prefer to switch off their cameras to protect their privacy, in line with UAE cultural norms. Zakaria (2022) explains how seriously privacy is viewed in the UAE: reposting a person's image without permission is a (heavily penalised) criminal offence. Despite

this, evidence from this study suggests that the majority of student-teachers and two college mentors were not willing to display their image on screen. If both the mentor and mentee cannot see each other during online PTOF, this raises further implications for practice.

6.1.4 Conceptual framework summary

This conceptual framework helps to explain the findings of this study. Viewed intersectionally, the findings illustrate how multiple overlapping and interconnected structural, institutional and personal variables shaped participant PTOF experiences. I feel that if curriculum developers and Management have insight into these factors, they can make more informed decisions as they develop the education curriculum and plan future PD. It is to be hoped that such development will mitigate the challenges evidenced in this study and thus improve PTOF practice.

6.2 Conclusions in relation to the research questions

The purpose of this study was to explore and develop PTOF practice. It investigated professional and programme development, evaluated a transition towards collaborative approaches and gave participants a voice in the process. Through examining the perceptions of college mentors and student-teachers before and after interventions, the findings revealed improvements to aspects of PTOF practice and identified areas for future development. For ease of reading, the research questions are restated below before drawing conclusions about the area explored.

Research question 1
How do college mentors and student-teachers describe their current experiences of giving and receiving PTOF?

The first cycle of this AR study's findings revealed that most participants described their experience of PTOF as confusing. College mentors were uncertain of their roles and responsibilities. Student-teachers were unclear what college mentors expected from them, perceiving each college mentor to have different expectations. At the time, there were no institutional guidelines, policies, or procedures for PTOF practice. Although this institution's

SBP handbook outlined college mentor roles and responsibilities, these were poorly defined, unspecific and not directly related to PTOF. Cycle 1 found consensus on beginning PTOF positively then moving onto developmental feedback; however, there was less consistency to ending PTOF, to conducting meetings before SBP, and to requesting student-teachers complete pre-PTOF self-reflections.

Most participants explained that there was not enough time to give and receive PTOF. College mentors considered their SBP workload too heavy, and student-teachers recognised that PTOF was often rushed. College mentors equated longer PTOF with quality feedback and student-teachers explained they needed time during PTOF to feel comfortable enough to discuss their practice openly. Time required to build relationships was perceived as important, particularly as student-teachers preferred to be paired with a college mentor who had taught them before. Additionally, college mentors explained that they spent time supporting school-based mentors.

All the college mentors provided examples of how they were positive, sensitive and tried to instil confidence in student-teachers during PTOF. While the student-teachers mostly recognised that college mentors tried to encourage and support them, they explained that they wanted college mentors to be considerate when they gave feedback. If college mentor language was negative, they felt it was detrimental to their development. A few student-teachers explained that on occasion they received contradictory positive oral PTOF and what they perceived as negative written PTOF. It was unclear whether student-teachers misinterpreted oral PTOF or college mentors withheld less positive oral feedback.

<u>Research question 2</u>
How do college mentors and student-teachers describe their theoretical approach to, and/or practice of, mentoring and giving or receiving PTOF?

Opinion was divided when college mentors described their theoretical approach to mentoring and PTOF. Half the college mentors said that they mostly implemented directive approaches, while the remaining half indicated that they mostly implemented either a collaborative or a combination of directive and collaborative approaches. The student-teachers perceived that they

mostly received and indeed wanted directive approaches to mentoring and PTOF. It appeared that college mentors implemented their preferred approach as and when they chose, rather than when it was developmentally appropriate for student-teachers. This inconsistent implementation likely accounted for student-teachers' perceptions of differing levels of mentoring and PTOF support.

The directive approach to mentoring and PTOF appeared to be influenced by the requirement to grade each observed lesson. Again, opinion was divided. Half the college mentors felt that grading individual lessons and discussing grades during PTOF motivated student-teachers and supported their development. The other half considered grading all formative lesson observations as not conducive to student-teacher learning. Interestingly, most student-teachers explained that they found grading individual lessons unmotivating and a distraction from the developmental feedback the college mentors gave. Although half the college mentors indicated that they implemented collaborative approaches to mentoring and PTOF, there was limited evidence of developmental feedback that was assertive, questioning or 'critical' as defined by Bjørndal (2020). Student-teacher comments indicated that college mentors mostly pointed out elements of their teaching they needed to develop and directly told them how to improve, indicating linear dialogue. These findings did not appear to support the reflective practice model that underpins ITE at this institution.

Research question 3

What suggestions, if any, do mentor college teachers and student-teachers have to develop PTOF?

Suggestions from Cycle 1 participants indicated that PTOF development should focus on allocating more time, creating guidelines and providing developmental support. Most college mentors wanted guidance and structure to give PTOF. A few indicated they wanted support to enhance the discussions they held with student-teachers, particularly when framing questions. Every college mentor indicated that they had never received any institutional mentor PD; with the exception of two, they were keen to participate in PD. Additionally, a few college mentors recommended developmental support for school-based mentors. Student-teachers did not suggest

that they needed developmental support to receive PTOF. Rather, they recommended that all college mentors implement a consistent PTOF structure and articulate clear expectations prior to the commencement of SBP. All college mentors and the majority of the student-teachers advocated for more time and longer PTOF sessions, believing that this would improve quality. The majority of student-teachers suggested that PTOF should always occur immediately after teaching, a factor they perceived to be beneficial to their development.

The evaluation cycle, Cycle 2

Research questions 4, 5 and 6 relate to the second cycle of this research study, following interventions.

<u>Research question 4</u>

How do college mentors and student-teachers describe their experiences of giving and receiving PTOF after interventions?

Cycle 2's findings revealed that the new practice guidelines supported a more consistent and structured approach to giving and receiving PTOF. College mentors indicated that they knew what their roles and responsibilities entailed. The addition of meetings before SBP facilitated student-teachers' understanding of expectations and served to build mentor/mentee relationships. After the interventions, all college mentors indicated that they found the new formative lesson observation template easier to use. It supported their provision of evidence-based feedback to student-teachers during PTOF. Additionally, most college mentors found the PD useful, and the additional resources supported them to give PTOF. Most participants preferred the convenience and flexibility of online PTOF. However, the home environment was not always conducive to student-teacher development and learning. Student-teachers mostly switched off online cameras, explaining that their families would disapprove if they showed their faces. Cycle 2's findings raised concerns that Emirati female student-teachers who study from home may be disadvantaged. Despite no commuting, a lack of time to conduct PTOF remained a concern in Cycle 2. This suggested serious flaws in the institutional formula used to calculate lesson observation schedules.

Research question 5

In what ways, if any, do college mentors and student-teachers perceive that the interventions have altered their theoretical approach to, and/or practice of, mentoring and giving or receiving PTOF?

There was a transition towards collaborative mentoring and PTOF after the interventions. Most college mentors acknowledged that the PD and new practice guidelines supported this transition. Before the interventions, these college mentors acknowledged that they mostly incorporated directive approaches to PTOF; this transition therefore represented a paradigm shift in their theoretical approach. The findings revealed that removing grades from individual observed lessons supported greater collaboration during PTOF. However, reflective practice was mostly found to be descriptive. Most student-teachers were positive, more relaxed and felt more comfortable during Cycle 2's PTOF than Cycle 1's. While the shift to online delivery likely accounted for some of this sentiment, this change indicated a transition towards collaborative approaches to mentoring and PTOF. However, challenges were experienced when holding learning conversations and giving and receiving assertive, questioning feedback, which were perceived as new practice for approximately half the college mentors. These college mentors found giving grades easier and student-teachers wanted college mentor direction to develop their knowledge and improve their teaching skills. These findings indicated that the participants could have perhaps been better prepared, suggesting directions for future development.

Research question 6

What suggestions, if any, do college mentors and student-teachers have to further develop PTOF practices?

The participants of this study offered limited suggestions for further development of PTOF practice. Most ideas were a continuation of the developments undertaken during the interventions, which implies that future PD would be well received. College mentors mostly wanted support for holding learning conversations; giving assertive, questioning feedback; and giving written feedback. Student-teachers tended to focus on how college mentors could better support and guide them.

Both cycles of this study evidenced requests for more time. It was more time efficient for SBP course teachers to mentor the student teachers they taught during SBP. Student-teachers also preferred their college mentor to be their SBP teacher. If college mentors are paired with the student-teachers they teach, it would save time building relationships and establishing expectations. However, unless changes to SBP scheduling are made, a lack of time for PTOF is likely to remain an issue. Another suggestion that appeared in both cycles but was more prominent in Cycle 2 was providing mentor developmental support to school-based mentors. Finally, almost every participant suggested that the option for online PTOF should remain.

6.3 Limitations of the study

Limitations are "weaknesses within the study that may influence outcomes and conclusions of the research" (Ross & Bibler Zaidi, 2019, p. 261). This section discusses how limitations could have affected the study's findings and interpretation.

This study explored the perceptions of college mentors and student-teachers within a specific institution, so its findings are not generalisable. However, the findings provide contextual evidence to enhance the views from predominantly Western literature, which support practice development others may wish to explore within the region.

The research is possibly limited because the student-teachers who volunteered may be high achievers more active and confident at taking part in research; thus, they may not be entirely representative of education students at the institution. Additionally, because I requested that all student-teachers participating in the study switch on their cameras during the FGIs, these were likely the less conservative student-teachers on the programme, meaning that they may not be fully representative of education students at the institution. Nevertheless, this is the first systematic study of their experiences of PTOF and provides insight not previously available to practitioners.

The rapid transition to online teaching and learning meant that not all Cycle 1 and Cycle 2 findings were directly comparable. While this could be viewed as a limitation of the study, the

findings offer insight into participant experiences of online PTOF that may be useful for future programme development.

In hindsight, the PD could perhaps have been enhanced to focus more on collaborative mentoring, learning conversations and reflection. However, the timescales were pressured and because of Covid-19 disruptions the participants did the best they could under the circumstances.

6.4 Contributions to practice

The main contribution of this study is its effect on practice, which will be useful to all stakeholders, specifically Management, student-teachers, college mentors, and school-based mentors. It is hoped that these findings contribute to the upcoming programme review; they seem particularly relevant given that Management are currently pursuing international accreditation for the education programme and plan to transfer approximately half the education courses to 100% online delivery. This study shows there are significant disadvantages to students that may not be balanced by the flexible nature of online learning. Thus, evidence will inform and support Management in ensuring equality for all students when PTOF and learning and teaching more generally continue online.

This study revealed that the directive approaches to mentoring and PTOF were not congruent with current literature on PTOF or the reflective practice model that underpins ITE at the institution. While the findings demonstrated that a transition to collaborative approaches enhanced mentoring and PTOF practice, participants required more time and developmental support for successful implementation.

Although not directly related to the findings, but following their participation in this AR study, three college mentors recently began their doctoral journeys. Anecdotally, each explained that their collaboration in this study promoted awareness of research conducted at the doctoral level and gave them the confidence and motivation to apply.

6.5 Recommendations for practice

Although this study is not generalisable, its recommendations for improved PTOF are likely to apply to other campuses conducting the ITE programme. This is important because changes implemented by Management will probably be applied to all campuses running the education programme.

- ***Removal of individual lesson observation grades***

It is recommended that the practice of not grading individual observed lessons continues. However, this needs to be coordinated with PD and curriculum development. While Management have approved this recommendation, developmental support is at the planning stage and is discussed below.

- ***Student-teacher development programme***

Student-teacher PTOF development is likely to be more effective if it is built into the SBP course curriculum. This study recommends that reflective practice and collaborative approaches to mentoring and PTOF are taught overtly. I suggest implementing a developmental approach. There are eight SBP courses, one every semester. As such, the subject lends itself to what Bruner (1960) called a spiral curriculum, with student-teachers revisiting concepts every semester. Concepts would gradually increase in complexity as student-teachers make connections between previous and new learning. Drawing on Dervent's (2015) developmental model, reflective practice would begin with technical knowledge and, as student-teachers progressed through the programme, move to critical reflection and higher-order thinking. This would equip student-teachers to reflect on practice and apply collaborative approaches to mentoring and PTOF at appropriate developmental levels. Because this study demonstrated that student-teacher perspectives impacted PTOF development, I suggest that student-teachers and college mentors establish pedagogical partnerships to co-create the SBP curriculum. If student-teachers, college mentors and Management co-design PTOF practice, their understanding of PTOF would be expanded and PTOF practice further developed. Pedagogical partnerships could help to empower student-teachers and build stronger mentor mentee relationships.

- ***School-based practice handbook***

I recommend that the SBP booklet is aligned with the SBP course learning outcomes and curriculum. The handbook should include SBP policy and procedure. Additionally, college mentor, school-based mentor, and student-teacher roles and responsibilities need to be clearly defined. The new PTOF guidelines should be integrated into the handbook, along with recommended mentoring approaches, observation structure, and PTOF. Finally, a revised written lesson observation template, question prompts, and further resources could be added as appendices. I suggest that developmental support is provided prior to SBP to ensure all stakeholders understand the content of the handbook and their respective roles.

- *Online delivery*

While it is recommended that PTOF is conducted immediately after lesson observation, this study demonstrates it is not always feasible. To ensure PTOF is timely, Management have approved the continuation of online PTOF. Given the challenges surrounding online PTOF evidenced in this study, I recommend that online PTOF is only conducted when face-to-face PTOF is not possible on the same day as the lesson observation.

Due to its practical nature and the challenges to online learning evidenced by Emirati female student-teachers, the SBP course should not be permanently transferred to 100% online delivery mode. If it is transferred online, I recommend that the institution work closely with families to educate and advise them on creating a home environment conducive to study.

- *College mentor development programme*

I recommend that a college mentor development programme is developed and implemented. It should be contextually appropriate and include reflective practice and collaborative approaches to mentoring and PTOF. Adequate time needs to be allocated for mentor development: Wetzel et al. (2017) noted that it took over a year of mentor professional development before PTOF dialogue became less directive and more reflective, collaborative and forward-thinking.

To formalise the mentoring programme and ensure mentoring consistency, I recommend developing institutional standards for college mentors that are then built into the college mentor

development programme. Internationally, mentoring standards tend to be aimed at school-based mentors; however, given the diversity of college mentors and the inconsistent mentoring and PTOF practice evidenced in this study, it seems wise to implement standards. In the UK, National Standards for School-Based Mentors (Teaching Schools Council, 2016) exist, while in Australia, the Mentoring Capability Framework supports the development of effective teacher mentoring (Department of Education and Training, 2019).

To enhance future college mentor PD offerings, I suggest establishing pedagogical partnerships to represent all perspectives and stakeholders. While Murphy and Ní Dhuinn (2022) acknowledge that in ITE discourse pedagogical partnership tends to be limited to school-university partnerships or staff-student partnerships, their study focused on pedagogical partnership between a university and the wider community. Similarly pedagogical partnerships could be between the MOE, schools and this institution. Emiratis, expatriates, mentors and student-teachers should be involved to research and plan a future PD programme. Once developed, piloted, implemented and evaluated, a similar programme for school-based mentors could be installed.

- ***Time and college-mentor/student-teacher pairings***

The lack of time to conduct PTOF evidenced in this study suggested serious flaws in the institutional observation schedule formula. I therefore recommend replacing the formula. College mentors should teach the SBP course to the same student-teachers they mentor in school. This would allow time for relationships to be built and expectations established before the commencement of SBP. If class sizes were limited to 12 or 15 student-teachers, more manageable observation loadings would result. This recommendation has been presented to Management and it is likely to be implemented next academic year.

I also recommend that during SBP college mentors should not be involved in duties that require them to return to campus. This will further alleviate time constraints.

- ***Recommendations for practice summary***

I am optimistic that the majority of these recommendations will be realised because Management are enthusiastic about developing the SBP curriculum and PTOF practice in their pursuit of international accreditation.

6.6 Recommendations for future research

AR is a cyclical process. It would be beneficial to conduct a third AR cycle once SBP returns to face-to-face instruction. Additionally, if the new PTOF guidelines, revised curriculum and college mentor development programme are rolled out across campuses, I recommend conducting localised AR studies to evaluate the effectiveness of these changes. I also suggest conducting further AR cycles once the recommendations discussed above are implemented, including a future cycle focused on school-based mentors.

In the near future I would like to expand this AR study to directly record PTOF sessions. This would gather first-hand data on PTOF dialogue. The findings could be evaluated to ascertain what, if any, support college mentors and student-teachers require to further develop PTOF practice.

6.7 Contributions to knowledge

This AR study contributes to the existing body of knowledge on ITE observation practice. Its specific focus is on developing and improving PTOF practice, using the perspectives of college mentors and Emirati female student-teacher mentees. Figure 2 presents the impact that structural, institutional and personal variables had on PTOF. This study found that the new practice guidelines and PD supported the development of practice, though there remains room for further improvement. While this study demonstrated that Western models of mentoring and PTOF can be applied in the research context, it highlights that developmental support is imperative for success. This study is original: to my knowledge, it is the first empirical study to explore PTOF practice in the UAE and wider Gulf region.

While there has been a wealth of research on online learning as a result of the pandemic, this study offers insight into online PTOF challenges experienced by Emirati females. This information is beneficial to Management and to those who plan and develop online courses for Emirati female student-teachers.

6.8 Self-reflection and concluding remarks

As a novice researcher, this was my first experience of conducting an AR study. Researching and writing this thesis was a rich learning experience. I have broadened my understanding of PTOF practice and the culture of the research context, improving my practice as a teacher educator.

Researching PTOF has improved my own mentoring and PTOF practice. The insight gained into the structural, institutional, and personal variables that affect giving and receiving PTOF have helped me to better understand challenges experienced. The new PTOF guidelines serve as a timely checklist and have refined my PTOF. Consequently, I feel I now provide more focused and developmentally appropriate PTOF.

As a doctoral student, the detailed feedback I received from my supervisors has enhanced my written feedback practice. I now provide students with timely, more detailed feedback. I feel better equipped to support undergraduate student-teachers to develop their academic writing. I appreciate the time it takes to write and edit, which I consistently underestimated while writing this thesis. Being a student again has helped me to empathise with the students I teach, which I feel has assisted me to support them more compassionately.

The student-teachers with whom I work conduct an AR study in their final year. During my employment at the institution, I received requests to work with student AR. However, I never felt confident, knowledgeable or skilled enough to fulfil this role. While still a novice researcher, conducting this study has certainly raised my confidence, understanding and ability at every stage of the AR process. As a result, I now feel better positioned to work with final-year student-teachers on their AR studies.

This study implemented change to develop practice. During the PD, I recognised the value of collaboration in the change process. Chapter 1 highlighted the hierarchical culture of the

institution. In my experience, institutional PD tends to be didactic; most PD sessions culminate with a 'test' to check participant understanding. I adopted what Carlström and Ekman (2012) call a clan culture during the PD sessions, involving collaboration, participation and empowerment to support the change process. Such collaboration, participation and action fit with the social constructivist and pragmatic paradigms that guide this study. I feel that through collaboration, college mentors were more committed to the change process; they engaged, creatively produced ideas and supported the overall development of the new PTOF guidelines. On reflection, I feel this process promoted college mentor 'buy in'. Every college mentor implemented the new PTOF guidelines and was positive about the PD and the changes to PTOF practice.

As I reflect on this study, I feel that being an insider researcher was critical to the study's success. I required senior management approval to implement some of the post-intervention changes. Because I had built relationships with senior management over the years, I knew whom to approach and how to make requests for approvals. I also feel that political entrepreneurship will enhance the likelihood that recommendations become reality.

While I hope to publish this study, the findings and recommendations have already been shared with this institution. If the recommendations are realised, college mentors and student-teachers should be equipped with the skills and knowledge to conduct PTOF in a manner that is constructive and aligned to both UAE culture and international standards. Additionally, PTOF practice and the SBP curriculum will be better aligned to the reflective practice model underpinning ITE at the institution. In turn, these changes will support the education mission statement outlined in chapter 1.

Ultimately the implementation of a reflective, collaborative, critical-thinking model of PTOF will equip graduate teachers to support the future of the UAE as it moves away from its fossil fuel economy. After all, as a federal entity, the institution has a vested interest in making education reform count toward the UAE agenda in its transition towards a knowledge economy. However, as we have seen, change occurs rapidly in the UAE. I want to ensure that the mistakes of earlier education reforms are not repeated. Like Warner (2018), I feel education reform needs to equip all stakeholders with the required skills and knowledge before change is implemented. Thus, time must be allocated for development. This is particularly important as this institution

continues to embrace Emiratisation. As expatriates are replaced by Emirati talent, I hope that as an expatriate worker I will leave a legacy. One through which college mentors and student-teachers are empowered to become lifelong learners, and gain the skills and knowledge to respond to the demands of 21st-century teaching and learning in the UAE's rapidly developing society.

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Appendix A: University of Liverpool Ethics Approval Certificate

Dear Sarah,			
I am pleased to inform you that the EdD. Virtual Programme Research Ethics Committee (VPREC) has approved your application for ethical approval for your study. Details and conditions of the approval can be found below.			
Sub-Committee:	EdD. Virtual Programme Research Ethics Committee (VPREC)		
Review type:	Expedited		
PI:	Sarah Hyde		
School:	HLC		
Title:	Post-lesson observation oral feedback practices in pre-service teacher education		
First Reviewer:	Dr Janet Hanson		
Second Reviewer:	Professor Gina Wisker		
Other members of the Committee	Dr Lucilla Crosta, Dr Kathleen Kelm		
Date of Approval:	06-June 2020		
The application was APPROVED subject to the following conditions:			
Conditions			

1	Mandatory	M: All serious adverse events must be reported to the VPREC within 24 hours of their occurrence, via the EdD Thesis Primary Supervisor.

This approval applies for the duration of the research. If it is proposed to extend the duration of the study as specified in the application form, the Sub-Committee should be notified. If it is proposed to make an amendment to the research, you should notify the Sub-Committee by following the Notice of Amendment procedure outlined at http://www.liv.ac.uk/media/livacuk/researchethics/notice%20of%20amendment.doc.

Where your research includes elements that are not conducted in the UK, approval to proceed is further conditional upon a thorough risk assessment of the site and local permission to carry out the research, including, where such a body exists, local research ethics committee approval. No documentation of local permission is required (a) if the researcher will simply be asking organizations to distribute research invitations on the researcher's behalf, or (b) if the researcher is using only public means to identify/contact participants. When medical, educational, or business records are analysed or used to identify potential research participants, the site needs to explicitly approve access to data for research purposes (even if the researcher normally has access to that data to perform his or her job).

Please note that the approval to proceed depends also on research proposal approval.