

## **Abstract**

Teaching Practice 1 (TP1), a core component of pre-service teacher education, is intended to bridge university-based theory and school-based practice. TP1 has recently been introduced as a mandatory requirement for pre-service teacher training in Kenya. Implementation by teacher educators, especially universities, has progressed more rapidly than systematic documentation regarding the preparedness of mentor teachers, who play a central role in mentoring student teachers. This study examined mentor teachers' perceptions of their preparedness to implement TP1 in junior secondary schools during the early phase of this reform. A concurrent mixed-method design was employed, targeting mentor teachers across designated teaching practice zones, drawing a sample of 217 from an accessible population of 325 using a stratified simple random sampling technique. Data was collected using a Mentor Teachers' Questionnaire (MTQ) and an interview guide (MTIG). Content validity was established through expert review, and the MTQ demonstrated high internal consistency (Cronbach's  $\alpha = 0.93$ ). Quantitative data were analyzed descriptively using SPSS (Version 24), while qualitative data were analyzed thematically using Nvivo. Findings indicated that mentor teachers generally perceived themselves as well prepared to implement TP1. However, interview data revealed significant gaps in preparedness, including misalignment between university expectations and school-based mentoring practices. The findings highlight misalignment between university expectations and school-based mentoring practices as one of the challenges associated with early-stage policy implementation and mentor teachers' capacity development. Hence, establishment of a structured orientation and professional learning programme for mentor teachers to support coherent implementation of TP1 is recommended. The study offers insights into mentor teachers' capacity, role ambiguity, and inclusivity within competency-based education.