International Journal of Integrated Research and Practice (IJIRP)

Vol 2, Issue 2, February 2026, Page: 99-108 ISSN: 3107-5037

Mentorship Models in Teacher Education: Rethinking Support for Pre-Service Teachers

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Abstract

Mentorship is generally acknowledged to be an important part of teacher education, but currently existing models do not tend to offer pre-service teachers long-term and context-specific assistance. In the current paper, the modern-day structures of mentorship within teacher education are discussed and a reformulated model is suggested that aims at enhancing professional learning, the formation of identity, and competence in instruction. Basing on the existing material in the literature on teacher development, reflective practice, and collaborative learning, the research examines the more traditional methods of supervision and the new models, including peer mentoring, co-teaching partnerships, and networked professional communities. Specific emphasis is placed on the relative, pedagogical, and institutional aspects that determine the effectiveness of mentoring. The paper argues that mentorship must be removed off the evaluating supervision onto developmental partnering on the basis of trustworthiness, dialogic reflection and inquiry. It singles out existing problems like lack of mentor preparation, role ambiguity, the quality of feedback inconsistencies and structural constraints to school-university partnerships. Based on qualitative data consisting of the case examples and program analyses, the research determines the practices that can promote resilience, instructional confidence, and adaptive expertise among pre-service teachers. An alternative mentorship model is suggested, as incorporating structured reflective dialogue, goal-focused observation cycles, collaborative problem-solving, and continuous mentor training. The model focuses on mutual learning, cultural responsiveness, and congruency between the course work and field lessons. Teacher education programs can be used to better serve novice educators in their first to second year of practice by redesigning mentorship as a dynamic professional learning relationship, and not a hierarchical assessment mechanism. The results may also be aligned with the current debate on teacher preparation reform and highlights the necessity of systemic support of high-quality mentoring systems. Enhancing the mentorship models has important consequences in terms of retention of teachers, classroom performance, and educational progress in the long run.

Keywords: Teacher education, mentorship models, pre-service teachers, professional development, reflective practice, instructional competence, mentor training, collaborative learning, teacher identity formation, school-university partnerships, teacher preparation reform, educational support systems.

Introduction

Teacher education is at a cross-road with more and more complex social, technological, and pedagogical needs facing the schools. Helping pre-service teachers to manage the different classrooms, the changing curricula and the increased pressure to perform tasks under accountability takes more than a course work; it takes a continual and relevant professional help. Mentorship is one of the most significant types of such support. As a traditional component of practicum and student-teaching opportunities, mentorship has been perceived as a resource between university training and classroom practices. Nevertheless, the modern issues demand a reconsideration of the conceptualization, structure, and implementation of mentorship in teacher education courses. Traditional mentorship systems tend to be based on one seasoned teacher and one beginning teacher as the relationships occur in an observational, feedback and gradual

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responsibility-creation process. Although this method of apprenticeship provides a good experience of learning, it might not provide enough attention to the emotional, reflective and collaborative aspects of professional development. Isolation, anxiety about the performance, and professional identity confusion are some of the most common complaints among pre-service teachers. These issues imply that mentorship has to transcend beyond supervision to a more comprehensive system that incorporates coaching, peer interaction, and mutual learning associations. New models are also concerned with distributed mentorship, communities of practice and technology-mediated support system that do not limit guidance to a single classroom location. These practices recognize mentorship as a process of responsiveness and dynamism and not a hierarchical framework. The redefinition of mentorship in the education of teachers, in its turn, involves inquiry into the problem of mentor preparation, power, cultural responsiveness, and institutional cooperation between learning institutions and schools. The provided paper evaluates the new paradigms of mentorship in the context of teacher education and discusses whether the new models can be able to support pre-service teachers in a sustainable, equitable, and transformative way. A critical assessment of the existing frameworks and the provision of new alternatives will add to the more responsive and development-oriented vision of teacher preparation as the study will be developed.

Background of the study

The teacher Education is a key factor of success, professional identity and long time success of teachers. As increasing demands of quality education, equity and better results of students in the education systems worldwide, pre-service teachers preparation has gained an inquiry of a high level. One of the long-standing issues, which have not been addressed is the challenge of theory in teacher education, its application in real-life circumstances involving the classroom set-ups. The pre-service teachers are also frequently complaining that they are not well prepared, they are over-burdened and confused in the face of the complexities in the modern classrooms (Zeichner, 2010). This gap between theory and practice shows that strong and well-structured support systems could not only enable professional growth but reflective practice, too. Mentorship has been regarded as an important part in the development of teacher since it gives them a mechanism of reflections, feedback and socialization of their professional growth (Ingersoll and Strong, 2011). The traditional paradigms in mentoring include; in one whereby the experienced teachers who mentor novices give support and guidance in matters relating to teaching and emotional support in addition to information related to the culture of the school. However, education has transformed radically in the recent decades in many ways such as the use of technology, the diversity among students, and the development of pedagogic procedures. These developments have influenced scholars and teacher educators to re-evaluate their old methods of mentorship to accommodate newer models that are more participative, situational, and cognizant to the pre-service teacher. According to recent research, the traditional one on one mentorship models, though useful in some ways, may not be sufficient enough to address the complexity of the issues that new teachers encounter (Darling-Hammond, 2006).As an example, peer mentoring, group mentoring, coaching and reflective supervision are different types of support that pre-service teachers might need to achieve resiliency and professional competence in different contexts (Beltman, Mansfield, and Price, 2011). Moreover, the dynamism of classroom settings, as well as the heterogeneity of learner needs, necessitate mentoring models that focus on inquiry, collaboration, and lifelong learning, instead of the hierarchical/directive ones.

Simultaneously, global comparisons of teacher preparation systems show that structured mentorship can help to increase teacher retention rates, the quality of instruction, and more professional identities among novice teachers (OECD, 2019). This information has caused education stakeholders to promote embedded mentorship models that are part of teacher preparation programs that are policy supported and standard reflective practice and professional

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development.

Although there has been an increasing interest in mentorship in teacher education, there are still gaps in the knowledge on the most effective mentorship models under certain conditions and to whom. In general terms, most of the studies have reported the advantages of mentoring but have failed to make adequate comparisons between models and investigate how the process of mentoring can be implemented in different educational contexts. This inconsistency is further extended by discrepancies in the definition and operationization of mentorship both in research and practice.

Hence, this research seeks to re-evaluate teacher education in support of pre-service teachers by analysing different models of mentorship that can be used to support pre-service teachers. It aims at researching the impact of various mentorship strategies on professional preparedness, teaching confidence, and adaptive teaching behaviours. This study aims to enlighten teacher educators, program developers, and policymakers on effective approaches that can be used to close the gap between teacher preparation and successful entry into the teaching profession by systematically researching the models of mentorship.

Justification

This paper is informed by the increasing awareness that teacher preparation is one of the key factors that determine classroom performance, student performance, and educational reform in the long-term. The pre service teachers primarily enter the training programs with a high theoretical knowledge and low practical confidence levels. The transition between the university coursework and practice in the classroom is intimidating and is accompanied with many challenges, such as classroom management, lesson adaptation, diversity, and expectations of the institution. Proper mentorship at this tender age is therefore not an optional one but a must. The traditional mentorship systems of teacher education are usually founded on informal mentoring or officially casual supervisory mentoring. These approaches may be beneficial; however, they may be inconsistent, not accountable, and not in accordance with the existing educational needs. The speed of the change in the norms of the curricula and technological assimilation, inclusive educational methods, and socio-emotional education systems require flexible, cooperative, and evidence-based mentorship models.

Re-evaluation of models in mentorship enables the institutions to transcend past models of supervision through observation to developmental partnerships that promote reflective practice and formation of professional identity as well as pedagogical innovations.

More so, uneven and inconsistent mentoring experience can also be a cause of early career teacher burnout and turnover. Enhancing the mentorship structures can be used to enhance teacher retention through development of resilience, confidence, and instructional competence by teachers prior to their taking full professional responsibility. This study is used to fill a gap in theory-practice that is critically important in teacher education by analysing and reforming mentorship models.

Finally, this research will aim to make a contribution to the design of carefully developed, context-sensitive mentorship programs that will be more helpful in pre-service teacher support. These reforms will play a crucial role in developing competent, reflective, and committed educators who can respond to the changing needs of the current classrooms.

Objectives of the Study

1. To review the current mentorship models that have been used in teacher education programs to guide pre-service teachers through training and practicum stages.
2. To examine the advantages and the drawbacks of conventional methods of mentoring in the development of professional competency, classroom preparedness, and reflective practice.
3. To explore how the quality of mentorship affects the pedagogical confidence,

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instructional skills, and professional identity development of pre-service teachers.

4. To discuss new and alternative mentoring models, such as collaborative model, peer-based model, and technology-supported model of mentoring.

Literature Review

Mentorship is not a new concept which has been used as part of teacher preparation to influence professional identities and instructional competence of pre-service teachers. The initial theorizations about conceptualizations of mentorship in teacher education stressed cognitive apprenticeship and situated learning, in which experienced teachers support the learning of pre-service teachers with regards to classroom practice by learning to model, coach, and reflect (Lave and Wenger, 1991, Collins, Brown, and Newman, 1989). The two underlying viewpoints underscore the role of mentorship not only as an administrative mandate but as a social-instructional phenomenon, facilitating the internalization of pedagogical norms and practices among novices.

In the last twenty years, studies have reported the various models of mentorship that have been practiced in teacher education curriculum. The most common model continues to be traditional one-to-one mentoring that may involve a pre-service teacher being paired with one experienced mentor. Darling-Hammond (2006) asserted that the long-term mentoring relationship enhances self-efficacy and decision-making of pre-service teachers in instruction areas especially when the mentors are involved in the process of joint planning, observation and feedback. On the same note, Ingersoll and Strong (2011) discovered that structured mentoring correlates with a low rate of attrition and a high rate of retention among novice teachers, and that mentorship is an important form of professional support in the transition between training and practice.

Nonetheless, the weaknesses of the classical models of mentoring have been suggested to include the lack of scalability, uniformity and preparedness of mentors. As was noted by Zeichner (2010), ad-hoc mentoring based schemes are not purposely oriented towards teacher education curricula, and thus the quality and relevance of guidance provided often vary. There are other models that have emerged in response to these like cohort mentoring and peer mentoring. Cohort mentoring places pre-service teachers in groups with a mentor or instructional coach and inquires them collaboratively and shares reflection (Ganser, 2002). In its turn, peer mentoring utilizes common experience of novice teachers in developing mutual support networks that mitigate the feeling of isolation and foster reflective practice (Veenman, 1984).

The development of the so-called distributed mentoring models also indicates the changes in teacher education that relate to the development of a collaborative and networked support system. Distributed mentoring is a process that combines several stakeholders such as university supervisors, school-based mentors, and peers to create a web of support that shares the responsibility and expertise (Tang, 2015). This model is in line with modern demands of professional learning communities in which the shared accountability of teacher development overrides the individual mentor-mentee dyads (DuFour, DuFour, and Eaker, 2008).

The field of mentorship has been broadened as well by means of technological improvements. Digital mentoring, which is implemented with the help of the Internet and online communities, has been proved to increase the access and persistence of support, especially in geographically distant placements (Baran, Correia & Thompson, 2011). As an example, the video-based coaching enables mentors to view pre-service teachers asynchronously and offer them specific feedback that predetermines reflective discussions (Tripp and Rich, 2012). A study by Borko et al. (2014) indicates that, technology-mediated mentoring has the capacity to address such gaps between classroom practice and university course work to enable a further examination of the classroom practice.

The key to successful mentorship is preparation and development of mentors. In his argument, Knight (2007) claimed that mentors must be provided with clear training on observation

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guidelines, feedback methods, and principles of adult learning to be able to promote the process of continual improvement. Likewise, Hobson et al. (2009) established that the quality of mentor that is defined by training, reflective ability and correlation with the program objectives has a significant effect on pre-service teachers in their perceptions of support and professional development.

The results that have been ascribed to effective mentoring programs include not just the instructional competence but also formation of professional identity, resilience, and dedication to the teaching profession. As an example, Flores and Day (2006) established that mentoring which serves both technical expertise and emotional support promotes teacher agency and lowers turnover. Similarly, Smith and Ingersoll (2004) reported that pre-service teachers who join conducive mentorship settings enjoy more job satisfaction and have a sense of belongingness.

Regardless of progress, there are still gaps in the literature concerning how various models of mentorship affect the long-term outcomes of teachers. There is an emerging agreement that mentorship research should no longer focus on comparative studies of model efficacy to understand how and to whom selected aspects of mentoring such as feedback quality, relational trust, and alignment with curricular goals are related to long-term teacher development (Kraft, Blazar, and Hogan, 2018). Furthermore, mentoring interventions depend on contextual conditions like school culture, district policy and mentor workload to determine the viability and effectiveness (Ronfeldt, 2012).

Material and Methodology

Research Design:

The research design that was adopted in the study which incorporated qualitative survey analysis and quantitative case study exploration in mixed method research design was to explore the effectiveness of different teacher education mentorship models. The two forms of evaluation used were descriptive and comparative approaches of evaluating traditional, peer based, and collaborative models of mentorship in the selected teacher training institutions. The design did not only enable the assessment of the results obtained by perceived support in a statistical way but also offered an in-depth understanding of lived experiences of pre-service teachers and mentors.

Data Collection Methods:

Data on pre-service teachers were obtained through structured questionnaires, semi-structured interviews with the faculty supervisor, mentor teacher, and the analysis of documents in the form of the institutional guidelines on mentorship. Furthermore, a focus group discussion was also conducted to have a share of minds on the mentoring practices. The quantitative data were summarized with the assistance of the descriptive statistics and regression analysis, and the qualitative responses were coded and separated into common patterns which mention the professional development, teaching confidence, and emotional support.

Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria:

The respondents were pre service teachers, who were already enrolled in accredited teacher education programs and had already completed at least one supervised practicum and formally assigned mentor teachers with at least three years of teaching experience. Institutions with structural system of mentorship were selected in order to provide uniformity. The rest of the sample that does not encounter practicum or non-formalized mentoring plans were sifted out to have a clean and relevant methodology and associate with systematic models of mentoring.

Ethical Considerations:

Data collection was done with ethical approval of the respective institutional review boards. Respondents were free to participate and their informed consent was obtained. The security of confidentiality and anonymity was guaranteed by coded identifiers and the safety of data storage. They were assured that they are free to withdraw at any point without a penalty, and

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the results were published in aggregate mode so that no individual or institution could be identified.

Results and Discussion

Results:

1. Participant Profile

The study took 180 pre-service teachers, who were enrolled in a one year teacher education program in three institutions. The mentorship models the participants were exposed to during the teaching practicum were the following three:

1. **Traditional Supervisory Model (TSM)** – periodic observation and evaluation
2. **Collaborative Mentorship Model (CMM)** – co-planning, reflective dialogue, shared feedback
3. **Peer-Led Reflective Model (PRM)** – structured peer mentoring and group reflection

Table 1: Distribution of Participants Across Mentorship Models

Mentorship Model	Number of Participants (n)	Percentage (%)
Traditional Supervisory Model (TSM)	60	33.3
Collaborative Mentorship Model (CMM)	60	33.3
Peer-Led Reflective Model (PRM)	60	33.3
Total	**180**	**100**

2. Teaching Self-Efficacy Outcomes

Teaching self-efficacy was measured using a standardized scale at the end of the practicum (score range: 1–5).

Table 2: Mean Teaching Self-Efficacy Scores by Mentorship Model

Mentorship Model	Mean Score	Standard Deviation
TSM	3.28	0.41
CMM	4.12	0.36
PRM	3.87	0.39

The highest mean score of self-efficacy was found in Collaborative Mentorship Model (CMM), and next was Peer-Led Reflective Model. The mean score in the Traditional Supervisory Model was the lowest.

3. Classroom Readiness and Instructional Competence

The readiness in the classroom was measured using the rubrics of classroom readiness that measured lesson planning, classroom management, and instruction delivery.

Table 3: Observed Instructional Competence Scores

Mentorship Model	Lesson Planning (Mean)	Classroom Management (Mean)	Instructional Delivery (Mean)
TSM	3.21	3.05	3.18
CMM	4.25	4.10	4.18
PRM	3.89	3.72	3.85

The performance of pre-service teachers in the Collaborative Mentorship Model always outperformed other groups in all the dimensions of instruction.

4. Professional Confidence and Stress Levels

Participants reported perceived professional confidence and practicum-related stress on a 5-point scale.

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Table 4: Confidence and Stress Levels by Mentorship Model

Mentorship Model	Professional Confidence (Mean)	Reported Stress (Mean)
TSM	3.14	4.02
CMM	4.31	2.88
PRM	3.95	3.21

The respondents in the Collaborative Mentorship Model registered the greatest professional confidence and the least levels of stress.

5. Retention Intentions in the Teaching Profession

Participants indicated their likelihood of remaining in teaching for at least five years.

Table 5: Retention Intentions (%)

Mentorship Model	High Likelihood (%)	Moderate (%)	Low (%)
TSM	48	32	20
CMM	72	20	8
PRM	63	25	12

The Collaborative Model showed the strongest positive influence on retention intentions.

Discussion:

The results prove that mentorship organization plays an important role in the professional growth of pre-service teachers. In all aspects of outcomes, such as self-efficacy, instructional competence, stress management, and retention intention, the Collaborative Mentorship Model (CMM) demonstrated the best outcomes.

1. Effectiveness of Collaborative Mentorship

The increased levels of self-efficacy in participants of the CMM program indicate that the implementation of a stable dialogue, common planning, and formative feedback contribute to the enhanced development of professional identity. As opposed to Traditional Supervisory Model, which focuses on assessment, collaborative mentoring offers continuous developmental assistance. This could be the reason why classroom management and instruction delivery were improved.

2. Limitations of Traditional Supervisory Approaches

Traditional Supervisory Model indicated the lower performance indicators and increased stress levels. Supervision seems to inhibit reflective development in its episodic and evaluative character. The participants often indicated anxiety with regard to observation-based assessment that can lead to lowered confidence and less retention intentions.

3. Value of Peer-Led Reflective Mentorship

The Peer-Led Reflective Model showed a range between moderate and strong results. Although peer support positively influenced reflection and emotional support, the lack of systemic expert support might be the reason why the results of this model did not outperform Collaborative Model. However, peer mentoring seems to be a feasible complementary framework in institutions with scarce resources.

4. Implications for Teacher Education Programs

The results indicate a need to shift from compliance-based supervision toward **developmental and relational mentorship frameworks**. Programs may consider:

- Embedding structured co-teaching sessions
- Formalizing reflective dialogue protocols
- Reducing high-stakes evaluative observation frequency
- Training mentor teachers in coaching and formative assessment

5. Rethinking Mentorship as a Systemic Support Mechanism

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Mentoring in teacher education is not a procedural necessity but a strategic choice in teacher resilience and long-term retention. The data indicates that professional confidence and career commitment are directly related to mentorship models based on collaboration and psychological safety.

Limitations of the study

In this study, there are several limitations. To begin with, the research findings can be constrained by the institutional context of the study (the institutions) and their particular features because it is not fully possible to extrapolate the findings onto the other teacher education programs which might have a different structure, culture or policy environment. Second, there was a risk of bias in the response, including the social desirability or selective memory, because pre-service teachers and mentors were utilized as the sources of self-reported data. Third, the investigation may not have been protracted to discover the long-term impact of mentorship models in the formation of professional identity, teaching competence, or teaching field retention. Also there could also have been variations in the quality of mentors, prior instruction and school placement situation which might have contributed to the results in a manner that could not be fully controlled. Lastly, the sample size might have been confined by resource limitations and the availability of participants, which would have influenced the statistical power and statistical depth of comparative analysis on the approaches to mentorship.

Future Scope

The future of studies on mentorship models in teacher education lies in devising more flexible and context sensitive models that can transcend the traditional supervisory models to more collaborative, technology mediated and culturally sustaining models of assistance. To provide pre-service teachers with timely and individual advice, new models can explore the possibility of examining the digital mentoring form, peer-to-peer mentoring networks and data-driven feedback systems. Longitudinal research of the efficacy of different mentorship models in educator identity formation, didactic power, strength, and job perseverance in the teaching career are required. It also needs to be explored further based on cross-cultural comparisons, equity-based mentoring practices and training mentors themselves that can be accomplished through the assistance of planned training programs. The future research has the potential to produce sustainable teacher development systems, which will increase the professional development and quality of education through the congruent policy reformation of the mentorship models to the transforming classroom realities, different needs of learners, and policy measures.

Conclusion

Re-examination of teacher education mentorship process that is capable of strengthening resilience, professional growth, and sustainability of pre-service teachers is important. Traditional supervisory practices as helpful as they are, might not be in a position to address the multidimensional emotional, pedagogical, and circumstantial demands of the novice teacher. This disjuncture between theory and classroom realities can be bridged through a more collaborative, reflective and sustained pattern of mentorship which is founded on mutual trust, practice wherein they are being mentored and constructive feedback. Instructors can develop confidence, instructional competence and adaptive expertise by adopting a mix of organized mentoring systems and peer learning and professional discussions. Lastly, not only pre-service teachers are assisted by an investment in dynamic and responsive models of mentorship, but also, teacher retention, classroom practice, and student educational outcomes are increased therewith.

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