
NURTURING SUCCESS: EXAMINING MENTORSHIP'S INFLUENCE ON NOVICE FEMALE TEACHERS IN KARACHI GOVERNMENT COLLEGES

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ABSTRACT

The research paper aims to investigate the role of mentoring in the professional development of novice teachers. The main focus of the research is on the female teachers serving in the Government colleges in Karachi. A qualitative research methodology has been selected to search for the answer to the research question. In this regard, three experienced and three novice teachers have been selected randomly from different government colleges in Karachi. Their interviews are conducted using structured questionnaires and the answers provided by these teachers are used to find out the role of mentoring in novice teachers' professional development in the light of their experiences. It has been revealed from the study that both experienced and novice teachers firmly believe that mentoring enhances the process of professional development however, some flaws in the teachers' training programs are also identified and it is found that some novice teachers are not provided with effective mentoring in their early years of job. The paper insists that there must be a systematic approach towards mentoring in government colleges and policies must be formulated to assure that every novice teacher must get the guidance and support from a professional during the early years of her employment.

KEYWORDS

Mentoring, Professional Development, Novice Teachers, Govt colleges of Education

INTRODUCTION

Educational institutes play a very vital role in the overall development and nurturing of a society in positive direction. This function could be performed effectively if the teachers at every level perform their roles and duties proficiently and reflect their professional development through their performances (Fabian & Simpson, 2002). At the novice level, the teachers especially at the college level often encounter several problems in pursuing their professional journey. At the college level, teachers have the great responsibility of leading relatively mature and grown-up students toward their knowledge attainment goals by acting as role models to the students (Jordell, 2006). The professional level is usually low among novice teachers and they often could face difficulties in teaching and handling students. At this point, proper and motivational mentoring of the novice teacher could be a factor that can make a difference in the progress of teachers towards their professional development. Sometimes, novice teachers come across such unpredictable situations and problems in their careers that they can successfully overcome and adequately handle only if they have been through the process of effective mentoring (Lucas, 2001).

The research paper aims to examine the role of mentoring in the professional development of novice teachers of colleges. The research paper specifically focuses on female government colleges and explores what novice teachers in female government colleges think and experience about the role of mentoring in their professional development. The research has been conducted using a qualitative approach and three novice and three experienced teachers from different government colleges in Karachi have been interviewed. The experienced teachers were asked about mentoring in their early career and the role that they see after reaching the current position whereas the novice teachers were interviewed to reflect upon their experiences and difficulties in performing their duties and the support that they help from mentoring.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Pelletier (2006) explains the need for mentoring for the novice teacher. He suggests systematic induction of new teachers into the teaching profession along with the provision of mentoring support is imperative to ensure the professional development of the teachers. According to him, there have been research studies conducted proving that mentoring support in the beginning year of the educational career is a sensible decision that compliments the overall quality and professional approach of the institutions. McGee (2001) explains that mentoring acts as a tool of professional development in all sectors and in education, mentoring can help bring out the best in a teacher which eventually turns a novice teacher into a proficient educational professional who has the capability to lead the generations of students in a positive direction.

Killion (2008) points out that mentoring provides novice teachers the opportunity to experience common planning time, observation of the colleagues and professional learning communities. The observation and learning from these experienced communities allow novice teachers to apply the tested methods of these professionals to their new careers and have a strong grip on their duties. Mentoring allows novice teachers to better and fast adjust in their place and stay in the profession for a longer period of time. Moreover, it has also been found that the teachers who have been passed through a systematic process of mentoring appeared to be more effective in the process of teaching their students. There have been clear differences observed among the teachers who receive mentoring in their early years as compared to the ones who are not mentored by an experienced teacher. It shows that mentoring could be the defining factor in the professional development of novice teachers and it must be provided to them on a priority basis.

Chubbuck and Clift (2001) reveal that the role of the mentor could not be seen as a problem solver neither to form the opinions of the mentee in any particular direction, rather he has to provide support to the novice teacher in developing his/her own skills and capabilities that are necessary for a good teacher. Mentor contributes to the learning process of novice teachers by instigating constructive self-awareness among them. Derrick and Watson (2002) clarified that the communication pattern between a mentor and a novice teacher tends to have a very clear impact on the professional development of a novice teacher. The communication must comprise some thought-provoking discussions and reflective talks that can help novice teacher realize their career goals and identify the areas where he/she needs to work to become a competent individual for the position she/he is rooting for.

Alvarado (2006) notices that novice teachers who got sincere and experienced mentorship in the early years of their career are the ones who get the insight to look into the educational career with great depth. They have the capability to judge the situations in better ways because they have the benefit of information sharing from the senior teachers who act as mentors. The professional development path of novice teachers has made mentoring much more flourishing and meaningful compared to the ones who are not mentored by experienced ones. Hulbert (1994) further clarifies that mentoring is an important contributing factor in the professional development of novice teachers and the more dedicated and sincerer mentor a novice teacher gets, the more changes are witnessed that his professional career would be comprehensive and significantly progressive.

Ganser (2004) found that mentors perform the role of building a bridge between the education of the teachers and their professional life because they provide support to novice teachers and guide them on how they are required to implement their

educational learning in the real-world practice of educating the students. He insists that sometimes the mentoring could be limited to the emotional support and guidance but in many cases, the mentor has to take the responsibility of providing practical support to the novice teacher allowing them to learn practically from the experience of the mentor. the practical support includes a demonstration of various types of teaching methods that the mentor has already tested on the students and their results and dealing with different college matters in the presence of the mentee so that the novice teacher can witness how the experienced teacher i.e. mentor uses to handle the situations.

Andrews & Martin (2003) explains that novice teacher usually joins an educational institution within a few years of completion of their own education. In the educational process, very often they are not trained to have a professional approach to the education process; rather they have spent years in simply learning various subjects. Teaching requires the educationalist to develop skills like maturity, conversation, and social competence that could not be gained through formal education but the teacher has to develop on his own, and in this development process, the role of the mentor becomes very important. The mentor can help the novice teacher by focusing on the social competencies in his/her communication with the mentee and the mentor can enhance the skills of the mentee in areas like building relationships with peers, encouraging reflection on others, and most importantly evolving as a role model for the students.

Hart (2006) observed that the education system has been evolving into a new one in the wake of modernization and to cope with this change, teachers also need to evolve with changing times and update their skills. He believes that teachers on the path of professional development could become part of the changing process because only a teacher with a professional approach could be able to make a difference in the educational sector's performance. This professional development is supported by various factors and among them mentoring is recognized to play a remarkably effective and determining role because mentoring allows novice teachers to face the challenges of the new situation with the help of the experiences, vision, and wisdom of the old teachers. Pelletier (2006) realized that mentoring plays such a vital role in the professional development path of novice teachers that educational institutes are required to have a systematic approach towards it. Moreover, he believes that it is imperative to have a well-designed professional development program arranged by educational institutions where novice teachers can be provided with effective and regular-based mentoring. This practice has been adopted by many of the educational institutions in Western countries especially and the trend needs to be spread all across the world along with the assurance that the professional development programs are not taken as formality but in real since they have to provide mentoring to the novice

teachers.

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

1. To assess the impact of mentorship on the professional development and career satisfaction of novice female teachers in Karachi government colleges.
2. To understand the challenges and opportunities of mentorship for novice female teachers in Karachi government colleges.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. How does mentorship impact the career satisfaction and professional development of female novice teachers in government colleges in Karachi?
2. What are the challenges and opportunities of mentorship for novice female teachers in government colleges of Karachi?

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The research work is based on a qualitative approach. A review of related literature has been conducted to build the theoretical foundation of the study. Moreover, interviews of three experienced and three novice teachers teaching at different government colleges have been conducted using a structured questionnaire. The answers collected from the interviews have been analyzed to gain an in-depth understanding of the role of mentoring in the professional development of novice teachers in the light of their experiences. The teachers for the interviews were selected randomly from the Government colleges in Karachi, based on their availability and willingness to participate in the study. The interviews were conducted face-to-face in their colleges after taking appointments from the teachers through email and telephone.

DATA ANALYSIS

The interviews of the experienced and novice teachers were conducted with the help of a questionnaire. There were slight differences in the questions asked from both groups of teachers because the experienced teachers talked about their past experience and also shared about the mentoring role that they were currently performing for the novice teachers. The novice teachers on the other hand were asked to share their main problem in career development and the support that they get from mentoring.

The interviews of the experienced and novice teachers reveal that both the novice and the experienced teachers commonly agreed upon the fact that the professional development of the teachers is an extensive and dynamic process. The novice teacher came across different types of challenges and problems during the teaching process and at such a challenging time the teachings they received from their mentor helped them in finding out the best possible solution to the situation. They also agree that the

mentor does not perform problem-solving functions for them. However, the advice and teaching given to them throughout the mentoring process significantly helped them in gauging the situation and coming up with the best possible solution.

One of the experienced teachers shared her views and informed that in most educational institutes mentoring has been seen as a vehicle for supporting and retaining the native teachers because novice teachers often face problems in adjusting to the environment and they look for changing their working place in the short time period, nevertheless, when these novice teachers are provided with effective mentoring, they become engaged with the institution in a better way and usually spend more time at one place to develop their professional skills and utilize them in a best possible way to educate the students. Another experienced teacher recalled her initial days at the college and shared that she had various issues during the early years of her professional career in the college and she sought help and support from various people around her. She expressed that she can never forget the college principal of that time who acted as a mentor for her and significantly supported her throughout the early years of her career. She admits that her current position in the college and all of her achievements in the academic field are considerably contributed by the mentoring that she received from her principal in the early years. Based on her experience, she explained that the colleges where the senior staff was not willing to act as mentors to novice teachers, usually have a very low staff retention rate, and teachers often fail to explore their potential. Consequently, the education system suffers because the talents of several teachers remain unexplored and they fail to contribute to the system with their full enthusiasm and support. The third experienced teacher who is also rendering her services as a mentor for the new teacher expresses her opinion and says that mentoring plays a very important role not only in supporting the professional development of the teachers but also in maintaining standards of teaching in the educational institutions; therefore it is evident that the novice teachers should pass through a procedure of training and mentoring before they step into their career because when novice teachers begin teaching just after completing their education without attaining mentoring, it takes a lot of time to change their mindset from a student to a teacher. On the other hand, if they are provided with mentor support right at the beginning of their careers, they would be able to adjust to their new position easily.

One of the novice teachers expressed in her interview that in the initial months of her educational career her confidence level was very low and she was unable to face the people around her confidently. Due to this reason, her interaction with the teachers was limited and she often failed to give her best in the classroom. This is because she has not been through any systematic mentoring program and became a teacher simply after the completion of her education and passing some tests. she however, realized

that some teachers in her college who joined after getting teacher special training were much more confident and professional in their approach because they had been gaining a lot from the experiences of their mentors and eventually, they had developed the ability to judge the situations well with the help of the observations they made during the time spent with the experienced and expert educationalists. She believed that the early years were very tough for her and it took her a long time to pick up the track of professional development due to a lack of mentoring during her early years. Therefore, she insisted that novice teachers must be provided with mentoring to keep them engaged with the professionals with high morale, a better level of confidence, and a professional approach to handling the matters.

Another novice teacher who had been through the process of teacher training and mentoring at the beginning of her career reveals that she found it quite easy to adjust in the college as a teacher because she had already been observing the experienced teachers and learning from their routines and activities for quite some time. She had observed how experienced teachers dealt with various types of issues and problems and how they used to handle people working at different positions within the system. This observation has made her well-versed in dealing with people and the environment due to which she has been successfully pursuing her career in college and her interest level, morale, and motivation are also very high at the school. She believes that mentoring has played a very important role in nurturing her professional development.

The interview with the third novice teacher reveals that she had also undergone the process of training before joining the college as a teacher but that training program was more like a formality during which the teachers and the mentor both just spent time without undertaking the teaching and learning process. She shares her views that many times either the novice teachers or the experienced ones do not understand the importance of mentoring and they just pass their time in the training program just to meet the requirements of the job otherwise the actual mentoring process never took place during these sessions. She believes that the lack of interest from experienced teachers is one of the main issues that are declining the mentor's role in the professional development of novice teachers. Despite the fact that novice teachers often look for mentoring from the senior teachers due to internal politics of the colleges, busy time schedules, and simply due to lack of interest, the experienced teachers often fail to provide mentoring to the novice teachers at a level that is required for their professional development. She urges that the policymakers of the education sector must take some effective measures to ensure that novice teachers are provided with proper mentoring at the beginning of their careers so that they can learn from experienced teachers and apply their knowledge to emerging situations.

DISCUSSION

The interviews of the experienced and novice teachers were conducted with the help of a questionnaire. There were slight differences in the questions asked by both groups of teachers because the experienced teachers talked about their past experience and also told about the mentoring role that they were currently performing for the novice teachers. The novice teachers on the other hand were asked to share their main problem in career development and the support that they get from mentoring.

The interviews of the experienced and novice teachers reveal that both the novice and the experienced teachers commonly agreed upon the fact that the professional development of the teachers is a long and dynamic process during which they come across different types of challenges and problems and at such tough time the advice they get from their mentor aid them in finding out the best possible solution to the situation. They also agree that the mentor does not perform problem-solving functions for them but the experiences they gain from the mentoring process significantly help them in judging the situation and coming up with the best possible solution. One of the experienced teachers shared her views and informed that in most educational institutes mentoring has been seen as a vehicle for supporting and retaining the native teachers because novice teachers often face problems in adjusting to the environment and they look for changing their working place in a short time period, however, when these novice teachers are provided with effective mentoring, they become engaged with the institution in a better way and usually spend more time at one place to develop their professional skills and utilize them in a best possible way to educate the students. Another experienced teacher recalled her initial days at the college and shared that she had various issues during the early years of her professional career in the college and she sought help and support from various people around her. She said that she can never forget the college principal of that time who acted as a mentor for her and significantly supported her throughout the early years of her career. She admits that her current position in the college and all of her achievements in the academic field are considerably contributed by the mentoring that she received from her principal in the early years. Based on her experience, she elucidated that the colleges where the senior staff was not willing to act as mentors for novice teachers, usually the staff retention rate is very low and teachers often fail to explore their potential. Eventually, the education system suffers because the talents of several teachers remain unexplored and they fail to contribute to the system with their full enthusiasm and support. The third experienced teacher who is also acting as the mentor for the new teacher expresses her opinion and says that mentoring plays a very important role not only in supporting the professional development of the teachers but also in maintaining teacher standards of the educational institutions; therefore it is very important that the novice teachers must pass through a procedure of training and mentoring before they step into their career because when novice teachers start teacher just after completing

their education and without getting mentoring, it took them a lot of time to change their mindset from a student to a teacher. On the other hand, if they are provided with mentor support right at the beginning of their careers, they would be able to adjust to their new position easily.

A novice teacher revealed during an interview that she lacked confidence in the early months of her educational career. As a result, she had limited interaction with her colleagues and struggled to perform at her best in the classroom. She went through a systematic mentoring program and became a teacher after completing her education and passing some tests. However, she noticed that teachers who had received teacher special training were much more professional and confident in their approach, thanks to the experiences they gained from their mentors. They were eventually able to judge situations effectively with the help of observations made during their time spent with experienced and expert educationalists. She believes that her early years as a teacher were tough, and it took her a long time to pick up the track of professional development due to a lack of mentoring. For this reason, she insists that novice teachers must be provided with mentoring to keep them engaged and maintain high morale, better confidence levels, and a professional approach to handling all matters.

A novice teacher who had undergone teacher training and mentoring at the beginning of her career shared that she had an easy time adjusting to her job as a college teacher. She attributed this to her habit of observing experienced teachers and learning from their routines and activities. By observing how experienced teachers dealt with different types of issues and the people working in various positions within the system, she became well-versed in handling people and the environment. This, in turn, helped her successfully pursue her career in college, with high interest, morale, and motivation. She strongly believes that mentoring plays a vital role in nurturing her professional development.

During an interview with a third novice teacher, it was revealed that she underwent a training process before joining the college as a teacher. However, she felt that the training program was more of a formality, in which the teachers and mentors just spent time without undertaking a proper teaching and learning process. She shared her views that many times, both novice and experienced teachers fail to understand the importance of mentoring and just pass their time in training programs to fulfill job requirements. As a result, the actual mentoring process never took place during these sessions.

She believes that the lack of interest from experienced teachers is one of the main issues that is declining the mentor's role in the professional development of novice teachers. Despite the fact that novice teachers often look for mentoring from senior

teachers, due to internal politics of the colleges, busy time schedules, and simply due to lack of interest, experienced teachers often fail to provide mentoring to the novice teachers at a level that is required for their professional development.

She urges that policymakers in the education sector take effective measures to ensure that novice teachers are provided with proper mentoring at the beginning of their careers so that they can learn from experienced teachers and apply their knowledge to emerging situations.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The interviews of the experienced and novice teachers clearly indicate that there are no doubts about the defining role of mentoring in the professional development of novice teachers and both the new and old teachers agree to the fact that the novice teachers must be provided with proper mentoring to foster their professional development. It is also found that teachers without mentoring in the early years of their careers often fail to carry on their careers with a high level of motivation and confidence and hence it is critically important that the educational institutes make adequate arrangements for the provision of mentoring to the novice teachers. In light of the interviews with the teachers, some suggestions are listed below that are meant for the policymakers of the education sector. The intention of these suggestions is to reinforce the mentoring practice in the colleges and improve the overall education quality of these institutions.

- The administration must form a formal committee in all colleges to look at the matters of novice teachers and the process of mentoring that they have to undertake.
- Each novice teacher must be attached to an experienced teacher from the first day of her joining and the experienced teacher must be provided with the instructions to provide mentoring to the novice teachers
- There must be some sessions of communication arranged between the experienced teachers' team and the novice teachers so that they can observe the experienced teachers' collective behavior, interaction patterns, and working styles
- The experienced teachers must be provided with some extra allowance for mentoring to keep them motivated towards this task
- There must be a system of evaluation of the mentoring process on a regular basis during which both the experienced and the novice teachers should be provided with the opportunity to inform about their problems and concerns.

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