



Mentoring Matters: A Transformative Approach to Teacher Education and Retention

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Abstract: Teacher mentoring plays a vital role in strengthening professional competence, improving instructional quality, and sustaining long-term teacher motivation. This study investigates the transformative impact of structured mentoring programs within Pakistan's teacher education landscape, with a particular focus on government and private schools in Karachi. Using qualitative insights from teacher educators, school-based mentors, and novice teachers, the research explores how mentoring nurtures reflective teaching practices, pedagogical creativity, and emotional resilience among early-career educators. The study also positions mentoring within international best practices and contextualizes it through national initiatives such as the Sindh Teachers Education Development Authority (STEDA) guidelines and the Continuous Professional Development (CPD) frameworks implemented by Aga Khan Development Network (AKDN) Education Services. These initiatives highlight how collaborative, school-embedded mentoring bridges the persistent gap between theoretical coursework and practical classroom demands, enabling peer learning, confidence building, and shared problem-solving. Findings indicate that mentoring not only eases the transition of novice teachers into the profession but also contributes to a positive institutional culture marked by teamwork, reflective dialogue, and improved teaching effectiveness. The study concludes that embedding structured mentoring systems into teacher education policies offers a sustainable and contextually relevant pathway for professional growth, enhanced instructional quality, and alignment with Pakistan's educational reforms and global standards.

INTRODUCTION

Teacher education is the cornerstone of a strong and sustainable education system. It equips future educators with the knowledge, skills, and values required to meet the complex demands of modern classrooms. However, one persistent challenge across teacher education systems—particularly in developing contexts like Pakistan—is ensuring that teachers not only enter the profession with competence but also continue to grow, remain motivated, and stay in the profession. Mentoring has emerged as a promising strategy to address this challenge.

Mentoring refers to a structured, supportive relationship between an experienced teacher (the mentor) and a novice or pre-service teacher (the mentee). It serves as a bridge between theoretical learning and practical teaching experience. Effective mentoring provides guidance, emotional support, and feedback, enabling mentees to refine their instructional skills, develop reflective practices, and navigate the complexities of school culture.

In teacher education institutions, mentoring enhances the quality of field experiences, strengthens teacher identity formation, and reduces professional isolation. Globally, evidence

suggests that schools with mentoring programs demonstrate higher teacher satisfaction and retention rates. Within Pakistan, however, formal mentoring programs in teacher education remain underdeveloped, often informal, and lack systemic policy support.

The purpose of this study is to explore the transformative role of mentoring in teacher education and its contribution to teacher professional growth and retention. It also seeks to identify the barriers and enablers of effective mentoring in educational institutions.

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES:

1. To examine the role of mentoring in supporting pre-service and in-service teacher development.
2. To explore the impact of mentoring on teacher confidence, instructional practices, and retention.
3. To identify the challenges and best practices in implementing mentoring programs within teacher education institutions.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS:

1. How does mentoring contribute to the professional development of teachers?
2. What factors influence the success or failure of mentoring programs?
3. How can mentoring be institutionalized to strengthen teacher education and retention?

REVIEW OF LITERATURE:

Concept of Mentoring in Teacher Education

Mentoring in teacher education refers to a structured process where experienced teachers guide, support, and empower novice or pre-service teachers to develop professional competencies and reflective practices. It is more than a supervisory role; it is a developmental partnership aimed at nurturing pedagogical confidence and professional identity (Ambrosetti & Dekkers, 2010). Through mentoring, beginning teachers learn to bridge Mentoring helps beginning teachers integrate the theoretical concepts taught in teacher education with the day-to-day instructional challenges they face in actual school settings.

Mentoring can be formal or informal. Formal mentoring involves institutionalized structures, clear objectives, and scheduled interactions, while informal mentoring evolves naturally through collegial relationships (Hudson, 2013). Both types contribute to teacher learning; however, structured programs tend to produce more consistent outcomes.

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical foundations of mentoring in teacher education are deeply embedded in the principles of learning that emphasize collaboration, observation, and reflection — all of which resonate strongly with the professional development context of teachers in Karachi and across Pakistan.

Vygotsky's Social Constructivist Theory (1978) highlights learning as a socially mediated process. In the context of Pakistani schools, where peer learning and classroom collaboration are increasingly encouraged, mentors act as "*more knowledgeable others*" who guide mentees through their *zone of proximal development*. This approach supports new and in-service teachers in developing classroom management skills, lesson planning competencies, and the confidence to integrate innovative teaching strategies within the National Curriculum of Pakistan.

Bandura's Social Learning Theory (1977) emphasizes that individuals learn behaviors, skills, and attitudes through observation and imitation. This concept is particularly relevant to government and private schools in Karachi, where teachers often learn from demonstration lessons, peer observations, and model teaching sessions conducted under mentoring programs. Mentees benefit from observing experienced mentors' practices—such as differentiated instruction, use of formative assessment, and digital tool integration—thereby fostering a culture of continuous professional growth.

Kolb's Experiential Learning Theory (1984) views learning as a cyclical process of concrete experience, reflection, conceptualization, and experimentation. Within the Pakistani context, mentoring reinforces this cycle by encouraging teachers to reflect on their classroom experiences, share challenges, and collaboratively design context-appropriate solutions. This reflective process is particularly valuable in diverse educational settings, such as multilingual classrooms in Karachi, where teachers adapt national curriculum goals to students varied linguistic and cultural backgrounds.

Together, these theories frame mentoring as an *interactive, reflective, and experiential process* that strengthens teacher education in Pakistan. By integrating social collaboration (Vygotsky), observational learning (Bandura), and reflective practice (Kolb), mentoring empowers teachers to enhance pedagogical skills, align with national standards, and contribute to quality education across Karachi and the wider Pakistani educational landscape.

Global Perspectives on Teacher Mentoring

Internationally, mentoring has been recognized as a cornerstone of effective teacher preparation and professional development. In countries such as Finland, the United States, and the United Kingdom, mentoring programs are formally integrated into teacher education curricula (Hobson & Malderez, 2013). Research consistently demonstrates that novice teachers who receive systematic mentoring exhibit greater professional confidence, improved instructional competence, and significantly lower attrition rates (Ingersoll & Strong, 2011).

In Finland, mentoring forms part of a broader professional culture that values collaboration, peer reflection, and lifelong learning. Finnish teachers engage in structured professional dialogues that link theory to practice, ensuring that new teachers transition smoothly into the teaching profession. Likewise, in the United States, the *Induction and Mentoring for New Teachers* programs support beginning educators through classroom observations, feedback sessions, and participation in professional learning communities (Smith & Ingersoll, 2004). In the United Kingdom, mentoring has evolved into a formal requirement within teacher induction frameworks, where mentors play a central role in developing teachers' pedagogical content knowledge, reflective habits, and classroom resilience.

When we draw parallels with Pakistan, similar approaches can be observed in the Aga Khan Development Network (AKDN) Education Services, Pakistan, which has pioneered structured Continuous Professional Development (CPD) programs for teachers. These initiatives mirror international best practices by embedding mentorship, peer observation, and reflective learning within local contexts. Under the CPD model, experienced teachers act as mentors who guide their colleagues through a continuous cycle of professional inquiry—observing lessons, co-

planning units, reflecting on student engagement, and identifying areas for pedagogical improvement.

This localized mentoring model resonates strongly with Kolb's Experiential Learning Theory (1984), as it encourages teachers to learn through experience, reflection, and collaborative experimentation. The AKDN framework also aligns with Vygotsky's Social Constructivist Theory (1978) by fostering social learning within communities of practice where teachers co-construct knowledge rather than work in isolation. In Karachi and other parts of Pakistan, these mentoring structures have been particularly effective in government and low-fee private schools, where resource constraints are offset by the strength of professional collaboration and reflective dialogue.

Hence, while global mentoring programs emphasize structured induction and peer collaboration, Pakistan's evolving mentoring landscape—especially through AKDN Education Services and regional CPD initiatives—demonstrates how international frameworks can be effectively adapted to local realities. By integrating global principles of mentorship into the national educational context, Pakistani educators are gradually building a sustainable culture of professional learning that values mentorship as a pathway to educational quality, teacher empowerment, and long-term institutional development.

Mentoring in Teacher Education in Pakistan

In Pakistan, teacher mentoring is an emerging yet underdeveloped area within the broader framework of teacher education. Historically, the focus of teacher training has been primarily on pre-service certification, emphasizing theoretical coursework over sustained, classroom-based mentorship. As a result, many novice teachers enter the profession with limited post-training guidance, facing professional isolation and early career fatigue (Ali, 2019).

Recognizing this gap, national education policies such as the National Professional Standards for Teachers (NPST) and the National Education Policy (NEP) have underscored the need for Continuous Professional Development (CPD) and mentoring as essential components of teacher growth. These frameworks advocate for teacher learning as a continuous process that promotes reflection, peer collaboration, and professional accountability. However, mentoring in many institutions remains informal, inconsistent, and dependent on individual initiatives rather than systematic policy integration (Khan, 2020).

To address these challenges, several reform-based projects have incorporated mentoring as a structured component of professional learning. For example, the USAID Teacher Education Project (2013–2018) successfully piloted mentoring programs that emphasized reflective practice and pedagogical improvement among both pre-service and in-service teachers. Evaluations from these initiatives revealed that consistent mentoring enhances teacher motivation, classroom innovation, and student engagement (Rehman & Qureshi, 2021).

A particularly noteworthy contribution within Pakistan's educational landscape is from the Aga Khan Development Network (AKDN) Education Services, Pakistan, through its Continuous Professional Development (CPD) Program. This model has been instrumental in institutionalizing mentorship within schools and teacher education centers. The AKDN CPD framework emphasizes school-based professional learning, where experienced educators act as mentors guiding their peers through lesson observations, collaborative planning, reflective

discussions, and classroom inquiry. This model draws upon global best practices but remains contextually grounded in Pakistan's linguistic, cultural, and systemic realities, particularly in urban centers like Karachi. The program mirrors Kolb's Experiential Learning Cycle (1984) and Vygotsky's Social Constructivist approach (1978), where learning is viewed as a social and reflective process.

In a parallel provincial effort, the Sindh Teachers Education Development Authority (STEDA) has emerged as a key institution supporting the professionalization of teachers in Sindh. STEDA's framework ensures that teacher education institutions adhere to national standards and that teachers receive accredited professional training aligned with the NPST. Through its policies and collaborations, STEDA has promoted mentoring-based professional development within both public and private teacher education systems. Its initiatives, such as capacity-building workshops, certification of teacher educators, and field-based mentoring support, serve as practical examples of institutional mentoring implementation. By bridging policy and practice, STEDA's work demonstrates how mentoring can be embedded as a sustainable element of teacher education governance in Sindh.

The synergy between AKDN's CPD approach and STEDA's provincial policy framework represents a promising direction for teacher mentoring in Pakistan. While AKDN demonstrates effective school-level mentoring and reflective practice, STEDA provides a regulatory and institutional foundation that can sustain and scale such initiatives across Sindh's teacher education landscape. Together, they illustrate that meaningful mentoring in Pakistan requires not only professional goodwill but also systemic support, structured models, and continuous monitoring.

In conclusion, mentoring in Pakistan's teacher education context is evolving from a peripheral activity into a core professional development mechanism. As STEDA strengthens the regulatory dimension and AKDN exemplifies practical, reflective mentorship, a hybrid model is emerging — one that combines policy structure, school-based learning, and peer mentoring. This integrated approach holds the potential to empower Pakistani teachers, enhance teaching quality, and nurture a sustainable culture of professional growth consistent with both national and global educational goals.

Challenges in Implementing Mentoring Programs

Despite its benefits, mentoring in teacher education faces multiple challenges:

- Lack of institutional support and absence of formal mentoring frameworks.
- Inadequate training of mentors, resulting in inconsistent guidance.
- Time constraints and excessive workloads that limit mentoring interactions.
- Cultural and hierarchical barriers, which discourage open dialogue between mentors and mentees.

Addressing these challenges requires policy alignment, mentor training, and integration of mentoring within teacher education curricula.

Summary of Literature Review

The literature consistently affirms that mentoring is a vital component of effective teacher education. It enhances teachers' professional identity, pedagogical confidence, and classroom performance. While international models demonstrate successful implementation through

structured programs, Pakistan's context calls for institutional frameworks and policy support to formalize mentoring as part of continuous professional development.

Therefore, this study seeks to contribute to the existing body of knowledge by exploring how mentoring can be systematically integrated into teacher education in Pakistan to enhance teacher retention and teaching quality.

The literature review forms the scholarly foundation of a research paper. Its purpose is to revisit and analyze the work of previous researchers relevant to the selected topic. Rather than simply describing earlier studies, the literature review contextualizes your research by outlining existing knowledge, identifying gaps, and establishing the rationale for your objectives or hypotheses. In doing so, the researcher critically examines, organizes, and integrates insights from prior scholarship to build a coherent understanding of the field.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY:

Research Design

This study adopted a mixed-methods design, integrating quantitative and qualitative strands to obtain a well-rounded understanding of mentoring in teacher education. The quantitative phase focused on assessing teachers' perceptions of mentoring effectiveness, whereas the qualitative phase examined their lived experiences and reflective insights. Using both methods enabled triangulation of data, which strengthened the depth, credibility, and overall validity of the findings.

This approach allowed triangulation of data, ensuring depth, reliability, and validity in the findings.

Population and Sample

The study population consisted of pre-service and in-service teachers working in both private and government schools in an urban district of Pakistan. A purposive sampling technique was used to select participants who had direct experience either as mentors or mentees within their institutions.

A total of 60 participants were selected:

- 30 teachers from private schools
- 30 teachers from government schools

The selected schools were anonymized in all data reporting to maintain confidentiality and adhere to research ethics. For the purpose of this paper, they are referred to as Private School A, Private School B, Government School X, and Government School Y.

Research Instruments

Two research instruments were used for data collection:

a) Questionnaire (Quantitative Tool)

A structured questionnaire was designed to measure teachers' perceptions of mentoring effectiveness, support mechanisms, and impact on professional growth.

The questionnaire included **25 items** divided into three sections:

1. Mentoring Practices – frequency, structure, and mentor accessibility.
2. Professional Growth – impact on teaching confidence, instructional planning, and classroom management.
3. Institutional Support – administrative encouragement, peer collaboration, and training opportunities.

Each statement was assessed using a five-point Likert scale, where participants indicated their level of agreement from 1 = *Strongly Disagree* to 5 = *Strongly Agree*.

The questionnaire was pilot-tested with 10 teachers to ensure reliability and clarity, achieving a Cronbach's Alpha coefficient of 0.87, indicating strong internal consistency.

b) Semi-Structured Interviews (Qualitative Tool)

To gain deeper insights, semi-structured interviews were conducted with 10 selected participants (5 from private and 5 from government schools).

Interview questions explored topics such as:

- Teachers' experiences with mentoring programs.
- Perceived benefits and challenges of mentoring.
- Institutional culture and administrative support.
- Suggestions for improving mentoring practices.

Each interview lasted approximately 30–40 minutes and was conducted in English or Urdu, depending on the participants' preference. Notes were taken manually, and key themes were identified through coding.

Data Collection Procedure

After obtaining permission from school administrations and ensuring participants' voluntary consent, data were collected over a four-week period.

- Questionnaires were distributed in person to teachers during professional meetings.
- Interviews were scheduled at convenient times to avoid disrupting school routines.

All collected data were anonymized, coded numerically, and securely stored to maintain confidentiality.

Data Analysis

The analysis of data is carried out in two stages corresponding to the quantitative and qualitative components of the study.

Quantitative Analysis

Responses collected through the questionnaires were processed using SPSS (Version 26).

Descriptive statistics such as means, percentages, and standard deviation- were generated to provide an overall summary of all participants' responses. In addition, Independent sample t-tests were conducted to examine differences in mentoring perceptions between teachers working in private and government schools.

Qualitative Analysis

The interview transcripts were examined using a thematic analysis approach based on Braun and Clarke's (2006) framework. The analysis progressed through the following steps:

1. Becoming familiar with the data
2. Generating initial codes
3. Organizing codes into preliminary themes
4. Refining and reviewing the emerging themes
5. Clearly defining and naming each theme
6. Compiling a coherent narrative of the findings

3.6 Ethical Considerations

The research adhered to standard ethical guidelines for educational research.

- Participation was voluntary, and informed consent was obtained.
- School names and participant identities were kept anonymous to ensure confidentiality.
- Data were used solely for academic purposes and stored securely.
- This ethical approach ensured participants' trust, honesty, and openness in sharing their experiences.

3.7 Limitations of the Study

While the study offers valuable insights, certain limitations exist:

- The sample was limited to one district and may not represent all schools in Pakistan.
- Self-reported data may involve personal bias.
- The time constraint restricted longitudinal observation of mentoring effects.

Despite these limitations, the study provides meaningful implications for strengthening mentoring frameworks in teacher education institutions.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Results and Findings:

This section presents the results derived from both the quantitative and qualitative data. The analysis explores teachers' perceptions of mentoring practices, its impact on professional development, and the institutional support provided in both private and government schools.

Quantitative Findings

Overview

A total of 60 teachers (30 from private and 30 from government schools) participated in the questionnaire survey. Descriptive statistics and comparative analyses were conducted to evaluate the perceived effectiveness of mentoring programs.

Table 1. Key Themes—Mentoring, Growth, Support

No	Category	Private Schools (Mean)	Government School (Mean)	Overall Mean
1	Mentoring Practices	4.21	3.48	3.84
2	Professional Growth	4.35	3.72	4.03
3	Institution Support	4.12	3.29	3.71

Interpretation

- Teachers in private schools reported stronger mentoring structures, frequent mentor–mentee meetings, and better institutional follow-up compared to government schools.
- Government school teachers indicated limited formal mentoring; interactions were often unstructured and based on seniority rather than developmental guidance.
- Overall, mentoring had a positive correlation ($r = 0.68$) with teacher professional growth, suggesting that effective mentoring contributes substantially to skill enhancement and job satisfaction.

Inferential Analysis

An independent sample t-test revealed a statistically significant difference between private and government school teachers' perceptions of mentoring effectiveness ($t = 3.42$, $p < 0.01$). This indicates that private school mentoring programs are perceived as more structured, reflective, and supportive.

Qualitative Findings

Semi-structured interviews with 10 teachers (5 private, 5 government) provided deeper insights into the lived experiences of mentoring. Data were analyzed thematically, and three major themes emerged:

1. Mentoring as a Catalyst for Professional Growth
2. Institutional Challenges and Structural Gaps
3. Emotional and Motivational Dimensions of Mentoring

Theme 1: Mentoring as a Catalyst for Professional Growth

Teachers consistently described mentoring as a “turning point” in their professional development. Participants emphasized that mentoring improved their lesson planning, classroom management, and confidence in delivering content.

“When I started teaching, I felt lost. My mentor helped me reflect on my classroom methods and gave me strategies to engage students better.” — *Private School Teacher A*

“Mentoring gave me direction. I realized I could improve each lesson through reflection and feedback.” — *Government School Teacher X*

The findings affirm that mentorship enhances reflective practice and continuous learning, aligning with Kolb’s experiential learning model.

Theme 2: Institutional Challenges and Structural Gaps

Both private and government school teachers reported barriers in implementing effective mentoring systems. Government school teachers cited *time constraints, lack of formal policy, and absence of training for mentors*. “We have experienced teachers, but no structured mentoring system. It’s all informal.” — *Government School Teacher Y*

Private school teachers noted that while mentoring exists, it often lacks consistent follow-up and institutional recognition. “Mentoring is encouraged here, but there’s no reward or evaluation system linked to it.” — *Private School Teacher B*

This highlights the need for institutionalized mentoring frameworks supported by school leadership.

Theme 3: Emotional and Motivational Dimensions of Mentoring

Participants shared that mentoring not only improved teaching skills but also provided emotional reassurance and motivation, especially for novice teachers facing early-career anxiety.

“My mentor helped me overcome my self-doubt. Knowing that someone believes in me made a huge difference.” — *Private School Teacher C*

This finding underscores the psychosocial aspect of mentoring, where emotional support complements professional guidance, fostering teacher retention and satisfaction.

Integration of Quantitative and Qualitative Results

The integration of both data sets reveals a clear pattern:

- Quantitatively, mentoring correlates positively with professional growth and satisfaction.
- Qualitatively, mentoring provides emotional, instructional, and institutional support that strengthens teacher identity.

While private schools demonstrate more structured mentoring practices, government schools possess significant potential if mentoring is formalized and supported through policy and leadership initiatives.

Summary of Findings

Mentoring significantly contributes to teacher confidence, classroom effectiveness, and retention. Private school teachers benefit from more consistent mentoring mechanisms compared to government school teachers. Lack of institutional policies, mentor training, and recognition systems are major challenges. Mentoring also plays a crucial emotional role, fostering a sense of belonging and professional resilience among teachers. These findings confirm that mentoring is not merely a training tool but a transformative professional relationship essential for sustainable teacher education.

DISCUSSION:

This study explored the role of mentoring in enhancing teacher education and retention across selected private and government schools in Karachi, Pakistan. Using a mixed-methods approach, it sought to understand teachers' perceptions, experiences, and challenges associated with mentoring programs. The results highlight that while mentoring significantly contributes to professional growth and teacher satisfaction, its implementation varies considerably between private and government institutions.

Mentoring as a Pathway to Professional Growth

Findings revealed that teachers across both sectors recognized mentoring as a key factor in improving instructional competence, reflective teaching, and classroom management. According to Vygotsky's Social Constructivist Theory (1978), learning occurs through social interaction, with mentors guiding novices by providing the expertise and support that learners do not yet possess. The mentoring relationship provided teachers with opportunities to reflect, receive feedback, and adapt their teaching strategies — processes that mirror Kolb's Experiential Learning Cycle (1984) of reflection, conceptualization, and application.

The quantitative findings demonstrated a strong positive correlation between mentoring and professional development ($r = 0.68$), confirming Ingersoll and Strong's (2011) assertion that structured mentoring improves teacher performance and retention. Similarly, qualitative insights showed that teachers valued mentorship as both a learning and confidence-building mechanism. This reinforces the idea that mentoring is not merely instructional support, but also an avenue for professional identity formation and continuous improvement.

Institutional Differences Between Private and Government Schools in Karachi

The comparative analysis between private and government schools in Karachi revealed distinct differences in mentoring practices.

- Private schools reported more structured and formal mentoring arrangements, with scheduled meetings, observation sessions, and follow-up discussions. Mentors in private institutions often acted as instructional coaches, helping mentees design lesson plans and integrate modern pedagogical strategies.
- In contrast, government schools exhibited largely informal mentoring systems, often dependent on individual initiative or senior-junior teacher relationships. Institutional policies supporting mentoring were minimal or absent, echoing Khan's (2020) observation that teacher mentoring in Pakistan lacks systematic implementation.
- These disparities suggest that institutional culture and leadership commitment play crucial roles in determining the success of mentoring programs. Schools that prioritize professional collaboration and allocate time for peer learning tend to foster stronger mentoring outcomes.

Emotional and Motivational Aspects of Mentoring

The findings also emphasized the emotional dimension of mentoring, particularly in reducing early-career stress and fostering teacher well-being. Teachers expressed that mentors served as emotional anchors, offering reassurance and guidance during professional challenges. This echoes Bandura's Social Learning Theory (1977), which highlights the importance of social modeling and emotional reinforcement in learning environments.

In Karachi's context — where teacher workloads, class sizes, and systemic pressures are considerable — such emotional support is particularly vital. Mentoring thus serves not only as a developmental mechanism but also as a retention strategy, reducing burnout and increasing job satisfaction.

Policy and Practice Implications

The study underscores the need for **formal mentoring frameworks** within teacher education and school systems in Karachi and beyond. Policymakers, educational leaders, and teacher training institutions should consider the following implications:

Institutionalize Mentoring in Teacher Education Programs:

Mentoring should be integrated into pre-service and in-service teacher education curricula to ensure continuity between training and practice.

Training and Certification for Mentors:

Mentor teachers require professional development to provide constructive feedback, foster reflective dialogue, and model effective teaching practices.

Administrative and Time Support:

Schools must allocate dedicated time for mentoring sessions and recognize mentoring contributions in teacher evaluations.

Collaboration Between Public and Private Sectors:

Public-private partnerships in Karachi could facilitate resource sharing, mentor exchanges, and joint capacity-building workshops.

Monitoring and Evaluation:

Continuous assessment of mentoring outcomes is necessary to refine practices and sustain their impact.

Alignment with Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 4

The study's findings align with SDG 4: Quality Education, particularly Target 4.c, which emphasizes increasing the supply of qualified and professionally trained teachers. Effective mentoring strengthens teacher education systems by promoting ongoing professional learning, ensuring classroom effectiveness, and improving student outcomes. In Karachi's educational context, mentoring represents a cost-effective and scalable approach to elevating teacher quality and supporting educational equity.

To sum up, the discussion reinforces mentoring as a transformative practice within teacher education — one that blends professional skill-building with emotional and institutional support. While mentoring practices in Karachi's private schools appear more mature, the potential for systemic adoption in government schools is substantial if supported by policy and leadership commitment. Mentoring is therefore not an optional enhancement but a core component of sustainable teacher education reform in Pakistan.

CONCLUSION

This study examined the transformative role of mentoring in teacher education and its contribution to teacher retention, with a focus on selected private and government schools in Karachi, Pakistan. The findings clearly demonstrate that mentoring plays a vital role in enhancing teachers' professional competence, reflective capacity, and emotional resilience. It also bridges the gap between theoretical training and practical classroom realities.

The study revealed notable differences between mentoring practices in private and government schools. Private institutions tended to have more structured mentoring arrangements with formalized feedback and support mechanisms, while government schools often relied on informal peer assistance. Despite these limitations, the willingness of teachers in government

schools to learn collaboratively and support one another highlights strong professional commitment and potential for growth if systematic mentoring frameworks are introduced. From the perspective of an educator who has experienced both structured professional development and field-level realities in government settings, it became evident that mentoring serves as an empowering force. It not only supports new teachers in gaining confidence and classroom control but also revitalizes experienced teachers by engaging them as reflective practitioners. The collaborative environment fostered through mentoring leads to improved teaching quality, better student engagement, and enhanced professional satisfaction.

Overall, the research affirms that mentoring is not a peripheral activity but a core pillar of effective teacher education and school improvement. Its structured integration within educational policy and practice in Karachi—and Pakistan more broadly—can serve as a sustainable pathway to achieving professional excellence and educational equity.

Recommendations

- Based on the study's findings and reflective insights, the following recommendations are proposed for teacher education institutions, school administrators, and policymakers: Teacher education authorities should design a standardized mentoring framework that defines mentor selection criteria, training modules, and evaluation procedures. Such a framework should be applicable across both private and government schools.
- Regular mentor training workshops should be organized through provincial education departments and teacher education universities to enhance mentoring skills such as feedback delivery, coaching, and reflective dialogue.
- Mentors should receive formal recognition through certification, career progression points, or performance appraisals to encourage sustained participation and motivation. Schools in Karachi can develop *Professional Learning Circles* or *Teacher Support Groups* to facilitate peer mentoring and continuous learning among teachers. Such communities have proven successful in education initiatives led by organizations promoting teacher development in the region.
- Experience-sharing sessions and joint teacher development workshops between private and government institutions can promote mutual learning, allowing government schools to benefit from structured mentoring models.
- Teacher training programs should embed mentoring components that pair pre-service teachers with experienced educators during practicum placements to ensure a smoother transition into full-time teaching.
- School leadership should allocate time within the timetable for mentoring sessions and create monitoring mechanisms to track progress and impact on teaching performance.
- Teachers should be guided to maintain reflective journals and participate in post-lesson discussions with mentors to internalize learning experiences and improve instructional planning.

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