

Mentoring Matters: A Transformative Approach to Teacher Education and Retention

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Abstract: Teacher Mentoring is an essential component of professional development that will enhance the professional competence of educators, improve the instructional quality of educators and promote long term teacher motivation. This research aims to examine the transformative effects of structured mentorship programs for both public and private school systems in Karachi, Pakistan. Through the use of qualitative information obtained from teacher educators, school-based mentors, and beginning educators, this research will explore the ways in which mentoring promotes early career educators' reflective teaching practices, pedagogical creativity, and emotional resiliency. The research also provides an overview of mentoring within global best practices, while providing a description of national initiatives, specifically the Sindh Education Reform Initiative (SERI), in the context of promoting teacher development.

These include the Teacher Education Development Authority (STEDA), as well as the Aga Khan Development Network (AKDN) Education Services' Continuous Professional Development (CPD) frameworks; these are examples of how the School-based and Collaborative Mentoring Model is able to bridge this long-standing gap for many teachers between their coursework at university or college and their in-classroom realities, and through which many teachers can learn from each other as peers, develop confidence in their practice and share problem solving strategies with one another.

The findings have demonstrated that mentoring is beneficial for supporting new teachers in the process of transitioning from being a student teacher into a professional as well as creating an overall positive school culture which includes working together, reflective communication, and improving the quality of teaching. The findings suggest that integrating formal mentoring programs into national teacher education policies could be a sustainable way of providing context-based support for both professional development and improvement of instructional quality and provide support for the implementation of Pakistan's Educational Reforms and internationally recognized standards.

INTRODUCTION

Teacher Education is at the heart of a robust and sustainable education system. Teacher Education provides prospective Teachers with the knowledge, skills and values necessary for effective teaching in today's modern classroom and all of the challenges that come with it. However, one of the most significant barriers in teacher education systems especially in developing countries like Pakistan is having teachers who are competent when they start their first day on the job; and then having them grow professionally, be motivated and stay in the profession long-term. Mentoring has been identified as an innovative approach to addressing this barrier.

Mentoring is a planned, supportive relationship between an experienced teacher (mentor), and a new or pre-service teacher (mentee); it acts as a connection between what has been learned in theory and what has been applied in practice; The effective mentoring process offers the mentee guidance, emotional support and feedback to enhance their instructional abilities, develop reflective practices and assist them in navigating the complexities of the school community.

In teacher education, mentoring increases the quality of experience while in a school setting, increases the development of a teacher's professional identity, and decreases feelings of professional isolation (in the classroom). There is global research which demonstrates that schools who have formal mentoring programs have increased levels of teacher job satisfaction and teacher retention. In Pakistan, however, there are very few formalized mentoring programs within teacher education, and many are unstructured and informal; as such, there is also little to no policy-based support for these programs.

The objective of this research is to investigate how mentoring influences the transformative aspects of a teacher's experience in teacher education and how it influences teacher professional growth and job retention. The study will also provide an overview of barriers and enablers that influence the effectiveness of mentoring in educational settings.

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES:

1. To analyze the role of mentoring for the support of both pre- service teachers and in-service teachers' professional development.
2. To assess the impact of mentoring on teacher self-confidence, instruction and job retention.
3. Identify barriers and best practices related to implementing mentoring programs in 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?

2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE:

2.1 Concept of Mentoring in Teacher Education

Research questions:

1. How does mentoring support teacher's professional development?
2. Which factors affect the success or failure of mentoring programs?
3. How can an institution formalize mentoring to increase teacher education and improve teacher retention?

Mentoring is defined as a structured way for experienced teachers to provide guidance, support and empowerment to pre-service or new teachers so they can develop the professional competencies and reflective practice needed to become successful educators.

a developmental partnership designed to foster confidence as a pedagogue and to develop the professional identity of the beginning teacher (Ambrosetti & Dekkers, 2010). As a result of mentoring, new teachers are able to connect the theoretical ideas that were presented to them in their teacher preparation program to the practical instructional issues they are facing every day in their own classroom settings.

Mentoring may take the form of either a formal mentorship relationship or an informal mentorship relationship.

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. Formal mentorship is formalized as an institutionally based structure of goals that provide a plan for regular meetings between mentors and mentees. Formal mentoring is contrasted with informal mentoring that is less formalized as it occurs organically in the form of collegial relationships. Both formal and informal mentoring support the learning of teachers; however, formal mentoring has demonstrated more predictable results than informal mentoring.

2.2 Theoretical Framework

The theory that supports formal and informal mentoring in the process of preparing teachers is based on the theories of learning that support collaborative learning, observational learning, and reflective learning. All of these theories have relevance to the professional development needs of teachers in Karachi and all of Pakistan.

In Vygotsky's Social Constructivist theory (1978), learning is a social construction that occurs when we learn with peers and from others; therefore, in many Pakistani schools where there is an increasing emphasis on collaborative and peer-based learning environments; mentors can be viewed as "the more knowledgeable other" for their mentee by helping them navigate their Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD). Therefore, this social constructivist model can assist both new and experienced teachers develop their classroom management, lesson planning, and the self-efficacy to implement innovative instructional techniques into the National Curriculum of Pakistan.

Bandura's (1977) Social Learning Theory holds that an individual will learn a behavior or skill based on what they have seen or observed others doing. Bandura's theory has been used to describe how students learn in school but can also be applied to how teachers develop their teaching skills. Teachers in both public and private schools in Karachi are able to learn from demonstrations and model lessons which provide them with the opportunity to observe their peers' teaching practices; this includes learning about different instructional strategies, assessing student progress, and using technology in their classrooms. As teachers learn by observing and imitating other teachers who may have more experience in these areas, it develops a culture of continued professional development for all teachers.

Within Kolb's Experiential Learning Cycle (1984), which defines learning as a circular process that involves a concrete experience followed by reflection, then conceptualization, then experimentation; mentoring within the context of Pakistan reinforces each stage of the learning cycle by providing teachers with opportunities for reflection regarding their own teaching practices/experiences; sharing of problems/challenges they have faced; and shared problem solving/collective development of solutions that are applicable to their particular classroom environment. A major advantage of using the reflective process in mentoring as mentioned above can be seen in the variety of educational environments such as multilingual classrooms in Karachi, Pakistan. In these types of classrooms, teachers modify the national curriculum for the various linguistic/cultural contexts of their students.

Mentoring together with its three other theoretical frameworks (reflective practice by Kolb; observational learning by Bandura; and social collaboration by Vygotsky) describe mentoring as a collaborative, experiential and reflective process for enhancing teacher education in Pakistan. Mentoring through combining these theoretical frameworks enables social collaboration (Vygotsky); observational learning (Bandura); and reflective practice (Kolb); all of which will help teachers to enhance their pedagogy, adhere to national standards, and assist in achieving quality education throughout Karachi and beyond in the Pakistani education system.

2.3 Global Perspectives on Teacher Mentoring

Mentoring is an international standard in preparing teachers to be successful, and it is also recognized as a key component of both teacher education and professional growth; for example, mentoring programs have become formalized components of teacher education programs in Finland, the United States and England (Hobson & Malderez, 2013). The research on mentoring is very consistent in showing that novice teachers who receive systemic mentoring have higher levels of professional confidence, higher instructional competency, and lower attrition rates compared to those who do not receive mentoring (Ingersoll & Strong, 2011).

Mentoring is an integral component of a much larger and collaborative professional culture within Finland where there are many opportunities for peer reflection as well as continuous professional development and learning throughout one's career. As a result of this, new teachers in Finland engage in professional dialogue with their peers in which they can translate theoretical

knowledge to practical experience and be supported in making a successful transition from preparation to the classroom. In the U.S., beginning educators have been supported by The Induction and Mentoring for New Teachers programs which allow beginning educators to gain experiences such as; class room observation, receiving feedback on instruction and being involved in a variety of professional learning community settings (Smith & Ingersoll, 2004).

The concept of mentoring as a formal program or requirement has developed significantly in the United Kingdom through its teacher induction framework; and mentors are at the center of this development by contributing to their professional development by teaching them pedagogical content knowledge, creating reflective practices, and developing classroom resilience.

By drawing on similarities with Pakistan, it is apparent that similar models exist in Pakistan such as The Aga Khan Development Network (AKDN) Education Services, Pakistan, who have been leaders in providing structured continuous professional development (CPD) programs for teachers.

Incorporating mentoring, peer observation, and reflective practice into the school environment in accordance with global standards is an element of the CPD model. Teachers have the opportunity to work with experienced mentors who support them through a continuous cycle of inquiry-based learning that includes observing and evaluating students' experiences in class; co-creating and planning units of study; providing and receiving feedback on students' engagement with lesson content and activities; and establishing goals for improving instructional approaches through ongoing collaboration. The CPD model also incorporates a strong experiential component — similar to Kolb's Experiential Learning Theory (1984) — which supports teacher development based upon direct involvement in teaching and learning activities, combined with critical thinking about those experiences, and experimentation to improve teaching practice.

The AKDN framework is congruent to the social constructivist theory of Vygotsky (1978). It fosters social learning through communities of practice that foster co-construction of knowledge among teachers as opposed to working independently. The structure of mentorship has worked well in the areas of Karachi and throughout Pakistan, especially in government and lower cost private schools, due to the fact that resource limitations were overcome by the power of collaborative professional relationships and dialogic reflection.

Therefore, while structured induction and peer collaboration in global mentoring programs address the structural challenges to mentoring globally, Pakistan's mentoring landscape has evolved — particularly through AKDN Education Services and regional Continuing Professional Development (CPD) — and demonstrates how mentoring models from around the world can be localized. The integration of global mentoring frameworks into the national educational system is creating a sustainable, locally-empowered culture of professional learning for Pakistani educators by providing an accessible model of mentorship as a means to improve quality education, empower teachers and foster long-term institutional growth.

2.4 Mentoring in Teacher Education in Pakistan

Teacher mentoring in Pakistan is growing as a field; however, it is still at its developing stages. Historically, teacher education in Pakistan has focused largely on the pre-service certification aspect of teaching which has emphasized the theoretical aspects of coursework over sustained classroom-based mentorship. This has resulted in many new teachers entering into their first years of employment without sufficient post training support or direction that would help to combat their professional isolation and early career burnout (Ali, 2019). The lack of a formal framework to support mentorship is recognized by both national education policies (the National Education Policy and the National Professional Standards for Teachers) which emphasize the necessity of Continuous Professional Development (CPD), and mentoring as key factors in supporting teacher development. These policies outline teacher learning as an ongoing process, including, but not limited to; reflection, peer-based collaboration and professional accountability. Yet, despite these national frameworks, mentoring continues to be carried out informally and

sporadically in most schools with little evidence of a consistent approach to integrating mentoring into school policy (Khan, 2020).

In order to help with the problems of lack of training, poor teaching methods, and low morale many project-based reforms which are focused on professional development included a mentorship structure for the development of their participants' skills. A successful pilot mentoring program was developed through the USAID Teacher Education Project (2013-2018) and it used mentoring to develop reflective practice and improve pedagogy in both pre-service and in-service teachers. In addition to this, the evaluations from the projects showed that when mentoring is consistently available, there will be increases in teacher motivation, innovative approaches to the classroom, and increased student involvement and participation (Rehman & Qureshi, 2021).

The Aga Khan Development Network (AKDN) Education Services' Pakistan branch, through its Continuous Professional Development (CPD) program, has made a significant contribution to the structure of education in Pakistan. The AKDN CPD model has served to institutionalize mentoring into school systems and teacher training programs. The AKDN's CPD model emphasizes professional development that occurs within schools, which utilizes experienced teachers as peer mentors for lesson observation, joint lesson planning, peer dialogue about teaching practices, and research and inquiry regarding student learning.

The Model utilizes global best practice; however, it is contextually based on Pakistani linguistic and cultural realities and to some degree systemic realities especially in urban areas such as Karachi. The model also follows the Experiential Learning Cycle of David Kolb (1984) and Vygotsky's Social Constructivist theory (1978) both of which view learning as a social and reflective process. In addition, at the provincial level there is an emerging institutional structure for the development of teacher professionalism in Sindh province, the Sindh Teachers Education Development Authority (STEDA).

Through the NPST, STEDA's framework helps ensure that all teacher education programs are based on national standards and provide certified, professionally trained teachers, while through collaboration and policy, STEDA has developed mentoring-based professional development throughout Sindh for both the public and private teacher education systems. The many ways STEDA promotes the institutional application of mentoring (through workshops, certification of teacher educators, and field-based mentoring) illustrate a real-world example of how mentoring can be built into the structure of teacher education administration in Sindh, by connecting policy to practice.

AKDN's CPD approach to mentoring teachers has found synergy with STEDA's provincial education policy framework; this is an encouraging route for developing teacher mentoring in Pakistan. As AKDN demonstrates the successful use of school-based mentoring and reflective practice, STEDA offers a supportive regulatory and institutional structure for sustaining and scaling such programs throughout Sindh's education landscape for teacher development. Thus, while goodwill among professionals can lead to successful mentoring in Pakistan, it requires systemic support through structural models and ongoing evaluation.

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.

2.5 Challenges in Implementing Mentoring Programs

The potential for this holistic approach is to provide Pakistani teachers with the opportunity to grow professionally; as well as to increase the quality of their teaching practices to create a sustainable environment of professional development consistent with both local and international education objectives.

There are several challenges that mentoring in teacher education face:

- No institutional support nor a formal mentoring framework exist in many cases.

- Mentors often receive little or no preparation in mentoring leading to the varying levels of support they can offer.
- Both time constraints and heavy workloads limit how much mentoring takes place.
- Culture and hierarchy may create barriers that will prevent mentors from being able to engage in an open dialogue with their mentees.

These issues require aligned policy, mentor education, and incorporation of mentoring into teacher education curriculum.

2.6 Summary of Literature Review

The Research has repeatedly shown that mentoring is an important aspect of developing effective teacher education. Mentoring improves teachers' professionalism, their sense of pedagogical confidence, and their ability to perform well in the classroom. However, while the international community has successfully implemented formalized mentoring through structured mentoring programs, the same cannot be said about Pakistan due to lack of institutional frameworks and policy support to formalize mentoring as part of ongoing professional development in teacher education.

Thus, this research aims to add to the body of literature on this topic by examining the ways in which mentoring can be formally incorporated into teacher education in Pakistan to improve teacher retention rates and overall teaching quality.

A Literature Review provides an academic base for a Research Paper. The primary function of a Literature Review is to assess and review the findings of other scholars that relate to the research area you have chosen as the focus of your investigation. A Literature Review does not only summarize other people's research; it establishes how your research fits into the established body of knowledge in the area of study (i.e., outlines what is already known) and identifies areas where there are no known answers (gaps); and establishes the rationale for your objectives or hypothesis. Ultimately, through critical examination, organization, and integration of the collective knowledge of all relevant prior scholarship, the researcher creates a cohesive understanding of the subject matter.

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY:

3.1 Research Design

The study employed an integrated research strategy (a mixed-methods approach) that used both quantitative and qualitative approaches in order to provide a broad perspective on the mentoring process within pre-service teacher education programs. The quantitative aspect was primarily concerned with measuring teachers' perceptions of the effectiveness of mentoring; while the qualitative component provided insight into their individual experiences and reflections as a result of mentoring. The use of both quantitative and qualitative components facilitated the ability for data triangulation, which increased the quality of the findings through increased depth, validity, and credibility.

3.2 Population and Sample

Teachers in both public (government) and private schools located in a large city in Pakistan made up the sample population for this study.

In order to identify the participants that would be involved in the study, the researcher employed a purposeful sampling strategy in order to identify those participants that have either been mentors or mentees with their own institution.

60 participants were selected in total:

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

The schools from which the participants were chosen were not identified by name in any of the data collection to protect participant confidentiality and to comply with ethical considerations of research. The schools will be referred to as Private School A, Private School B, Government School X and Government School Y.

3.3 Research Instruments

Two research tools were employed in collecting data:

a) A Quantitative Survey (Questionnaire)

A structured survey instrument was created to assess teacher perceptions as it pertains to mentoring's perceived effectiveness; support structures; and impact on the professional development of teachers.

The survey consisted of 25 questions that are divided into three categories:

Section One Mentoring Practices- frequency, formality, and access to the mentor.

Section Two Professional Development- Impact of mentoring practices on teacher's teaching confidence; instructional design/planning; and classroom management practices.

Section Three Institutional Support- Administrative support for mentoring programs; peer collaboration for mentoring purposes; and availability of training for mentoring practices.

Participants rated each item on a 5 point Likert Scale; responses ranged from 1= "Strongly Disagree" to 5= "Strongly Agree".

A pilot test was conducted on a small group of 10 teachers to establish reliability and to evaluate the clarity of the items, resulting in a Cronbach's Alpha of .87, representing high internal consistency.

b) Semi-structured interviews (qualitative tool), to have a better understanding of what the teachers in our sample experienced, we interviewed ten participants (five from public and five from private schools). The interview questions were structured around the following main areas:

- Teachers' experiences with mentoring programs.
- Benefits and drawbacks of mentoring perceived by teachers.
- Administrative support and school institutional culture.

Suggestions for improvement of mentoring practices.

Interviews with each participant lasted around 30-40 minutes and were done either in English or Urdu; this depended on the participant's choice of language.

Coding was used to identify key themes after notes were recorded manually.

3.4 Data Collection Procedure

Following approval from school administrators and confirmation that all participants provided their consent voluntarily, the data collection took place over the course of four weeks.

The questionnaires were distributed directly to the participating teachers by hand during their regular professional development meetings.

The interviews for this study were scheduled to occur at the most convenient time for the teacher involved so as to minimize disruptions to the normal routine of the school.

Data collected were de-identified (anonymized) and coded using numerical codes to protect confidentiality and securely store.

3.5 Data Analysis

Two different levels of data analysis are performed for this research; that is to say: the quantitative level and the qualitative level.

Quantitative Analysis

All questionnaire responses were analyzed using SPSS (Version 26) for descriptive statistical results (means, percentiles, and standard deviations), to present a general description of all respondents' answers. In addition,

Independent t-tests have been used to determine if there exist differences in the way teachers perceive mentoring in private and public schools.

Qualitative Analysis

The interview transcripts were analyzed for patterns or commonalities using thematic analysis as per Braun and Clarke (2006). This process was to be completed in six stages:

Stage 1 - Familiarization with the data

Stage 2 - Developing initial codes

Stage 3 - Identifying preliminary themes from these codes

Stage 4 - Reviewing, developing, and refining the preliminary themes

Stage 5 - Defining clearly and providing a name for each theme

Stage 6 - Creating an integrated story that includes the results

3.6 Ethical Considerations

the research followed the usual ethical practices of educational research.

- participation in this research study was completely voluntary; and all participants provided a formal (informed) consent before participating;
- school names & all identifiable information on each participant were anonymized to protect participant confidentiality;
- all data collected from this study were strictly for academic purposes, and stored in a secure manner;
- this ethical practice contributed to the participants' sense of trust, honesty, and willingness to share their experiences with researchers.

3.7 Limitations of the Study

Though this research contributes much to our knowledge base mentoring; however, there are some constraints or limitations that should be considered:

- Only a single school district was used as a sample which could limit the representation of other school district throughout Pakistan.
- Self-reporting of data can lead to involve respondent bias.
- Because of time constraint, longitudinal analysis of mentoring effects was limited.

This research has several important implications regarding the development of mentoring models in teacher education institutions.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Results and Findings:

The next section provides an examination of the data collected using both qualitative and quantitative methods. The study analyzed teacher attitudes toward school-based mentoring practices, their beliefs regarding how this effect teacher development, as well as the degree of institutional support offered for mentoring within each type of school setting, i.e., public and private.

4.1 Quantitative Findings

4.1.1 Overview

A total of sixty ($n = 60$), thirty ($n = 30$), public-school and thirty ($n = 30$), private-school teachers completed a survey questionnaire. This evaluation included descriptive statistical analysis, as well as comparison of responses.

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

- Private School teachers stated that they have greater support from their institution through formal mentoring practices as well as regular meetings between mentors and mentees and follow-up compared to teachers in public/Government Schools.
- Government School teachers reported that there is little formal support of mentoring for them; most interaction is informal and by way of seniority rather than developmental guidance.
- The overall relationship between mentoring and teacher professional development was found to be positively correlated ($r=0.68$), indicating that good quality mentoring has a significant influence on teachers' skills development and job satisfaction.

4.1.2 Inferential Analysis

A statistical analysis was completed by an independent sample t-test to test if there is a statistically significant difference in how effective mentoring was for both private and government school teachers ($p < .01$). The results from the t-test were $t=3.42$; indicating that private school mentoring programs appear to be more structured, more supportive, and provide more opportunities for reflection than government school mentoring programs.

4.2 Qualitative Findings

4.2.1 Overview

Semi-structured interviews were also conducted with 10 teachers; 5 private school and 5 government school, to gain a better understanding of their lived experience in mentoring. Themes that were developed through thematic data analysis are presented below.

1. Mentoring as an Accelerator of Personal and Professional Development
2. Challenges and Structural Barriers to Institutions
3. The Emotional and Psychological Dimensions of Mentoring

Theme 1: Mentoring as a Catalyst for Professional Development

Mentors viewed mentoring as a catalyst for teachers' personal and professional growth.

Teachers indicated they developed lessons plans, classroom management techniques and gained confidence to present the curriculum as a result of the mentoring experience.

"When I first began teaching, I was lost. I had a mentor who allowed me to reflect on how I was using the classroom for student engagement and provided me with strategies." Private School Teacher A "Through Mentoring I received Direction...I learned I could continually enhance each of my lessons through Reflection and Feedback." Government School Teacher X

These study results support the fact that mentorship contributes to developing reflective practice and continuous improvement through the experiential learning model of Kolb.

Theme 2: Institutional Challenges and Structural Gaps

Barriers to successful implementation of effective mentorship programs were experienced by both public and private school teacher participants.

Government school teachers indicated the barriers included time constraints, lack of a formal policy regarding mentorship programs, and lack of training for mentors to support them in their new role as a mentor.

"You have very good teachers, but you don't have a structure to do mentoring; it's all informal," Government School Teacher Y

Private school teachers indicated that although mentoring was encouraged at their schools, the mentoring program lacked consistency in follow up and recognition from the institution.

"Mentoring is encouraged here, but there is no rewards or evaluations tied to mentoring," Private School Teacher B

This supports the necessity for an institutionalized framework for mentorship with support from school administration.

Theme 3: Emotional and Motivational Dimensions of Mentoring

Mentoring not only developed participant's teaching ability, but it offered an emotional boost to their confidence as well. In particular, participants felt a lot of comfort from having someone who believed in them during their first year of teaching when they were experiencing a great deal of anxiety.

"Knowing my mentor believed in me was a huge help in overcoming my own doubts about myself." Private School Teacher C

The results show that mentoring provides both a psychological (emotional) element and a professional development element. As such, mentoring has a direct influence on a teacher's job satisfaction and whether or not he/she will continue in his/her career.

4.3 Integration of Quantitative and Qualitative Results

By merging two datasets we found:

- A positive correlation between mentoring and quantitative measures (growth and job satisfaction).
- A qualitative connection of mentoring as an emotional, instructional and institutional source of support for development of teacher identity.

Schools have demonstrated structured mentorship in the private sector while there are considerable opportunities within public schooling to formalize mentoring with policies and leaders supporting mentoring.

4.4 Summary of Findings

The primary purpose of mentoring is to enhance the self-confidence of teachers; their ability to effectively use their classrooms; and their likelihood of staying in the profession.

Mentorship for private school teachers generally has a more established structure than that for public school teachers.

One of the most significant barriers to establishing effective mentorship is the lack of institutional support for mentoring (policies, training programs, etc.), and for recognizing the contributions of mentors to the development of new teachers.

In addition to enhancing the technical skills of teachers, mentorship also provides a rigorous emotional experience that fosters a sense of belonging and professional resilience among teachers.

5. DISCUSSION:

The purpose of this research was to investigate how mentoring improves both the quality of teacher preparation and helps keep qualified teachers working in both the public and private school systems in Karachi, Pakistan. This research utilized a mixed-methods approach to identify what problems or concerns exist for teachers related to their experience with mentoring programs. The findings indicate that while mentoring has been shown to greatly contribute to both the professional development and job satisfaction of teachers; however, mentoring is implemented differently by the private and government systems of education.

5.1 Mentoring as a Pathway to Professional Growth

Research indicated that in both sectors, the instructors acknowledged that mentoring was one of the most important factors in developing instructional capability, developing reflective practices and managing classrooms. As per Vygotsky's Social Constructivist Theory (1978), learning is accomplished through interaction among people; and it was the mentor who would guide the novice teacher using the knowledge and experience the learner did not have. The mentoring relationships allowed teachers the opportunity to be reflective, obtain feedback, and develop new instructional methods — processes similar to Kolb's Experiential Learning Cycle (1984) of reflection, conceptualization and application.

Quantitative findings clearly indicated a strong positive relationship between mentoring and professional growth ($r = .68$) supporting the Ingersoll and Strong's (2011) statement that formal mentoring programs have a positive effect on teacher performance and retention. Additionally, Qualitative Findings suggested that teachers found value in the mentoring process as both a learning experience and a means to build their confidence. The findings of this study further support the concept that Mentoring provides a mechanism for both instructional support and professional growth and development through the establishment of a professional identity and continuous self-improvement.

5.2 Institutional Differences Between Private and Government Schools in Karachi

Mentoring procedures among public and private educational institutions in Karachi were significantly different.

- Mentoring at private school was much more organized and structured than mentorship at public school institutions; mentorship at private schools was more formally established through scheduled meetings, observations of the mentee's teaching practices and follow up discussions to check on the progress of the mentee. At many times mentors at private institutions were more

instructional trainers for the mentee. The mentors assisted the mentees in developing their own lesson plans as well as incorporating new methods of instruction.

- On the other hand, public schools have been characterized as depending on informal mentoring systems with a high degree of reliance on either the initiative of an individual staff member or a relationship between a junior and a senior staff member. In addition, there are very few institutional policies designed to support mentoring, consistent with Khan's (2020) statement that mentoring is not being executed in a manner that has been formalized in Pakistan.
- The differences identified above indicate that the institutional culture and the level of commitment from school leaders are both major determinants of the effectiveness of mentoring programs. Those schools that value professional collaboration and provide adequate time for peer-based learning will be those that experience positive mentoring outcomes.

5.3 Emotional and Motivational Aspects of Mentoring

Teachers further identified a strong emphasis on the emotional aspect of mentoring; with teachers indicating that their mentors were emotionally supportive for them and helped to alleviate some of the stresses they experienced as an early career teacher. The teachers described their mentors as "emotional anchors" who provided support and encouragement when needed. These observations are consistent with Bandura's Social Learning Theory (1977) - which emphasizes the role of emotional reinforcement and social models in learning environments.

For teachers in Karachi who are dealing with large class sizes, excessive teaching hours, and high levels of stress and pressure due to systemic factors, emotional support is essential. Mentoring can be a tool to retain a teacher but it can also be a tool to reduce burn out and increase job satisfaction.

5.4 Policy and Practice Implications

The study also supports that there needs to be formalized mentoring programs or structures within teacher education programs and school districts in Karachi and other locations. Policymakers, Educational Leaders, and those responsible for providing professional development opportunities to teachers should take into consideration the following: Pre-Service and In-Service Teacher Education Curricula Must be Integrated into Mentoring to Ensure that There is a Thematic Connection Between Training and Practice

Teachers who mentor students as well as other teachers, should have additional professional development opportunities to give the trainee positive and meaningful feedback, escalate reflective discussions with the trainee, and model good teaching strategies.

Educational Institutes must support both the time for mentors to meet individually with their assigned mentees, as well as administrative recognition of the mentor's contribution to the evaluation of the mentee.

Evaluation of Mentoring Outcomes as well as Ongoing Monitoring of Mentoring Outcomes is very important for enhancing mentoring practices and demonstrating the effects of mentoring.

5.5 Alignment with Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 4

The results from this research are consistent with SDG 4: Quality Education, specifically Target 4c that increases the number of qualified and professionally trained teachers. The effective mentoring helps in strengthening teacher education systems through continuing professional development for teachers and helping them become effective in the classroom; additionally, it leads to better student outcomes. Mentoring in Karachi's educational setting can be implemented at a low cost and with measurable results to improve teacher quality and support educational equity.

5.6 Synthesis of Discussion

More broadly, the discussion further supports that mentoring serves as a transformative practice in teacher preparation — to be sure a professional development opportunity, while also providing teachers with both emotional support and institutional support. The maturity of mentoring practice in Karachi's private schools does provide a solid basis from which to build, however

there exists considerable potential for mentoring to be systemically adopted in Pakistan's public-school systems when provided with adequate policy support and leadership commitment. Therefore, mentoring is not simply an optional add-on, but rather an integral element of any sustainable reform efforts to improve teacher education in Pakistan.

6.CONCLUSION

Mentoring was found to be an essential part of developing a competent teacher in the context of this research, which explored how mentoring has been a transformational process in the area of teacher education and has contributed to improving teacher retention in selected public and private schools in Karachi, Pakistan. This study showed that mentoring provides the tools for teachers to become emotionally resilient, reflective and professionally competent; in addition, it helps bridge the gap between theory and practice in classrooms.

The study identified significant variations in mentoring practices in private and public (government) school settings. In particular, private institutions were likely to have a more structured and formal mentoring system that included regular, structured feedback and supportive systems; whereas, public institutions generally relied on informal support from their peers. While both types of institutions face challenges, the willingness of public institution educators to be involved in collaborative learning as well as offer mutual support indicates an apparent high level of professionalism as well as opportunity for development through a mentoring framework.

From the perspective of an educator who has experienced both structured professional development and real-world teaching and learning experiences with government agencies, mentoring is a paradigm shift. In addition to building confidence and improving classroom management for new teachers, mentoring has the ability to revitalize veteran teachers through having them mentor/educate other teachers (train-the-trainer). This creates a positive, supportive educational environment which positively impacts the overall quality of education provided to students; increases teacher-student interaction; and enhances the professional satisfaction of educators.

As a whole, the study indicates that mentorship should be viewed as an essential component of successful teacher education and not simply an ancillary or supplementary program; therefore, it has the potential to form the foundation for both effective educational policies and practices within schools and districts throughout Karachi and Pakistan. By formally incorporating mentorship into the structure of educational systems and processes in Karachi and Pakistan, there is a strong likelihood of creating a long-term means to achieve both high levels of professionalism and educational equity among teachers.

6.2 Recommendations

Based on the study's results and reflective analysis, the following recommendations were developed for institutions of teacher education, school administrators and policymakers:

Develop a Formal Mentoring Framework: Teachers' education authorities have a responsibility to develop a standardised mentoring framework which includes the definition of mentor selection criteria; training modules; and assessment methods. This will allow the use of this framework in all (both public and private) schools.

Training and Capacity Development for Mentors: Provincial education authorities and teacher education institutions must organize regular training for mentors with an emphasis on developing their capacity to give effective and useful feedback; to coach; and to engage in reflective conversation.

Reimbursement of Mentors: To maintain long-term engagement and motivation; and to formally recognize mentors; they should be given formal acknowledgment of their role through certification; career advancement points; or by having their performance reviewed.

Foster Interdisciplinary Professional Learning Communities: The Karachi educational institutions can create Professional Learning Circles (PLC) and Teacher Support Groups for

inter-professional collaboration to support peer mentoring and ongoing learning of teachers. The experience of these types of PLCs has been successfully demonstrated through the work of organizations involved in promoting teacher development within the region.

Strengthening Public-Private Partnerships (P3) to Promote Inter-Institutional Collaboration Among Schools: Collaborative professional learning will be facilitated by a P3 that will allow the establishment of cooperative, reflective professional learning opportunities through shared teaching sessions and workshops related to developing teachers' skills in the public and private school sectors. Each of the schools participating in the P3 will have the opportunity to benefit from a formalized mentorship model as it develops their own ability to create professional learning opportunities.

Embedding Mentoring into Pre-Service Teachers Programs: Mentoring components should be embedded in teacher preparation programs so that new, prospective teachers are paired with experienced professionals while they complete their field placements so that their transition to a full-time teaching position is made less difficult.

Support of Institutions and Monitoring: School Leadership will allow school leaders to include a place for mentoring in their schools' schedules and provide methods for tracking the success and the effects of mentoring on teachers' classroom performance.

Development of Reflective Thinking: Teachers need to be encouraged to keep reflective journals and take part in post lesson meetings with their mentor as a way to reflect and make the most of learning opportunities and enhance the development of their lesson plans.

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