ICPK

A Review of Teacher Mentoring Programs and the Impact on Teacher Retention

Dr. Jana' L. Sparks
College of Education
Department of Counseling,
Instructional Leadership and Special Education
Auburn University
Montgomery
United States

Abstract

Retaining novice teachers in today's K-12 classrooms has become a challenge for many school districts. There are several factors that contribute to beginning teachers leaving the teaching profession, however an effective mentoring program can provide the support and guidance novice teachers need. This literature review explores the effects of teacher mentoring programs and it identifies three common themes to develop and establish a successful mentoring program. This review suggests recommendations for decision makers to enhance the quality of such studies and maximize the finding to improve mentoring programs and increase teacher retention.

Keywords: Mentoring, teacher retention, mentor, novice teacher, teacher attrition, mentoring programs

1. Introduction

The concept of teacher mentoring is not a new theory. Mentoring is one of the oldest forms of teaching, which can be traced back 3,000 years to Greek mythology (Lingren, 2005). The Greek poet Homer used the term mentor in his poem "The Odyssey" when Telemachus was left with his friend Mentor (Shea, 2002). King Odysseus left to fight the Trojans and he trusted his friend, Mentor, to take care of his palace and his son Telemachus' (Lingren, 2005). Telemachus was not left with Mentor to raise him, but rather to guide him through several journeys and challenges (Shea, 2002).

Today, in the field of education, mentoring is described as a relationship in which mentors provide novice teachers with "structure and support during a new teacher's transition to the demands of the classroom and school environment" (Gagen & Bowie, 2005, p. 42). Martin, Gourwitz, and Hall (2016) define mentoring as a developmental sharing relationship where the mentor invests time with a novice teacher to enhance knowledge and skill. Novice teachers often feel "lost at sea" or endure "trial by fire" when they enter the field of education (Ingersoll & Strong, 2011).Teacher attrition and the cost of teacher attrition is a major concern in the nations K-12 schools. School districts are faced with the revolving door of teachers leaving and this is impacting student achievement and it is costing districts large amounts of money. In order to improve the factors that create teacher attrition, strategies need to be identified to contribute to the longevity of quality teachers. Mentoring plays a critical role to help novice teachers be mentored by a veteran teacher to assist in their success in the classroom.Novice teachers found that the relationships they developed with their mentor was pivotal to their success (Beers, 2016).

1.1 Teacher Attrition

Teacher attrition continues to increase in the field of education causing significant concern for school districts. A teacher attrition rate varies across the United States. Researchers' haveidentified that the southern states have the highest teacher attrition rate at 16% while northeastern states are at 10% (Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2017). Will (2017) reported that in the United States 86% of new teachers supported by a mentor teacher (or mentor) in the first years remain in the classroom, while 71% of those without mentors leave the profession. According to Scharton (2018), "in the last 20 years, teacher attrition has nearly doubled, and districts are finding it harder than ever to place a highly-qualified and effective teacher in every classroom". The amount of teachers that need to be replaced each school year is astonishing. According to Carver-Thomas and Darling-Hammond (2017), high attrition rates are due to unprepared and unsupported teachers which in turn cause teachers to leave the profession. As teacher attrition rates continue to rise and causes teacher shortage, it is imperative to examine why teachers are leaving the teaching profession early in their careers. Higher teacher attrition rates affect new teachers' more than veteran teachers, and they identified four major factors that heavily influence teacher attrition: compensation, preparation, teaching conditions, and mentoring (Sutcher et al., 2016).

1.2 Cost of Teacher Attrition

High teacher attrition rates not only affect student achievement, but it also creates additional costs for schools that could be close to $20,000 or more for every time a teacher leaves a school district (Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2017). The reason teacher attrition is problematic and costly for public school districts is due to teacher preparation, recruitment,and replacement cost that are needed for new hires within school districts (Vagi et al., 2019). Research has shown a link between the high rates of beginning teacher attrition and the teacher shortages that plague the teaching profession (Sutcher et al., 2016). Research shows teacher attrition costs are most prevalent in economically disadvantaged school districts where teacher turnover is the highest and where social and academic resources are scarce (Goldring et al., 2014).

1.3 Building a Successful Mentoring Program

Building a successful mentoring program is essential for novice teachers to be successful in the classroom. The objective of an induction program is to provide professional development opportunities that assist beginning teachers to acquire knowledge about their content, best practices, and school/district policies (American Institutes for Research, 2015). Although mentoring program is in many states, approximately half of the states in the U.S do not offer a formal mentoring program for novice teachers. Research suggests that having a high-quality induction program for beginning teachers reduces teacher attrition because of mentors assisting novice teachers within their first years of teaching (Espinoza et al., 2018).

In reviewing the literature, three common themes are apparent for developing and establishing a successful mentoring program.Those three themes are developing a mentoring program vision, mentor selection, and mentor/mentee relationships.

1.4 Mentoring program vision

The first common themeto help create a successful mentoring program isto develop a vision for the program. School districts need to know what their vision is, and what they want to achieve by having a mentoring program. The mentoring program needs to be a comprehensive program that the entire district implements. Lipton and Wellman (2018) highlighted the many benefits of a mentoring program, proclaiming that, novice teachers who participate in high quality induction programs that include a comprehensive mentoring component have consistently shown that they increase beginning teacher retention, improve student achievement, and reduce the waste of financial and human resources.

The U.S. Department of Education (2016) identified four policies that should be considered when developing a mentoring program:
• Requiring that all beginning teachers and principals receive induction support during their first two years.
• Requiring a rigorous mentor/induction coach selection process.

• Establishing criteria for how and when mentors/induction coaches are assigned to beginning educators and determining the training they will receive to serve in this role.
• Requiring regular observations by mentors/induction coaches and opportunities for new teachers to observe classrooms. (p. 10)

Espinoza et al. (2018) suggested that a strong induction program and support for early-career and beginning teachers can be an effective policy to ensure well-prepared individuals remain in the classroom. Mentoring preparedness is supported when teacher preparation programs work in collaboration with public school partners to have shared goals and structures to promote sustainability for long term impact (Childre & Van Rie, 2015; Lees & Kennedy, 2017). Childre and Van Rie (2015) determined that teacher preparation programs must recognize that mentor preparation is ongoing and cannot be accomplished through a one-time training.

1.5 Mentor selection

The next common theme for a successful mentoring program is selecting mentors for novice teachers. The American Institutes for Research (2015) strongly recommends that a rigorous mentor selection process should include the following:

• Beginning teachers and mentor teachers that teach the same content area should be paired together to ensure that beginning teachers are developing best practices. If pairing in the same content area is not possible; beginning teachers and mentor teachers should be at the campus.
• Release time should be set aside so that mentors and beginning teachers are able to communicate effectively and develop a supportive and trusting relationship.
• Observations should be conducted regularly and provide timely feedback to assist beginning teachers in making appropriate adjustments in their classroom.
• Professional learning communities should be accessible to beginning teachers to help facilitate a collaborative working environment that offers support.

In order for the mentor to be able to build a relationship with a novice teacher they must demonstrate a positive attitude, vulnerability, integrity, concern, assertiveness, leadership, tolerance, teamwork, self-efficacy, and motivation (Schatz-Oppenheimer, 2017).

1.6 Mentor/Mentee Relationships

The third common theme in creating a successful mentoring program is to foster the mentoring relationship between the mentor and mentee. Mentoring relationships are an essential step in developing novice teachers into effective practitioners (Kupila et al., 2017; Russell & Russell, 2011; Wexler, 2019). Mentors are referred to as counselors, role models, monitors (Vumilia & Semali, 2016), supervisors (Hobbs & Stovall, 2015), and advisors (dos Reis & Braund, 2019). According to Ingersoll (2001), the heart of a mentoring program is the mentor/mentee relationship. "After districts hire talented teachers, strong induction and support for novice teachers can increase their retention, accelerate their professional growth, and improve student learning" (Podolsky, et al., 2016, para. 28).

Researchers have categorized mentor relationships as evolving through three stages: formal, cordial, and friendship (Henning et al., 2015). The goal in effective mentoring is to develop a personal relationship to encourage respectful dialogue by preservice teachers feeling comfortable to speak freely (Nolan & Molla, 2018). Within the mentoring relationship, it is assumed that valuable experience is only gained by the mentee; however both individuals grow from this relationship (Russell & Adams, 1997).

According to Holt et al. (2016), mentoring relationships evolved through stages of trust and confidence in one another is built over time spent together. Bear (2018) conducted a quantitative study comprised of 143 pairs of mentors and mentees to examine organizational support and affective trust. Mentoring connects psychological and emotional support, enhances novice teachers' self-esteem, confidence, and feelings of effectiveness (Izadinia 2016).

1.7 Conclusion

When novice teachers enter the classroom, there needs to be a concerted effort to ensure that they are successful. Teacher attrition is a major concern; however, research indicates that mentoring programs are helping to address the problem of teachers leaving the teaching profession early. Schools that have mentoring programs have a strong effect on novice teachers, primarily in the areas of teacher retention, classroom instructional practices, and student achievement (Ingersoll & Strong, 2011).

The review of literature revealed three common themes for developing a successful mentoring program which included the mentoring programs vision, mentor selection and mentoring relationships. Podolsky et al. (2016) suggested that strong induction programs that focus on supporting novice teachers by mentoring, coaching, and providing feedback from experienced teachers will assist in teacher retention. Although mentoring programs support novice teachers, there are still a lot of states that do not currently have mentoring programs in place. Furthermore, there are schools not meeting the needs of novice teacher with a lack of mentoring support to assist in reducing teacher attrition. School districts need to make it a priority to put forth the same effort of retaining teachers, as they did when they hired them.

References

American Institutes for Research. (2015). Promoting teacher effectiveness: Teacher induction and mentoring brief.Retrieved from http://lincs.ed.gov/publications/te/mentoring.pdf

Bear, S. (2018). Enhancing learning for participants in workplace mentoring programs. *International Journal of Evidence Based Coaching & Mentoring*, *16*, 35–46. doi:10.24384/000462

Beers, C. (2016). Seven layers of strength in a model early childhood teacher preparation program. *Action in Teacher Education, 40*(1), 3-18. doi: 10.1080/01626620.2018.1424661

Carver-Thomas, D., & Darling-Hammond, L. (2017). *Teacher turnover: Why it matters and what can we do about it.* Learning Policy Institute.

Childre, A. L., & Van Rie, G. L. (2015). Mentor teacher training: A hybrid model to promote partnering in candidate development. *Rural Special Education Quarterly*, *34*(1), 10–16. doi:10.1177/875687051503400104

dos Reis, K., & Braund, M. (2019). Are school-based mentors adequately equipped to fulfil their roles? A case study in learning to teach accounting. *Africa Education Review, 16*(4), 17-36. doi:10.1080/18146627.2018.1460210

Espinoza, D., Saunders, R., Kini, T., & Darling-Hammond, L. (2018). *Taking the long view: State efforts to solve teacher shortages by strengthening the profession.* Learning Policy Institute.

Gagen, L., & Bowie, S. (2005). Effective mentoring: A case for training mentorsfor novice teachers. *The Journal of Physical Education, Recreation & Dance 76*(7), 40-46.

Goldring, R., Taie, S., & Riddles, M. (2014). *Teacher attrition and mobility: Results from the 2012-13 teacher follow-up survey (NCES 2014-077).* U.S. Department of Education. Washington, DC: National Center for Education Statistics. Retrieved from http://nces.ed.gov/pubsearch

Henning, J. E., Gut, D., & Beam, P. (2015). Designing and implementing a mentoring program to support clinically-based teacher education. *Teacher Educator, 50*(2), 145-162. doi:10.1080/08878730.2015.1011046

Hobbs, M. K., & Stovall, R. (2015). Supporting mentors of preservice early childhood education teachers: a literature review. *Journal of Early Childhood Teacher Education*, *36*(2), 90-99. doi:10.1080/10901027.2015.1030524

Hong, Y., & Matsko, K. K. (2019). Looking inside and outside of mentoring: Effects on new teachers' organizational commitment. *American Educational Research Journal*, *56*(6), 2368–2407. Retrieved from https://doi.org/10.3102/0002831219843657

Holt, D. T., Markova, G., Dhaenens, A. J., Marler, L. E., & Heilmann, S. G. (2016). Formal or informal mentoring: What drives employees to seek informal mentors? *Journal of Managerial Issues*, *28*, 67–82. Retrieved from https://www.jstor.org/journal/jmanaissues

Ingersoll, R., & Strong, M. (2011). The impact of induction and mentoring programs for beginning teachers: A critical review of the research. *Review of Educational Research, 81(2), 201-233.*

Izadinia, M. (2016). Student teachers' and mentor teachers' perceptions and expectations of a mentoring relationship: Do they match or clash? *Professional Development in Education, 42*(3), 387-402. doi:10.1080/19415257.2014.994136

Kupila, P., Ukkonen-Mikkola, T., & Rantala, K. (2017). Interpretations of mentoring during early childhood education mentor training. *Australian Journal of Teacher Education*, *42*(10), 36-49. doi:10.14221/ajte.2017v42n10.3

Lees, A., & Kennedy, A. (2017). Community-based collaboration for early childhood teacher education: Partner experiences and perspectives as co-teacher educators. *Journal of Early Childhood Teacher Education, 38*(1), 52-78. doi:10.1080/10901027.2016.1274692

Lingren, U. (2005). Experiences of beginning teachers in a school-based mentoring program in Sweden. *Educational Studies*, *31*(3), 251-263.

Lipton, L. & Wellman, B. (2003) Mentoring matters: A practical guide to learning focused relationships. Sherman, CT: MiraVia

Martin, S., Gourwitz, J., & Hall, K. P. (2016). Mentoring urban school leaders: A model. *Journal of School Leadership, 26*, 314–333. doi:10.1177/105268461602600205

Nolan, A., & Molla, T. (2018). Teacher professional learning in early childhood education: Insights from a mentoring program. *Early Years: An International Journal of Research and Development, 38*(3), 258–270. doi:10.1080/09575146.2016.1259212

Podolsky, A., Kini, T., Bishop, J., & Darling-Hammond, L. (2016). *Solving the teachershortage: How to attract and retain excellent educators* (research brief). PaloAlto, CA: Learning Policy Institute.

Russell, E. A., & Adams, D. M. (1997). The changing nature of mentoring in organizations: An introduction to the special issue on mentoring in organizations. *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, *51*(1), 1-14. Retrieved from http://www.journals. elsevier.com/journal-of-vocational-behavior/

Russell, M. L., & Russell, J. A. (2011). Mentoring relationships: Cooperating teachers' perspectives on mentoring student interns. *Professional Educator*, *35*(1), 1-21. Retrieved from http://www.theprofessionaleducator.org/

Schatz-Oppenheimer, O. (2017). Being a mentor: Novice teachers' mentors' conceptions of mentoring prior to training. *Professional Development in Education*, *43*(2), 274-292. doi:10.1080/19415257.2016.1152591

Scharton, H. (2018). Taking on teacher attrition. *District Administration, 54*(4), 6

Shea, G. (2002). *Mentoring: How to develop successful mentor behaviors.* Menlo Park, CA: Crisp Publications.

Sutcher, L., Darling-Hammond, L., & Carver-Thomas, D. (2016). *A coming crisis in teaching? Teacher supply, demand, and shortages in the U.S.* Learning Policy Institute.

U.S. Department of Education Office of Elementary and Secondary Education. (2016). *Non regulatory guidance for Title II, Part A: Building systems of support for excellent teaching and leading.*Retrieved fromhttps://www2.ed.gov/policy/elsec/leg/essa/essatitleiipartaguidance.pdf

Vagi, R., Pivovarona, M., & Barnard, W. M. (2019). Keeping our best? A survival analysis examining a measure of preservice teacher quality and teacher attrition. *Journal of Teacher Education*, *70*(2), 115–127. Retrieved from https://doi.org/10.1177/0022487117725025

Vumilia, P. L., & Semali, L. M. (2016). Can the mentoring and socialization of pre-service teachers improve teacher education? *Journal of International Education and Leadership, 6*(2), 29. Retrieved from http://www.jielusa.org

Will, M. (2017). Mentors for new teachers found to boost student achievement—by a lot.*Education Week.* Retrieved fromhttp://blogs.edweek.org/teachers/teaching_now/2017/06/new_teacher_center_mentor_study.html

Wexler, L. J. (2019). Working together within a system: Educative mentoring and novice teacher learning. *Mentoring & Tutoring: Partnership in Learning*, *27*(1), 44–67. Retrieved from http://dx.doi.org.ezp.waldenulibrary.org/10.1080/13611267.2019.1583406