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Novice Teachers' Perceptions of Success in a Mentoring Relationship

Dorean Marie Whitehouse
Walden University

Walden University

COLLEGE OF EDUCATION

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Dorean Whitehouse

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Dr. Jennifer Seymour, Committee Member, Education Faculty
Dr. Celeste Stansberry, University Reviewer, Education Faculty

Chief Academic Officer

Eric Riedel, Ph.D.

Walden University
2016

Abstract

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MEd, Mary Grove College, 2003

BA, Eastern Michigan University, 1993

Doctoral Study Submitted in Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

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Abstract

There has been little research on what is necessary for a mentoring relationship to be considered successful from the novice teacher's perspective. Although researchers have asserted that mentoring promotes new teacher retention and improves new teacher skills, new teachers are still leaving the profession, causing a shortage of teachers in school districts across the United States. The purpose of this phenomenological study was to understand the meaning of a successful mentoring relationship from the perspective of 6 selected elementary teachers who have been in the teaching field fewer than 5 years and who have participated in a mentoring relationship for more than 2 years with the same mentor. Social cognitive theory was used to examine the mentoring relationship. Interview questions were used to examine participants' perceptions and experiences of their mentoring relationship and the impact of that relationship. Novice teachers participated in face-to-face, semistructured interviews, which were recorded and transcribed. The Modified van Kamm method was used to analyze the transcribed interviews. These results were reviewed, coded, and organized into categories and themes. The findings indicated that the experiences which had the greatest impact on the 6 novice teachers were time spent with the mentor, communication, quality of the relationship, and support from the mentor. The implications for social change may include improved mentoring programs for school districts in order that new teachers remain in the teaching profession. These results can also be used to inform mentor teachers in developing improved and more effective mentoring relationships.

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Dedication

This study is dedicated to Herb Whitehouse, my loving and supportive husband of

43 years. His support and encouragement enabled me to pursue my academic goals.

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I would like to acknowledge Dr. Marilyn Robb and thank my committee members for their guidance and advice regarding the research project itself and the completion of the dissertation. Many friends and family members also provided the support and encouragement I needed throughout the process of completing this work.

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Section 1: Introduction to the Study

Mentoring has been identified as the road to success in beginning teacher development and novice teacher retention (Hobson & Malderez, 2013; Ingersoll & Strong 2011). Researchers have supported mentoring programs as a means of retaining teachers and developing relationships between mentors and mentees within the teaching profession. However, mentoring relationships are highly complex and successful mentoring involves complex skills and understandings that are rarely intuitive (Gless & Moir, 2001; Zachary, 2006). It is important to understand what is involved in a successful mentoring relationship if teacher leaders are to remain in the teaching field and develop professionally. The emotional support that mentors provide, the nonjudgmental feedback, and the opportunity for professional growth play an important role in the development of novice teachers (Clark, 2012). Listening, talking, and asking questions can resolve many difficulties; but, more information is still needed about the mentor relationship and the associated effect on teacher retention and job satisfaction. This study can help improve the programs that are used to implement educational mentoring relationships in order to improve teacher performance and retention.

Background of the Study

Widespread concern among educators at all levels about the quality of education in the United States has led to renewed interest in teacher preparation and teacher induction (Ingersoll & Strong, 2011). Educational researchers have referred to the transition of beginning teachers from training into their first teaching job as a period of induction (Wang, Odell, & Clift 2010). One goal of teacher induction is to provide

ongoing assistance to novice teachers through mentoring programs. The objective of teacher induction is to enhance the novice teacher's effectiveness in the profession; the quality of a teacher, more than any other factor, can affect how much a student learns (Clark, 2012; Ingersoll & Strong, 2011).

Teacher mentoring has increased since the early 1980s and has continued to be a vehicle to support and retain novice teachers (Kazin-Boyce, 2014). As mentoring programs evolved, improvements were needed to further support their effectiveness. In 1989, the National Mentoring Partnership and the United Way of America gathered leaders from national and community-based nonprofit organizations with significant experience in administering mentoring programs to discuss the issues and practices that were emerging in their mentoring programs. They focused on ways to promote the growth of responsible mentoring relationships within the programs. They defined responsible mentoring programs as meeting the needs of the mentored participants as well as the volunteer mentors. One of the most pressing needs identified was for guidelines, or common principles, to guide the development of responsible, successful mentoring relationships.

Although mentoring programs were still developing, in 1993, the Michigan legislature mandated the new Teacher Induction/Teacher Mentoring Program. This mandate required that teachers in their first 3 years of employment are provided (a) a mentor in the form of a master teacher, college professor, or retired master teacher; and (b) intensive professional development induction into teaching, which will consist of a minimum of 15 days of professional development. To assist in the implementation of this

mandate, many school districts developed a framework for teacher induction and mentoring programs (Ingersoll & Strong, 2011). However, merely requiring these mentoring programs and developing a framework does not ensure that the relationships within these programs are successful and effective (Clark, 2012).

An overall objective of mentoring programs is to provide novice teachers with a guide, that is, someone who can help with the induction process (Cook, 2012). The character and content of these relationships vary in duration and intensity. Mentoring programs can require the mentoring relationship to be a single meeting between a mentor and a mentee at the beginning of a school year, or they can be highly structured programs involving frequent meetings over several years between mentors and mentees that occur during the release time that the individuals are given from their normal teaching schedules (Conner, 2012).

In a 10-year research study involving 1,000 participating teachers, the effects of novice teacher induction programs using mentor relationships were studied. Participants expressed that this relationship impacted their decision to stay in the teaching profession and improved their teaching strategies (Resta, Huling, & Yeargain, 2013). The participants emphasized that the mentors' emotional support and nonjudgmental feedback, as well as the opportunity to grow professionally, were important to their staying in the profession.

Statement of the Problem

The problem addressed in this study is that there has been little research on what is necessary for a mentoring relationship to be considered successful from the novice

teacher's perspective. Between 40% and 50% of new teachers leave within the first 5 years of entering the teaching profession (Resta et al., 2013). The most cited reason for the decision to leave teaching is a lack of support provided to new teachers (Ingersoll & Strong, 2011). Various types of new teacher induction programs are used by school systems to assist, support, and guide novice teachers through the difficult and stressful first years of teaching until they have established a successful professional practice (Waterman & He, 2011). The intent of such programs is to assist in the smooth transition from student teacher graduates into competent career teachers (Ingersoll & Merrill, 2012). Without mentoring support, many novice teachers are unsuccessful, eventually leaving the profession (Pogodzinski, Youngs, Frank, & Belman, 2012).

During the past 20 years, teacher-mentoring programs have served as the dominant form of teacher induction. Hudson (2013) showed that mentoring programs have been successfully used for induction; however, the careful and judicious development of the mentor program is of critical importance to its success (Ingersoll & Strong, 2011). A mentor program that serves to truly support new teachers and decrease the probability of teachers becoming discouraged and leaving the profession consists of more than the simple assignment of a mentor (Flanagan, 2006); mentoring must not be regarded solely as an add-on program (Johnson et al., 2004).

While well-designed mentoring programs can lower the attrition rates of novice teachers, McCann, Johannessen, and Ricca (2005) asserted that it is better for a school to have no mentoring program at all than to have a bad mentoring program. The first-year attrition rate of teachers trained in traditional college programs without mentoring was

found in one study to be 18%, whereas the attrition rate of first-year teachers whose induction program included mentoring was only 5% (Gold, 1999). State mandates in Michigan require the establishment of a mentor program for teachers in their first 3 years of employment, which is typically included in the induction process for new teachers incorporated at the individual schools. These mentor relationships serve as a resource for new teachers, providing the needed support through the first few years of teaching, a time at which new teachers are at high risk of attrition (Flanagan, 2006).

Mentor training is an important adjunct to ensure mentoring relationships are productive. Such training, designed to assist mentors in establishing more successful mentoring relationships with new teachers, needs to be improved (Waterman & He, 2011). Many school districts across the United States including Michigan districts have used and are using mentoring as a means of retaining and training new teachers (Stanulis, Little, & Wibben, 2012). With the changing student population in the district and new core standards for the state and nation, these new teachers are facing many challenges (Rajuan, Tuchin, & Zuckermann, 2011). There is a consensus that teacher quality makes a significant difference in student learning and school effectiveness, which can impact student achievement (Moir, Barlin, Gless, & Miles, 2009). Moreover, new teachers have expressed a need for help from experienced colleagues who can watch them teach, provide feedback, and help them with instructional strategies (Hudson, 2013).

Little empirical research has been conducted on the topic of successful mentoring relationships from the perspective of the mentee, and few researchers have focused on ways in which mentors and mentees can strengthen this relationship.There is need to

explore the factors that affect the development of productive and successful mentor relationships among teachers. My objective was to understand the elements of successful mentoring relationships as viewed by novice teachers, to determine the effects towards job satisfaction for new teachers and retention. This study may contribute to the scholarly literature by informing educators about ways to establish successful mentoring relationships within a mentoring program as they strive to promote social change within the elementary educational setting. In order to understand a successful mentoring relationship, six purposefully selected elementary teachers were interviewed for their perspective.

Nature of the Study

A qualitative, phenomenological approach was used to understand success from a mentees perspective in order to analyze the essential impact of the mentoring relationship for the novice elementary teacher's retention and success. Valle and King (1978) stated that phenomenological psychological research is used to answer questions that are related to a lived experience. Determination of how mentors and mentees negotiate their relationship and which components are necessary for developing a strong, positive mentoring relationship was explored.

Semistructured interviews were conducted with the mentees, using open-ended questions, to reveal participants' perceptions and experiences related to their mentor relationships was conducted within a 2 week period. Participants included new teacher mentees from two elementary schools in southeastern Michigan. Responses were recorded and transcribed for analysis. Data analysis was accomplished via the modified

van Kaam method of phenomenological analysis (Moustakas, 1994) to determine the

essences (key elements) of the mentor relationship.

Research Questions

I focused on the experiences and perceptions of novice elementary teachers who

have participated in a mentor relationship for more than 2 years. Two research questions

were addressed.

1. What are the lived experiences and perceptions of novice elementary

 teachers with regard to success in the mentor relationship?

2. What is the impact of the mentoring relationship on the new teacher?

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this qualitative phenomenological study was to understand the

meaning of a successful mentoring relationship from the perspective of six purposefully

selected elementary teachers. A mentoring relationship at this school is defined as a

professional, supportive relationship between a veteran teacher and a novice teacher for

the purpose of providing guidance, advice, and motivational support. My objective was to

understand the essential structure of a successful mentoring relationship. I explored

experiences of new teachers participating in a mentoring relationship for more than 2

years within an elementary school setting. Six novice teachers in elementary education

who have been in the teaching field fewer than 5 years participated. Participants were

predominately female teachers of various ages ranging from 22 through 38 years.

Many school districts, including the participating district, have used and are using

mentoring as a means of retaining and training new teachers (Rajuan, Tuchin, &

Zuckermann, 2011). The participating district had two elementary schools in which few new teachers have been hired in the last 5 years, thereby limiting the sample. With the changing student population in the district and new core academic standards for the state and nation, these new teachers face many challenges (Shaw & Newton, 2014). As ever-present budget cuts essentially eliminate every other avenue of support, it is reasonable to explore an effective mentor program as an efficient substitute (Hudson, 2013). If the mentor is not helped to understand the specific needs of the novice, and if they are not trained in the best ways to render guidance, this solution to the problem of supporting the novice becomes profitless (Burks, 2010). It is useful to understand success from a mentee's perspective in order to understand the essential components of the mentoring relationship for their retention and success.

Conceptual Framework

The present study was built on the assumption of the potential influence of a mentor relationship in the positive development of a teacher. The conceptual framework for the study encompasses social cognitive theory, with particular interest in self-efficacy. The principles of social cognitive theory, in particular, the aspects of this theory that deal with self-efficacy, were used to understand the experiences of the novice teacher and the relationship with his mentor. The multifaceted science of social cognitive theory provides the framework for this study. In 1977, Bandura enlarged the understanding of social cognitive theory by recognizing the critically important component of self-efficacy, simply an individual's self-beliefs or sense of competency.

The term self-efficacy is used to describe an individual's beliefs in his or her ability to perform (Bandura, 1997). Among teachers, the perception of success facilitates an increase in self-efficacy in the form of efficacy expectations (the expectations for future competence and success), which further promotes additional success (Scheafer, 2010). The opposite may also be true, in which negativity of emotions, anxiety, external social persuasion, or less than positive peer-feedback can serve to negatively affect self-efficacy beliefs, decreasing efficacy expectations.

Teacher self-efficacy can be affected by a variety of factors inclusive of resources and support offered to teachers, and opportunities to participate in professional development, mentoring, or other training experiences. These factors, such as administrative leadership support, coworker support, and professional development resources, can serve to affect teachers' perceptions with regard to their ability to perform by increasing levels of confidence while reducing concerns and promoting positive attitudes, increasing teacher self-efficacy (Bandura, 1997; Bradshaw & Mundia, 2006; Scheafer, 2010; Subban & Sharma, 2006). This study draws upon the ideas presented in social cognitive theory specifically that learning occurs in a social context, through the observation of others. Given the opportunity to learn in this way, a novice's sense of self-efficacy will improve. The focus of this study was to understand the meaning of a successful mentoring relationship from the perspective of six purposefully selected elementary teachers.

Definitions of Terms

Induction: Programs of training and support for beginning teachers (Bartell, 2005).

Mentee: A person that is mentored by a more experienced person, in this case a new teacher (Sweeney, 2008).

Mentor: Edwards (2002) defined mentors as guides, counselors, or coaches and role models.

Mentoring Relationship: A close, intense, and mutually beneficial relationship between someone who is older, wiser, and more experienced with someone who is less experienced (Sweeney, 2008).

Mentoring process: A developmental process in which a protégé and a mentor commit to working together within a predetermined amount of time for the purpose of professional growth (Sweeney, 2008).

Mentoring role: A role is a description of what a mentor is to be like, the kind of person they must be to be effective (Sweeny, 2008).

Novice: A novice is someone who is less experienced. A novice teacher may be a student teacher or a teacher in his or her 1st, 2nd, or possibly 3rd year of teaching (Boreen, Johnson, Niday, & Potts, 2009).

Protégé: A novice teacher who works actively working with a mentor (Boreen et al., 2009).

Scope, Assumptions, and Limitations

Scope

The study was limited in scope to novice teachers in two elementary schools in Southeastern Michigan. These novice teachers participated in a novice teacher mentoring relationship appointed by the school district. Very few new teachers have been hired in this district; the sample was limited to six novice elementary teachers who have been in the teaching field fewer than 5 years and who have participated in a mentoring relationship for more than 2 years with the same mentor.

The scope of this study was narrowly focused on the lived experiences of the participants with their mentors. No interviews were conducted with the mentors, school principals (other than a school administer) on the need for effective mentoring relationships, or district administrators. All participants in this study were elementary teachers, further narrowing the focus.

Assumptions

It is assumed that the participants provided thoughtful and insightful responses. Although there were only six participants from two school districts, it is assumed that the experiences of these participants were typical and representative of the positive and negative impressions of the general population of mentees throughout the state. It is assumed that the 10 questions presented to the mentees in this study provided ample opportunity for discussion of the most important issues, both positive and negative, in the relationship.

Limitations

A limitation of this study was the small sample of six teachers in an urban school district. A second area of concern involves drawing generalizations and conclusions from diverse individual views as indicated in responses. Hatch (2002) stated that constructivists have argued that multiple realities exist and are constructed by the individuals who experience these realities from their own perspectives. Mentoring can have multiple realities to each individual involved in the relationship. However, the present study is limited to the perspective of the mentee and did not include interviews to determine the perceptions and experiences of the mentors, representing a potential weakness of the study.

Incorporation of only two elementary schools serves to delimit this study. The requirement that teacher participants have fewer than 5 years of teaching experience and few new teachers have been hired in the school district, further delimits teacher participation. Given that this study was designed to explore success through the lived experiences and perceptions of elementary school teachers with regard to mentor relationships in two elementary schools in Southeastern Michigan, these delimitations narrowed the range of perspectives obtained. The study still allowed for a comparison of the differing experiences within the sample of participants.

Significance of the Study

This study may provide added mentoring policy and practice for the district from which the sample is drawn. Other educators may use the findings in the process of developing mentoring relationships. Meaningful mentoring relationships are essential to

ensure success in the educational field. Ingersoll and Strong (2011) noted that the better

the quality of the mentoring relationship, the better the quality of the novice teacher's

classroom instruction. Legislatures in many states have mandated mentoring programs as

part of the teacher certification and licensing process in order to provide excellent

teachers for educating their constituents (Ingersoll, 2012). Over the past 2 decades,

numerous studies have been done on different types of induction programs which have

been cited widely by advocates and reformers (Hudson, 2013; Scheafer, 2010). What

remains unclear is what is needed to develop successful mentoring relationships within

induction programs (Ingersoll & Merrill, 2012) as perceived by the mentee. Identifying

ways to improve the mentoring relationship is the critical missing link in determining the

success of mentoring programs that are designed to help novice teachers remain in the

teaching field with adequate training.

Locally, the stakes are high. Considering that for many districts the mentor

relationship has become the last bastion of support for new teachers, a failed mentor

relationship presages adversity and frustration for the novice (Resta et al., 2013). In the

end, the children pay the price, for as their teacher struggles, so will they, potentially

endangering their easy progression through the grade-level material.

Summary

Mentoring programs are important for novice teachers who have completed

teacher education programs, but need supervision and support during their entry year.

These mentoring programs may help novice teachers not only with classroom instruction

but also with the confidence needed to implement that instruction. In a prescribed

mentoring program where the skills of the mentor in the relationship are emphasized, successful positive relationships can develop. These relationships can help novice teachers to improve their teaching skill and their confidence in those skills so that they will grow professionally and have a positive impact on student achievement. Mentoring needs to be linked to a vision of good teaching, guided by an understanding of what makes a successful mentoring relationship. However, building a successful mentoring relationship can be a challenge to the teaching profession. In many states, programs have been established to train mentors. The problem is that there has been little research on what is necessary for this relationship to be considered successful from the novice teacher's perspective. The purpose of this qualitative, phenomenology study was to understand the meaning of a successful mentoring relationship from the perspective of six purposefully selected elementary teachers.

This study may inform and improve mentor training and the mentoring relationship. In the sections that follow, the essence of this study is discussed in more depth. Section 2 is a review of the literature related to the research problem and the research questions. Background information on mentoring programs and studies related to the mentoring relationship are provided. Section 3 is a description of the methodology for the data collection and analysis. The research methodology is outlined and provides support for using a qualitative study. The participants are described as well as the process of engaging them in the study. Data collection methods and analysis are explored and the limitations of the study are provided. Section 4 is a rich description of the study's findings as they relate to the research questions that guided the collection of data. In this

section, perceptions of the relationship are described as narration. Finally, in Section 5,

the study is summarized and suggestions for use of the results in practice and potential

research for the future are explained.

Section 2: Literature Review

Introduction

Mentor relationships serve as a resource for new teachers. Mentors provide support, resources, and camaraderie to new teachers who are at high risk of attrition (Hudson, 2013; Ingersoll & Strong 2011). Little empirical research has been conducted on the topic of successful mentoring relationships, and few researchers have focused on ways in which the mentor-mentee relationship can be strengthened. It is important to explore the factors that affect the development of productive and successful mentor relationships among teachers in order to ensure positive job satisfaction and retention for the new teacher.

The goal of this qualitative phenomenology study was to understand the perceptions and experiences of novice teachers with regard to the success of a mentor-mentee relationship. For the purposes of this study, the mentor-mentee relationship describes a relationship between a veteran teacher and a novice teacher. Understanding the novice teacher's perceptions of a successful mentor relationship can provide knowledge of specific elements of the mentoring relationship. This knowledge can then be used to support mentor training, which in turn may contribute to increased effectiveness of the mentor program in supporting new teacher retention with the ultimate goal of increased job satisfaction (Hughes, Matt, & O'Reilly, 2014).

This chapter includes an overall review of the literature within the last 20 years as it pertains to the goal of this study. The previous research was gained from peer reviewed academic journals, dissertations, and books that relate to the mentoring topic. Search

terms such as *mentoring relationships, induction programs, informal and formal mentoring, novice teacher experiences, teacher efficacy*, and *social cognitive theory* were used to search academic data bases such as Eric and ProQuest. Saturation was reached when topics of importance to the mentoring relationship were repeated. As such, the literature review is divided into four main sections. These sections include literature related to (a) the background for the study, (b) induction and mentoring programs, (c) theoretical framework, and (d) literature related to mentoring relationships. The chapter ends with a brief summary.

Background

A number of researchers have found that between 40% and 50% of new teachers leave within the first 5 years of entering the profession (Ingersoll & Strong, 2011). Carroll and Foster (2010) and Nielsen et al. (2006) documented the strong link between the high rates of novice teacher attrition and ongoing teacher shortages. An analysis of United States data showed that widely publicized school staffing problems are not solely or even primarily the result of too few teachers being recruited and trained. Instead, the data indicated that school staffing problems are, to a significant extent, the result of large numbers of teachers leaving the profession long before retirement (Ingersoll & Smith, 2003).

Most beginning teachers choose the profession because they want to make a difference in the lives of their students. Kazin-Boyce (2014) indicated that if beginning teachers are unsupported while trying to learn how to teach, they feel stressed, and their

focus becomes their own survival. The most cited reason for the decision to leave teaching remains a lack of support provided to new teachers (Ingersoll & Strong, 2011).

Teacher shortage continues to confront schools as researchers and policy makers point to the loss of retaining new teachers (Waterman & He, 2011). Although increases in student enrollment, coupled with teacher retirements, have exacerbated teacher shortages, the data point to teacher attrition as the major reason for continual shortages (Bullough, 2012). Teacher attrition is particularly high for first year teachers. Compared with many other occupations, the teaching occupation suffers from continual and unreasonably high annual turnover (Bullough, 2012; Ingersoll & Smith, 2003). Employee turnover has many consequences for both industries and organizations, but is particularly serious in the teaching field, where staffing problems may affect the school environment as a whole and student performance (Hudson, 2013). It is vital to understand what is needed to help lower rates of new teacher turnover.

Most school systems take seriously the issue of teacher satisfaction and are always seeking to discover positive ways to influence new teachers to remain in the profession. To achieve this purpose, most districts have instituted induction programs to facilitate the new teacher's transition from the university experience to the classroom. One aspect of these induction programs is often a mentor program, in which a seasoned teacher is assigned to develop a relationship with a novice teacher for the purpose of aiding in this transition. This personal, one-on-one support has been shown to lower the attrition rate among new teachers (Garber, 2013). Little is understood about what makes

an effective mentor relationship from the perspective of the mentee, for whom the program is designed (Clark & Byrnes, 2012).

Induction and Mentoring Programs

Induction Programs

Most induction programs are based on a desire to assist, support, and guide novice teachers through the difficult and stressful first years of teaching until they have established a successful professional practice. It is a process used for new teachers to become a full member of the teaching profession (Ingersoll & Strong, 2011). The intent is to transform student teacher graduates into competent career teachers (Ingersoll & Strong, 2011). A quality induction program provides the support that beginning teachers need to be successful leaders of effective instruction and to ensure their students success. According to Bullough (2012), an induction program that includes mentors, orientation, and training can be highly effective. This induction program should also include observations by expert practitioners and peer support groups, along with professional growth goals, plans, and a portfolio (Dos Santos, 2012). Most school districts have started induction programs to address these related areas.

Most induction programs seek to fulfill three general purposes (Bullough, 2012): orientation, professional practices, and school development. The first and most immediate purpose for any induction program is to orient novice teachers. When this component is missing, novice teachers are frequently unsuccessful, and many even leave the profession (Wang, Odell, & Clift, 2010). They need to have a sense of the organizational culture and traditions within the school district and the expectations of staff. Teachers need to know

how to improve professional practices, such as learning the various teaching models and strategies (Bullough, 2012). The induction program endeavors to develop a learning community within the school, in which teachers share developed skills and insights with each other (Hudson, 2013).

Most schools do currently provide some kind of formal induction program for new teachers. These programs vary widely in the kind of support they provide. However, regardless of the specific details of implementation, new teachers benefit from these programs in the areas of teaching effectiveness, maintaining a positive classroom environment, classroom management, and improved lesson plans (Ingersoll & Strong, 2011).

Mentoring Programs

While induction programs have a positive impact on new teachers, a vital aspect of the induction process is a strong mentoring program (Waterman & He, 2011). It is essential that teacher mentoring programs not become simply an add-on program (Johnson et al., 2004). Mentors are a tremendous resource for beginning teachers, providing support in answering questions, sharing lesson plans, observing classes, providing encouragement, and helping the transition into the school community (Waterman & He, 2011). However, the development of the mentor program is of critical importance to its success; a mentor program that serves to truly support new teachers and decrease the probability of that teacher becoming discouraged and leaving requires thoughtful consideration (Birkeland, & Feiman-Nemser, 2012).

As well-informed school leaders undertake the responsibility of creating a mentor program, they do well to recognize that it is not a one-size-fits-all proposition; the program must complement the culture of the school (McCann, Johannessen, & Ricca, 2005). For example, in a smaller, rural, more intimate school setting, a simple orientation for new teachers may be a sufficient catalyst to ensure the success of the mentoring relationship; however, a larger urban school may be better served with a program that requires regular meetings for the both the novice and mentor teachers. According to Hobson and Malderez (2013), mentoring programs should offer interventions that orient new teachers to the school and community. A program tailored to the specific demographic of the school culture will be best suited to accomplish this end.

Regardless of the implementation style, the goals of the mentoring program should be based on the following high quality principles. According to Resta et al. (2013), learning to teach is a career-long, developmental process, a continuous cycle of inquiry into practice, self-assessment, and reflection. The district's support should be responsive to the needs of each new teacher; lastly, professional learning must have its foundation set in improving student outcomes. The focus of these guiding principles is to help novice teachers confront their challenges in the classroom (Resta et al., 2013). Collegial conversations and consistent support from experienced teachers improve their teaching practices.

Training is an important aspect of the support mentors need as they seek to help novices. A sound and effective mentoring program should also strive to meet the mentor's needs, such as adequate training and compensation (Waterman & He 2011). Although

some programs include training for mentors, others do not. It is important to recognize

that teachers who are good at teaching children may not be qualified to teach teachers

(Burks, 2010). Findings such as these should result in increased training for mentor

teachers. Stanullis, Little, and Wibbens (2012) studied a large-scale mentoring

intervention program and sought to determine whether targeted mentoring could make a

difference for new teachers. A specific model for framing directed discussions with

novice teachers was used to enhance the prospective teacher's pedagogical skills. The

data analysis indicated that the prospective teachers who were assigned mentors trained

in using this discussion framework demonstrated more complete and effective planning,

additional effective classroom instruction, and a higher level of reflection on practice than

did the new teachers who did not have mentors trained in this framework (Stanullis et al.,

2012). Programs also vary according to how they pay mentors for their services (Ingersoll

& Strong, 2011). Depending on the district, mentors may receive no compensation at all

for the time and effort they invest in their assigned novice. When designing mentoring

programs, ample consideration should be given to ensure a positive experience for the

veteran teacher in order to create a momentum for mentoring within the school (Stanullis

et al., 2012).

<div align="center">**Theoretical Framework**</div>

Social Cognitive Theory (SCT)

Social Cognitive Theory (SCT; Bandura, 1986, 1997, 2010) is a theory in which

human behavior is viewed within the constructs of personal interactions, behaviors, and

the environment. Accordingly, previous experiences and consequences serve to predict

behavior. According to SCT, beliefs and expectations are continually constructed and revised through the processes of one's experience within the environment, including one's perception of one's own capabilities, also shaped through experience (Bandura, 1986, 1997, 2010). In the context of SCT, Bandura described that an individual's views of personal abilities and strengths determine behavior based on what the individual attempts to achieve in addition to the effort put into achieving it.

Bandura (1986) first introduced the concept of self-efficacy within his SCT model, describing efficacy as a self-reflective concept that relates "not with the skills one has but with judgments of what one can do with whatever skills one possesses" (p. 391). Bandura defined self-efficacy as "people's judgment of their capabilities to organize and execute courses of action required to attain designated types of performance" (p. 391). According to this definition, those who display high self-efficacy beliefs are likely to believe in their personal ability to perform a task and work hard to succeed and persevere; whereas, those who demonstrate low level efficacy tend to fail to demonstrate this same confidence (Woolfolk & Burke-Spero, 2005).

The self-reflective nature of self-efficacy affects the thoughts, beliefs, and emotions of the individual and as such, influences behavior (Bandura, 1986, 1997). There are four sources of self-efficacy expectations: mastery experiences, physiological and emotional states, vicarious experiences, and social persuasion (Bandura, 1986, 1997). Among teachers, the perception of success facilitates an increase in self-efficacy, primarily in terms of efficacy expectations (the expectations for future competence and success), which then promotes further success (Scheafer, 2010). The opposite is also true,

in which negativity of emotions, anxiety, external social persuasion, or less than positive peer-feedback can serve to negatively affect self-efficacy beliefs, decreasing efficacy expectations.

Teacher Efficacy

Bandura (1997) used the term *teacher efficacy* to describe self-efficacy within the context of a teacher's beliefs in his or her ability to perform. High efficacy teachers tend to exhibit positive attitudes and higher confidence levels; they feel good about teaching and about themselves and demonstrate confidence in their teaching (Collie, Shapka, & Perry, 2012). In contrast, teachers with low efficacy tend to feel negative, frustrated, and discouraged, with a tendency for negative perceptions of their abilities (Collie et al., 2015). Teacher self-efficacy can be affected by opportunities to participate in professional development, mentoring, or other training experiences, which can serve to increase levels of confidence and efficacy by reducing concerns and promoting positive attitudes (Bradshaw & Mundia, 2006; Scheafer, 2010).

Various external factors can affect teachers' self-efficacy, particularly in terms of the resources and support offered to teachers. According to Woolfolk, Hoy, and Burke-Spero (2005), "Teachers make efficacy judgments, in part, by assessing the resources and constraints in specific teaching contexts" (p. 344). Resource elements such as administrative leadership support, coworker support, and professional development resources can serve to affect teachers' perceptions with regard to their ability to perform, which when positive, can increase teacher self-efficacy. External factors can directly affect the development of teacher efficacy (Wang, Hall, & Rahimi 2015). According to

Ashton (1984), "Our study of teacher efficacy beliefs indicates that the extent to which teachers believe they are capable of influencing student performance affects their enthusiasm and persistence in working with their students and ultimately their students' achievement" (p. 11). Teachers with higher self-efficacy perceptions tend to demonstrate greater effort, persistence, enthusiasm, and confidence (Ozder, 2011).

Due to the apparent effect teacher efficacy may have on teacher persistence, it is important to define elements that serve to improve teacher efficacy, especially among new teachers. Bandura (1986) stated, "Perceived self-efficacy results from diverse sources of information conveyed vicariously and through social evaluation, as well as through direct experience" (p. 411). Because teacher efficacy is affected by external factors as well as experience (Woolfolk-Hoy & Burke-Spero, 2005), attempts can be made to improve teacher efficacy through increased support and increased experience through professional development and co-worker relationships such as mentoring (Ingersoll, 2001).

The critical nature of support in the development of teacher efficacy can be seen when looking at new teachers, who may exhibit low teacher efficacy due to lack of experience. Adequate support for teachers in the first few years of teaching may be the most significant element in promoting development of positive teacher efficacy beliefs among new teachers (Shaw & Newton, 2014). First year teachers who perceive adequate support from colleagues and administration tend to be more confident in themselves and their ability to teach, whereas those who do not perceive to have adequate support tend to be less confident (Clark & Byrnes 2012). However, all successful experiences may not

necessarily contribute to positive efficacy development due to the effect of individual interpretation (Bandura, 1997).

Likewise, experiential elements of social persuasion and emotional feedback resulting from social interactions can serve to either increase or decrease teacher efficacy (Ozder, 2011). To accomplish a positive shift of self-efficacy beliefs, Bandura (1997) stated the need for "compelling feedback that forcefully disrupts the preexisting disbelief in one's capabilities" (p. 82). Although beginner teachers tend to be idealistic, contributing to low-efficacy and attrition (Burks, 2010), new teachers that have support such as a mentoring relationship can seem to be amenable to changes in efficacy. These relationships can promote teachers' pride and the ability to work side by side with other professionals (Hallam, Chou, Hite, & Hite, 2012). Mentoring relationship can enhance the capacity of teachers, as individuals and collectively, which can serve to promote teacher efficacy.

Mentoring Relationship

Formal and Informal Mentoring Relationships

Mentoring relationships can be formal or informal. In formal mentoring relationships, the mentors and the mentees are paired by another party, such as the management of an organization, for a predetermined time. There is little or no involvement of the participants in the selection process of matching the mentors and the mentees within these programs (Hallam, Chou, Hite, & Hite, 2012). Whereas informal mentoring relationships are formed spontaneously as participants get to know each other in the work environment; they occur without the involvement of a third party. The

relationship is usually voluntary and is based on mutual professional commonalities and respect born out of a more personal nature (Sweeny, 2008).

Both the formal and informal assignment of mentors has benefits and pitfalls. In the formal modality, because of this lack of previous personal connection, the mentors and the mentees may not always be committed to each other or to the program. This diminished commitment can result in an underdeveloped mentoring relationship, that is, one in which there is an inequality of status in this relationship and in which communication may be a one-way process (Clarke, 2012). The mentor directs and drives the communication down to the mentee, who has little opportunity to provide input or respond to the communication from the mentor. The one-way communication in formal mentoring can result in the mentee being unable to connect with the mentor. On the other hand, Dos Santos (2012) asserted that this formal modality allows schools to be more intentional about which values and cultural norms are passed on to new staff. Consequently, some school systems have formalized the complex mentoring processes as part of their induction programs (Waterman & He, 2011).

The informal approach also offers both benefits and drawbacks. The informal approach to mentoring is often much more appropriate for new staff with previous teaching experience, who have been hired from other school districts. If the only responsibility of a mentor is to help the new staff member to become acclimated to his new work setting, then an informal approach is sufficient (Clarke, 2012). However, according to the Sweeny (2008), informal mentoring is not enough. New educators often do not ask for the help they need. Informal mentoring cannot provide the extensive

support and modeling that is needed; it can take up to 4 years of observing effective teaching models to counteract the many years of observing old models of teaching as a student. In addition, informal mentoring does not establish collaboration as the norm, but merely transmits the current culture of the school, that is, the status quo.

Sweeny (2008) stated that other problems may arise as the result of informal mentoring. For example, if the administration does not know who is mentoring whom, support or training for mentors is difficult to establish. Without knowing the extent of mentoring that a new teacher is given, additional help that may be needed is not provided (De Lay & Washburn, 2013). Whether a novice teacher is in a formal or an informal mentoring relationship, problems in negotiating the relationship may arise, such as finding common time to collaborate (Desimone et al., 2014). Resta et al. (2013) asserted that new teacher stress levels are at an all-time high and may need both types of mentoring relationships in order to gain the advantages of each. By recognizing the complexities of mentoring, the new teachers can view these relationships as ongoing, reciprocal, an active form of professional growth (Resta et al., 2013). A result of this mentoring relationship should be the transfer of organizational values and beliefs from one generation of teachers to the next (Ingersoll & Strong, 2011).

Roles of the Mentor

Mentors need the guidance of clear roles and tasks for which they are responsible (Rikard & Banville, 2010). Ingersoll and Strong (2011) asserted that a role is a description of what a mentor is to be like, that is, the kind of person he or she must be to be effective. Mentors are experienced teachers who share their knowledge with less

experienced teachers and gently push them forward in their practice. Burks (2010) commented that the mentoring relationship is an equal partnership, a facilitating relationship, and a counseling relationship. The mentor's role may be that of tour guide, coach, challenger, and trainer. It cannot be a one-way relationship in which the mentors do all of the giving. Mentors also need an attitude of being lifelong learners and must understand that mentoring is an opportunity to develop leadership skills in themselves and in those who they mentor (Cook, 2012).

It is vital that mentors enhance their own ability to help others develop greater insight, identify needed knowledge, and expand skills. One way to enhance the mentor's own ability is the process of reflection. Hudson (2013) suggested ways in which mentors can expand this practice through modeling reflective teaching practice. One way is to know contemporary views and teaching standards. Teachers need to stay current in professional reading and encourage new teachers to do the same. Moreover, they need to model and demonstrate effective instructional behaviors. Mentors can provide opportunities for practice and reflection. The mentors can demonstrate their own approach to self-assessment through a reflective evaluation of instructional strategies and behaviors. Lastly, mentors can share constructive feedback with novice teachers and discuss how reflective teaching practices can help teachers monitor their own professional growth.

To help with this process, researchers have recommended that prospective mentors participate in professional development to learn about the mentoring process and understand what is expected of them before they assume their duties (Hudson, 2013;

Waterman & He, 2011). Ingersoll and Strong (2011) suggested that there are three major roles of a mentor: (a) a helper, someone who is a resource and a giver of time, energy, and support; (b) a colleague, someone who is an advocate for the child, the profession; and (c) a model, someone who is a facilitator enabling the novice teacher to become independent, mature and professional. Mentors also need to know the roles that building and central office administrators, department chairs, lead teachers, and others will play in new teacher orientation. According to Hudson (2013), it also is important for the mentors to have support and the opportunity to discuss ideas, problems, and solutions with other mentors.

Podsen and Denmark (2000) contended that the part of the mentoring role that is often the most difficult for mentors is giving constructive feedback to first year teachers while maintaining a relationship as peers and colleagues. According to Bieler (2012), mentors provide responses to fit the needs of the protégés. They are the leaders who recognize the stages of development and readiness for growth. Mentors should challenge, encourage, and promote the undeveloped potential of new teachers.

Most teachers who choose to be mentors have a collaborative working style; however, mentors also need to assume a very directive style (Hudson, 2013). The least successful mentor-novice relationships are those in which the mentors convey negative attitudes about their roles as mentors, about their jobs, or about the mentoring process as a whole. Costa and Garmston (2002) identified five processes in cognitive coaching that could also benefit the role of the mentor while working with a protégé. First, ask questions that would cause the teacher to think, using nonjudgmental responses. Exercise

the skill of probing for deeper understanding, then paraphrase what the teacher is saying, this communicates that the mentor is listening and attempting to understand. Lastly, use wait time, providing the new teacher the opportunity to think deeply about what the mentor is asking (Costa and Garmston, 2002).

Part of the benefit of having trained mentors is that they can help novice teachers to plan lessons, assist them in gathering information about best practices, observe the new teachers' classes, and provide positive feedback. Novice teachers can then reflect on their practice and apply what they have learned to future lessons. Stanulis, Little, and Wibbens (2012) found that novice teachers who work with trained mentors possess a higher level of teaching skills than new teachers who do not have mentors. The knowledge of how to support new teachers and their skill in providing guidance in targeted areas such as leading classroom discussions can a crucial factor in improving new teachers' teaching skills. Mentors that provide the knowledge new teachers need in leading classroom discussions is an important attribute that can lead to improved teaching and practice (Stanulis et al., 2012).

Factors That Affect the Mentor Relationship

Although learning is a matter of individual interpretation of experiences, it takes place within the social context (Kerka, 1995). To create the conditions for new teachers to learn all that is expected of professionals and to find success as reflective, student-centered educators, an effective mentoring relationship is vital. Not everyone is naturally innately capable of forging quality relationships such as that which is required in a mentor relationship; however, individuals can be taught the skills that contribute to

quality mentor relationships (Garber, 2013). A few specific factors have been shown by Burks (2010) to affect the quality of the mentor relationship. These factors include trust, active listening skills of the mentor, same grade level taught, same gender, and school climate/culture (Burks 2010).

Trust is an essential element to developing a mentor relationship (Nash, 2010). According to Burke (2010), "Confidentiality is a hallmark of that trust and new teachers must know that mentors will not consider what is said in mentor-protege conferences as fodder for water fountain gossip" (p. 54). Trust can be built through demonstrating active listening skills on the part of the mentor. The mentor's ability to discern non-verbal communication in terms of thoughts, feelings, and body language, serve to build trust and effective mentor relationships (Portner, 2008).

According to Boreen et al. (2009), a number of factors can aid or hinder the mentoring relationship. Boreen et al. suggested that mentors should have a minimum of 3 to 5 years of teaching experience and that mentors and mentees must teach in the same content area or at the same grade level. The mentors should be in classrooms that are in close proximity to those of the novice teachers. Mentors and mentees must be aware of gender differences, although the importance of this factor may depend upon other circumstances. In addition, the mentors may want to interview the novice teachers to determine whether they reflect the goals and expectations of the school district. Listed are a few questions suggested to determine whether this will be an effective match.

- Tell us a little about yourself, your education, and your experiences.

- What is your philosophy of education? Tell us about some of your beliefs about teaching and learning.

- How do you view your role as a mentee?

- What do you view as your mentor's role?

- Why did you choose to become a teacher?

- What are your future goals? (Boreen et al., 2009, p. 119)

Mentors should encourage their colleagues to talk about their teacher preparation programs and previous teaching experiences (Frels, Zientek, & Onwuegbuzie, 2013), and they should ask the novice teachers to suggest mentoring support that would be the most helpful. Mentors also should share something about their own educational and experiential backgrounds to establish a context within which the mentoring relationship can grow (Ingersoll & Strong, 2011). The unique relationship between mentors and novice teachers offers opportunities for the novices to access and internalize higher order social functions as they become part of the experienced community.

Mentor-novice conversations about teaching are important to the development of teachers' professional knowledge (Burks, 2010). If conversations are to become an integral part of a successful mentoring relationship, the way in which the mentor communicates is vital. Communicating openly and having a trusting relationship are vital elements if the mentoring process is to be successful. Burks (2010) stated that mentors must be able to observe accurately and provide novice teachers with appropriate feedback about their practice in a respectful and collaborative manner. It is important for mentors not to confuse assessment with evaluation. Assessment is an important part of the

mentoring process that gives novice teachers the opportunity for self-criticism and direction for improvement; evaluation is a final judgment imposed. According to Hobson and Malderez (2013), if novice teachers feel judged, this type of situation may cause a failure in the relationship.

Other factors that enhance the mentoring relationship include the mentor's teaching experience, shared content areas and grade levels. It is essential that the mentors have these factors in common with their assigned novice in order to provide valuable insight (Efron, Winter, & Bressman, 2012). According to Rajuan et al. (2011), the relationship between mentors and mentees is heavily based on such relational factors as personal preferences, prior experience, goals, and expectations. These factors can be very crucial to the successful mentoring process in the relationship. For example, much consideration needs to go into the approach that mentors take with mentees. In order for the approach to be effective, mentors and mentees need to collaborate on various ways to work together. Quality mentoring occurs where there is a genuine exchange of ideas (Ozder, 2011).

Despite the numerous positive benefits of mentoring, tension can arise. Ingersoll and Strong (2011) discussed a few of the more common problems in mentoring relationships: lack of time for collegial conversations, differences in educational philosophies, and qualms about evaluation affecting the mentor's approachability. In addition, another source of tension may be an inappropriate length of a mentoring relationship. In the most productive relationships, the mentors gradually withdraw as the

novice teachers gain experience and move from dependent learners to colleagues (Frels et al., 2013).

Whether in a formal or an informal mentoring relationship, the problems are not simple or easily addressed by short-term solutions. Perhaps once successful mentoring relationships are established within a mentoring program, the new generation of teachers will have a more caring, nurturing, and successful rite of passage into the teaching profession.

Defining Successful Mentor Relationships

The quality of the mentor relationship can impact the efficacy of the program, particularly among new teachers. Ingersoll and Strong (2011) suggested effective practices that align with the researcher's pre-determined critical mentoring functions (relating, assessing, coaching, and guiding) and related these teacher mentor standards to the elements of context, content, process, adjustment, collaboration, and contribution.

In terms of context and content, effective mentors act with intent to align their actions and the relationship with the norms expected within the organizational culture and the principals of adult learning theory (Portner, 2008). As such, the beginning teachers' prior conceptions of teaching practice affect what they learn in the context of the mentor relationship (Wang, Odell, & Clift, 2010). The quality and effectiveness of the mentor relationship is influenced by organizational factors of social and cultural contexts (Wang et al., 2010).

Mentors represent a model of an accomplished and self-reliant professional, demonstrating qualities to which they wish to instill in the mentee, such as characteristics

associated with intellectual growth (i.e., reasoning, creativity, risk taking, and problem-solving; Stanulis, Little, & Wibbens, 2012). Effective mentors are also described by Cho, Ramanan, and Feldman (2011) as those who meet the professional needs of their mentee through strategies based on adult learning theory, teacher development, communication, and coaching. Effective mentors attempt to adjust to potential difficulties, providing multiple solutions, purposefully tailoring support in each of these areas (Cho et al., 2011).

Through processes and adjustment, effective mentors are able to gather information on the progressive development of their mentee, modifying their practice, and adding their own knowledge and skills to assist the mentee (Portner, 2008). According to Portner, "Their decisions are not only grounded in the literature, but also in their experience" (p. 98). Finally, effective mentors, as suggested by Portner, employ concepts of collaboration and contribution such that the enlist assistance of others that may support their own personal weaknesses, amplifying the positive impact. Mentors seek out personal mentoring education opportunities for growth and improved practice (Portner, 2008).

Connor and Pokora (2012) also proposed guidelines for developing effective mentors, which can be translated into possible aspects that could serve to positively affect teacher mentor programs. These include clear expectation of their roles, and awareness of culture and gender issues. Mentors need to support their mentees, while challenging them as well. They need to develop a forum to express their problems and confusion with an awareness of professional boundaries. Mentors also need mentoring, along with recognition and rewards. They need support and protected time to appropriately plan and

perform the duty. It is important to continuously evaluate the effectiveness of the

mentoring relationship (Clark & Bymes 2012). Several tips to help make mentors more

effective would be to avoid information overload, sharing decision-making, knowing

when to intervene, maintain the relationship, to not forget content, what the mentee is

asking for, know when to wean, find time to mentor, and to reflect on the mentoring

process (Ingersoll, 2011).

According to Clarke (2012), the mentors should initiate contact with the novice

teachers to establish an atmosphere in which the novices feel supported as colleagues and

full partners in the professional life of the school building. When this is done within the

mentoring relationship, the necessary context of safety and confidence for the mentor and

protégé to take risks such as trying new teaching strategies and of learning in front of

each other is created. This context is necessary for accelerated professional growth.

Benefits of Mentor Relationships

As an interactive system, mentoring benefits all participants: mentors, protégés,

and school systems. Effective mentor relationships support beginner teacher development

and success, promoting future mentor relationships in both the mentor and mentee

(Hudson, 2013). According to Edwards (2002), protégés benefit from the mentoring

relationship in three major ways: fast assimilation into the school environment,

establishment of professional competence, and introduction to teaching as a continually

developing, lifelong career. Development of competence and introduction to teaching as a

career was discussed earlier, but the third factor, fast assimilation into the school

environment, also is very important. Ingersoll and Strong (2011) acknowledged that

knowing how the building operates; knowing policies, procedures, rules, and forms; knowing how to access building maintenance; and so on, allows novice teachers to focus on teaching and learning to facilitate the development of teaching competence.

According to Hallam, Chou, Hite, and Hite (2012), beginning teachers must be given constant feedback and opportunities to discuss and reflect about their teaching experiences with colleagues who can provide the support necessary to develop and foster a successful teaching career. Because new teachers' success is partially mediated by open communication with colleagues, providing insight and experience, mentoring relationships provide benefits of encouragement, advice, assistance, and general feedback for the new teacher (Katz, 2010) They gain the satisfaction of being able to transfer skills and knowledge accumulated through extensive professional practice (California State Department of Education, 1983; Krupp, 1984; Wang et al., 2008); much of this knowledge cannot be learned simply by teacher preparation programs. Other factors include instructional strategies, access to resources, support in classroom management strategies, and the ability to work with parents, manage the school day, and function within the school district (Wang et al., 2008).

In addition to gaining productive working strategies, beginning teachers rank emotional support that reduces their sense of isolation as one of the most helpful factors in their development (Ingersoll & Strong, 2011). With a supportive context for professional learning such as observing other teachers, novice teachers find success and self-confidence, and they become veteran teachers who continually seek to provide better

ways to support student learning (Clark & Bymes, 2012). Mentors can ensure that achievement by sharing their teaching expertise.

Mentoring helps novice teachers face their new challenges; through reflective activities and professional conversations, they improve their teaching practices as they assume full responsibility for their students (Ingersoll & Smith, 2003). Mentors give novice teachers the opportunity to hear different points of view, think out loud, and test ideas with more experienced teachers (Garber, 2013). Mentoring fosters the professional development of novice teachers and their mentors. With a supportive relationship, novice teachers find success and self-confidence.

Those teachers who assume the role of mentor increase their knowledge of the performance-based standards and strengthen their teaching and leadership skills (Roby 2012). According to Roby, teachers strengthen their skills and professionalism by interacting with each other, trying new approaches in the classroom, sharing ideas with peers, and using peer input to evaluate and revise their teaching strategies. Ingersoll (2001) noted the regenerative and generative effects of the mentor roles for teachers, such that assuming the mentor role provides the opportunity to continue to learn and remain excited about teaching, and to influence the development of new teachers by sharing of oneself. A successful mentoring relationship will make the most of this kind of collegial interaction.

In a qualitative study examining the effects of electronic peer mentoring on a university physical therapy class, Holloway (2001) found that the mentors and the mentees learned through the process of reflection and articulation. The mentees benefited

from the mentors' stories and experiences, which made the learning more concrete and authentic. The mentors reinforced concepts already learned by connecting theory to practice and by doing new research to address the mentees' questions effectively. Therefore, mentors who participate in inquiry critically examine their own practice, which can lead to a heightened awareness of the complexity of teaching (Garber, 2013).

Not only can beginning teachers and mentors benefit from a mentoring relationship but administrators also experience an advantage (Huling-Austin, 1999). Through this relationship, administrators are assisted with beginning teacher orientation and support from the mentors. Reduced teacher attrition and time required for beginning teacher recruitment, development, supervision, and problem solving occur. Administrators also see increased quality of teacher performance for beginning teachers. When administrators grapple with funding decisions related to mentoring programs, they need to recognize the dual benefits of their investments (Birkeland & Feiman-Nemser, 2012).

The majority of what has been written about mentoring has focused on what mentors should believe and do in their work with novice teachers. Researchers have described the benefits for novice teachers (Odell & Huling, 2000). However, facilitators of mentoring programs and researchers have begun to recognize that mentors also derive substantial benefits from the mentoring experience, including advancement in leadership positions, better teaching in their own classrooms, and increased self-esteem (Roby, 2012).

A school that welcomes beginning teachers enthusiastically and encourages them to actively participate in the educational processes can potentially reduce its teacher attrition rate (Hudson, 2013). Poor mentoring does not produce these benefits. Rather, they result from an effective, high-quality mentoring relationship.

Research on Efficacy of Mentor Programs and Teacher Perceptions

Recent research on mentor programs maintains a focus on the efficacy of these programs and relationships at retaining new teachers and enhancing teacher quality of instruction, thereby enhancing student achievement. Many of these studies are quantitative in nature; however, some qualitative researchers have sought to determine teacher perceptions of the programs in terms of benefits and problems associated with such programs (Clark & Bymes, 2012; Margolis, 2008). A gap remains in the study of new teacher perceptions of the mentor relationship at the elementary level.

The efficacy of the mentor program must be examined both from the perspective of the mentor and from the perspective of the novice. On the mentor side, researchers have discovered some surprising insights into the mentoring experience. According to Frels et al. (2013), mentors came away from the mentoring experience believing that their relationship with the novice had been more beneficial to the novice than it actually was. However, the mentors also would have appreciated more training in effective mentoring practices. In addition, Margolis (2008) concluded that teachers who acted as mentors experienced an increased desire to remain in the teaching field themselves.

On the other hand, in many studies, novices have expressed dissatisfaction with a myriad of aspects of the mentor relationship, mostly relating to time with the mentor and

time for classroom observation. Frels et al. (2013) found that novices wanted more time in general with their mentor, more time to observe other classrooms, and for their mentor relationship to follow a specified format. Similarly, Clark and Bymes (2012) also found novices to desire release time to observe other teachers and common planning time with their mentor.

Other researchers corroborate the novices' notions of the situation. Rockoff (2008) concluded that the success of the mentoring relationship and retention of the new teachers was strongly linked to the number of hours the mentor spent with the novice. However, sometimes the best intentions can use a little motivation: Rikard and Banville (2010) found that accountability measures were necessary to effectively meet the needs of new teacher.

Summary

This literature review was divided into four main sections. These sections included literature related to (a) the background for the study, (b) induction and mentoring programs, (c) theoretical framework, and (d) literature related to mentoring relationships. The literature showed that comprehensive induction programs that use mentor teachers are ways to combat the attrition rates for new teachers. Although there is no one-size-fits all approach, there can be many benefits to a successful mentoring relationship within an induction program. When novice teachers begin their career in a new setting, there is an enormous amount of new information to learn and there are a thousand questions to be asked. An effective induction program helps a great deal by anticipating and providing just what new teachers need to know. Researchers have

documented a strong link between new teacher retention and increased support through induction and mentoring programs. Having a positive mentoring relationship within an induction program can be the impetus to move the classroom instruction and interpersonal relationship to a deeper level of growth in the areas of teaching, learning, and professionalism.

The literature demonstrated that to be effective, mentoring programs need focus and structure to ensure that the desired results will occur. To help guide novice teachers within an induction program or through a mentoring relationship, it is critical to understand what the perceptions of success are for the novice teacher. The importance of research highlighting the experiences and perceptions of novice elementary school teachers within a mentor program will help to understand the strengths and weaknesses of the relationship. However, there is a need for further investigation in the mentor-mentee relationship among new elementary teachers for enhancing efficacy and increased retention.

Section 3 begins with a short introduction then describes the research methodology and design for the data collection and analysis. The research methodology is outlined and provides support for using a qualitative study. The participants are described as well as the process of engaging them in the study. Data collection methods and analysis are explored and the validity of the study is discussed in Section 3.

Section 3: Research Method

Introduction

The purpose of this qualitative phenomenological study was to understand the meaning of a successful mentoring relationship from the perspective of six purposefully selected elementary teachers. Many school districts across the United States are using mentoring as a means of retaining and training new teachers; regardless, many new teachers are leaving the profession within the first 3 years of teaching (Ingersoll & Strong, 2011). Research is needed to determine how mentors and mentees can strengthen the mentor relationship. I attempted to uncover the meaning of a successful mentoring relationship from the perspective of the novice teacher, and sought to understand the underlying themes that help describe this phenomenon.

Research Method

According to Creswell (2013), qualitative research takes place in the natural setting. A qualitative researcher employs multiple methods that are interactive and humanistic. Qualitative research is emergent rather than prefigured and is essentially interpretive. Qualitative researchers view social phenomena as a whole, systematically reflect on who is in the inquiry, and are sensitive to personal biography and how it shapes the study (Creswell, 2012).

Qualitative studies maintain an emphasis on the importance of the participant's perspective and how it informs meaning for the participant (Creswell, 2012). According, to Creswell, qualitative research "is best suited for a research problem in which you do not know the variables and need to explore" (p. 45). When the variables have not yet

been defined or inadequate research exists on the specific population further exploration

is needed. Qualitative exploration allows for a flexible exploration and in-depth study;

this may lead to novel concepts from observation and provide an opportunity for further

exploration of a study's prevalence, predictors, and sequence in other studies (Yoshikawa,

Weisner, Kalil, & Way, 2008). The methodology for qualitative research is inquiry-based,

exploring the phenomenon through questions, narrative descriptions, and analysis of

emerging themes Qualitative research methods are not as dependent upon sample sizes as

quantitative methods

A qualitative research method is appropriate when a researcher seeks to

understand the meanings individuals make of their experiences (Morrow, 2007). One of

the primary purposes of qualitative research is to describe and clarify the experiences as it

is live and experienced by the individuals (Punch, 2013). Qualitative research is also

appropriate when a researcher needs to present a detailed and in-depth view of a

phenomenon. Quantitative methods can enable a researcher to get a broad understanding

of a phenomenon, qualitative approaches are able to delve into complex processes and

illustrate the multifaceted nature of human phenomenon.

In contrast to qualitative methods, quantitative methods do not meet the

characteristics and goals of the present study, as quantitative studies are focused on "a

description of trends or an explanation of the relationship among variables," expressed

statistically (Creswell, 2012, p. 45). Quantitative researchers often use research

instruments that search for the answers related to how much, how many, when, and who;

whereas qualitative methods are used to explore phenomenon using detailed data to

promote interaction between participants and events that may uncover phenomenon

(Punch 2013). However, qualitative studies allow the subject to tell a researcher what he

or she thinks is important; thus, the result of this research is not numeric ratings, but

transcripts of what people said (Merriam, 2014). Qualitative research methods are not as

dependent upon sample sizes as quantitative methods; a phenomenological approach for

example, can generate meaningful results with a small sample group as was used in this

study. The research questions that guided this study and the focus of this study, in which I

explored, understood, and interpreted the lived experiences of participants was best suited

for a qualitative, phenomenological design.

Research Design

A qualitative, phenomenological approach was used to study success from a

mentees perspective in order to analyze the essential elements of the mentoring

relationship for the novice elementary teachers' retention and success. A

phenomenological methodology was used to answer the research questions. The

phenomenological tradition was chosen because it is a way to understand a lived

experience, thus opening the way for positive social change within the teaching

profession. Phenomenologists explore the structures of consciousness in human

experiences (Marshall & Rossman, 2014). It is the search for the essential, invariant

structure (or essence), that is, the central meaning of the experience (Creswell, 2012).

Mentoring relationships tend to be highly complex, so by understanding the

experiences of success as perceived by the novice teacher, mentoring can become more

effective. My intent was to explore the experiences of individual mentees in the

mentoring relationship within an elementary school setting. This study represents a constructive approach to a phenomenological study. It is a study based on an interpersonal topic that attempts to uncover the meaning of a successful mentoring relationship from the perspective of the mentee, and seeks to investigate the underlying themes that help describe this phenomenon.

Phenomenological research is used when a researcher seeks a deeper understanding of the everyday experiences of individual through an exploration of the nature and meaning of these experiences, describing what has been experienced, how it was experienced, and the perceived effects resulting from the experience (Creswell, 2012; Moustakas, 1994). A phenomenological inquiry assumes that meaning is derived from the commonality of shared experience (Patton, 2002). The phenomenological design involves investigating the experiences of a small group of individuals to gain insight through "comprehensive descriptions that provide the basis for a reflective structural analysis that portray the essences of the experience" (Moustakas, 1994, p. 13).

A phenomenological evaluation was used to develop a picture of mentoring function and perspectives. The participants' responses involved verbal description as the basis of explanation of what constitutes success in a mentoring relationship. There is an underlying belief to this study based upon Boreen et al. (2009) and Speck (1996), as well as the framework of phenomenological research (Creswell, 2012), that the characteristics of the ideal mentoring relationship can be made evident .

A qualitative, case study approach, which is often used to provide an in-depth look at a particular case (Creswell, 2012), was one such design considered. Case studies

typically include various data collection methods and data sources, such as interviews, surveys, and historical data collection, to provide different perspectives and understanding of a single or few cases (Creswell, 2012; Merriam, 2014). However, in the present study, I collected a single source of data (interview data). Although the teachers were from the same school district, they were from different elementary schools within the district, allowing for different experiences despite the common location. A case study was deemed less appropriate to meet the goals of the study than the phenomenological approach.

Research Questions

The research questions guided the study and the development of the interview questions that were asked of the participants. The research questions were asked in order to explore the perceptions of successful and unsuccessful experiences for mentees who have been in mentoring relationships, by having them describe the meaning of success in their everyday lived experiences in that relationship. I focused on the experiences and perceptions of novice elementary teachers who have participated in a mentor relationship for more than 2 years.

1. What are the lived experiences and perceptions of novice elementary teachers with regard to success in the mentor relationship?

2. What is the impact of the mentoring relationship on the new teacher?

Moustakas's (1994) modified van Kaam systematic procedure, which is rigorous yet accessible, was used. Participants described their own experiences of the phenomenon and significant statements, the invariant constitutes, from the participant interview text

were identified. The themes were then synthesized into textual and structural descriptions

of the experiences of the individuals to facilitate construction of a composite description

of the meanings and essences of the mentoring experience.

Context for the Study

The constructivist paradigm guided this study because the mentoring relationship

is an active process in which the learners construct new ideas or concepts based upon

their current or past knowledge. Bruner (1966) stated that the learners select and

transform information, construct hypotheses, and make decisions, relying on a cognitive

structure to do so. All the components of listening, talking, and making meaning from the

mentoring relationship are based on constructivism. Descriptions of the realities of their

struggles and successes in constructing a successful mentoring relationship were relied

upon. Constructivists often focus their data collection on interviewing and observing the

participants in their natural setting (Hatch, 2002).

The research design included six elementary teachers at two elementary schools

who have had prior interactions with the same mentor in a mentoring program for more

than 2 years and were able to communicate their thoughts and feelings about these

interactions. At present, there are only two elementary schools in this district in which

few new teachers have been hired in the last 5 years.

With changing student population in the district and new core standards for the

state and nation these few new teachers are facing many challenges. These challenges

range from ways to manage students in the classroom to using engaging strategies that

will increase student test scores and academic learning (Kazin-Boyce, 2014). Many

school districts across the United States, including Michigan districts, have used and are using mentoring as a means of retaining and training new teachers, making it desirable to study success from a mentees perspective in order to analyze the experiences of the mentoring relationship for their retention and success.

The participants were asked 10 open-ended questions of their experiences and perceptions of the successful or unsuccessful relationships with their mentors and the impact of that relationship; the interviews were tape recorded. As interview questions where being answered by each participant I took notes on my own feelings and thoughts. According to Caelli (2001), the writing of field notes during the research process compels the researcher to further clarity each interview. After the descriptions were read and reflected upon several times, they were formulated into meaning units or categories and then clustered into themes using codes according to the research questions. Themes emerged during the interpretation process. A phenomenological evaluation was designed to develop an analysis of mentoring function and perspectives.

Protection of Participants' Rights

Due to the use of in-depth interviews and observations with human subjects, this proposal was submitted to the Institutional Review Boards (IRB) of Walden University and the elementary school principal. Approval from the IRBs and signed consent from the participants ensured that the participants would face minimal risk while being involved in the study and that they were not subjected to embarrassment, coercion, stress, or any other type of harm (Roberts, 2004). All of the collected data were confidential and will be

kept in a secure, locked filing cabinet in my home office for a period of 7 years to ensure that unauthorized access to the materials is not possible.

Prior to conducting interviews, elementary principals were contacted by e-mail to gain permission to set up the participant's interviews. Participants in the study received a copy of the informed consent, which included the purpose of the study, a description of the open-ended interview process, identification of who viewed the data collected, identification of any risks associated with the study, identification of the time commitment needed for study involvement, a discussion of the confidentiality, and the option to withdraw from participation at any time. At the time of the scheduled interview, I reviewed the consent form with the participant and asked that the participant sign the informed consent form. Each participant was required to sign the informed consent form at the time of the interview if the intent is to continue with participation in the study. Once the consent form was signed in front of me, I conducted the interview with the participant.

Participation in this study was voluntary, there was no payment for participation, and there were no foreseeable risks to participants during the study beyond what would be ordinarily encountered in everyday life. Special precautions were established to protect the confidentiality of the responses. Participants were notified that for research purposes, interview data were transcribed and electronically archived. All data collected for the study, electronic and paper, will be maintained in a secure, locked file cabinet for 7 years, after which all documents and electronic data will be destroyed. To maintain confidentiality of participants, each participant was assigned a pseudonym for purposes

of the research study. The interview data did not include personal identifiable information such as the name or address of the participants.

Role of the Researcher

I was the primary instrument for collecting and analyzing the data. According to Creswell, (2012) "Qualitative researchers collect data themselves through examining documents, observing behavior, or interviewing participants. They may use a protocol—an instrument for collecting data—but the researchers are the ones who actually gather the information" (p. 175). Data are mediated through this human instrument, rather than through inventories, questionnaires, and interview schedules designed by someone other than the researcher (Merriam, 2002). In this study, I served as the interviewer, interacting with the participants during the various data collection and analysis procedures. Contact with the novice teachers at school meetings established a rapport and trustworthiness, which is critical for obtaining valid information from participants. When the novice teachers were approached to participate in the in-depth interviews, they were comfortable and willing to provide information and perspectives. Although I was a teacher in the school district, and have been a mentor in the past, it was important for me to put aside any preconceived ideas about the meaning of success in the mentoring relationship, while exploring the meanings provided by mentees in the study.

Population and Sample

A purposeful sample of six novice educators who have taught in a southern Michigan school district for fewer than 6 years and have had the same mentor for more than 2 years participated in the study. Purposeful sampling is a nonprobabilistic sampling

method in which a researcher selects the particular research locations and participants to increase the probability that they will be able to provide the information necessary to answer the research questions of the study (Creswell, 2012). In qualitative research, the selection of the sample requires a focus on recruitment of participants who provide specific narratives to clarify and deepen the exploration of the study and provide the depth of information needed for descriptive research (Merriam, 2014). Participants for this study were purposively selected and recruited through cooperation with administrative leaders at the elementary school and school district. Participants were selected on a voluntary basis according to the above criteria; the target population for the interviews was very specific, serving to limit the number of eligible participants.

In contrast to quantitative research, qualitative research normally involves small sample sizes of participants. Creswell (2012) recommended that the size for a phenomenological qualitative sample should consist of long interviews with up to 10 people. Patton (2002) stated that there are no specific rules for sample size, and described, "Sample size depends on what you want to know, the purpose of the inquiry, what's at stake, what will be useful, what will have credibility, and what can be done with available time and resources" (p. 244). Accordingly, I incorporated a sample size of six educators, based on the limited number of new teachers that had mentors.

Data Collection

Potential participants that meet the inclusion criteria for the study were approached via e-mail during the school year and asked whether they would like to participate in a study of their experiences and perceptions of the successful or

unsuccessful relationships with their mentors. Once willingness to participate was

established, participants were sent a copy of the consent form (Appendix A) for the study,

which provided detailed information with regard to the study. Potential participants who

expressed the desire to participate were given a follow up telephone call to set up a date,

time, and location for the interview. In the event of fewer than six responses to

participate, additional e-mails were sent to additional potential participants. This sample

was comprised of six elementary teachers who had the same mentor for more than 2

years and were able to communicate their thoughts and feelings regarding these

interactions. Data for this study were collected through semi-structured interview

questions.

Interview Questions

The semistructured, open-ended interview questions permitted narrative responses

from participants (Creswell, 2012) and yielded detailed and pertinent information. Open-

ended interview questions included inquiry into the personal experience and perception

of the mentor relationship. I initiated the conversation with a discussion of the informed

consent form, answering any questions the participant may have with regard to the study

or consent. The interview did not begin until after the consent form was signed and

returned to me.

Use of semistructured questions guided the interview process, but also allowed for

participant directed conversation in order to gain a deeper understanding of the

participants' lived experiences. All in-depth audio taped interviews were given on site by

me, as recommended by Moustakas (1994). The participants were asked 10 open-ended

questions. (Appendix A) Upon completion of the data collection process, the audio-recorded interviews were transcribed into a Microsoft Word document for analysis.

Field Notes

Working as the interviewer, I took notes and observations during the interview process in order to record nonverbal communication (Creswell, 2012). I made descriptive notes and reflective notes, such as my impressions, feelings, and thoughts about the interviews. These notes were taken while the participant discussed the interview questions that were being taped recorded. I also add further impressions to my notes after the participant left the room. According to Caelli (2001), the writing of field notes during the research process helps further clarify the interviews. This information was used as a means to improve and establish the interpretation the data during the analysis process. I transcribed key words, phrases, and statements in order to allow the voices of the participants to speak. The notes also helped facilitate the development of new questions that I could ask the participant if needed after the interview question was recorded. Lastly, these notes where combined with the transcripts to develop the significant statements, or invariant constitutes as illustrated in the appendix.

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Field Test

</div>

A field test was conducted in 2009 to justify the interview questions and to ensure clarity of comprehension. Three teachers from a past mentoring relationship who had been mentored were asked to review and critique each of the questions. The three mentor teachers were asked to evaluate the questions to ensure that they were clear. An explanation regarding the purpose of the study was given to each of the mentor teachers.

Upon reviewing each of the questions, the three teachers expressed any concerns they had

regarding each of the questions listed. Revisions included revised phrasing to insure that

they would elicit true experiences by the novice teacher. Upon receiving their feedback,

questions were revised. One example of a revision is demonstrated by this question from

"Can you describe a successful interaction with your mentor?" to Describe the two most

impactful interactions that you had with your mentor and what precipitated the

interaction. Once revision of the questions was complete, the questions were given to the

school administrator for approval (Appendix C).

Data Analysis

In qualitative phenomenological research, the researcher searches for common

patterns shared by particular instances (Polit & Beck, 2006). Moustakas's (1994)

systematic procedure, which is rigorous yet accessible, was used. Specifically, the

modified van Kaam method for phenomenological data analysis described by Moustakas

(1994) was used. Phenomenological analysis provides a method of capturing the

perceptions of participants and exploring the phenomenon to provide a vivid depiction of

the experiences of the individual as well as the group as a whole (Moustakas, 1994).

Phenomenology is focused on illuminating the essential aspects of a given phenomenon,

in this case the mentoring relationship from the perspective of the mentee.

Modified Van Kaam Method for Phenomenological Analysis

I followed the phenomenological analysis model, as presented by Moustakas

(1994). Data for the study were gathered from interview responses from six elementary

teachers in a single southern Michigan school district. The QSR International's NVivo 10

software was used to synthesize the data and allow for a comprehensive

phenomenological exploration. The interview data were reviewed, coded, categorized

into thematic categories of common elements mentioned by participants. Further

categorization into overarching themes revealed the essence of the experiences of

participants, as revealed from the data.

Data Analysis Plan

I conducted the data analysis according to the modified van Kaam process. I

found this approach effective in organizing, analyzing, and synthesizing the data. First,

expressions that are relevant to the experience were put in a preliminary grouping and

listing. I transcribed each audio taped interview verbatim. I did not omit any statement or

word from the transcript, and considered each phrase equally relevant. This is known as

horizonalization, viewing each statement as having equal value.

Second, I reduced the data by repeatedly reading each transcript and eliminating

statements that did not answer the guiding questions. Overlapping, repetitive, and vague

expressions were also eliminated. I checked the expressions and their accompanying

theme against the complete record of the research participant: (a) Are they [themes]

expressed explicitly in the complete transcription? (b) Are they compatible if not

explicitly expressed? and (c) If they are not explicit or compatible, they are not relevant

to the co-researcher's [participant's] experience and were deleted. The remaining

statements became the invariant constituents (the meaning units or horizons) of the

experience, and described the phenomenon in exact descriptive terms. I have provided an

example of how I reduced the data to answer each question in Appendix D. Third, the

invariant constituents of the experience that are related into a thematic label were clustered. The clustered and labeled constituents are the core themes of the experience. Fourth, I checked the invariant constituents and the themes against each individual transcript to make sure the theme was expressed either explicitly or was compatible with the constituents. This process helped determine the relevancy and meaning of the experiences to the participants. The modified van Kaam process allowed me to operate within a set of clearly defined steps, to reveal the essence of the lived experiences of the participants pertaining to the mentoring experience. Although the QSR International's NVivo 10 qualitative software assisted in the processes of storage, coding, and comparing data, I performed the actual analysis utilizing these steps of phenomenological analysis (Moustakas, 1994) in order to provide for an effective and valid analysis.

Validity of the Study

To ensure the validity and accuracy of the findings, member checking, bracketing and peer debriefing were used. Participants were asked to read and review the transcriptions of the interviews to determine whether they feel that all information or themes were accurate, a process termed member checking (Creswell, 2012). According to Lincoln and Guba (1985), member checking is the single most important means for improving validity in qualitative study. Additionally, any of my own preconceived ideas about the meaning of success in the mentoring relationship, was put aside (bracketing) while exploring the meanings provided by mentees in the study. The individual participants received a copy of the transcribed text of their interview(s) and later a copy of the analysis and asked to review these documents to ensure accuracy of the

transcription and that the analysis was an accurate representation of their perceptions and experiences, as obtained through the interview process.

Creswell (2012) suggested reporting a detailed protocol for data collection so that the procedure of a qualitative study might be replicated in another setting. In order to ensure quality of the study, the collection and analysis of data followed the procedure as described in the previous data collection and analysis sections of this chapter. Quality of qualitative research was also improved by the use of NVivo9 qualitative analysis software to aid in the coding and categorization of the data, which reduced human error in the coding process.

Summary

A qualitative phenomenological design was used to explore and understand the meaning of success in a mentoring relationship from the perspective of the mentee, and sought to investigate the underlying themes that help describe this phenomenon. Elementary educators who have taught in a southern Michigan school district for fewer than 6 years and who had the same mentor for more than 2 years were interviewed. Their recorded responses to 10 open-ended questions were analyzed into categories and clustered in themes, which formed the basis of a narrative description. The results were documented and then related to the existing literature. In section 4 I describe the process by which the data were generated and gathered. A report of the original data that were gathered from the interviews is given. This information includes the relationships that were experienced and the themes that emerged from the findings. Finally, a discussion of the quality of this study is presented.

Chapter 4: Results

Introduction

In this qualitative phenomenological study, data were generated through a purposeful sample of six novice educators. Teachers were from a Michigan school district that had taught for fewer than 6 years and had a mentor for more than 2 years. The participants were recruited with permission by administrative leaders at the elementary school district. I was the primary instrument for collecting, gathering, and analyzing the data. In-depth audio taped interviews were conducted on site and then transcribed. Each interview lasted approximately 60 minutes. I also took notes during the interview process. According to Caelli (2001), field notes compel the researcher to further clarify each interview. As participants talked about their experiences in the tape recorder, I made descriptive notes and reflective notes, such as my impressions, feelings, and thoughts about the interviews on paper. I listened to what was being said, how it was being said, and, the tone of conversation among participants. All statements and notes from the interviews about how the participants experienced the topic were read and reflected upon. Statements and notes were reviewed several times to see if there was any redundancy then combined. Any data with similar meaning were eliminated. This information was then organized using a color-coded system that allowed for tracking of all the data and emerging understandings according to the modified van Kaam process (Moustakas, 1994). The statements from each interview were classified and compared to pull-out content that could be put into themes.

To find themes within the data, I read through each sentence in the transcript and considered what was important and what aspects of the data would help to answer my research questions.

1.   What are the lived experiences and perceptions of novice elementary teachers with regard to success in the mentor relationship?

2.   What is the impact of the mentoring relationship on the new teacher?

As I read through the transcripts several times, similar or related codes were refined and combined to determine a final list of categories or themes. These categories were developed with both vertical content (location within the interviews) and horizontal contact (relationship to other statements made). As certain themes began to repeat themselves, I also reread my field notes to insure that my thoughts and feelings made connections with the themes.

Findings

The semistructured interviews with the mentees consisted of 10 open-ended questions and my notes to reveal participants' perceptions, experiences, and expectations related to their mentor relationships. A qualitative, phenomenological approach was used to study success from a mentees perspective in order to understand the essential experiences and impact of the mentoring relationship for the novice elementary teachers' retention and success. The assumptions of this study include that mentoring relationships tend to be highly complex, so by understanding the experiences of success as perceived by the novice teacher, then mentoring can become more effective. Four major themes emerged from the data analysis that best explained the experiences that impacted the new

teachers the most. These themes included areas of time with the mentor, communication, quality of relationship, and support. Following are the questions and responses that led to this conclusion.

Question 1

What did you hope to learn or receive through your mentoring relationship?

Each participant had a different expectation of his relationship, although not all expectations were met. Four out of the six teachers expected help with paperwork that was required and someone who could answer questions as needed. Two of the teachers expressed disappointment in the fact that their mentors were not regularly available for questions and did not take the time with them for concerns that they had. Teacher 1 had cultural differences with her students and had hoped her mentor would be more available to answer her questions.

My mentor did not have the same prep times so it was hard to meet with her and discuss the cultural differences that I need help with, it would be nice if we had a regular time to meet, not just by chance in the hall or at the copy machine.

Teacher 2 thought that having someone to "bounce ideas off of about classroom behavior" was the most important aspect of the relationship. Teacher 2 stated, "Being able to talk to them if you are having difficulty with a student getting a fresh pair of eyes or opinions, and what strategies would be useful really helped me." Teacher 3 indicated that giving different classroom strategies helped the most, she commented that is was important to "Talk about certain strategies that are working then talking over how I'm

doing with the strategy, also helping me tweak a strategy maybe one isn't working a certain way."

A personal bond in the mentoring relationship was most important to Teacher 4, "Having someone to connect with," made it easier for her to ask questions. Teacher 5 expressed that

My mentor provides guidance, support with any of the situations that come up in my classroom, things that they don't teach you at the university. Things such as report cards, assessment, district assessments, what to do when parents come in for conferences, sign in sheets, little things like that.

Teacher 6 wanted to "learn more about ways in which to teach the different subject matter, someone who could come in and demonstrate a reading lesson to help with student learning, I wish my mentor would do that but it is hard for her with our different schedules." Overall, the response to question one indicated that there were definite expectations for the mentoring relationship, although each novice had different expectations; some of these expectations were met and others were not.

Question 2

How was your mentoring relationship initiated or established?

All teachers explained that the school district assigned a mentor to them at the very start of their first year. Although mentors were assigned to the new teachers, two of the teachers found other classroom teachers that they felt more comfortable with and more available to help them with questions. Teacher 5 stated that "my mentor was assigned to me by my principal although she is not in the same grade level so it is more

comfortable to talk with my grade level partners." Additionally teacher 6 stated that "my mentor was assigned to me by our principal and she is in a different grade and hall so I don't have much contact with her." Each teacher expressed a desire to have some type of input into who was assigned to be their mentor.

Teacher 3 suggested that administration have "informal staff meetings where new teachers could make connections with veteran staff before mentors were assigned; this would allow the novices the opportunity to have input as to who they would like to have as a mentor. Although Teacher 1 stated that the relationship "shouldn't have to be initiated or establish because you've built a relationship in the past the bond that I have with my mentor now comes natural because we built a relationship outside of work." In contrast, teacher 2 said, "Because my classroom is so specialized I was assigned a mentoring relationship through the lead teacher in our department." Teacher 4 stated, "I did my student teaching with her so our relationship was established before she became my mentor." It was clear from the response that participants wanted to play a role in the initial process of establishing the relationship.

Question 3

Tell me about the time you spent in mentoring activities.

The six teachers in this study were from two different school districts; both of these districts required the teachers to be part of a mentoring program. One district mentoring program required that they meet once a month. The other mentoring program did not require meetings.

All teachers discussed spending some time in documentation of what they discussed with their mentor. Teacher 1 said that "documentation was done online every month about topics we discussed and any kind of meetings that we attended". Teacher 3 also expressed the same type of documentation activity "We have to document everything that we talk about through our mentoring program what we discuss, any kind of meetings that we had. What I learned from the meeting. We document every month online." Teacher 5 expressed "spending time outside of school was important to establish a close comfortable bond with my mentor. I met with my mentor for lunch in the summer and we have contact outside of school hours." Teacher 2 also said "we are not in a mentoring program but we spend lunch together planning we meet once a week outside of school and talk about what's working and what's not working."

Teacher 4 expressed that she spent time with her mentor outside of school for lesson planning. She stated, "Planning together helped me understand better what lessons to teach from the curriculum for my grade level." Teacher 6 expressed that "we go to the mentoring meetings that are held by the District together other than that we don't have any other activities that we do together." Although most of these experiences were not formal mentoring activities, such as going to a required district meeting, teachers felt the informal meetings were most helpful in establishing a positive relationship.

Question 4

Tell me about the personality traits that affected your mentoring relationship positively or negatively.

Teachers felt that the mentor had both positive and negative personality traits that affected the mentoring relationship. Teacher 2 indicated that her mentor was "very helpful" and introduced her to other staff members, "she made me feel part of the school family. She is available for questions and is willing to share her ideas."

Being able to trust the mentor and have a rapport were also traits that were mentioned as a positive elements in the relationship. Teacher 1 said:

Our personalities were a lot alike. He's really crazy in the classroom and so am I. We're not afraid to be silly were not afraid to be ourselves in front of the kids, so that really clicked for us when we first met. I really had high respect for him and trusted him to help me with anything I needed.

Teacher 3 said "My mentor would give me constructive feedback on my progress not just negative comments but also positive and praise for doing things that are right." Teacher 4 commented "My mentor didn't seem as approachable." She continued that "since my mentor was not in the same grade level, I couldn't ask her questions about the curriculum, I would just ask other teachers in my grade level for ideas". Teacher 2 mentioned that because her mentor was not in the same grade level, it was not as convenient to meet and discuss lessons so I didn't get to know her on a personal level." "If I had a question about a lesson I would just pop in on my teaching partner and ask her instead of my mentor". "It would have helped if she would have been more proactive in our relationship and set up meetings." Teacher 6 also stated that "my mentor was not as informed about the curriculum because she is not in the same grade level. So it is hard to share about personality traits when I don't really know her." She also mentioned that "I

know one of my colleagues who is a third-grade teacher and she would meet with her mentor who was in third grade and they would meet every month. I would meet with them but it didn't look very good on my mentor." The results show that both positive and negative traits did affect the mentoring relationship.

Question 5

Describe the two most impactful interactions that you had with your mentor and what precipitated the interaction.

Impactful interactions for the new teachers were described in different ways. Teacher 1 described getting together outside of school hours with his mentor to just "hang out." They would meet in the summer to talk about sports and things they were interested in such as their music interest. He was also involved in an after school music program with his mentor, which really impacted his confidence as a teacher. He commented:

My mentor and I codirected a special coral group from all the students, the best students in the district. We do this after school every Wednesday so this is another way that he has impacted my teaching career. Our mentoring relationship has gone way beyond just him being a mentor for me but a personal friendship.

In contrast to his experience Teacher 2 said, "I didn't have any impactful experiences because my mentor was not in the same grad level." She said, "Anytime I had a question I would go to my grade level teachers because they would understand and know how to help me more than my mentor would". Also Teacher 3 said, "We really don't meet so I can't really talk about any impactful interactions, luckily I have a third-grade colleague that helps me a lot." Teacher 4 stated:

It is just being comfortable with my mentor it all just comes together the bond that

I have with my mentor now comes natural because we built a relationship outside

of school it's better than any mentoring program it's a relationship, a bond that we

build and everything else falls into place it all works out . We talk about

everything from how to manage a classroom to how to work with students.

Teacher 5 said, "Nothing comes to mind." Teacher 6 said, "The most important thing is connecting on a personal level." The teachers all had some kind of interaction with their mentor, but not all felt it was impactful.

Question 6

How did the mentor relationship enhance or influence your job performance?

Overall, most teachers felt that their mentor did enhance and influence their job performance in a positive way. Teacher 1 said:

It really helped because this culture is so different and my mentor had

been working in this district for so many years that he really helped me

with adjusting to the differences in culture, also in knowing how the

school is run since in the past I worked at a Catholic school and it's totally

different.

Teacher 2 stated that it gave her "more confidence in dealing with curriculum and the students". Teacher 4 felt that it helped because she was "comfortable asking questions about what would work best with my students." Teacher 5 stated that "my mentor helped by showing me examples of ways to fill out the paperwork." Teacher 6 expressed that her involvement with student parents improved because of suggestions by her mentor. She

stated that "during conferences I was more confident in talking with parents about the students behavior and problems that the student was having because my mentor and I talked about it before hand." Teacher 3 stated "I don't think it really helped me that much since I never see or talk with her". Overall the experiences that the teachers had indicate a positive influence on their job performance.

Question 7

How beneficial was your mentoring experience to your professional development?

Most of the teachers thought that having regular meetings with the mentor helped them develop professionally as a new teacher. In fact, teacher 4 expressed that "administration should require that mentors meet with their mentee at least once a week or biweekly." Teacher 3 stated "that going with my mentor to district meetings gave me a chance to ask questions that I couldn't because of time and availability. The district meetings were a way that I could learn about issues that are addressed in the classroom, such as ways to increase student learning and manage classroom behavior." Teacher 5, however, admitted that the "meetings were a waste of her time." The meetings were held after school when teachers are tired and not very attentive." Teacher 1 stated, "Having a mentor is very beneficial especially for a new teacher because teachers need to know how the system works. Going to college, you don't really learn how school is run. I think having a mentor is more important for learning how the school is run even though you need to know the curriculum." Teacher 6 replied, "I found it helpful to have more than just one person to talk to about my classroom situations and how things are working for

you. It's really important to have different people to talk and give you different input, so you don't have to sort out things on your own." Teacher 2 said "I don't think my mentoring experience is that beneficial because I've learned more from my grade level team." To grow professionally as a new teacher most participants felt that their experiences within the relationship helped them develop.

Question 8

What challenges were experienced in your mentor relationship and how they were overcome?

The challenges that surfaced in several of the responses were related to availability of the mentor. Teacher 3 stated, "Because my mentor was not in the same grade level, we are in different locations in the building so that makes it hard to see each other." She shared that, "When you have a question it's very hard to try and hunt that person down." To overcome this challenge she said, "I have to call my mentor on the phone before or after school for questions or advice". Some of the mentors had different prep times or free time, which made it hard to meet during the school day. Teacher 4 stated that she only "gets to see her mentor at district meeting three times a year." Some teachers mentioned that they would ask someone other than their assigned mentor for help. Teacher 5 said, "I had to go to other grade level teachers because my mentor does not know as much about my curriculum." She added, "I think a mentor should be in the same grade level and that you should choose your own mentor but wait 6 months so you'll have more time to build relationships this way you would get to know the other teachers and feel comfortable with someone that you trust." Teacher 6 also shared "My

biggest challenge is getting together with my mentor since we were not in the same grade level." Teacher 1 stated, "It was a challenge to go to district meetings, we would have district meetings three times a year and they would do a presentation and they would give us updates of what we would have to do. Then we would have breakout sessions where we would have different questions to answer it was good but because my mentor and I have such a good relationship I felt that it was kind of a waste of time for me." Teacher two said, "My mentor wanted me to use some of the same strategies that she used in her classroom but they wouldn't really work with the type of kids that I have to work with." Some of these challenges were overcome and some were not.

Question 9

Tell me about the topics you benefitted most from exploring with your mentor.

Topics new teachers benefitted most from were; guidance about students, parents, paperwork, and curricula. Although Teacher 6 said, "I didn't benefit really from anything because we never get together, although there are district meetings three times a year they are after school when you're exhausted you go in, you have to go sign in. You're not really paying attention to what's going on. The topics they discussed we're not towards my grade level so it was not very interesting to me."

Teacher 3 remarked, "Having my mentor show me how to fill out forms on student report cards helped me understand what was expected by the principal." "Asking my mentor about what to say to parents about a child who had behavior problems" in the classroom helped teacher 2. Teacher 5 thought that discussing year goals would have been beneficial. She stated "I had goals set for myself but they were never discussed. I

wish my mentor would have set goal with me and then we could have discussed them. I think that would've been more helpful." Teacher 4 stated 'talking about my lesson plans and how to work with the kids gave me the most help." Teacher 1 stated, "Because he had been working with the culture and the diversity in this district for so long he really knew a lot about the language and culture which really helped me a lot, because the culture and language is so different he helped me with the barriers that were there for me with my students, and how to get around it." Any topics that were explored with the mentor the new teacher thought were helpful.

Question 10

Was there one setting that seemed to foster more effective communication than another?

Although all participants answered no to this question they continued with a further response as to how they communicated. Effective communication had more to do with having opportunities to meet than where they met. Teacher 2 stated, "It is easier just to talk to my mentor when we see each other in the hall or I go into her classroom after school if I have any questions since we don't have the same prep times and she is not in the same grade level. "Teacher 1 stated, "we would meet in the summer and just talk about other things just because we had so much in common but it made me feel so comfortable that I could ask any questions that I wanted to. Now I shoot him a text I can call him, I feel comfortable with our relationship. I think meeting outside of school is really important to build that relationship." Teacher 3 stated that "no, we never really had a time set apart to discuss issues. I just call her if I have a question, before or after school

we would talk or at the district meetings. I also feel comfortable asking other teachers

questions besides my mentor." Teacher 6 explained that "no, but right now they are

having smaller mentor meetings but we are not part of that program." Teacher 4 said,

"Not really, just whenever I need to have some questions answered. We don't follow any

criteria from a mentoring program, we just talk whenever is needed." Teacher 5 replied,

"No, I don't really see my mentor because she is in another grade level so it's hard to get

together and talk, I just get in touch with her when I have a question." From the responses

there was no one setting that seemed to foster better communication. It seems that any

place they could meet was beneficial.

The recorded responses to the 10 open-ended questions were reviewed, coded,

analyzed and then put into categories of common elements to answer the guiding research

questions. There are two questions. First, what are the lived experiences and perceptions

of novice elementary teachers with regard to success in the mentor relationship? Second,

what is the impact of the mentoring relationship on the new teacher?

The participants' verbal responses were used as the basis of explanation of what

constitutes success in a mentoring relationship. I accomplished this by focusing on the

experiences and perceptions of novice elementary teachers from the interview data using

the modified van Kamm process for data analysis. Categories or invariant constitutes

were developed by the relationship to the statements that were made within the

interviews, I repeatedly read each transcript and eliminated statements that did not

answer the guiding research questions. An example of this process is in Appendix D. The

final categories included the structure of the relationship, expectations, outcomes, and

recommendations. I took these categories and clustered them into overarching themes that reveal the essence of the experiences of the participants. The themes that emerged included areas of time with the mentor, communication, quality of relationship, and support. These are displayed in Table 1.

Table 1

Research Themes

Categories	Themes	Associated Questions
Structure	Time	2, 3, 9
Expectations	Communication	1, 4, 8, 10
Outcomes	Quality	5, 6, 7
Recommendation	Support	10

The overall results of the analysis for research question one, "What are the lived experiences and perceptions of novice elementary teachers with regard to success in the mentor relationship?" indicated successful experiences and perceptions for the novice teachers. Although experiences within the novice-mentor relationships varied, the above themes can be used to conceptualize the typical experiences that had the most impact on new teachers with regard to success in the mentor relationship. For example, spending time outside of school and setting up regular meeting times gave new teachers opportunities to ask questions and learn new information about school procedures, curriculum and teaching strategies. Positive communication resulted in improved self efficacy and confidence for the new teacher. The overall results for research question two, "What is the impact of the mentoring relationship on the new teacher?" indicated that the relationship can have both positive and negative effects on the new teacher. A positive impact resulted when adequate time was spent with the mentor, a personal bond was

established, and helpful interactions were made. A negative effect occurred when the new

teacher felt that there were no impactful experiences with the mentor. Mentors were from

different grade levels and not available to help with questions. These overall results show

that the success of the mentoring relationship from the novice perspective although

positive in many respects can also be improved. Understanding the novice teacher's

perceptions of a successful mentor relationship within these themes can provide

knowledge of specific elements of the mentoring relationship for improvement. This

knowledge can then be used to support the mentoring relationship, which in turn may

contribute to increased effectiveness of the mentor program in supporting new teacher

retention with the ultimate goal of increased job satisfaction. These themes along with

further analysis are discussed and related to the literature in section five.

Evidence of Quality

Phenomenological researchers seek to describe how people perceive or

experience their surroundings. Therefore, a powerful strategy, such as member checking,

helps to validate the research (Creswell 2012). This strategy helps to elicit the

participants' view of their experiences, focusing on building an understanding based on

the specifics and details of each participant. During the member checking process, I e-

mailed each participant a password- protected copy of the transcription of the

participants' interviews. I kept all data in a secure location to ensure confidentiality. The

anonymity of the participants is protected by the use of identification numbers. I asked

participants to review the transcript to determine if they agreed with their own statements,

and to add any other information that would help me in the interpretation. I used member

checking as a way to safeguard against my bias. My knowledge of mentoring relationships within the teaching environment needed to be bracketed out so that my personal beliefs would not interfere with the beliefs of the participants. As a final measure, I used peer debriefing to help with any presumptions or perspectives on my part.

To ensure validity, there were multiple layers of review in this study. First I used inductive content analysis by analyzing, organizing and reducing the data for categorizing. Next, I used thematic coding, developing a code for the participant answers provided in the interviews. Lastly qualitative software analysis was used to discover emerging themes from the data.

In section 5 a brief overview of why and how the study was done is described. Findings within this study are related to the data and conclusions are made. I express the implications for social change and steps for useful action in the mentoring relationship are explained. The section ends with recommendations for further study and my personal reflection on the experience with the research process.

Section 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

This phenomenological study was conducted in an attempt to answer the following guiding questions:

1. What are the lived experiences and perceptions of novice elementary teachers with regard to success in the mentor relationship.

2. What is the impact of the mentoring relationship on the new teacher?

The semistructured interviews with the mentees used 10 open-ended questions to reveal participants' perceptions and experiences related to their mentor relationships. Teacher responses were analyzed though the Modified Van Kaam Process and the QSR International's NVivo 10 analysis program. An analysis of all data discovered overarching themes in the areas of time spent with their mentor, communication, quality of the relationship on career, and support. This data revealed that the experience of the novice teacher with his or her mentor varies widely. The success of the relationship is dependent on aspects of the mentoring relationship that can be improved and reinforced.

Interpretation of Findings

Time with Mentor

One of the foremost challenges in the teacher-mentor relationship proved to be finding time to interact. In practice, teachers find that busy school days compete with congested personal schedules for both parties, and honest intentions to connect often fall by the wayside. These findings are corroborated by Ingersoll and Strong (2011) who explored the negative effects of a lack of time for collegial conversations.

Some of the elements of current mentor programs within these schools were actually counterproductive, for example, the school districts' requirement that new teachers attend regular large group meetings. These proved to be an unprofitable and frustrating time that presumably could have been spent interacting with a mentor on a personal level. Teacher 6 made the point by saying that she was exhausted after school when the meetings were held and she didn't benefit from the information. The development of the mentor program can be of critical importance to the success of the mentoring relationship as Birkeland and Feiman-Nemser, (2012) indicated. They said that a mentor program that serves to truly support new teachers and decrease the probability of that teacher becoming discouraged and leaving requires thoughtful consideration, consideration that allows adequate time and opportunity for the new teacher to interact with the mentor (Flanagan, 2006).

The experiences that indicated the most positive results were times spent with the mentor outside of school. Several participants expressed that spending time outside of school having lunch together throughout the school year establish a close comfortable bond with their mentor. Gaining productive working strategies, while spending time outside of school, can not only reduce a new teacher's sense of isolation, but be one of the most helpful factors in developing a positive successful relationship (Ingersoll & Strong, 2011).

These experiences of the novice teachers indicate that the time spent with the mentor can either impede a mentoring relationship or improve it, either way it has an impact on communication.

Communication

Every goal of the mentor relationship hinges on the ability of the mentor and the mentee to communicate effectively. In practice however, communication proves to be one of the most difficult aspects of the relationship (Moir et al., 2009). The results of this study demonstrated that two components are important in order to reliably secure this successful connection: accessibility of the mentor to the mentee, and the existence of a trusting relationship between the mentor and the mentee.

A mentee being unable to access his or her mentor will invariably represent a complete roadblock in their communication. In this study, several of the participants expressed the need to have better access to his mentor, whether the accessibility was hindered because of a lack of proximity to the mentor or because of time and scheduling conflicts. Teacher 1 commented, "My mentor did not have the same prep times so it was hard to meet with her and discuss the cultural differences that I need help with, it would be nice if we had a regular time to meet, not just by chance in the hall or at the copy machine". This accessibility to communicate can be facilitated when the teachers have common planning times and work in close proximity to one another in the school building (Boreen et al., 2009).

A trusting relationship between the participants is of paramount importance. This involves an easy, natural rapport between the participants. Teacher 4 expressed this as one of the most important aspect of her mentoring relationship. As with all personal

relationships, many factors affect this rapport, including harmonious personalities and backgrounds as indicated by Teacher 1's response, "we would meet in the summer and just talk about other things just because we had so much in common but it made me feel so comfortable that I could ask any questions that I wanted to. Now I shoot him a text I can call him. I feel really comfortable with our relationship. I think meeting outside of school is really important to build that relationship." Communicating openly and having a trusting relationship are vital elements if the mentoring process is to be successful (Burks 2010; Hallam et al., 2012).

According to Ozder (2011), mentors need to consider the approach they take with the mentee in order for the communication in the relationship to be effective. Effective communication seems to be experienced by those participants that collaborated on various ways to work inside and out of school. Trust and a rapport made communication easier for both parties. Furthermore, Nash (2010) indicated this trust can be built through demonstrating active listening skills on the part of the mentor. The mentor's ability to discern non-verbal communication in terms of thoughts, feelings, and body language, was shown by this study to have a positive effect on the mentoring relationship.

Quality of Relationship

The quality of the mentoring relationship can have both positive and negative results as indicated by this study. According to Iancu-Haddad and Oplatka (2009), mentors need to be more informed about the needs of the beginning teachers they mentor than they usually are. University education alone cannot adequately prepare a novice teacher for the labyrinth of logistical requirements, the specific cultural challenges, or the

behavioral issues facing him or her in the particular school in which he or she ends up teaching (Darling-Fiammond & Richardson, 2009).

A supportive mentor relationship has the potential to impact the career of a new teacher in a positive way not only with teaching creative lessons but with learning the culture of the school and administrative duties. Even the academic needs of one classroom of students are likely to be distinct from another, depending on the socioeconomic make-up of the district. Parent interactions are likely an entirely unfamiliar and intimidating bailiwick for the new teacher, especially if he or she is young. Even one troubling interaction with an unhappy or challenging parent could be quite daunting for a young teacher in her first year or two of teaching (He, 2010; Pogodzinski et al., 2012). Teacher 6 was more confident in her parent interactions because she discussed any issues that concerned her before meeting with the parent. In addition, Teacher 3 said "My mentor would give me constructive feedback on my progress not just negative comments but also positive and praise for doing things that are right." For these reasons, while the new teacher can be fully equipped to prepare and administer lesson plans, the actual execution of his or her ideas is greatly facilitated by the support of a seasoned mentor, and in the first few years of teaching, can have a positive impact on her career and sense of self-efficacy. Kazin-Boyce (2014) indicated that if beginning teachers are unsupported while trying to learn how to teach, they feel stressed, and their focus becomes their own survival. These results demonstrate an important impact on the teacher's career.

Support

  The findings of this research illuminate the specific areas in which support was important and beneficial to the new teachers. More specifically, these experiences of the novice teachers revealed support in answering questions, sharing lesson plans, observing classes, and spending time outside of the classroom. According to Mandel (2006), first year teachers need more practical information about surviving their first year of teaching instead of information on state-wide standards. The data from the interview questions elicited these specific areas that mentors supported:

-   Discipline issues, dealing with problem students (Questions 7 & 9)

-   Professional development (Questions 7 & 9)

-   Logistical duties (Questions 6 & 9)

-   Parent classroom visits (Questions 6 & 9)

-   Confidence with curriculum, lesson presentation (Questions 3, 4, 6 & 9)

-   Confidence in interacting with children (Question 6)

  There are myriad responsibilities facing a new teacher for which his or her university experience cannot completely equip him her, as Bullough (2012) suggested that pre-employment teacher preparation is rarely sufficient to provide all the knowledge and skill necessary to successful teaching. The data from this research confirm the findings of Bullough. Novices do enjoy a sense of security and confidence with a positive mentor relationship in place during their first years of teaching. This relationship empowered them and bolstered their confidence. It helped them to engage with their

classrooms with more assurance and eagerness, more than if they were left to manage this host of unexpected difficulties on their own.

Results also indicated that novice teachers who had a personal bond with their mentor experienced more impact on their career than those teachers who were not connected in a personal way. Mentors that were in the same grade level as the new teacher played an important part in making the new teacher feel supported and connected in the relationship. According to Hopkins and Spillane (2014), turning to colleagues in the same grade who have experience with teaching the prescribed curricula is important for beginning teachers. In other words, teachers that felt bonded with their mentor and were in the same grade level had a better experience and felt more supported. First year teachers who perceive adequate support from colleagues and administration tend to be more confident in themselves and their ability to teach, whereas those who do not perceive to have adequate support tend to be less confident (Bangs & Frost, 2012).

The findings of this research indicated that mentor relationships, when successful, can have a multifaceted, positive impact on new teachers and their experiences. In order to be successful, it has been shown that certain logistical concerns must align between the veteran and novice teachers. When these factors are in place, the impact on the career of the novice teacher can help with retention and job satisfaction. This open channel of support and invaluable guidance has the potential to transform what could have been a year fraught with challenges and unexpected obstacles, into a dynamic and successful teaching experience. Although the results of this study did not indicate that the new teachers stayed in the teaching field as a result of the mentoring relationship, there was an

impact on the novice teacher. Some experiences in this study reveal evidence that mentors can hinder the process of new teacher development and job satisfaction; overall, the positive experiences far outweigh the negative.

Positive experiences within the four themes resulted in higher levels of efficacy; those experiences that had little impact resulted in the teacher's lack of confidence and ability. Teacher efficacy is connected to mentoring relationships that serve to increase levels of confidence and effectiveness, reduce concerns, and promote positive attitudes (Bradshaw & Mundia, 2006; Scheafer, 2010; Subban & Sharma, 2006). In a Gallup research study, more than 10 million people worldwide were surveyed on the topic of how positive and productive people are at work. People who have the opportunity to focus on their strengths or what they do best at work are six times as likely to be productive and satisfied in their jobs (Rath, 2007). This research supports the idea that it is important for mentors to help new teachers develop their strengths and focus on what they do well. As indicated in the research, mentors represent a model that demonstrates characteristics of intellectual growth (i.e., reasoning, creativity, risk taking, and problem solving; Stanulis, Little, & Wibbens, 2012).

The findings from this study may be applied within mentoring programs to improve the mentoring relationship by investing more time with the new teacher, developing effective ways to communicate, adding quality to the new teacher's career and supporting new teachers beyond the curriculum. It is also important for mentors to understand what is needed and expected by the novice teacher.

Implications for Social Change

Mentoring programs for school districts offer the promise of new teacher success and retention. What may be missing seems not to be the existence of these programs, but their successful implementation. If educators could improve the effectiveness of the current mentoring programs in local school districts, the mentoring relationship could improve. From the results of this study, one major improvement within the district's mentoring program would be to allow new teachers to have input in choosing his or her mentor.

Another feature would be to give the novice teachers an opportunity to meet and interact with the prospective mentors in a casual environment before mentoring selection. Giving new teachers some type of input into the mentoring selection may be a positive change that could improve the relationship for a successful outcome. The culture of the school and student learning can also be enhanced by improving mentoring relationships. These improved relationships should require that mentors help new teachers understand the diverse population of the school and demonstrate teaching strategies that would improve student learning. New teachers need to understand the way the school operates, and the diversity of the school demographics along with fresh ideas on how to improve teaching. As teachers work toward these outcomes, another natural implication for change may be improved training for veteran teachers in the relational skills they need to encourage and empower new teachers.

According to Nash and Burke (2010), not everyone is naturally capable of forging quality relationships such as those which are required in mentor relationships; however,

individuals can be taught the skills that contribute to quality mentor relationships. Mentor teachers could become more motivated by the opportunity to enhance the professional growth of the beginning teacher and the prospect to grow professionally. As suggested above, the effective implementation of a successful mentoring relationship within the present school district equates with far-reaching benefits, not only for the novice teacher, but also for the student's learning, the overall culture of school, and for the veteran teachers.

Recommendations for Action

There are many variables at play within a mentoring relationship. When dealing with a variety of personalities and personal logistics, there is no one-size-fits-all formula, which will work for every situation. Forty years of research on this topic attests to the importance of creating a fertile environment within the schools that allow healthy mentor relationships to flourish. Myriad researchers vouch for the connection between a novice teacher having a strong mentor and job satisfaction, which leads to teacher retention. In response to this understanding, many school districts have implemented programs which assign novices a veteran teacher to act as a mentor. My research with these new teachers has revealed that there needs also to be provision made to create environments in which these relationships are most likely to thrive; correspondingly, care needs to be taken to ensure that the school district's administration of the mentor program does not inadvertently frustrate the natural development of these beneficial relationships. To this end, there may be a need for a paradigm shift in the way mentor programs are implemented within school districts.

The most significant information that was gained from this study was not drawn from the experiences the novice teachers had with their mentors, but rather the experiences that they wished they had had with their mentors. Without exception, every novice involved in this study expressed a desire to have had input as to who his mentor would be. The reasons for this were both logistical and personal. Given that the novice is the party who has the most to gain from this relationship; it stands to reason that he should be the one to have the most say in who he can relate to most naturally.

With this in mind, in order to aid the novice teacher in the mentor selection, the novice needs opportunities to get to know the mentors that are available. Although a new teacher's need for a mentor may feel the most urgent at the beginning of the school year, it seems the most reasonable to postpone this assignment until he or she has had a chance to get to know other teachers. In the meantime, it would be advisable to provide opportunities for the new teachers to get to know the other staff members. School-wide meetings, grade-level meetings, and intentional social gatherings would create a favorable environment for teachers to get to know one another and form natural bonds that would facilitate profitable mentoring relationships.

Guided by the results of the study, mentoring programs would be best administered at the individual school level and overseen by school principals, rather than at the district level. Principals would then be empowered to tailor the mentoring programs to accommodate the needs of the novice teachers, the character of the student population, as well as the demographic and overall culture of the school in any particular year. Additionally, the principal would be free to exercise creativity in the employment of

resources, especially in the case of too few veteran teachers to meet the needs of new teachers. If, for example, a principal encounters this situation (more novices than willing veterans to act as mentors), yet still is required to meet the demands of a district rule that every novice must be assigned a mentor, the principal could be forced into an ineffective pairing. This mentoring pairing may be of no benefit to the novice and is a waste of time for both the novice and the veteran, accomplishing nothing but satisfying a district requirement. On the other hand, putting more control into the hands of the principal, he or she is free to come up with a creative solution to the problem. This represents a change in the flow of control, rather than any structural change in mentoring programs as they exist today, as illustrated in Figure 1.

State Board of Education

School District

School Principal

Mentor

Mentee

Currently, mentor relationships within individual schools operate under regulations imposed by the State Board of Education and enforced by the school districts and principals. The mentees have little control of the assignment of their mentor.

State Board of Education

School District

School Principal

Mentor

Mentee

My research suggests that mentor programs may benefit by giving the Mentees primary charge in their choice of a mentor. These relationships would be facilitated by the school principal, with only loose oversight by the school district or state.
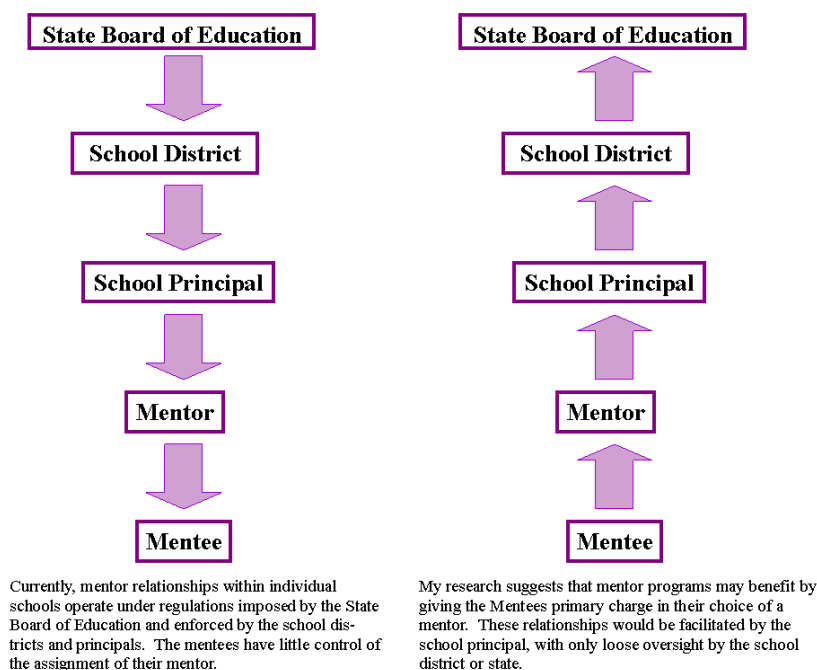
Figure 1. Inception of the mentor relationship.

While it is imperative that the school district's involvement in the mentor program not be allowed to constrict the growth of a natural relationship between a mentor and a novice teacher, the district does play a valuable role in the support of new teachers. One district I encountered had very effectively implemented what was called a New Teacher Academy. This was a venue for all the new teachers in the district to come together on a regular basis during their first year of teaching to ask questions, to learn the particulars of how to fill out required paperwork, and gain further support with district requirements.

Similarly, the state also plays an important role in mentor programs simply by requiring that they be implemented. One school principal (Susan Stanley, personal communication, December 6, 2015) admitted that without this requirement, school principals might not invest the time and energy to implement a mentor program within their school. While it is important that the State Board of Education not be as involved in mentor programs as to dictate the particulars of how they are implemented in the schools, their role in compelling school principals to establish these programs effectively is vital.

In the end, each participant has an important part to play in the effective implementation of mentor programs for the benefit and retention of novice teachers. In contrast to how these programs are currently administered, however, this researcher recommends a change in the structure of control to a more bottom up approach rather than top down. In this way, more power is ceded to school principals for the effective support of new teachers in their schools and the assignment of mentors as best meets the needs of their teachers in any particular year.

Recommendations for Further Study

Mentoring relationships are used by many school districts to assist in helping new teachers. This relationship constitutes a critical factor that is included in teacher induction programs. Having professional development or training that prepares mentors to increase effectiveness within the relationship may be what is needed (Hudson, 2013). How mentors perceive their role and what novice teachers expect from that relationship are questions that could be significant to address in a future study. A closer look at how schools provide this training might also be an area to examine, and how these programs if at all, make a difference for the new teacher within a mentoring relationship. It is my recommendation that these areas would benefit the mentoring relationship by further study.

Summary

In my 22 years of teaching, I actively sought out opportunities to mentor younger teachers. I relished these relationships and was gratified to watch novices successfully transition from the university experience to the classroom as a result of my input. The topic of mentoring was close to my heart and a natural choice for me to study. As natural as the choice was; however, it also meant that I was in for a surprise as I observed more flawed or failed mentor relationships than successful ones in our school district. Yet, this observation further validated my choice and my conviction that the advancement of mentoring relationships in our schools is of vital importance.

Having spent more time as a mentor than as a mentee, it was almost inevitable that I embarked upon this study with certain blindness to the needs of new teachers. It

was refreshing to hear their candid impressions of the mentor relationships and the difficulties they encountered, both with their assigned teacher and with the logistical requirements imposed by the district. As I listened to their responses, I recognized the personal bias I brought into the interview and was pleased to alter my vantage point to see the situation through their eyes. I relinquished my preconceived notions and took the opportunity to listen to their perspectives on what they needed in order to feel successful in the teaching field.

I also embarked upon this study quite naively believing that veteran teachers by and large would have a strong desire to impart the benefit of their experience to incoming teachers, and that their earnestness alone would result in the needs of the novice being met very naturally. In this, I was in error on three fronts. Not all veteran teachers care to invest their time in helping young teachers. Some veteran teachers, who are willing, simply lack the intuitive interpersonal skills to forge effective and reciprocal relationships easily. Even among veteran teachers who have the desire to mentor and also possess the requisite relational skills, there is a lack of understanding of the needs of the novice.

While teachers are limited in their ability to foster a passion for mentoring among experienced teachers, and cannot easily reconfigure a veteran teacher's relational style, teachers can address the third issue in this paradigm: teachers can better equip themselves to understand the needs of new teachers in their schools. In this, I believe, my study was successful and beneficial to the educational community in that it introduces the idea that the best mentoring programs can be built from the bottom up, assessing and accommodating the needs of the new teacher before considering the logistical needs of

district administrators. Also mentors who are well matched with new teachers would benefit from some additional instruction as to the best way to meet their needs; teachers must make sure the novice has a voice in the relationship, and that the veteran is willing to listen.

With so much having been written about this topic over the past 40 years, it is tempting to think that the subject has been exhausted; however, it is crucial that teachers keep the mentoring conversation going. Teachers must make an effort to improve mentoring skills and to pass these skills on to the next generation of new teachers. If mentoring relationships continue to be used by schools as a strategic means for teacher retention and job satisfaction this is of critical importance. This study revealed ways in which to do this, by taking into consideration the participants, views and suggestions for maintaining and improving a successful relationship. It is imperative to remember that the novice teachers of today will one day be the mentors of tomorrow. With past positive mentoring experiences to draw from, these new mentors can have a powerful impact on future leaders.

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Appendix A: Interview Questions

1. What did you hope to learn or receive through your mentor(ing) relationship?

2. How was your mentoring relationship initiated or established?

3. Tell me about the time you spent in mentoring activities.

4. Tell me about the personality traits that affected your mentoring relationship positively or negatively.

5. Describe the two most impactful interactions that you had with your mentor, and what precipitated the interaction.

6. How did the mentor relationship enhance or influence your job performance?

7. How beneficial was your mentoring experience to your professional development?

8. What challenges were experienced in your mentor relationship and how they were overcome?

9. Tell me about the topics you benefitted most from exploring with your mentor.

10. Was there a setting that seemed to foster more effective communications than another?

Appendix B: Sample Consent Form

You are invited to participate in a research study of Novice Teachers' Perceptions of Success in a Mentoring Relationship. You were selected as a possible participant due to being a new teacher in the last six years and having a mentor. Please read this form and ask any questions you may have before acting on this invitation to be in the study.

This study is being conducted by Dorean Whitehouse, a doctoral candidate at Walden University.

Background Information:

The purpose of this study is to understand the meaning of a successful mentoring relationship from the perspective of six purposefully selected novice elementary teachers.

Procedures:

If you agree to be in this study, you will be asked to set a date, time, and location for an interview. The tape-recorded interview will consist of 10 open-ended questions. The duration will be at the participant's convenience.

Voluntary Nature of the Study:

Your participation in this study is strictly voluntary. Your decision whether or not to participate will not affect your current or future relations with the Redford Union School district. If you initially decide to participate, you are still free to withdraw at any time later without affecting those relationships.

Risks and Benefits of Being in the Study:

There are no risks associated with participating in this study and there are no short or long-term benefits to participating in this study.

In the event you experience stress or anxiety during your participation in the study you may terminate your participation at any time. You may refuse to answer any questions you consider invasive or stressful.

Compensation:

There will be no compensation provided for your participation in this study.

Confidentiality:

The records of this study will be kept private. In any report of this study that might be published, the researcher will not include any information that will make it possible to identify you. Research records will be kept in a locked file, and only the researcher will have access to the records.

Contacts and Questions:

The researcher conducting this study is Dorean Whitehouse. The researcher's faculty advisor is Marilyn Robb. You may ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, you may contact them via Wherbwhit@aol.com. The Research Participant Advocate at Walden University is Leilani Endicott, you may contact her at 1-800-925-3368, extension 1210, if you have questions about your participation in this study.

You will receive a copy of this form from the researcher.

Statement of Consent:

I have read the above information. I have asked questions and received answers. I consent to participate in the study.

Printed Name of Participant

Participant Signature

Signature of Investigator

Appendix C: Sample Letter of Cooperation From a Community Research Partner

This type of letter must be obtained from any type of organization involved in identifying potential participants or collecting data. Please contact irb@waldenu.edu if you have any questions about the appropriate content for a letter of cooperation. Either letter or email format is acceptable, from the perspective of the Walden University Institutional Review Board (IRB).

Community Research Partner Name

Contact Information

Date

Dear Ms. Researcher,

Based on my review of your research proposal, I give permission for you to conduct the study entitled "Novice Teachers' Perceptions of Success in a Mentoring Relationship" within the Redford Union district. As part of this study, I authorize you to invite members of my organization, whose names and contact information I will provide, to participate in the study as interview subjects. Their participation will be voluntary and at their own discretion. We reserve the right to withdraw from the study at any time if our circumstances change.

I understand that the data collected will remain entirely confidential and may not be provided to anyone outside of the research team without permission from the Walden University IRB.

Sincerely,
Authorization Official
Contact Information

Appendix D: Invariant Constituents for Each Question

Interview Question	Sample Response
Question 1. What did you hope to learn or receive through your mentoring relationship?	- Strategies with parents and students - Personal bond - Paperwork that was required - Answer questions - Regular time to meet
Question 2. How was your mentoring relationship initiated or established?	- School district assigned a mentor - Teachers found other classroom teachers to help them - Input into who was assigned to be their mentor - Shouldn't have to be initiated or establish - Assigned through head of department.
Question 3. Tell me about the time you spent in mentoring activities.	- Documentation was done online - required mentoring meetings outside of school for lesson planning
Question 4. Tell me about the personality traits that affected your mentoring relationship positively or negatively.	Positive: - Very helpful - I felt comfortable and I trusted her to ask any question - Giving you praise for doing things that are right Negative: - Not as available - Couldn't ask her questions about the curriculum - Being negative about your progress
Question 5. Describe the two most impactful interactions that you had with your mentor and what precipitated the interaction.	- Getting together outside of school hours with his mentor - I didn't have any impactful experiences
Question 6. How did the mentor relationship enhance or influence your job performance?	- More confidence in dealing with curriculum and the students - How to fill out paperwork, giving examples of ways to fill out the paperwork - Students' behavior and problems - Involvement with student parents improved
Question 7. How beneficial was your mentoring experience to your professional development?	- Having regular meetings - Ways to increase student learning - Manage classroom behavior
Question 8. What challenges were experienced in your mentor relationship and how they were overcome?	- Availability of the mentor - Different prep times or free time - Call my mentor on the phone before or after school for questions or advice - Ask someone other than their assigned mentor for help
Question 9. Tell me about the topics you benefitted most from exploring with your mentor.	- Guidance about students, parents, paperwork, and curricula - Discussing year goals student report cards
Question 10. Was there one setting that seemed to foster more effective communication than another?	- Any place that they could meet (classroom or hallway) - Outside of school made it easier to communicate - E-mail them with a question or give them a phone call was the best