MENTORSHIP MATTERS: STRATEGIES FOR NURTURING AND SUSTAINING GROWTH IN BEGINNING TEACHERS

by

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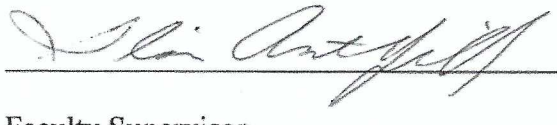

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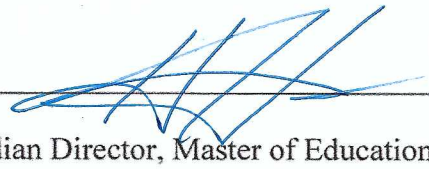

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Abstract

This capstone study examines existing literature pertaining to mentoring beginning teachers within a K-12 school setting. Current challenges in the education system, such as high attrition rates among beginning teachers, due to inadequate support from administration and colleagues, and insufficient preparedness post-graduation, underscore the need for effective mentoring. Scholarly sources reveal that mentoring benefits beginning teachers by enhancing job satisfaction and developing professional skills. It also serves as a beneficial experience for mentors, offering them a platform to share expertise and refine their teaching practices and career objectives. This capstone study concludes with recommendations for beginning teachers, mentors, and school and district administrators. These suggestions aim to improve the professional lives of beginning teachers and mentors and offer guidance to administrators seeking to integrate mentoring within their schools and districts.

Keywords: attrition, beginning teachers, job satisfaction, mentoring, mentors, mentorship in education, teacher induction programs, supporting beginning teachers, teacher retention

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Mentorship Matters: Strategies for Nurturing and Sustaining Growth in Beginning Teachers

Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

Introduction

Beginning teachers entering the education field are faced with numerous responsibilities. These include lesson and unit planning, classroom management, communicating with parents, student assessment, and reporting. Throughout their first year, these teachers need emotional support, help with lesson planning, resources, advice on classroom management, and advice on how to address specific learning and behaviour problems (Ballantyne et al., 1995). A significant challenge for beginning teachers is that "teaching is one of the few professions in which beginners have as much responsibility as their experienced colleagues" (Tait, 2008, p. 58). Furthermore, new teachers frequently face demanding work tasks, encounter ambiguous expectations, lack sufficient resources, and grapple with feelings of isolation (Gordon et al., 1999). They often face situations where they are assigned the most challenging students, are tasked with preparing for and teaching several classes, and may even lack a dedicated classroom, causing them to move throughout the school to instruct different groups (Danielson, 2002). Angelle (2006, p. 320) suggests, "Schools which provide opportunities to develop professional competence through a system of support, professional growth, and reflective practice, may find job satisfaction increasing, which logically, may lead to teacher retention."

Mentors are uniquely positioned to offer beginning teachers valuable support, practical help, and experience insights (Ballantyne et al., 1995, p. 297). This study focuses on the benefits of mentorship for beginning teachers, explores barriers administrators face in introducing mentorship initiatives, and highlights promising mentorship models.

Background

In Canada, becoming a teacher requires a high school diploma and completion of a bachelor's degree in education. Teacher education programs include in-class university courses and short-term and long-term practicums. At least one practicum takes place in a school, where the student teacher - the individual undergoing the teacher education program - is paired with an experienced mentor teacher and a university supervisor. Student teachers must observe others instruct, prepare lesson plans, teach classes under their mentor's supervision, assess their students' progress, be observed by their university supervisor while teaching, and engage in discussions about their teaching with their mentor teacher and university supervisor.

In Canada, practicums within teacher education programs span from 8 - 22 weeks (Gambhir et al., 2008). Despite this extensive training, one interviewed administrator believed that "new teachers do not really know what is required of their time when they enter the field" (Angelle, 2006, p. 327). For beginning teachers, having "a mentor who provides great professional feedback about lesson planning, classroom management and assessments" is invaluable (Bickmore, 2009, p. 89). Additionally, a supportive colleague who provides camaraderie can instill a sense of community and belonging (Bickmore, 2009).

Mentorship is a skill that needs to be cultivated. Barnhart (2020) discussed her personal challenges as a mentor, notably the absence of effective training and guidance in this role. She underscored that transitioning "enacting the change from expert to coach [was] deceptively complex" (p. 123). Beyond enhancing the mentee's teaching, Barnhart posits that mentorship allows mentors to appreciate the "skills and knowledge novices bring with them to classrooms" (p. 126) and prompts them to "rigorously interrogate [their own] teaching practices" (p. 124).

Reflecting on my time in the teacher education program, I genuinely believed I was ready to embark on my teaching career upon graduation. During my extended thirteen-week practicum, it felt like I was receiving all the essential training needed for a promising start in teaching. I acquired classroom management skills and the ability to devise enjoyable and engaging lesson plans. However, upon entering the profession, I recognized numerous educational gaps. A glaring example was my limited knowledge of student assessment. My first teaching role was in a kindergarten classroom filled with enthusiastic learners. Among them were a few unique personalities, resulting in some particularly memorable moments. I enjoyed activities like planting a garden, teaching the alphabet, narrating stories, and more. However, I was entirely unprepared for student assessment. My fellow kindergarten teachers at my school were not receptive to assisting me. This left me isolated and frustrated, leaning on my wife - who had completed her practicum in kindergarten - for guidance. A few years later, I transitioned to teaching Grades 4 and 5. The curriculum for these Grades was distinct, and these students received letter-grade assessments. Once again, I found myself on my own. My attempts to seek help from colleagues met with reluctance or found them with limited experience to share. This led to confusion and frustration, with much of my learning happening independently. Over time, as I embraced new opportunities, few colleagues seemed to be available for support.

My latest venture was pursuing a Master of Education degree with City University in Canada. Embarking on this journey was daunting, especially as I balance the program's demands with my role as a full-time teacher and father of two young children. However, this time around, I was fortunate to be in a school with an encouraging principal. They were genuinely invested in my success, always open to discussions about my learnings, the questions I sought to explore, and ways I could progress into a leadership position. I felt supported and empowered to succeed.

This experience taught me about the value of effective mentorship in boosting my morale, motivation, and sense of community. It prompted the questions driving this capstone study, where I aim to delve deeper into the advantages of mentorship and strategies administrators can employ to introduce mentorship opportunities in their schools.

Statement of the Issue

Many beginning teachers grapple with feelings of isolation (Boreen & Niday, 2000). The inherent "cellular nature of schools" tends to compartmentalize educators, promoting independence and self-sufficiency over collaboration (Lortie, 1975 as cited in Boreen & Niday, 2000, p. 152). As Boreen and Niday (2000, p. 153) suggest, “Teachers need a supportive community of colleagues. One way to meet this need is by mentoring beginning teachers.”

Mentored teachers of reap benefits such as easier social integration into the school’s culture, improved teaching skills, and support during unforeseen challenges. Interestingly, mentors stand to gain, too: the fresh prospective of a beginning teacher can reignite a veteran’s reflections on their practice, provoke a fresh look at specific teaching habits, and reaffirm the seasoned teacher’s beliefs and practices at their current career juncture (Danielson, 2002).

Mentors and mentees can forge a partnership wherein both have wisdom to impart, leading to mutual growth and enhanced practice. As Danielson (2002, p. 183) puts it, “A successful learning community involves mentoring, which breaks down the barriers of isolation and revitalizes commitment to teaching.”

In many regions of Canada and globally, a concerning trend is beginning teachers departing from the profession early in their careers (Tait, 2008). For example, one study found that “18% of new Ontario teachers [were] at risk of leaving the profession” (Tait, 2008, p. 58).

Launching an educational career is difficult. One study identified significant hurdles for beginning teachers, such as gaining support from administration and colleagues, mastering classroom management, differentiating instruction, handling extensive paperwork, and teaching subjects outside their area of expertise (Mendoza, 2020). There is a clear demand for mentorship programs to enhance job satisfaction among beginning teachers (Mullen & Klimaitis, 2021). Danielson notes, "Retaining good teachers requires a commitment to professional growth, a goal that can be addressed through quality mentoring" (Danielson, 2002, p. 185). Moreover, bolstering teacher resilience is crucial. As Tait (2008) observed, teachers with heightened resilience were less likely to leave the profession.

Purpose of the Study

This capstone study aims to uncover the benefits of mentorship, to understand the obstacles hindering the initiation of mentorship opportunities, and to discern how administrators can implement impactful mentorship initiatives. Targeted at administrators, this research seeks to bolster their ability to support beginning teachers. This capstone study delves deeply into the benefits of mentorship opportunities tailored for those beginning their teaching careers. This capstone study will scrutinize academic literature addressing effective mentorship tactics tailored for administrators, mentors, and mentees. It aims to highlight how mentorship can elevate the success of beginning teachers in their professional environment. Additionally, the capstone study will investigate administrators' challenges when instituting effective mentorship opportunities and the obstacle in cultivating harmonious mentor-mentee relationships.

Research Questions

The intent in this capstone study is to aid administrators in school districts in establishing effective mentorship programs. This will be achieved by investigating the advantages of mentoring for beginning teachers and by analyzing exemplary mentorship models within schools. Three central research questions drive this capstone study.

1. How can beginning teachers benefit from mentorship opportunities that connect them with experienced teacher colleagues?
2. What challenges do administrators face when introducing mentorship initiatives?
3. Which mentorship models show promise that administrators might employ to enhance for support for beginning teachers?

Significance of the Study

Starting a career in education presents numerous challenges (Gordon et al., 2000) and can often lead to feelings of isolation (Boreen & Niday, 2000). The early departure of new teachers from the profession is a concern worldwide (Tait, 2008). One study conducted in Canada estimated that "18% of new Ontario teachers would be at risk of leaving the profession. Studies conducted in the United States, Australia, and Great Britain confirmed similar or higher early teaching attrition rates" (Tait, 2008, p. 58). Challenging assignments and minimal support heightened the risk of beginning teachers leaving the profession prematurely (Danielson, 2002). "Many teachers listed lack of job satisfaction as a reason for leaving the education profession, while citing the lack of mentoring as a main cause of job dissatisfaction" (Botha & Hugo, 2021, p. 64). Consequently, introducing mentorship can bolster job satisfaction among beginning teachers (Botha & Hugo, 2021). An effective learning community utilizes mentorship to foster collaboration, mitigate feelings of isolation, and rejuvenate dedication to teaching (Danielson,

2002). Serving as an invaluable support, mentors guide beginning teachers through the early stages of their careers, promoting both increased productivity and satisfaction (Richter et al., 2013).

Mentorship provides beginning teachers with essential skills and knowledge, enhancing their students' academic achievements (Tahir et al., 2014). As Danielson (2002, p. 183) points out, "Teachers grow professionally when they seek out peers for professional dialogue and turn to each other for constructive feedback, affirmation, and support." Successful mentorship relationships also provide lasting benefits to mentors as well as mentees as they can encourage both parties to examine and reflect on their teaching practices and learn from one another (Barnhart, 2020). Additionally, by partaking in mentorship programs, teachers can enhance their classroom management techniques, which in turn, can boost student success and outcomes (Botha & Hugo, 2021).

Scope of Study

This capstone study examined research regarding the benefits of mentorship programs for beginning and experienced teachers. Key findings encompassed areas like increased job satisfaction, impacts on teacher attrition rates, and rejuvenated dedication to the teaching profession. This capstone study also highlighted challenges that elementary and high school administrators face when introducing mentorship initiatives. These challenges range from ensuring compatibility between mentors and mentees, to fostering collaboration among colleagues, and to the need to train effective mentors. Furthermore, this capstone study reviewed literature pinpointing effective mentorship program models suitable for elementary and high school environments.

Summary

Many beginning teachers face challenges in their initial years of teaching, which can result in health issues, burnout, or even leaving the profession (Danielson, 2002; Tait, 2008). The early exit of teachers before their retirement age is a concern globally (Botha & Hugo, 2021). While retaining teachers is crucial, it is equally important to ensure they maintain high teaching standards (Botha & Hugo, 2021; Danielson, 2002). Mentorship offers a solution by fostering community and supporting beginning teachers (Danielson, 2002). Such support can enhance job satisfaction and deepen teachers' commitment to their profession (Botha & Hugo, 2021). Mentorship offers advantages beyond supporting beginning teachers, including fostering a renewed passion for the profession among experienced teachers, and prompting self-reflection among mentors (Danielson, 2002). However, when initiating mentorship programs, administrators need to navigate certain challenges. These include the readiness of teachers to engage in mentorship, the school's overall attitude towards professional growth, and the imperative of training competent mentors (Danielson, 2002; Ralph, 2000; Watkins & Whalley, 1993). This capstone study highlights effective mentorship models, providing administrators with insights to integrate mentorship into their school environment seamlessly.

Outline of the Remainder of the Paper

Chapter 1 examines the significance of mentorship for beginning teachers. It highlights the challenges these educators encounter and elaborates on how mentorship programs can bolster their success and curtail teacher attrition. Chapter 2 is a literature review that examines the literature around mentorship. This chapter describes the benefits of mentorship programs, the challenges of creating effective mentorship opportunities, the barriers around creating positive mentor-mentee relationships, and promising mentorship program models. Chapter 3 reviews the

implications of the literature review and includes recommendations for administrators on implementing effective mentorship programs to support beginning teachers.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Introduction

Mentorship significantly influences the growth and success of beginning teachers (Carter & Francis, 2001; Marable & Raimandi, 2007). The purpose of this capstone study was to underscore this crucial component of teacher development. The research for this literature review was conducted systematically, focusing on mentorship for beginning teachers. This capstone study involved a deep dive into various scholarly articles, research papers, educational reports, and other pertinent sources to ensure a thorough understanding of the topic.

This chapter starts by defining the key terms related to mentorship. It then delves into a review of literature that underscores the impact of mentorship on beginning teachers. Organized to address the research questions highlighted in Chapter 1 sequentially, this review covers the initial challenges beginning educators face, the advantages that mentorship brings to these teachers, potential obstacles administrators might encounter when introducing mentorship initiatives, and notable characteristics and models of effective mentorship programs. Through this literature review, the goal is to showcase the transformative potential of mentorship, encourage further research, and champion evidence-based educational practices. By presenting these findings, this chapter aims to further the conversation on mentorship, emphasizing its crucial role in nurturing and ensuring the success of beginning teachers.

Definition of Terms

Administrator: Döş and Savaş (2015) described an administrator as an individual who "prepares the school for education, remedy the deficiencies, is encouraging, a guidance counselor, ensures discipline and order, creates a school culture, supports teachers and students,

rewards success, establishes healthy communication, consistent between promises and actions, reassures manners, provides motivation, an effective planner, and quick at resolving problems" (Döş and Savaş, 2015, p. 4).

Attrition: Teachers who are leaving the profession either voluntarily or involuntarily before the age of retirement (Brown et al., 2020; McIntyre, 2003). Such departures can arise from various factors such as "strong dissatisfaction with their assignments, exhaustion with the long hours required, frustration with the politics of their profession or with the lack of adequate resources and mentoring support" (McIntyre, 2003, p. 7).

Beginning Teacher: Refers to an individual who recently entered the teaching profession.

Induction: A phase within a program characterized by intense mentoring, marking a pivotal point in learning to teach (Feiman-Nemser, 2001) that "stand[s] as a key juncture of learning, growth, and support" for beginning teachers (Paine et al., 2003, p. 15).

Induction Program: A formal and highly structured staff development program that occurs during the beginning years of a teacher's career (Hellsten et al., 2009).

Job Satisfaction: A positive emotional state experienced by an individual in relation to their job, often resulting from one's emotional reaction to the conditions and circumstances of the job (Botha & Hugo, 2021).

Mentee: A teacher who receives professional feedback and support from a more experienced and competent teacher (mentor). This support can include, but not limited to, co-planning lessons, classroom management, assessment strategies, decision making, pedagogical recommendations, and curriculum mapping (Bickmore, 2009; Botha & Hugo, 2021).

Mentor: A mentor is "anyone who is involved in tasks and activities which support a [beginning] teacher" (Watkins & Whalley, 1993, p. 130). Mentors are more experienced and competent

colleagues who can help co-plan lessons, observe and provide feedback, demonstrate teaching techniques, help in analyzing student work, and create curriculum maps (Stanulis & Floden, 2009). Their roles extend to providing guidance on classroom management and assessment, aiding in decision-making, coaching during challenging times, and rendering emotional assistance (Bickmore, 2009). Mentors are collaborative partners who refrain from evaluations and do not report their observations. They stand as empathetic listeners, offering a shoulder to lean on after tough days, or sharing in the joy of successful ones (Wilson et al., 2021).

Mentorship: Defined as "A one on one relationship between a competent, experienced teacher (mentor) and a novice or trainee (mentee)" (Botha & Hugo, 2021, p. 66).

Student Teacher: An individual undergoing a teacher education program.

Teacher retention: The act of retaining qualified teachers within the profession.

Review of Research Literature

The Benefits of Mentorship

Job Satisfaction

Teachers exiting the profession before reaching retirement age is a concern recognized globally (Botha & Hugo, 2021; Tait, 2008). Early in their careers, teachers frequently face daunting tasks: they are often assigned classes with disengaged students and are expected to prepare for multiple courses, typically with minimal peer support (Danielson, 2002). Notably, "Less than 20% of this attrition is due to retirement, and especially in hard-to-staff schools, both teacher dissatisfaction with the conditions of work and many teachers' lack of preparation are critical components of high turnover" (Ingersoll et al., 2021; Henke et al., 2000 as cited in Darling-Hammond, 2003). Working in isolation can undermine teachers' job satisfaction and

commitment to the profession (Bickmore, 2009; Danielson, 2002). Botha and Hugo (2021) studied teacher retention through the lens of job satisfaction. Their research revealed that those who left the teaching profession before retiring often cited a lack of support as the primary factor fueling their job dissatisfaction. This finding was echoed in the work of Darling-Hammond (2003) who stated that "among teachers who leave their jobs due to dissatisfaction, salaries and working conditions such as poor administrative support run neck and neck as reasons for leaving" (p. 5). Suspecting that job satisfaction had a direct impact on teacher retention, Botha and Hugo (2021) undertook a study focusing on mentorship as a potential solution to counteract job dissatisfaction, thereby examining its effect on teacher retention. The purpose of their study was to learn more about how effective mentoring programs could improve job satisfaction for beginning teachers ultimately leading to greater teacher retention. Botha and Hugo (2021) also acknowledged that teacher job satisfaction is related to their students' success. They suggested that augmenting teachers' expertise and competencies through mentorship might boost their job satisfaction and elevate their capacity to support students, thereby enhancing student outcomes.

Botha and Hugo (2021) conducted a survey involving 1,000 teachers with the intent of exploring "aspects of the work environment assisting teacher satisfaction and supporting learner achievement" (p. 70) and "aspects of how an effective mentoring program can contribute to job satisfaction of [beginning] teachers" (p. 70). When analyzing the data related to the impact of work environment on teacher satisfaction, they discovered a trend: many teachers expressing satisfaction in their roles also manifested heightened dedication to bolstering their students by investing more time, energy, and focus (Baker-Gardner, 2014; Botha & Hugo, 2021). Danielson (2002) also reported that the sense of community achieved through mentorship led to increased commitment to the job by the mentor and mentee. As Hobston et al. (2009) described, "Through

mentoring relationships and the raised profile of beginning teachers and of early professional development activities within the school, staff came to know each other better, which led to their increased collaboration and enjoyment" (p. 210). Botha and Hugo (2021) drew a connection between job satisfaction and the "enhancement of teaching and learning" (p. 70).

Several themes emerged in examining the survey results concerning teachers' views on the advantages and features of mentoring programs. These indicated that mentoring assisted beginning teachers in adjusting to their new work setting, that mentorship might serve as a strategy to boost job contentment in such an environment, and that mentorship potentially elevated job satisfaction among beginning teachers (Botha & Hugo, 2021). In addition to its direct benefits, mentorship was found to have several positive secondary effects that could influence job satisfaction. These encompassed professional development, skill enhancement, personal and emotional support, and an instilled sense of empowerment (Botha & Hugo, 2021). The mentorship experience can mitigate feelings of professional isolation among beginning teachers and foster a more favourable disposition toward teaching (Akhalq et al., 2016; Hellsten et al., 2009). School leaders and policy makers should be aware that high-quality mentorship programs can not only enhance teacher satisfaction and professional growth, but also boost teacher retention and benefit students (Stanulis & Floden, 2009).

Teacher Retention Through Knowledge and Skill Development

Teacher effectiveness sees marked improvement after the initial few years of teaching (Kain & Singleton, 1996). Hobson et al. (2009) posited that mentoring stands out as an exceptionally effective means of supporting the professional development of new teachers. Furthermore, evidence suggests that better-prepared teachers are more likely to remain in the profession for extended periods (Darling-Hammond, 2003). Such mentoring programs equip

beginning teachers with knowledge and insights that enhance their productivity and foster skill acquisition, especially in areas like classroom management (Botha & Hugo, 2021). Mentoring programs have been used to "improve the competence of new teachers with the expectation that this would positively impact students' performance" (Baker-Gardner, 2014, p. 284). Research indicates that through mentorship, mentees can better structure their curriculum and design engaging lessons, ultimately becoming more proficient educators (Akhalq et al., 2016). Beginning teachers who receive mentorship from experienced teachers tend to remain in the profession for longer durations and attain proficiency at a faster pace compared to those learning solely from trial and error (Darling-Hammond, 2003). "The commitment effects of strong initial preparation are enhanced by equally strong induction and mentoring in the first years of teaching" (Darling-Hammond, 2003, p. 9). Several studies have found that well-designed mentoring programs improve retention rates for new teachers along with their attitudes, self-confidence in teaching, and instructional skills (Darling-Hammond, 2003).

Mentorship can focus on the individual professional needs of a mentee or align with the broader goals of a school or school district (Akhalq et al., 2016; Danielson, 2002). Akhalq et al. (2016) evaluated the efficacy of a mentorship initiative in the Punjab Province of Pakistan. The program aimed to provide professional development for teachers in the area of activity-based teaching and learning. This approach emphasized students engaging actively in their education, often through hands-on experiences with materials. Akhalq et al. (2016) collected data from 302 District Teacher Educators and 381 Primary School Teachers using interviews and questionnaires. The designated role of these District Teacher Educators was to mentor the Primary School Teachers in devising and delivering activity-based lessons. The research revealed that the "mentoring process helped the mentees in organizing the curriculum related

activities to create attractiveness in the lesson [and] reported that [the] mentoring process helped the mentees in making their teaching more effective" (Akhalq et al., 2016, p. 442). They also found that the "mentoring process helped the mentees in eliminating the feelings of professional isolation and developing positive attitude towards teaching" (Akhalq et al., 2016, p. 442).

Mentoring tailored to address an individual's professional and emotional needs proves to be essential (Bickmore, 2009; Danielson, 2002). Notably, when adults proactively seek learning experiences, they are more motivated, drawing upon their personal experiences. Such individuals exhibit greater autonomy and a self-driven approach to learning (Baker-Gardner, 2014). Despite their motivation and preparedness for hard work, McCann and Johannessen (2008) identified a gap between job expectations and the reality of the work experience for new teachers. Coupled with potential feelings of isolation and challenges in managing their workload, the value of mentorship becomes even more evident for these teachers (Bickmore, 2009). "Teaching is demanding, and all too often, it is a solitary pursuit," states Bickmore (2009, p. 89). Mentors offer valuable professional feedback on aspects like lesson planning, classroom management, and assessments. Furthermore, when mentors are sensitive to the personal needs of their mentees, they can foster a sense of community (Bickmore, 2009). Mentorship positively influences beginning teachers' quality and teaching performance, helping them grow in confidence and dedication (Botha & Hugo, 2021). Danielson (2002, p. 185) emphasizes, "Retaining good teachers requires a commitment to professional growth, a goal that can be addressed through quality mentoring." Mentorship can enhance beginning teachers' job satisfaction and professional commitment by linking them with a supportive community and expanding their skill set, ultimately boosting their effectiveness and self-assurance.

Reciprocal Nature

Mentoring is a two-way process that can help both individuals grow in their career and knowledge while allowing them to support one another in areas where they may be deficient (Akhalq et al., 2016). Mentors' feedback revealed that mentorship's benefits extend beyond just the mentee. Mentors reported that the act of mentoring caused them to reflect on and examine their teaching methods. Furthermore, some mentors noted that discussing the highs and lows of teaching allowed them to solidify their teaching philosophies (Barnhart, 2020). Mentorship can reawaken the experienced teachers' "questioning about practice, prompt a re-examination of certain teaching behaviors and affirm the veteran teacher's own growth" (Danielson, 2002, p .184; Hobson et al., 2009). Mentors often characterize the mentorship experience as fulfilling, deriving feelings of satisfaction and pride as they witness their mentees flourish and advance (Hobson et al., 2009). Such experiences lead many mentors to believe they are making a meaningful contribution to the professional growth of their mentees (Hobson et al., 2009). Finally, mentoring offers mentors the chance to recognize their professional strengths and core values, assisting them in shaping their career trajectory. This may involve seeking professional certifications or adopting more significant responsibilities to support peers (Hobson et al., 2009). As Darling-Hammond (2003, p. 10) notes, "Many say that mentoring and coaching other teachers creates an incentive for them to remain in teaching as they gain from both learning from and sharing with other colleagues." For experienced teachers, engaging in mentoring programs can reignite passion and result in a deeper commitment to the profession.

Barriers To Implementing Mentorship

Investing in Mentorship

Teaching, in today's context, has evolved into an increasingly complex job, requiring teachers to teach an expanding curriculum to an increasingly diverse population of students with a spectrum of needs (Martinez, 2004). Given these challenges, "the very best of teacher education programs will only ever be able to prepare graduates to begin to teach" (Martinez, 2004, p. 99). Formal teacher education is not a prerequisite for all teachers in certain parts of the globe. For instance, in Los Angeles, only 25% of teachers hired in 2001 had certification, as noted by The National Education Association (as cited in Martinez, 2004). Martinez (2004) acknowledged that mentorship of beginning teachers could play an important role in shaping new teachers to take on the demands of their job while also cautioning that policymakers should not rely on mentoring to fix the gaps in the education system. Busy principals should not view assigning mentors to beginning teachers as a way to lessen supervisory responsibilities and support. Moreover, it is vital to identify and invest in the training of competent mentors to prevent them from inadvertently perpetuating undesirable values and attitudes to their less experienced peers (Martinez, 2004). For mentors to be influential, policymakers must allocate sufficient funding to establish the necessary structures and practices for mentor training and to craft well-conceived mentorship programs. Martinez (2004, p. 102) notes that "mentoring new teachers is an education practice with enormous potential." She further elaborates, "Teaching has become more complex with increased external standards and demands placed on teachers." The work of mentoring beginning teachers should also be appreciated as equally complex and demanding. Given its significance, the development and execution of superior mentoring programs should be perceived as a valuable financial investment for school districts (Martinez, 2004).

Training Effective Mentors

"Good teachers are often assumed to be good mentors" (Danielson, 2002, p .184). However, an effective mentor typically requires additional preparation and professional development (Danielson, 2002). "Mentoring is a professional practice that must be learned and developed over time" (Danielson, 2002, p. 184). Mentors also need continuous support to be effective in their role (Baker-Gardner, 2014; Brown et al., 2020). Mentors should be afforded release time to fulfill their mentoring responsibilities, and they also need both foundational and continuous professional development (Baker-Gardner, 2014; Brown et al., 2020). For mentors to be influential, they must develop a variety of skills including:

- Knowing what to observe and how to provide feedback.
- Understanding how to keep communication open and resolve conflicts.
- Being able to study one's own teaching and to communicate our own process so others can learn from them.
- Providing appropriate challenges for the novice.
- Fostering reflective thinking.

(Danielson, 2002, p. 184)

The importance of providing quality professional development and support for mentors cannot be overstated (Baker-Gardner, 2014; Brown et al., 2020). Research indicates that the quality of mentoring compared to the frequency of mentoring can decisively shape a successful career start (Richter et al., 2013). O'Sullivan and Conway (2016) studied the effects of poorly executed mentorship, even when mentors had received some training. The beginning teachers interviewed found the mentoring process underwhelming, focusing mainly on planning and day-to-day routines. From the viewpoint of the beginning teachers, their mentors appeared uncommitted to their role, offering only superficial support that encompassed short discussions,

occasional observations, and, in some cases, “petered out” (O’Sullivan & Conway, 2016, p. 409). This occurred even though four of the nine mentors assigned to the surveyed beginning teachers had undergone training with the National Induction Programme for Teachers (O’Sullivan & Conway, 2016). They emphasized the importance for schools to foster a culture of collaboration, encompassing mutual interactions about teaching and learning between both the mentor and the mentee, as well as between experienced and beginning teachers. O’Sullivan and Conway (2016, p.414) state that “developing the capacities of mentor teachers (and school principals) is a matter of priority.” To deliver effective mentorship, mentors must develop a specific skill set, a process that demands both time and continual growth (Baker-Gardner, 2014; Brown et al., 2020; Danielson, 2002; O’Sullivan & Conway, 2016).

Matching Compatible Mentors and Mentees

Compatibility between a mentor and mentee is critical in effective mentoring (Hellsten et al., 2009). It is suggested that beginning teachers be matched with mentors who teach in the same grade or subject area (Hellsten et al., 2009; Smith & Ingersoll, 2004). Alongside grade and subject compatibility, Hellsten et al. (2009) also explored the effects of assigned versus unassigned mentors, as well as engaged versus disengaged mentors. Through interviews with beginning teachers, they found that all their participants found the mentorship experience beneficial regardless of the mentor type. However, the advantages of having either an assigned or unassigned mentor varied based on the specific individuals and their teaching environment. In one case, a mentee with an assigned mentor felt that their mentor lacked the necessary years of experience to offer meaningful emotional or instructional guidance (Hellsten et al., 2009). The compatibility between mentor and mentee proved challenging to anticipate with assigned mentors (Hellsten et al., 2009). In another case, a participant not involved in an official

mentorship program had to form their own mentorship bonds. This beginning teacher was situated in a school filled with supportive peers, allowing them to seek advice and assistance based on specific needs (Hellsten et al., 2009). The advantage of unassigned mentors lies in the organic development of the mentorship relationship, often resulting in a more authentic bond. Nonetheless, this depended on the beginning teacher being in an environment where potential mentors were accessible and inclined to assist (Hellsten et al., 2009). On the other hand, the merit of having an assigned mentor meant that the beginning teacher was integrated into a structured induction program. Within such a program, mentors had a clearer mandate and could more effectively pinpoint the areas of support required by the beginning teacher (Hellsten et al., 2009).

Hellsten et al. (2009) delved into the influence of engaged compared to disengaged mentors. Engagement was gauged by the extent of support mentors rendered to their mentees. Conversely, Stanulis and Floden (2009) noted that, in their observations, the matching process between mentors and mentees frequently revolved around factors like convenience and the availability of volunteers. Such a pairing method might not always prioritize selecting mentors genuinely committed to fostering the professional growth of their mentees. A mentor's level of engagement plays a pivotal role in shaping the relationship they forge with their mentee. It determines the mentee's comfort level in seeking support and the mentor's readiness to invest time and share resources. Both assigned and unassigned mentors offer distinct advantages. However, engaged mentors generally prove to be more efficacious. Notably, as highlighted by Hellsten et al. (2009, p.718), "the opportunity to be exposed to more than one mentor appear[ed] to influence the [beginning teacher's] engagement and personal learning." Mentors possess varied teaching styles and can provide diverse types of support, encompassing professional

feedback, guidance on classroom management, assessments, or addressing personal needs (Bickmore, 2009; Hellsten et al., 2009). The advantage of having multiple mentors is that a single mentor may not be equipped to meet all the diverse needs of a beginning teacher (Bickmore, 2009; Hellsten et al., 2009). Additionally, mentors must exhibit genuine engagement and dedication to their responsibilities. Garza et al. (2008) suggest that potential criteria for selecting mentors could include a desire for ongoing learning and self-improvement, the ability to work with diverse individuals, a commitment to understanding and withholding judgment about beginning teachers, a history of effective teaching to serve as a positive role model, a willingness to support colleagues, and acceptance of the time commitments involved. The potential of mentoring is especially high when mentors and mentees are compatibly matched (Garza et al., 2008; Hellsten et al., 2009; O'Sullivan & Conway, 2016; Stanulis & Floden, 2009).

Promising Mentorship Models

The worldwide concern is the number of teachers leaving the profession before reaching retirement age (Botha & Hugo, 2021). Research suggests that the attrition rate among beginning teachers ranges between 16-18%. This includes teachers who exit the profession entirely or transition to different school districts (Brown et al., 2020; Tait, 2008). Given the pronounced support needs of beginning teachers, the pressing need for comprehensive, coordinated, and sustainable formal teacher induction strategies spanning multiple years is evident globally (Brown et al., 2020, p. 2). This section delves into three promising mentorship models: professional socialization, intensive mentorship, and feedback processes, all aimed at bolstering beginning teachers.

Professional Socialization

Often, beginning teachers face challenging situations such as managing the most difficult students, planning and teaching multiple classes, and sometimes not even having their own classroom, leading them to "float" from one space to another within the school (Danielson, 2002). Despite being newcomers, they are held to the same standards as their veteran counterparts (Angelle, 2006). To support these new educators, Angelle (2006) introduced the term "professional socialization." This concept refers to the process through which beginning teachers learn about and integrate into the organization, impacting both teacher quality and longevity. The successful implementation of this socialization model can significantly influence a beginning teacher's inaugural year, determining its success or failure (Angelle, 2006). "School leadership, as the fulcrum for organizational climate and socialization, sets the tone for the beginner's first experience in the school community" (Angelle, 2006, p. 319). Her study specifically examined how the school principal's role affects a beginning teacher's decision to remain in the teaching profession. Feldman (1976) developed a model of organizational socialization that centers on the beginning teacher within the context of the organizational culture. He outlined three distinct stages. The initial stage, termed "anticipatory socialization" encompasses learning before the beginning teacher enters the organization. The second stage is "accommodation," during which the beginning teacher learns about the organization and starts the integration process. Progress is assessed through supervisory monitoring, established competence, and workplace acceptance by supervisors (Feldman, 1976). In the third stage, the beginning teacher navigates the challenges and demands posed by their profession in conjunction with personal life outside of work. The focus of Angelle's (2006) study was primarily on Feldman's (1976) second stage. Here, the beginning teacher gauges the dynamics of the school system and endeavors to integrate as an active member of the school community (Angelle,

2006). Angelle (2006) emphasized that "throughout this stage, the beginning teacher seeks assistance with role definition and monitoring with acceptance as a work partner. As the organization's instructional leader, the principal is the primary source of this assistance and monitoring" (Angelle, 2006, p. 320).

Angelle's (2006, p. 321) study gathered interview data from middle school principals and beginning teachers to "elicit information regarding the middle schools' induction process and the role of the principal in the process." Angelle (2006) emphasized the significance of a beginning teacher's first experience in teaching. Based on her interviews, she observed that teachers introduced to schools lacking strong social, professional, and organizational structures were more prone to feelings of frustration and burnout, thereby increasing their inclination to exit the teaching field. If these individuals persisted in teaching, they often became less effective educators. Conversely, beginning teachers introduced to a school culture marked by positivity, high student expectations, and a firm belief in student success exhibited a stronger allegiance and motivation to persist in their teaching careers. As Darling-Hammond (2003, p.11) aptly stated "Great school leaders create great school environments for accomplished teaching to flourish and grow." Consequently, a principal's capacity to cultivate and uphold a favourable work ambiance directly impacts beginning teachers' dedication to teaching. It also influences the probability that they will continue in the field and evolve into effective educators.

Angelle's findings (2006) indicated that while all four principals recognized the importance of supervising beginning teachers, the extent of their supervision varied. For example, some principals observed beginning teachers weekly, coupling their observations with reflective feedback and subsequent meetings. In contrast, others limited their observations to the state-mandated minimum of twice a year, often providing minimal or no feedback. When

interviewed, the teachers expressed appreciation for the principal's observations, seeing it as a sign of the principal's interest in their classroom activities. These teachers also voiced a preference for prompt and constructive feedback. From the perspective of the principals, such interactions serve as invaluable avenues for steering beginning teachers toward more proficient teaching methods.

According to Angelle (2006), there are three primary suggestions concerning the role of principals:

- Principals should take an active role in the induction of new teachers, including frequent discussion, monitoring, and feedback regarding professional practice. […] Principals who take seriously their role as instructional leaders can do much to shape an effective staff in a school climate geared to learning.
- Principals should refrain from relegating all aspects of new teacher induction to other staff members. Instructional leadership is a vital part of the socialization experience and should not be removed from the process.
- Professional development for principals, whether during preparation programs or part of continuing education, should include development of skills in socializing employees to the culture of the school. (p. 332)

To summarize, effective socialization enhances the initial experiences of beginning teachers and strengthens their dedication to teaching. Principals are pivotal in this process, especially when they foster a positive working atmosphere and commit to direct observation and feedback for these beginning educators (Angelle, 2006). Active involvement by school leaders in introducing and socializing new teachers can instill a sense of support and confidence in them (Tahir et al., 2014).

Intensive Mentorship

Stanulis and Floden (2009) conducted a study to evaluate the impact of a program designed to bolster the instructional practices of beginning teachers through intensive mentorship. The program focused on a researched concept of high-quality teaching called effective, balanced instruction (Stanulis & Floden, 2009). After reviewing pertinent literature on this instructional model, the authors identified three core components that the mentoring program aimed to achieve. These components included "teaching of worthwhile content, excellent classroom management that engages students, and strong motivation and scaffolding of student learning" (Stanulis & Floden, 2009, p. 2).

Stanulis and Floden (2009) assessed 24 teachers in their first and second years. These teachers were categorized into two groups: a treatment group and a comparison group. Those in the treatment group received intensive mentorship from mentors specifically assigned based on the teachers' subject specializations. This intensive mentorship entailed being observed by their respective mentors between 29 to 31 times over the school year. During their sessions, mentors and beginning teachers collaborated on lesson planning, with some of these lessons subsequently observed by the mentors. After observing, mentors offered feedback. Additionally, they assisted beginning teachers in procuring resources specific to their subject area. The nature and focus of these mentorship interactions varied, tailored to each beginning teacher's unique teaching context and needs. Moreover, mentors organized monthly after-school study groups. Both mentors and their mentees also participated in a day-long workshop on the challenges and intricacies of teaching in urban school environments. The comparison group received regular district induction interventions, including orientation, after-school seminars, and principal seminars, as well as the typical "building mentor" assigned by their school principal. Stanulis

and Floden (2009) defined a "building mentor" as one that had "no specific preparation for their role and were not expected to observe in the beginning teacher's classroom or provide feedback on their developing practice" (p. 115). Unlike the treatment group, the comparison group did not receive any release time to meet with their mentors during the school day.

The data for Stanulis and Floden's (2009) study was gathered through observations and surveys. Observations were conducted twice: initially from September to October, and then at the year's end between April and May. For these observations, the researchers employed a tool they had developed called AIMS. This tool assessed Atmosphere, Instruction, Management, and Student engagement. Specifically, it looked at a teacher's capability to enthuse students about their learning, capitalize on teachable moments, articulate the reasons behind rules and requests, and ensure that at least 80% of the students were actively engaged and involved in classroom activities.

Stanulis and Floden (2009) found that "intensive mentoring focused on balanced instruction improved teaching practice" (p. 120). According to their data, this program enabled teachers to better engage learners, heighten student motivation, and effectively scaffold student learning. They have no measurable improvement in the teachers' classroom management skills. They posited that this might be because the intensive mentorship program mainly focused on engaging students through teaching content. Another contributing factor could be the timing of the program's initiation, which began in the third week of the school year. They suggested that mentorship programs might be more effective if started before or during the first week of the school year. This study thus provides evidence that intensive mentorship can improve teaching effectiveness.

Feedback Processes to Support Beginning Teachers

In the United States, an increasing number of teachers are relatively new to the profession, with five or fewer years of experience (Ingersoll et al., 2021). There is a pressing need to bolster and foster the professional growth of these new educators (Botha & Hugo, 2021; Gordon et al., 2000; Hellsten et al., 2009; McCann & Johannessen, 2008; Park et al., 2014; Stanulis & Floden, 2009; Teague & Swan, 2013). A pivotal strategy for their support is offering impactful feedback geared towards refining instruction (Danielson, 2002; Park et al., 2014). Park et al. (2014, p.2) investigated "the factors and processes that contribute to an effective feedback system, paying particular attention to how the system affects early career teachers and how such systems can coexist with extant and emerging teacher evaluation systems."

The objective of the 90-day cycle was to create a framework that illustrated feedback as an intricate process integrated within a system. Park et al. (2014) identified key elements, termed "drivers," that support effective feedback mechanisms. These were mapped across district, school, and classroom echelons. They charted a detailed process map to elucidate the anatomy of meaningful feedback. "Because of [beginning] teachers' needs for extra support […] strategies that are comprehensive, coordinated, and sustainable over several years has become very clear and critically important worldwide" (Brown et al., 2020, p. 2). Implementing such strategies becomes particularly crucial for districts aiming to retain the influx of beginning teachers joining the workforce annually (Park et al., 2014).

Feedback for beginning teachers originates from multiple stakeholders, including principals, coaches, and colleagues. This feedback can serve evaluative purposes or focus on professional development (Park et al., 2014). Given the increasing focus on teacher assessments, numerous districts are inclined to situate feedback within an evaluative framework (Park et al., 2014). Evaluation-based discussions generally cover a range of competencies, aligning with the

district's teacher observation standards. The main goal of these evaluations is to determine a teacher's position and performance within the district (Park et al., 2014). On the other hand, feedback geared towards improvement often includes more regular observations that hone in on one or two distinct skills (Park et al., 2014). Observers in improvement-focused feedback settings are typically instructional coaches or mentors, rather than principals. This arrangement often fosters a foundation for trust-building relationships (Park et al., 2014). The consistent nature of these interactions, combined with the non-judgmental context of observations and the specific emphasis on feedback, encourages transparency. Beginning teachers become more open about their requirements, are more receptive to advice, and exhibit an eagerness to grow (Park et al., 2014).

Park et al. (2014) developed a feedback process map to assist school districts in crafting feedback and evaluation systems, outlining the distinct yet interrelated roles of principals, coaches, and beginning teachers. The dynamic between a coach and a beginning teacher is designed to appraise and elevate teachers' performance (Park et al., 2014). Coaching serves as a method to bolster classroom teachers in delivering superior instruction. It does so by offering actionable feedback and aiding in continuous development across various content areas (Brown et al., 2020; Park et al., 2014). Within the relationship between a principal and a beginning teacher, the principal typically undertakes formal evaluations of the beginning teacher. However, these new teachers also look to principals for guidance and valuable feedback (Park et al., 2014). While time constraints and expertise can pose challenges to providing detailed feedback, feedback-driven conversations enable principals to forge connections with beginning teachers and foster trust (Park et al., 2014). Collaborative efforts among principals, coaches, and

beginning teachers ensure that feedback is frequent, coherent, actionable, and relevant to subsequent discussions centered on professional growth and evaluation (Park et al., 2014).

While every driver is essential for an effective feedback system, real-world experiences show that training feedback providers in instructional frameworks and coaching strategies can greatly improve the feedback quality for beginning teachers and amplify the influence of other drivers (Brown et al., 2020; Danielson, 2002; Park et al., 2014). Park et al. (2014) emphasized several effective practices and a feedback framework designed to aid districts and schools in developing feedback systems that both improve and evaluate the practices of new teachers. School leaders and those providing feedback can cultivate efficient feedback systems that support and retain novice educators by building trust via routine observations, aligning the objectives and content of feedback discussions, and encouraging beginning teachers to set their own goals (Park et al., 2014).

Summary

The literature reviewed in this capstone study makes a compelling argument for incorporating mentorship into school and school district practices to support the professional development of beginning teachers. It highlights the many advantages of mentorship but also discusses the challenges that might arise when trying to start mentorship programs in schools. Finally, the selected literature reviewed and summarized some promising mentorship models.

The first section of Chapter 2 discussed the positives of mentorship for both the mentee and the mentor. The findings of Botha and Hugo (2021) illustrated that not having mentorship and support could make teachers unhappy and more likely to leave their jobs. In the same vein, several studies recognized that teaching can sometimes feel lonely, and this loneliness can push teachers to leave the profession (Akhalq et al., 2016; Bickmore, 2009; Danielson, 2002; Hellsten

et al., 2009; Stanulis & Floden, 2009). These studies found that mentorship has the potential to mitigate some of these negative experiences and attitudes by building a community for beginning teachers and addressing their professional and emotional needs. In addition to increasing job satisfaction and creating a sense of community, mentoring can also enhance teaching effectiveness. It does so by expanding the knowledge and skills of beginning teachers (Botha & Hugo, 2021; Danielson, 2002; Darling-Hammond, 2003; Hobson et al., 2009). This mentorship model offers advantages beyond just bolstering teachers' confidence and competence. It also positively influences student outcomes as teachers become more adept at crafting and implementing high-quality lessons and programs (Akhalq et al., 2016; Baker-Gardner, 2014; Botha & Hugo, 2021). Enhanced attitudes, increased feelings of efficacy, and improved instructional skills are all factors that contribute to higher teacher retention rates (Darling-Hammond, 2009). The last benefit explored in Chapter 2 is the reciprocal advantage of mentoring. Research indicates that both mentor and mentee benefit from the relationship (Akhalq et al., 2016). Mentors have reported that the act of mentoring encourages them to reconsider and reflect upon their own teaching methods (Barnhart, 2020). Mentoring has also been described as a rewarding experience that provides stimulation, challenges thinking, and reenergizes experienced teachers' commitment to the profession (Darling-Hammond, 2003; Hobson et al., 2009). Mentees gain from this relationship by enhancing their expertise and skills, receiving guidance in areas such as classroom management, evaluation, lesson preparation, and observation, as well as feeling a sense of belonging (Akhalq et al., 2016; Baker-Gardner, 2014; Bickmore, 2009; Botha & Hugo, 2021). As previously highlighted, this leads to a more positive attitude, a stronger community bond, increased efficacy, and greater confidence.

The challenges to the development and rollout of mentoring initiatives were elaborated upon in Chapter 2's second section. One major hurdle is the need for well-trained mentors, which requires financial investment in mentor training programs (Baker-Gardner, 2014; Brown et al., 2020; Martinez, 2004). The research indicates that mentor training should encompass continuous professional development and allocate time for mentors to fulfill their mentoring roles. Contrary to the assumption that an adept teacher automatically makes an excellent mentor, this is not always true (Danielson, 2002). To effectively cater to their mentees, mentors must cultivate a unique skill set (Danielson, 2002; McCann & Johannessen, 2008). Finally, this section outlines the importance of pairing compatible mentors and mentees. This compatibility goes beyond just matching based on grade or subject area; it also includes factors like engagement level and teaching methodology (Hellsten et al., 2009; O'Sullivan & Conway, 2016; Smith & Ingersoll, 2004; Stanulis & Floden, 2009).

The third section of Chapter 2 examined three promising mentoring models: professional socialization, effective balanced instruction, and a coaching initiative tailored for beginning teachers (Angelle, 2006; Park et al., 2014; Stanulis & Floden, 2009). The model of professional socialization emphasized supporting beginning teachers in their journey of assimilation into the educational community, as this process directly influenced their teaching quality and career longevity (Angelle, 2006). This model particularly underscored the pivotal role of principals in guiding the professional integration of these beginning teachers (Angelle, 2006). Angelle (2006) indicated that her socialization model could determine whether the first year of a beginning teacher was a success or a failure. This impacted the likelihood that a beginning teacher would remain or leave the teaching profession. On the other hand, the model of effective balanced instruction investigated the impact of an intensive mentorship program focused on imparting the

principles of effective balanced instruction to beginning teachers (Stanulis & Floden, 2009). Effective balanced instruction focused on "teaching worthwhile content, excellent classroom management that engaged students, and strong motivation and scaffolding of student learning" (Stanulis & Floden, 2009, p. 2). Stanulis and Floden (2009) studied how intensive mentoring supported beginning teachers in mastering the elements of effective balanced instruction. Their research concluded that intensive mentoring positively influenced teachers' instructional methods. Lastly, the coaching model for beginning teachers was discussed, as presented by Park et al. (2014). This approach examined the interplay of district, school, and classroom factors in fostering robust feedback mechanisms. Park et al. (2014) devised a feedback process map to aid school districts in crafting their feedback and assessment frameworks. They proposed a collaborative feedback process involving principals, coaches, and beginning teachers, aiming to enhance teaching methodologies and increase the retention of beginning educators. By examining the advantages and challenges of mentorship alongside the methodologies presented in the mentorship models, school administrators, and districts can be equipped with the necessary insights to create and introduce their effective mentorship programs.

Chapter 3: Summary, Recommendations and Conclusions

Summary of Findings

Effective mentorship offers numerous advantages to both mentors and mentees. These include heightened job satisfaction, fostering community ties, enhancing teacher knowledge and skillsets, providing mental engagement, delivering a sense of fulfillment, and bolstering commitment to teaching—which ultimately aids in retaining educators (Akhalq et al., 2016; Baker-Gardner, 2014; Barnhart, 2020; Bickmore, 2009; Botha & Hugo, 2021; Darling-Hammond, 2003; Hobson et al., 2009; Stanulis & Floden, 2009). While the advantages of mentorship are clear, administrators face challenges in its implementation. These challenges encompass the recruitment and training of adept mentors, financial considerations for program support, and ensuring mentees are paired with compatible mentors (Baker-Gardner, 2014; Brown et al., 2020; Danielson, 2002; Garza et al., 2008; Hellsten et al., 2009; Martinez, 2004; O'Sullivan & Conway, 2016; Smith & Ingersoll, 2004; Stanulis & Floden, 2009). This capstone study delved into three noteworthy mentorship models: professional socialization, intensive mentorship, and feedback processes designed for beginning teachers (Angelle, 2006; Park et al., 2014; Stanulis & Floden, 2009). The following section discusses the impact of mentorship on beginning teachers, mentors, schools, school districts, and students.

Implications

A recurring theme in the literature covered in this capstone study is the alarming global teacher attrition rate. Research indicates that in certain regions of Canada and the United States, the attrition rates for beginning teachers stand at 18% and 16%, respectively (Brown et al., 2020; Tait, 2008). Even more strikingly, in some areas of the U.S., up to 45% of teachers with five or

fewer years of experience leave the profession (Brown et al., 2020). This includes both teachers who exited the teaching profession altogether and those who transitioned to different school districts. Such significant teacher turnover can adversely influence schools and entire school districts. Notably, schools in rural and remote locations often bear the brunt of this issue. Moreover, subjects like mathematics and science are especially affected by these high attrition rates (Martinez, 2004). With beginning teachers being more prone to leaving the profession, the pool of experienced educators gradually diminishes. Brown et al. (2020, p.2) observed that "Higher rates of [beginning teachers] means less experience, greater challenges, more instability, and lower rates of efficacy." Research has identified job dissatisfaction stemming from inadequate support as a significant reason for these elevated attrition rates (Bickmore, 2009; Botha & Hugo, 2021; Danielson, 2002). Danielson (2002) highlighted the pivotal role of working conditions in influencing attrition rates among beginning teachers. She noted that beginning teachers often face tough assignments, manage classrooms with unmotivated students, and juggle multiple class preparations. This, along with other research, underscores the importance of mentorship to aid these teachers, particularly in assessing its impact on job dedication and teacher retention. Indeed, mentorship has demonstrated wide-ranging benefits for beginning teachers and their mentors, schools, districts, and students.

Mentees stand as the primary beneficiaries of mentorship. Numerous studies depict teaching as a profession that can often feel isolating, adversely affecting teachers' attitudes, job satisfaction, and commitment (Bickmore, 2009; Botha & Hugo, 2021; Danielson, 2002). With the presence of effective mentorship, there is a significant boost in job satisfaction, dedication to the profession, and a heightened commitment to student support (Akhalq et al., 2016; Baker-Gardner, 2014; Botha & Hugo, 2021; Hellsten et al., 2009). Mentorship has proven valuable in

helping beginning teachers establish a supportive network and sense of community (Danielson, 2002; Hobson et al., 2009). It significantly enhances teacher knowledge and skills. In fact, it is recognized as one of the foremost professional development tools for novice teachers (Hobson et al., 2009). Effective mentorship aids beginning teachers in becoming more skilled educators by enhancing their lesson planning, classroom management techniques, and assessment strategies (Akhalq et al., 2016; Bickmore, 2009; Botha & Hugo, 2021). Mentees acquire these skills faster than peers who learn through trial and error, and research indicates that teachers who feel well-prepared tend to remain in the profession longer (Darling-Hammond, 2003). Consequently, with the rise in job satisfaction and effectiveness, teachers often feel more confident, better equipped for their roles, more content with their positions, and more dedicated to staying in the teaching profession.

Mentoring has shown to be beneficial for mentors as well. Many mentors noted that the mentoring process encouraged them to introspect and reevaluate their teaching methods. This self-reflection helped mentors both clarify their teaching philosophies and reaffirm the effectiveness of certain teaching strategies (Barnhart, 2020; Danielson, 2002; Hobson et al., 2009). Mentoring is not only rewarding for mentees but also for mentors, especially when they witness the growth and success of their mentees (Hobson et al., 2009). Such experiences often influence the career trajectories of mentors, inspiring them to seek further qualifications or explore new ways to support their peers (Hobson et al., 2009). By sharing their expertise and viewing teaching through a fresh lens, mentors often rediscover their passion and deepen their commitment to the field.

Mentorship impacts not only individuals but also schools, school districts, and students in broader, indirect ways. As previously noted, one of mentorship's most significant contributions

is fostering a robust sense of community among participants (Danielson, 2002; Hobson et al., 2009). Through mentorship initiatives, schools and districts can strengthen their support networks and cultivate a cohesive community environment. Mentorship has proven effective in bolstering job commitment and enhancing teacher proficiency, significantly boosting teacher retention rates (Botha & Hugo, 2021). This could benefit schools and school districts by creating a more stable and experienced collection of teachers (Brown et al., 2020). Furthermore, students stand to gain from these mentorship initiatives. As Baker-Gardner (2014, p. 291) elucidates, "The student is directly supported by the classroom teachers, but also benefits indirectly from the support offered to the new teacher by the mentor. Mentoring is not done in isolation but is a part of a wider induction [program] that gives support to the mentors and the new teachers who are being mentored." Baker-Gardner (2014, p. 291) aptly notes, "At the heart of the induction process is the student who needs the instructional help and support of the teacher in order to perform well. However, these new teachers are not able to independently support the students in their academic growth since the teachers are also learning and do not yet possess the repertoire of skills that would make them competent and effective.". Mentorship programs can thus play a crucial role in rapidly advancing these beginning teachers' skills, increasing their commitment to the profession, and enhancing their ability to support students academically (Botha & Hugo, 2021).

Recommendations

Mentorship offers valuable support to beginning teachers. However, for this support to be enduring and impactful, mentoring and its related programs must be carefully crafted and implemented (Brown et al., 2020). The literature reviewed in this capstone study examined

numerous studies around effective mentorship. This included individual mentoring connections to broader mentorship systems. Based on these studies, a set of guidelines has been assembled. These can guide school and district administrators in initiating and nurturing mentorship endeavors in their institutions. Furthermore, some of these recommendations are tailored to cater to both beginning teachers and their mentors.

Recommendations to Beginning Teachers

The literature reviewed in this capstone study highlights that beginning teachers frequently experience feelings of isolation and a lack of support. Although mentorship can provide an avenue for beginning teachers to build relationships and create a support network, it is crucial for these teachers to take proactive steps as well. Bickmore (2009) recommended that beginning teachers actively initiate discussions about their professional needs with colleagues. Bickmore further proposed that these teachers connect with colleagues whose teaching styles and practices they admire and collaborate with those teaching the same grade level or subject area. To further immerse themselves in the school culture, Bickmore also advised beginning teachers to attend after-school events and observe the school from diverse viewpoints, suggesting that understanding a school's culture extends beyond the classroom's four walls.

Recommendations to Mentors

Mentoring beginning teachers demands patience, guidance, and effective communication. In line with suggestions for beginning teachers, mentors are also encouraged to be proactive. They should anticipate the needs of their less experienced colleagues and offer assistance even before it is specifically requested (Bickmore, 2009). Mentors can assist beginning teachers in various ways: collaborating on lesson plans, consistently observing and providing feedback,

modeling exemplary lessons, and assessing student work (Stanulis & Floden, 2009). Even simple gestures, such as engaging in conversations with beginning teachers before and after school, can significantly reduce feelings of isolation (Bickmore, 2009). Mentors play a pivotal role in shaping how beginning teachers adapt to the profession. Through mentoring, these educators can combat feelings of professional loneliness and cultivate a more positive attitude toward their role (Akhalq et al., 2016; Hellsten et al., 2009).

Recommendations to Administrators

Implementing mentorship programs in schools offers substantial benefits for beginning teachers and the broader school community. As Angelle (2006, p. 319) observed, "School leadership, as the fulcrum for organizational climate and socialization, sets the tone for the beginner's first experience in the school community." Therefore, setting clear goals and objectives for the mentorship program is crucial for school administrators. Determining the desired outcomes of the mentorship program is essential. Creating a structured mentorship program with clear roles, responsibilities, and expectations for both mentors and mentees enhances consistency and program efficacy. As Darling-Hammond (2003, p. 11) stated, "Great school leaders create great school environments for accomplished teaching to flourish and grow." Based on this premise, there are several recommendations for administrators considering integrating or initiating mentoring practices within their schools or districts.

Active involvement from school leaders in the orientation and acclimation of beginning teachers is essential for fostering a sense of security and support (Tahir et al., 2014). Angelle (2006, p. 332) emphasized that "[Administrators] should take an active role in the induction of new teachers, including frequent discussion, monitoring, and feedback regarding professional practice." Moreover, just as mentors require specific training for their roles, administrators also

need professional development to aptly integrate new employees into the school's culture (Angelle, 2006; Danielson, 2002). Park et al. (2014) emphasized that the support of beginning teachers should be a collaborative effort, with principals, mentors, and mentees continuously working together to provide feedback and support.

School administrators play a pivotal role in offering direct mentorship to beginning teachers and ensuring the efficacy of mentorship relationships among colleagues. A crucial first step in this process is determining the compatibility between the mentor and mentee (Hellsten et al., 2009). Administrators, where suitable, should assist in pairing mentors with mentees. The level of engagement and commitment of the mentor significantly influences the mentor-mentee relationship. It determines the comfort level of the mentee in seeking support and their willingness to collaborate (Stanulis & Floden, 2009). It might be advantageous for administrators to assign multiple mentors to each mentee. Relying on just one mentor might fall short of addressing a beginning teacher's requirements (Bickmore, 2009; Hellsten et al., 2009). Aligning mentors with mentees is not just about the grade level or subject area. Personalities and teaching styles also play a significant role in determining compatibility (Hellsten et al., 2009). The timing for initiating these mentorship relationships is crucial. Stanulis and Floden (2009) recommend that mentoring should start before the school year begins or during its first week.

Administrators are pivotal in fostering enduring mentorship programs within their institutions. Effectively nurturing mentors often demands both preparation and specialized training (Danielson, 2002). To facilitate this, administrators can allocate release time for mentors to undergo professional development. This training can focus on essential mentorship skills and strategies, including:

"Knowing what to observe and how to provide feedback, understanding how to keep

> communication open and resolve conflicts, being able to study one's own teaching and to communicate our own process so others can learn from them, providing appropriate challenges for the novice, and fostering reflective thinking"
>
> (Danielson, 2002, p. 184).

Finally, encouraging mentors and mentees to share their experiences, strategies, and successes with the school community can contribute to a culture of continuous improvement.

Conclusions

Evidence strongly indicates that the quality of teachers plays a pivotal role in student achievement (Darling-Hammond, 2003). Therefore, it is imperative for school and district administrators not only to attract top-tier teachers but also to ensure their retention and continuous professional growth (Darling-Hammond, 2003). Worldwide, there is growing concern over high rates of teacher attrition. Many studies attribute this to several factors, including poor job satisfaction due to inadequate support and teacher education programs failing to sufficiently prepare beginning teachers for job demands (Botha & Hugo, 2021; Martinez, 2004). One effective solution to aid beginning teachers in their transition into the profession is mentoring. Such support from colleagues and administrators has been shown to significantly enhance teacher attitudes, increasing job satisfaction and commitment (Botha & Hugo, 2021). Mentoring provides effective on-the-job training for beginning teachers, enhancing their understanding and skills tailored to challenges specific to their teaching roles (Bickmore, 2009; Danielson, 2002). Mentors prove most effective when they proactively identify and address the needs of their mentees, offering insightful advice, guidance, and demonstrating best practices (Bickmore, 2009; Danielson, 2002).

While the benefits of mentoring are well-documented in the literature examined in this capstone study, there also exist barriers that may hinder the effective implementation of mentoring programs. As Darling-Hammond (2003, p. 2) noted:

> "Teachers [who] have assembled the kind of training and experience that allows them to be successful with students, […] constitute a valuable human resource for schools – one that needs to be treasured and supported if schools are to become and remain effective."

Implementing effective mentorship demands significant investments of time and resources by schools and districts. This involves carefully designing mentorship programs and ongoing support and professional development for mentors and mentees. While effective teaching is a prerequisite for mentorship, proficiency in teaching does not automatically translate to mentorship skills (Danielson, 2002). Mentoring is a distinct skill set that demands training (Danielson, 2002). Thus, mentors must be offered consistent professional development to hone these unique skills and given ample time to adequately fulfill their mentoring responsibilities (Baker-Gardner, 2014; Brown et al., 2020; Danielson, 2002; O'Sullivan & Conway, 2016). Carefully selecting and pairing mentors and mentees are crucial (Stanulis & Floden, 2009). Failing to do so could jeopardize the beginning teacher's integration into the profession and perpetuate poor teaching practices and values (Martinez, 2004; O'Sullivan & Conway, 2016).

"There is a magnetic effect when school systems make it clear that they are committed to finding, keeping, and supporting good teachers as a primary focus of school and district management" (Darling-Hammond, 2003, p. 11). Exceptional teachers naturally seek out environments where they anticipate both positive experiences and genuine appreciation (Darling-Hammond, 2003). Mentoring stands as a significant strategy in shaping such uplifting work atmospheres for mentors and their mentees. This influence extends beyond just the educators; the

broader school community benefits, given that quality teachers directly enhance student achievement (Baker-Gardner, 2014; Darling-Hammond, 2003). When executed thoughtfully, mentoring serves as a powerful instrument for supporting beginning teachers, revitalizing experienced ones, and fostering a sustained commitment to the teaching profession.

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