

Mentoring Practices in Pakistan: A Panacea for Professional Development of Primary School Teachers

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Abstract

The present study aims to explore the mentoring process and its impact on the professional development of Primary School Teachers (PSTs) in Punjab province of Pakistan. This process was launched by School Education Department Govt. of Punjab under the umbrella of Directorate of Staff Development Lahore. The population of the study was consisted of 47988 PSTs of 12 selected districts of Punjab province in which 22575 were male PSTs and 25413 were female PSTs. Mixed method approach was followed, data was collected through self-structured questionnaires and structured interview. The overall difference in the Mean Opinion Scores of male and female PSTs showed that mentoring process extensively contributed towards the professional development of Primary School Teachers. There is dire need to revisit the 'Taleemi Calendar' to enable the PSTs to manage all the teaching activities in a systematic way to achieve the pre-set educational targets. Unseen days should be reflected in the 'Taleemi Calendar' to make it realistic and to cover the unseen days of an academic year. Inclusive guidelines, practical examples, teaching points, projected and non-projected teaching tools for various components of core courses should be added in lesson plan.

Key Words: Mentoring; Professional Development; Mentoring Areas; Primary School Teachers; District Teacher Educators

1. Introduction

The term mentoring refers a relationship between entrusted friend and novice teacher. Initially, mentoring was executed by ancient Greeks when renowned king "Ulysses" deputed an old friend for education and training of his son "Telemachus" (Fitzgerald, 1961). This entrusted friend i.e. "Mentor" played the role as a counselor, guide, sponsor, coach, advisor and protector to edify the education and training of Telemachus (Yoder, 2001). The old Greeks used the mentoring services to the train of newly inducted professionals in the fields of agriculture, art, education and medicines (Gibson 2004).

The old Greeks explored the concept of mentoring as an instructional and hierarchical process which based on the hypotheses of paternalism and models for the professional. (Allen, Eby, Poteet, Lentz, & Lima, 2004; Clutterbuck & Ragins, 2002; Noe, Greenberger, & Wang, 2002; Ragins, 1999; Wanberg, Welsh, & Hezlett, 2003). Athens credited the mentor for role modeling, counseling and increasing the self-esteem of newly inducted professionals (Little, J.W. 1990, Klein, E. 1967, Megginson, D. & Clutterbuck., D. 1995).

Historically, the word "mentor" an experienced person or a wise teacher deployed to junior teachers. The notion of mentor has been replicated as a trusted, older, experienced and wise person who keenly guides a younger individual in all aspects of his/her professional life (Yoder, 2001 & Carden, 2010, Kram, 1985; Levinson, 1978; Noe et al., 2002; Ragins, 1999; Wanberg et al., 2003).

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Successful mentoring programmes were initiated in Asian and European countries to help out neophyte managers and employees to achieve their already set professional targets (Clutterbuck, 1991a, Clutterbuck 1995b, Agnes Missirian 1970). During 19th century indistinguishable practices of mentoring relationships were started in United States and United Kingdom for the professional development of the teachers (Clutterbuck, 2001 & 2004, Stodgill 2010).

Many types of mentoring relationships have been emerged in the field of medicines, art, management, social sciences and education with multi-dimensional functions to support the mentee in acquiring professional skills (Levinson et.al., 1978). Mentoring process contains various developmental phases to achieve specified objectives e.g. (i) to develop professional knowledge and skills of mentees, (ii) to help out the mentees in professional progression, (iii) to help out the mentees to acquire professional knowledge and lean professional values, (iv) to provide a role model for the mentees to their professional learning (Levinson, 1978 Levinson, D.J, Darrow, C.N, Klein, E.B, Levinson, M.H & McKee, B. 1978; Bey and Holmes, 1992). In the field of teacher education mentoring is always executed by senior rank teachers having significant teaching experience to guide and facilitate to their junior teachers to learn professional skills, academic rules and understand organizational culture (Daresh 2010). Briefly, mentoring is an interactional process where a senior teacher guides and motivates the junior teacher to enhance professional skills (Yoder, 2001 & Carden, 2010, Huwe, 2003).

Mentoring has recognized a powerful tool to refine the professional practices of junior teachers. Mentoring is an intentional relationship which focuses on professional and self-development of less experienced teachers through dialogues and reflections. Mentoring is a planned process in which more skilled teacher teaches, guides to a less skilled person to develop the specific professional competencies (Hall, 2008, Murray, 2007). Traditionally, it is a dyadic, long-term and face-to-face relationship between junior and senior teacher that promotes the academic, professional, personal and career related skills of junior teachers through observations, discussions and questionings (Donaldson, et. al 2005, Kasprisin, et. al 2003). Kasprisin, et. al 2003). The essential qualities mentor attempt to inculcate include:- (i) interpersonal skills, (ii) knowledge of a repertoire of teaching methods, (iii) alternative modalities of learning that positively influences student's achievement, (iv) ability to foster increased self-direction, (v) effective communication skills, and (vi) continuous professional development of teachers within the context of adult learning (Kunitz, S.J. & Colby, V. (1967) & Hawai 1993).

Mentoring is Continuous Professional Development of PSTs to fulfill their professional needs, and to remove their career deficiencies (Johnson, 2007, Darwin, 2000). The Continuous Professional Development opportunities facilitate the teachers to develop their professional knowledge and skills to address students' learning needs. The planned effective professional development followed by careful implementation and corrective feedback can meet the learning needs of PSTs. The mentoring process is imparted through education, training and through different modes of professional development. The important professional development modes are:- (i) Individual reading/study/research, (ii) focused group study, (iii) Observation, (iv) Coaching, (iv) programs by private vendors, (v) Departmental meetings, (vi) Online courses, (vii) Professional courses, (viii) Workshops, (ix) Conferences and (x) Whole-school improvement programs.

Since the creation of Pakistan, all educational policies, plans, schemes and reforms focused on the professional growth for all categories of teachers but pace of implementation remained at variance. (GoP, 2008). In Punjab, regular professional development of PSTs was started in 2003 to improve the professional skills and knowledge. The objectives of CPD were to improve the work performance and increase the learning capacity of the PSTs (GoP, 2010). Such programmes contribute to achieve these objectives:- (i) up-gradation of professional competencies, (ii) enhancement of existing knowledge & skills, (iii) acquiring new knowledge and skills. The emphasis of this scheme was to ensure the career development of PSTs. This programme focused to prepare the teachers to meet their responsibilities and professional deficiencies of teachers through mentoring activities (GoP, 2009; DTE Guide, 2011; DSD, 2010).

District Teacher Educators (DTEs) are working as key player to provide mentoring to PSTs in Punjab (GoP, 2009). The District Teacher Educators (DTEs) are performing in their respective areas to cover: (1) to ensure 100% enrollment of Universal Primary Education (UPE) campaign, (2) to ensure zero drops-out at primary level, (3) to ensure 100% attendance of the teachers, (4) ranking of schools and teachers on the basis of results, (5) to ensure implementation of English medium scheme, (6) to ensure monthly and periodic tests of students, (7) to conduct the census of schools, and (8) work jointly with teachers for achievement of national targets (DSD, 2011).

The DTEs mentored the PSTs in the eight identified areas i.e. Taleemi Calendar Area=1, Lesson Planning Area=2, Activities Based Teaching and Learning Area=3, Used of Support Material Area=4, Interaction with Students Area=5, Classroom Management, Area=6, Students Assessment Area=7, Homework Area=8. The present study focused on these eight mentoring areas.

Government of Pakistan is giving services attention for the professional development of teachers by developing pre-service and in-service teacher training programmes. In Punjab province Directorate of Staff Development (DSD) is responsible for the professional development of teachers. Since 2007 less effort have been made to study various areas of continuous professional development of PSTs. Researcher developed interest to study to what extent mentoring process is effective for professional development of PSTs. Study was carried out to achieve following objectives:

1. To study the mentoring process started by Govt. of Punjab, School Education Department under the Directorate of Staff Development for the professional development of Primary School teachers in Pakistan.
2. To analyze the effectiveness of mentoring process for the professional development of male and female Primary School Teachers in Punjab Province, Pakistan.

Study was guided by following research questions:

1. How mentoring process started by the Directorate of Staff Development is functioning in selected districts of Punjab province Pakistan?
2. To what extend various areas of mentoring are effective for the professional development of Primary School Teachers in Punjab Province, Pakistan?

2) Methodology

2.1 Sampling/Study population

The study was mix method in nature. Sample comprising of 691 PSTs (310 male and 381 female) was selected throughout simple random sampling techniques. Mentoring system is functioning in thirty six districts of Punjab province, but study was carried out in twelve districts where the mentoring programme was launched in first phase. Districts included in the study include: i) District Attock, ii) District Gujarat, iii) District Sargodha, iv) District Mandi Bahuddin, v) District Faisalabad, vi) Mainwali District, vii) District Muzffaarghar, viii) District Kasure, ix) Okara District, x) District Shakhpura, xi) District Rajanpur, and xii) District Rahim Yar Khan.

2.2 Data collection tools

Two sets of self-structured questionnaires were collect data from male and female PSTs. Interview guide was also developed to collect the qualitative data from the selected respondents. Reliability of the questionnaire was checked through SPSS version 17, while, content validity of the questionnaire, interview guide and observation sheet was checked in consultation with experts. Cronbach alpha was applied to measure the reliability of the questionnaires. The instruments were pilot tested to assure the reliability of the study. The questionnaire covered the demographic information and eight mentoring areas i.e. (i) Taleemi Calendar, (ii) Lesson Planning, (iii) Activity Based Teaching and Learning, (iv) Use of Support Material, (v) Interaction with Students, (vi) Classroom Management, (vii) Student Assessment and (viii) Homework.

2.3 Procedure

The data were collected personally and by electronic mail. Interviews with respondents were conducted in person by taking prior permissions and consent. Data was tabulated and analyzed by calculating percentages and mean score while data collected through observation was shown in percentages. Data collected through interview was analyzed by using NVIVO software version 10 and t-test was used to see that if there was significant difference between the mean score of the groups.

3. Findings

Table 1: Significance of Difference between Mean Opinion Scores of Male & Female (PSTs)

Mentoring Areas	Respondents	N	X	SD	t-value	p-value
Area-1 Taleemi Calendar	Female	381	12.340	3.5398	2.710	0.006
	Male	310	13.306	5.6507		
Area-2 Lesson Planning	Female	381	18.452	3.9438	8.560	0.000
	Male	310	21.642	4.6562		
Area-3 Activity Based Teaching and Learning	Female	381	18.640	4.3121	2.621	0.009
	Male	310	19.742	6.6337		
Area-4 Use of Support Material	Female	381	25.257	5.4922	2.610	0.009
	Male	310	26.741	9.2132		
Area-5 Interaction with Students	Female	381	21.370	5.0438	4.631	0.000
	Male	310	23.722	8.1249		
Area-6 Classroom Management	Female	381	18.531	4.2608	1.380	0.167
	Male	310	19.021	4.9478		
Area-7 Student Assessment	Female	381	15.345	3.9732	5.170	0.000
	Male	310	17.222	5.4855		
Area-8 Homework	Female	381	24.958	4.9255	3.710	0.000
	Male	310	26.472	5.4351		
Total (Area-1to Area-8)	Female	381	155.026	18.1975	5.532	0.000
	Male	310	167.596	39.3542		

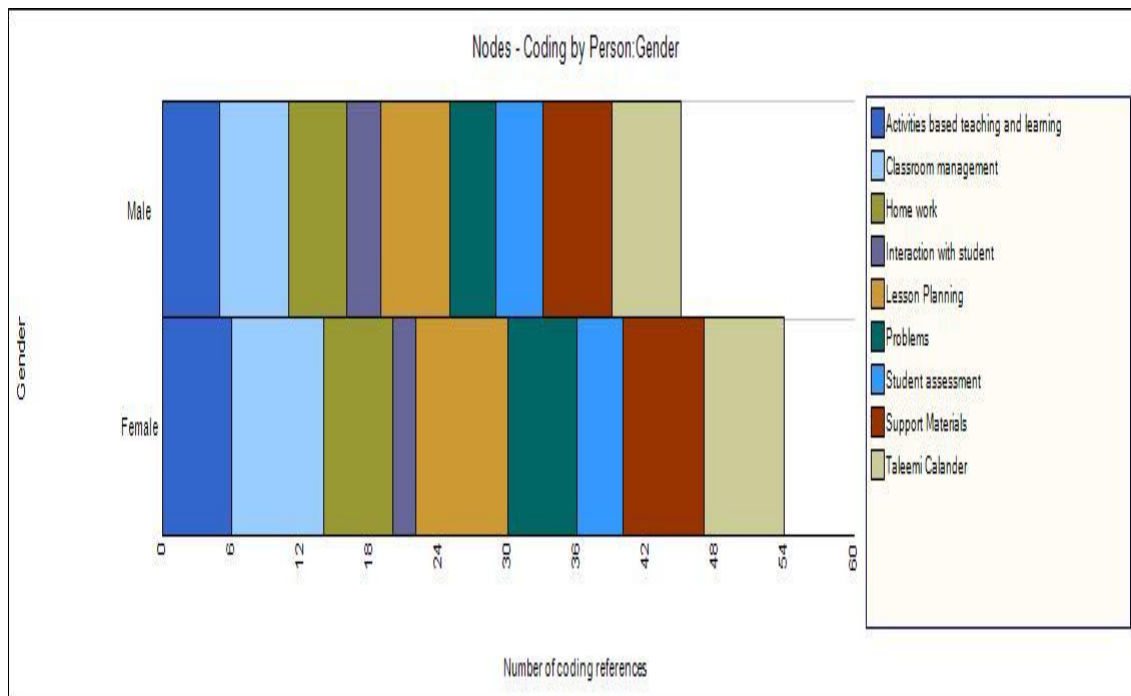
Table 1 reflects that the overall and total difference between the mean opinion scores of male and female PSTs on the all eight Mentoring Areas. The calculated t-value was overwhelmingly significant at $p=0.001$ level of significance in mentoring areas, Area-2, Area-4 & Area-7 & Area-8, it was highly significant in mentoring areas, Area-3 & Area-8 and t-value was not-significant in mentoring Area-6. The t-value was also overwhelmingly significant on the total sum of all the mentoring areas. So it is concluded that mentoring process significantly contributed towards the professional development of the male as well as female PSTs.

- i. The mean opinion score of female Primary School Teacher (PSTs) was 12.340 whereas, the mean opinion score in case of male PSTs was 13.306 and t-value remained 2.710 ($p=0.006$, $p<0.01$) which was highly significant at 0.01 level of significance. This indicated that there was significant difference in the opinion scores of the female and male PSTs on the mentoring Area-1 "Taleemi Calendar". Therefore, it was concluded that mentoring Area-1 "Taleemi Calendar" effectively contributes towards the professional development of male and female PSTs.
- ii. The mean scores of female and male mentees remained 18.452 and 21.642 respectively and t-value was 8.560 ($p=0.000$, $p<0.001$) which was overwhelming significant at 0.001 level of significance. This showed that there was significant difference in the opinions of the female PSTs and the male PSTs on the Area-2 "Lesson Planning". So it is evident from the opinions of male and female PSTs that Area-2 "Lesson Planning" added in their professional development.
- iii. The mean opinion score of female PSTs was 18.640 whereas, mean opinion score of male PSTs was 19.742 and t-value remained 2.621 ($p=0.009$, $p<0.01$) which was highly significant at 0.01 level of significance. This indicated that there was higher difference in the opinions of the female and male PSTs on the Area-3 "Activity Based Teaching and Learning". This reflected that Area-3 "Activity Based Teaching and Learning" effectively added towards the professional development of PSTs.
- iv. Mean value in case of female PSTs was 25.257 while in case of male PSTs was and 26.741 t-value remained 2.610 ($p=0.009$, $p<0.01$) which was highly significant at 0.01 level of significance. This indicated that there was high difference in the opinions of the female PSTs and the male PSTs on the Area-4 "Use of Support Material". This evident that Area-4 "Use of Support Material" entirely contributed towards the professional development of Primary School Teachers.

- v. In mentoring Area-5 "Interaction with Students" the mean opinion scores of female PSTs and male PSTs were 12.340, 13.306 while t-value remained 4.631 ($p=0.000$, $p<0.001$) which was overwhelmingly significant at 0.001 level of significance. This indicated that there was highly difference in the opinions of the female PSTs and the male PSTs on the Area-5 "Interaction with Students".
- vi. Female PSTs mean score was 18.531 and male PSTs mean score was 19.021 whereas t-value was 1.380 ($p=0.05$, $p>0.05$) which was not-significant at 0.05 level of significance. This indicated that there was equal difference in the opinions of the female mentees on the Area-6 "Classroom Management".
- vii. The mean score of female PSTs was 15.345 and male PSTs was 17.222 whereas, t-value was 5.170 ($p=0.000$, $p<0.001$) which was overwhelmingly significant at 0.001 level of significance. This reflected that there was highly difference in the opinions of the female PSTs and the male PSTs on the Area-7 "Student Assessment".
- viii. The mean score of female PSTs was 24.958 and male PSTs was 26.472 while the t-value was 3.710 ($p=0.000$, $p<0.001$) which was overwhelmingly significant at 0.001 level of significance. This indicated that there was highly difference in the opinions of the female and male PSTs respondents on the Area-8 "Homework".
- ix. The overall mean opinion score of female PSTs was 155.026 and male PSTs was 167.597 t-value was 5.532 ($p=0.000$, $p<0.001$) in all the eight mentoring areas i.e. Taleemi Calendar Area=1, Lesson Planning Area=2, Activities Based Teaching and Learning Area=3, Used of Support Material Area=4, Interaction with Students Area=5, Classroom Management, Area=6, Students Assessment Area=7, Homework Area=8 which was highly significant at 0.001 level of significance. This indicated that there was highly difference in the opinions of the female PSTs and the male PSTs on all the mentoring areas. So in the light of female and male PSTs, it is concluded from all eight mentoring areas effectively contributed towards the professional development of Primary School Teachers.

Researcher interview with the respondent's in-person in the office of the head of the institutions, at Cluster Training and Support Centers (CTSCs) Head's offices, or in the offices of the Heads of District Training and Support Centre (DTSCs). Themes and sub-themes were coined in the light of eight mentoring areas. The total number of female PSTs respondents were 381 and 310 male. The data collected through interviews was analyzed by using NVIVO Software version 10. Table 2 below reflects the results.

Table 2: Gender Wise Distribution of the Opinions of PST Respondents



The above figure reflects the contents analysis of gender wise difference on the eight mentoring areas. The female respondents laid stress on the following areas: (i) Taleemi Calendar (ii) Lesson Planning, (iii) Activities Based Teaching and Learning and (iv) Classroom Management While, the male respondent stressed on (i) Classroom Management, (ii) Lesson Planning and (ii) Homework. It is depicted from the analysis that female respondent stressed more on mentoring areas as compared to the male respondents. It is evident from the analysis that both the groups equally focused on the (i) Taleemi Calendar, (ii) Lesson Planning and (viii) Homework. Area wise findings of male and female PSTs are given below:-

- i. **Taleemi Calendar:** The female PSTs respondents said that mentoring process helped the mentees in managing all the teaching activities according to the Taleemi Calendar but it has not coped the mentees to manage teaching activities in a realistic way while, the male PSTs respondents stated that mentoring helped the mentees in precisely using the Taleemi Calendar and it was helpful in achieving the pre-set targets well before time. The overall opinions of male and female PSTs showed that Taleemi Calendar was effective in the professional development of the primary school teachers.
- ii. **Lesson Planning:** The female PSTs respondents stated that mentoring helped the mentees in separating the contents into parts and identifying amount of time needed for each component. Mentoring process was helpful in separating learning activities into components while pacing the activities appropriately while the male respondents stated that mentoring helped in using lesson planning guide successfully and in obtaining the requisite lesson planning skills. The overall opinions of the male and female PSTs showed that mentoring process helped in enhancing their professional capabilities through Lesson Planning.
- iii. **Activity Based Teaching and Learning:** The female mentees expressed that through mentoring process their teaching has become effective and it has helped them in eliminating the feelings of professional isolation while, the male mentees said that mentoring process helped the mentees in developing their positive attitude towards teaching and it has also helped them in assessing the progress of their students which contributed towards deepening the understanding about teaching and learning. The overall opinions of the male and female mentees reflected that Activity Based Teaching and Learning effectively contributed towards the professional development of the PSTs.
- iv. **Use of Support Material:** the female mentees narrated that mentoring process helped them in utilizing various kinds of instructional techniques to improve the students learning and in judging the appropriateness of supporting materials for classroom instructions whereas, the male mentees said that mentoring process helped in preparing teacher made supporting material, in preparing the cost-effective support material but the male and female contradicted that mentoring process helps in preparing the support material that matches with mental abilities of their students.
- v. **Interaction with Students:** the female mentees said that mentoring provided guidelines to them, to encourage their students, provided corrective feedback to the students and it has improved the questioning skills of the mentees whereas, the male mentees narrated that mentoring process helped in writing clear learning objectives, in encouraging the students to ask questions.
- vi. **Classroom Management:** the female mentees narrated that mentoring process helped in improving their classroom management skills, in promoting desired behaviors among students whereas, the male mentees replied that mentoring process provided the guidelines in keeping their students on-task, during class and mentoring process did not helped in identifying and dealing with potential behavioral problems of their students.
- vii. **Students Assessment:** Female mentees said that mentoring was helpful for them in evaluating their student performance in line with objectives of the lesson plan and in monitoring the progress of their students whereas, their male mentees replied that mentoring process provides a variety of ways to assess the students' achievement and in strengthening their assessment skills.
- viii. **Homework:** Female mentees said that mentoring process provides guideline in assigning homework to their students and in providing guidelines to the students for the completion of homework whereas, male mentees narrated that mentoring process provided instructions in promoting creative thinking and in ensuring that assigned homework was according to the capabilities of the students.

Discussion

The effect of mentoring process was studied in the following eight areas: (i) Taleemi Calendar, (ii) Lesson Planning, (iii) Activity Based Teaching and Learning, (iv) Use of Support Material, (v) Interaction with Students, (vi) Classroom Management, (vii) Student Assessment and (viii) Home Work. Results of the present study revealed that mentoring process positively affected the professional development of teachers. The results of the study conducted by Sheri (2012) titled "Mentoring Functions within the ACE Leadership Development Programme" revealed that mentoring programme was helpful for the professional development of the teachers and remove the professional deficiencies. Similarly, the results of this study found that mentoring process positively contributed towards the professional development of PSTs. The study conducted by Bresnahan (2011) reflected that mentoring revealed positive effect on the professional development of teachers and enhanced their communication skills. This study also depicted that mentoring process improved the communication skills and helped the mentees in communicating efficiently with their students. The study carried out by the Gardiner (2008) depicted that mentoring programme benefited the junior teachers but the senior teachers were not positively influenced by mentoring activities. The results of present study are not in line with Gardiner's study because mentoring programme contributed towards the professional development of teachers. The Gardiner's study was focused on public sector schools of junior level. The researcher in the referred study emphasized on the informal and online mentoring while, the present study focused on formal and on the job mentoring.

4) Recommendations

1. Overall eight selected mentoring areas are effectively contributing for the professional development of Primary School Teachers (PSTs). On the same analogy a comprehensive mentoring programme may be designed for the professional development of secondary as well higher secondary school teachers. There is need to revisit the 'Taleemi Calendar' to enable the PSTs to manage all the teaching activities in a systematic way to achieve the pre-set educational targets. For instance unseen days should be reflected in the 'Taleemi Calendar' to make it realistic and to cover the unseen days of academic year.
2. Inclusive guidelines containing practical examples, teaching points, projected and non-projected tools for various components to teach core courses should be added in the lesson plan formats already developed for various subjects and be made available in the classrooms to facilitate PSTs.
3. Dealing with challenging behaviors of students always remained as a challenge for teachers. There is a need to include components, types, reasons and evidence based strategies to deal with challenging behaviors of students in mentoring modules already launched in the province.
4. There should be a detailed policy to assign and check homework of students and it should be included in the mentoring programme. Mentors should train the mentees in such a way that they are able to assign and evaluate homework of their students in the light of the policy.
5. Subject based mentoring may be introduced as there are difficulties in multi-grade teaching activities. Separate mentors may be appointed to provide mentoring facilities to the teachers who are teaching different subjects at primary school level.

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