



Findings and Recommendations on Mentoring in Pre-service Teacher Training

**Kenyatta University and Syracuse University*:
Africa-U.S. Higher Education Initiative Partnership**

Building Capacity Through Quality Teacher Preparation

Policy Brief 14-07-KUSU



Teaching is a process that demands designing and implementation of deliberate plans to achieve intended objectives. To do so, one has to consciously and carefully select appropriate content, resources and instructional strategies that seek to attain the desired intents or outcomes. Such a task can be daunting, especially to the novice teachers graduating from colleges and universities and those on teacher training practicum. There is therefore a need to put into place a mechanism for guiding trainees and also inducting novice teachers into the teaching profession. Thus, by definition such a program would have to be a mentoring one in which the novice is assisted to settle into the teaching career with relative ease.

Teacher mentoring can be a valuable process in educational reform for beginning teachers (Beverly, 2007). Besides helping others to develop and improve their personal and professional potential, mentoring is a meaningful and useful leadership skill. In addition to managing and motivating people, it is also important in helping young incoming teachers learn, grow and become more effective in their job. Teacher mentoring is a necessary process for all teachers preparing to enter into the teaching profession in order to ensure that their practice is firmly anchored on professional ethics and practice. Since there is no officially functional system of inducting pre-service teachers in Kenya (Republic of Kenya, 2012), there is need for establishing a firm, official mechanism of

anchoring such teachers on sound functional professional base so as to, in turn, ensure acceptable learner development in the institutions that these graduating teachers will be posted to. This is the basic reason for developing a professional pre-service teacher-mentoring program for Kenya.

Research Study

As part of our partnership project, one of the collaborative research studies we undertook was to understand the effectiveness of the collaborative mentoring model on pre-service teacher training in a developing country like Kenya. The implementation of the project employed an evaluative survey design involving the training of teacher mentors, mentoring of selected pre-service teachers and evaluation of the mentoring process. The study focused on the following research questions: (a) What are the different ways in which pre-service teachers are inducted into the teaching profession?; (b) What role can the practicing teacher play in inducting the new teacher into the profession?; and (c) What is the effect of mentoring on student teachers? By analyzing 3rd and final year student teachers' induction into the teaching profession through a mentoring program, we sought to understand the effect of mentoring on teacher training.

We collected data through questionnaires and classroom observations and interviews. The instruments used were (1) a Classroom Observation Feedback Form, which was used

mainly by the mentor teachers to observe a TP-student teaching in class, followed by a conference between the student teacher and mentor teacher. (2) Mentor Teacher Record Form, which required the mentor to give documented and progressive performance on key skills by teaching practice students. The main area emphasized were planning, class-management, instructional skills, integration of resources, evaluation and lastly, professional growth. (3) Student Teacher Questionnaire. This was meant for TP-students being mentored and also non-mentored teachers for purposes of comparison. (4) Questionnaire for mentors which sought to find out their impressions on a number of issues. Such issues included: work load; school contribution and co-operation; mentor – teacher relationship; challenges and benefits of teacher mentoring. (5) Interview Schedule with the School Principals which to gauge whether the principals appreciated and supported the program.

The data analysis emphasized descriptive statistics mainly due to the small size of the information resulting from a small sample. The SPSS program facilitated the data analysis. From our data analysis, we have the following findings:

- ***Finding #1: Benefits of the Mentoring Process to Mentees***

The process of teacher mentoring was appreciated by the TP-students because it gave them a fast start. They were able to settle a lot faster regarding writing schemes of work, lesson plans, and general orientation to school rules and places.

The help and the fast settlement were like a form of acceptance to the school. Consequently it helped them to build confidence in and the motivation towards the profession. This is useful to young and beginning teachers as they are likely to love the profession and stay for a long time. In the long run, the retention rate of teachers can remain high.

The mentees were with the mentors for an extended length of time. This gave the practising teachers ample time to get elaborate and valid guidance. Examples that were given to reinforce this point related to tasks like

setting and marking Continuous Assessment Tests CATS; developing instructional resources and participating in co-curricular activities.

- ***Finding #2: Benefits of Mentoring Process to Mentors***

Mentors were very delighted with the realization of satisfaction to develop as a professional. They could observe a TP-student come up from scratch to a constructive teacher. They felt that this improvement is as a result of their effort & guidance.

The other benefit that mentors sounded was “opportunity to be more reflective”. As they advised the beginning teachers, they too, had to make sure that were confident in what they were advising. For example, they had to be sure of the content, lesson planning and suitable methodologies. This gave the opportunity to mentors to refresh on all these areas. These refreshed and professional knowledge and skills would then be incorporated in the mentors’ lessons, thus improving their performance as well and adds to professional growth for mentors.

The mentors had the opportunity to interact with the university staff, an opportunity which lays ground for academic and professional consultations. Such an opportunity can be used to consult, for example on further education and even references for jobs or promotions.

- ***Finding #3: Teacher Mentoring and Workload***

Mentors were asked to indicate how many TP students they were comfortably able to mentor. This question was put to them after going through the mentoring experience at the end of the school term. The response was almost by unanimous, as most of them indicated that were comfortably able to guide two TP students. They qualified by emphasizing that “if TP-students are in the same school.” The average classroom observation by most teacher training institutions is four or five. If mentors can manage the indicated observations, then all that the university can do is just to “fill in” with one or two clinical

observations to complete the TP exercise. This of course does assume that the mentors still do a good job when it comes to full-scale mentor program.

- ***Finding #4: The Role of the Teacher Mentor in the University Supervision Process***

The mentors, mentees reported the need to separate the supervision by mentors and that of the university supervisors. The supervisions were done independently and there was no given time that mentors and university supervisors observed a lesson together. This separation was important considering that the observations had different foci. While the mentors focused mainly on teacher development, the university supervisors emphasized the element of assessment. The main goal of mentor supervision should be to bring improvement in teacher performance (Olivia & Pawlas, 1994) rather than to generate a grade for entry in the university transcript. In a way, we therefore expect the moods on behaviour of the TP-students to be different. To be more relaxed with the mentor than with the university supervisor.

Based on our research, we have the following recommendations:

- ***Recommendation #1:*** There is a need for a national and university policy on teacher mentoring in pre-service teacher training curriculum to guide the introduction and implementation of a policy on teacher mentoring in pre-service teacher education. Such a policy could to address aspects of mentoring such as outlining the roles of each participant in the mentoring process, as well as the adequate training of teacher mentors. It is envisaged that the proposed teacher mentoring process can be applicable to many other developing countries.

- ***Recommendation #2:*** The collaborative mentoring model (Pungur, 2007) is recommended since it has the capacity to improve teacher development at the pre-service level. Findings from the study indicated that the collaborative mentoring has the capacity to improve teacher development at the pre-service level.

References

- Beverly, J. (2007). Mentoring in teacher education: An experience that makes a difference for fledgling university students. In Townsend, T., & Bates, R. (Eds), *Handbook of teacher education*. Dordrecht, Netherlands: Springer.
- Hall, G. E. (1985). A stages concern approach to teacher education. *Paper presented at the 69th Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association*, Chicago, IL.
- Janas, M. (1996). Mentoring the mentor: A challenge for staff development. *Journal of Staff Development*, 17(4), 2-5.
- Oliva, P. F, & Pawlas, G. (2001). *Supervision for today's schools* (6th ed.) New York: John Wiley & Sons.
- Pungur, L. (2007). Mentoring as the key to a successful student teaching practicum: A comparative analysis. In Townsend, T., & Bates, R. (Eds), *Handbook of teacher education*. Dordrecht, Netherlands: Springer.
- Republic of Kenya (2012). *A Policy Framework for Education: Aligning Education and Training to the Constitution of Kenya (2010) and Kenya Vision 2030 and beyond*. Nairobi, Kenya.
- Twoli N. W. (2011). Mentoring as a process of training teachers in the 21st century. *Proceedings of the 2nd International Conference on Education*, Nairobi, Kenya.

*This partnership is made possible by the generous support of the American people through the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and the Higher Education for Development (HED) office, as well as the Schools of Education at Kenyatta University and Syracuse University. The contents are the responsibility of the project team members from Kenyatta University and Syracuse University and do not necessarily reflect the views of HED, USAID or the United States Government.