Role of Mentors and Supervisors in Enhancing Field Engagement Experience of Pupil Teachers

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Abstract

School field placement is core components of pre-service teacher training programs that enable pupil teachers to practice theoretical learning within real classroom settings. This review takes into account empirical and theoretical research evidence for the influence of mentors and supervisors on pupil teachers' involvement, motivation, professional development, and teaching outcomes in these placements. Key topics are the character and excellence of mentoring interactions; modeling, reflective practice, and feedback; emotional and professional support; and institutional and systemic factors affecting mentor involvement. Findings are that effective mentorship enhances involvement by building trust, scaffolding pedagogy, facilitating reflective practices, and providing emotional support.

However, issues persist with regards to uneven preparation of mentors, role ambiguity, and weak supporting infrastructure. Recommendations involve formal mentor training, defined role expectations, reflective communities of practice, and continuous institutional support. These efforts vow to maximize field experiences to the advantage of both pupil teachers and the students they teach.

1. Introduction

1.1 Background

Teacher training has never overlooked the importance of mixing theoretical studies with practical practice teaching. Field experience, alternatively known as teaching practicum, internship, or student teaching, marks the climax of most pre-service teacher training programs. It presents pupil teachers with a chance to experiment with teaching methodologies, manage classrooms, and improvise curriculum to different learners in the presence of experienced professionals.

Previous studies (Darling-Hammond, 2006; Zeichner, 2010) highlight that student teachers' success in the teaching profession is largely dependent on the quality of field engagement. Positive practicum experiences lead to building confidence, skill mastery, and professional identity, whereas negative practicum experiences may lead to disillusionment and even teacher turnover.

1.2 Mentors and Supervisors' Role

Mentors—usually experienced school teachers—and supervisors—university staff or field coordinators—are the bridge between theory and application of practice. They serve a dual purpose:

- Offering pedagogical advice and teaching pragmatic strategies.

- Serves as models of professionalism, ethics, and classroom practice.

- Offering constructive feedback that enhances the strength of teaching competence.

- Offers a setting for encouragement to enhance confidence and reduce stress.

1.3 Purpose of the Review

This paper explains how supervisors and mentors enhance behavioral, emotional, and cognitive engagement (Fredricks et al., 2004) of pupil teachers in school settings. It also discusses challenges that undermine effective mentorship and suggests institutional interventions to improve the practicum.

2. Conceptual Framework

2.1 Engagement Theory

Engagement theory (Fredricks et al., 2004) is the theory under which field experiences of pupil teachers are examined. Engagement is multi-dimensional:

- Behavioral Engagement: preparation of learning materials, classroom discipline, and classroom attendance.

- Emotional Engagement: interest, belonging, and motivation.
- Cognitive Engagement: reflective practice, problem-solving, and theory to practice.

2.2 Apprenticeship and Social Learning

Field engagement is a process that mirrors an apprenticeship model (Lave & Wenger, 1991). Student teachers acquire learning through legitimate peripheral participation, where they increasingly take on teaching responsibilities while observing and imitating mentors.

Vygotsky's (1978) zone of proximal development (ZPD) also suggests the way mentors facilitate tasks so that pupil teachers can perform actions they cannot perform on their own. Supervisors go a step further by ensuring experiences align with standards of practice and curriculum requirements.

3. Empirical Evidence on Mentoring Practices that Increase Engagement

3.1 Modeling Instructional Practice

Mentors provide live observation of effective teaching practices. Through delivery lessons, classroom management, and pupil assessment, pupil teachers learn intangible skills difficult to grasp from textbooks.

- Example: A difficult classroom manager as a mentor can show pupil teachers calmness, proactive actions, and restorative practice, which they replicate later.

- Additional work by Grossman et al. (2009) finds that apprentice-style observation helps pupil teachers link abstract theory with concrete decision-making in real life.

3.2 Instructional Feedback and Scaffolding

Feedback is most helpful when it is specific, timely, and constructive. Mentors make extensive use of feedback loops: pre-lesson discussion, observation, post-lesson reflection to refine pupil teachers' teaching strategies

• Gradual release of responsibility and co-teaching afford chances for scaffolding of teaching responsibilities.

• "Structured support is especially good at fostering confidence and therefore teaching self- efficacy: Feiman-Nemser (2001)"

3.3 Facilitating Reflective Practice

Supervisors/mentors promote the following reflection:

Journaling Video analysis Debriefing.

• Reflection enhances cognitive engagement by helping student teachers connect classroom practice with theories of education (Loughran, 2013).

• Wenger (1998) highlights the importance of communities of practice, while mentors promote reflection and peer-sharing promotes professional growth.

3.4 Emotional and Professional Support

Practice teaching can be a source of anxiety, self-doubt, and burnout. Supportive, empathetic, and affirming mentors create a safe environment where student teachers feel appreciated.

• Johnson (2015) found that emotional support enhances the feeling of belonging among pupil teachers and reduces stress.

• Hamilton & Pinnegar (2016) argue that successful mentoring fosters professional identity by validating pupil teachers as real members of the teaching community.

3.5 The Supervisor's Role

Supervisors offer consistency in between university expectations and school life. Supervisors:

• Ensure teaching standards.

• Perform the function of a bridge between schools and universities.

• Conduct triadic meetings (mentor–supervisor–pupil teacher) to coordinate expectations.
Smith & Lev-Ackerman (2015) demonstrate that effective supervision promotes coherence, avoiding confusing mixed messages that could confuse pupil teachers.

4. Challenges Affecting Mentor and Supervisor Effectiveness

4.1 Inadequate Mentor Training

Few mentors are selected on the basis of their mentoring skills, but rather for their teaching experience. Without coaching training, they can fall into the trap of giving developmental as opposed to evaluative feedback (Avalos, 2013).

4.2 Role Ambiguity and Conflicting Expectations

Supervisors and mentors emphasize different things—practical classroom management over pedagogical theory. Student teachers in between these pressures may suffer from role conflict (Beycioglu & Ozer, 2010).

4.3 Insufficient Time and Workload Pressure

Teachers have heavy workloads and little time to devote to mentoring. This limits observation time and reduces precious feedback sessions (Ingersoll & Strong, 2011).

4.4 Poor Institutional Support

Without coordinated collaboration between universities and schools, schemes of mentorship lack coherence. Richter et al. (2011) summed up that inadequate institutional support means disjointed and variable practicum experiences.

5. Strategic Recommendations

5.1 Coordinated Mentor Training

Mentors ought to be trained by universities in:

•   Observation skills (how to observe pupil teacher development).

•   Feedback systems (e.g., the "praise–question–suggestion" method).

•   Reflective conversation skills.

5.2 Clarify Roles and Foster Cooperation

Clarifying role descriptions reduces conflict. Scheduling triadic meetings ahead of time can get mentors, supervisors, and pupil teachers to focus on common purposes.

5.3 Make Time and Resources Available

Policies should release mentor time to enable pupil teachers to work closely with mentors. Incentives such as stipends, recognitory awards, or professional credits spur commitment.

5.4 Set Up Reflective Infrastructure

Video analysis, peer observation, and reflective portfolios are resources that allow pupil teachers to reflect on practice critically.

5.5 Build Supportive School Cultures

Mentorship must be an all-school, rather than a personal teacher, responsibility. Whole- school involvement fosters a sense of belonging and reduces pupil teacher isolation.

6. Conclusion

Practice engagement is the foundation of teacher education, where theory is turned into practice. Supervisors and mentors make a significant impact on pupil teachers' engagement, at the behavioral, emotional, and cognitive levels, by modeling best practice, offering scaffolded feedback, facilitating reflective inquiry, and facilitating emotional resilience.

But effectiveness is limited by systemic obstacles such as weak mentor training, workload conflict, and lack of

institutional partnership. These are resolved through formal development of mentors, more specified roles, and better school–university collaboration.

In the end, effective mentorship also makes for a more professional teaching profession more broadly—providing future professionals in the profession with the capacity, confidence, and commitment to high-quality teaching.

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