

EXPERIENCED TEACHERS' VOICES: WHAT MOTIVATES THEM TO MENTOR?*

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1 Introduction

While novice teachers are expected to successfully plan lessons, deliver instruction, assess students, attend district professional development sessions, and may sponsor a student organization or other assigned duties, they undoubtedly face the overwhelming task of surviving the first year. These professional challenges coupled with “a combination of feelings of isolation, normlessness, powerlessness, and meaninglessness” (Benham & O'Brien, 2002, p. 20), requires personal and professional support from an experienced teacher to guide them through the early stages of development. As a result, mentoring, an effective vehicle contributing to the professional development of novice teachers has continued to gain prominence. However, in addition to establishing a productive teacher-mentor relationship, this transition phase requires systemic support. As researchers affirm, the context and culture of the school environment should facilitate the effective socialization of teachers through different approaches, including mentoring (Darling-Hammond, 2003; Brennan, Thames, & Roberts, 1999; Trubowitz, 2004).

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Mentoring is intended to help new teachers successfully learn their roles, establish their self-images as teachers, figure out the school and its culture, understand how teaching unfolds in real classrooms, and achieve other goals that are important to the teachers being mentored. Mentoring is also intended to help new teachers improve their effectiveness in demonstrating the schools' standards for teaching. (Sergiovanni & Starrat, 2002, p. 265)

Although researchers highlight the benefits of a mentoring program and identify the characteristics of an effective mentoring process (Andrews & Quinn, 2005; Ganser, 1996; Brennan, Thames, & Roberts, 1999; Rowley, 1999; Olebe, Jackson, & Danielson, 1999; Trubowitz & Robins, 2003), some (Feiman-Nemser, 1996; Trubowitz, 2004) suggest that inquiry needs to focus on the mentor and his/her work with teachers. For example, exploring why experienced teachers volunteer to mentor when they are already saddled with other responsibilities might be useful in selecting the most effective mentors. Additionally, illuminating mentors' perceptions about their characteristics and skills may enable others to understand better the mentor's talents that contribute to a valuable mentoring relationship.

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More recently, much of the research on mentoring has tended to focus on things such as how meaningful mentoring activities should be designed, what components mentoring programs should include, what criteria should be used in the selection of mentors, and what type of training should be provided for prospective mentors (Breux & Wong, 2003, p. 55).

Since mentors' reasons for mentoring are almost nonexistent in the literature, additional inquiry is needed to add their voices to the discourse. Understanding why experienced educators volunteer to serve as mentors and the characteristics and skills they possess, may inform instructional leaders in preparing and supporting mentors before, during, and after the mentoring process.

Furthermore, as administrative and school personnel continue to search for better ways to retain and socialize teachers into the teaching profession, it is essential to gain a better understanding of experienced teachers' motives to engage in additional roles beyond their teaching responsibilities. While many states now have incorporated mentoring as an avenue to enhance new teachers' success in the classroom, several questions remain unanswered. For instance, Trubowitz (2004) suggests addressing the following questions: "How do people become mentors? What are the first steps? What does the mentor need to know? How does the mentor build trust? What are the stages of development in mentor/mentee relationships? What are the possible pitfalls?" (pp. 59-62). Therefore, it is imperative to explore experienced teachers' motives to engage in a mentoring initiative. Thus, exploring the intrinsic motivation of experienced teachers who volunteer to mentor and identifying the characteristics and abilities they possess may also inform other experienced teachers in deciding whether or not to engage in such a collaborative endeavor.

2 Mentoring Adults

Mentoring as a promising avenue (Jones & Pauley, 2003) to assist in the development of adults has been the focus of previous research. For instance, researchers have concentrated on enhancing teacher development through mentoring (Galvez-Hjornevik, 1986; Glickman, Gordon, & Ross-Gordon, 2001) and the potential of mentoring for adult development (Odell, 1990). A purpose, as Merriam (1983) explains, began with "several researchers of adult development seeking to describe the complexities of the mentor relationship and delineated how it functioned in the development of individual adults" (p. 162). Levinson (1986) expounded on the theory of "the life structure and its development in adulthood" (p. 6) and explained that a person's relationships are the center of a life structure. Since an individual may form several types of relationships with others, it is important to study the human bonding such as in a mentor-protégé relationship to further our understanding of the connections that influence adult development. In concert with Levinson's theory of "life structures," Schulz (1995) explains that a mentor can help an adult learner move through the different phases of work and socialization processes because they both experience the same life tasks.

In addition to acknowledging the importance of the mentor and the mentoring process, knowing an adult's motivation to mentor another is also important. "A necessary ingredient to making sure you get the full benefit in the relationship comes from knowing what you want out of the relationship, and setting specific goals and expectations" (Murphy & Ensher, 2006, p. 27).

3 Motivation to Mentor

Experienced teachers who volunteer to mentor usually believe they can contribute to teacher development, are needed, or an altruistic purpose guides them to help others. Hammer and Williams (2005) agree that "one of the most rewarding, yet unexpected, benefits is watching mentors become rejuvenated" (p. 23) especially when they see how their efforts benefit the mentee. In some school settings, school administrators make use of experienced teachers' talents and assign them a novice teacher for a period of time, to provide support during the first year of teaching. On the other hand, some experienced teachers who volunteer for the additional tasks required by mentoring, are influenced by a genuine commitment to support others. However, for a mentoring relationship to yield the expected outcomes, it is imperative to clearly understand mentor motivation. As Zachary contends, "motivation may be tied to conditions of a particular relationship or external pressures. On one level, it may feel like an organizational imperative or a voluntary engagement (or both). The underlying question is, What is driving your participation?" (2000, p. 68).

Experts in the field go as far as suggesting that schools should provide educators opportunities to clarify the reasons why they volunteer to mentor. The following are cited as potential reasons experienced teachers desire to mentor:

- I like the feeling of having others seek me out for advice or guidance;
- I find that helping others learn is personally rewarding;
- I have specific knowledge that I want to pass on to others;
- I enjoy collaborative learning;
- I find working with others who are different from me to be energizing;
- I look for opportunities to further my own growth (Zachary, 2000, p. 69).

Similarly, Bowden (2004) identifies the most important aspects of volunteering to mentor:

- gain new ideas and enthusiasm for the job;
- demonstrate professionalism;
- be available over time;
- reconsider your own practice;
- model effective strategies;
- provide on-the-spot answers;
- open the treasure chest of community resources;
- share the contents of your toolbox;
- offer a shoulder of support;
- establish reciprocal collaboration through trust (p. 78).

Few studies in the education field have looked at why experienced teachers wish to engage in a mentor role. Scheetz, Waters, Smeaton, and Lare (2005) interviewed teachers to identify reasons for wanting to become mentors. A major response was 'to give back' followed by comments such as "flextime, being released from some professional development activities, state-mandated professional development credits, thank-you notes, gifts, and celebratory social events" (p. 35). Similarly, Mavropoulou, Nikolaraizi, and Seremetidou (2008), examined why undergraduate special education students volunteered to support persons with special challenges. The findings identified professional growth as the primary reason, followed by an altruistic value. However, most of these tend to reflect a personal, self-seeking position.

Influential factors that motivate experienced teachers' professional desire to engage in a mentoring relationship may possibly be shaped by their respective mentoring experiences or the lack of mentors as they

entered the education profession. Thus, identifying experienced teachers' intrinsic motivation as well as mentor attributes through their authentic voices is necessary to expand the potential of mentoring as an avenue to successfully support new teachers entering into the teaching profession and to enhance the retention of effective teachers.

4 Mentor Attributes

Previous researchers (Reiman & Edelfelt, 1990) have highlighted critical attributes necessary for a productive mentor/protégé relationship in educational settings:

- a. a willing and empathic mentor who understands the problems of the beginning teacher;
- b. (a mentor who acknowledges a novice teacher's strengths;
- c. a mentor who is willing to listen and learn from the protégé as well as guide the protégé thereby establishing a mutual partnership;
- d. a willingness by the mentor to model reflective practice and establish a rapport open to questioning;
- e. an ability by the mentor to provide constructive and corrective feedback to the novice teacher;
- f. a mentor willing to become an advocate for the beginning teacher; and
- g. a mentor who models multi-tasking abilities and responsibilities without becoming inundated with the workload.

With regard to the fostering of beginning teachers' needs by support teachers in an induction program, Odell et al. (2000), Bey and Holmes (1992), and Galvez-Hjornevik (1986) present a framework with similar characteristics describing effective mentoring practices. A component of the framework describes the process for mentor selection and placement of novice teachers with experienced educators. Criteria for mentors may include:

- a. a desire to continuously learn and promote self-improvement;
- b. an ability to work with a diverse group of individuals;
- c. a readiness to seek to understand first and not make judgments about the novice teacher;
- d. an ability to demonstrate effective practices in the classroom and serve as a model for a beginning teacher;
- e. an enthusiasm to serve in a support role rather than in an evaluator role; and
- f. a readiness to accept the time commitment involved in mentoring a beginning teacher.

Although the extant body of research highlights beginning teachers' expectations of a mentoring relationship (Garza, Ovando, Ramirez, 2008), reflections of mentoring (Trubowitz, 2004), teacher concerns (McCann & Johannessen, 2004; Meister & Melnick, 2003), mentor characteristics (Arnold, 2006; Poulter, 2005), mentor benefits (Kram, 1985; Murphy & Ensher, 2006), effective teacher's influence on novice teacher's practice (Roehrig, Bohn, Turner, & Pressley, 2008), and induction programs (Fluckiger, Mc.Glamery, & Edick, 2005; Ponticell & Zepeda, 1997; Smith & Ingersoll, 2004), little attention has been given to the mentor's voice. It is just as critical to know why mentors volunteer as it is to know the benefits and advantages of a mentoring program. Understanding the intrinsic motivational factors that influence teachers to become mentors may provide insight for a more effective mentoring initiative to prevent prescriptive processes and checklists to fulfill a systemic requirement.

5 Methodological Considerations

This qualitative study used constant comparative analysis (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Strauss & Corbin, 1998) to identify motivational factors that influenced experienced teachers' desire to mentor and to describe the characteristics and skills they perceived as possessing that would enable them to perform their task. The participants responded to three questions designed to capture their voices. These questions included: Why are you interested in becoming a mentor? What characteristics do you possess that will enable you to help a first-year teacher through the year? What skills did you possess that might help the first teacher?

This approach allows the data to drive the development of theoretical explanations related to the phenomenon of study (Gall, Borg & Gall, 1996) and to “explicate the ways people in particular settings come to understand, account for, take action, and otherwise manage their day to day situations” (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p.6). This interpretive methodology is framed within the theoretical underpinnings of mentoring (Bey & Holmes, 1992; Galvez-Hjornevik, 1986; Holden, 1995; Odell et al., 2000). The purpose of this study was to determine why experienced teachers want to engage in an additional non-teaching role. Specifically, our study examined why teachers volunteered to mentor, and the characteristics and skills they perceived as possessing, to assist first-year teachers.

Study participants were selected using convenience and purposive sampling (Gay & Airasian, 2000; Kuzel, 1992). Eighty-eight aspiring mentors (15 male and 73 female) with varied classroom teaching experience (5 to 35 years) from a school district located in the southern part of a central state participated in the study. The majority of the teachers had previously mentored and supervised student teachers with varied experiences (5 to 15 years). A majority of the participants taught at the elementary school level (60%), some at the high school level (24%), and a few at the middle school level (16%).

Primary data sources included participants’ written responses to an open-ended questionnaire. An open-ended format captures the respondent’s perspectives without predetermining those perspectives through a previous selection of questionnaire categories of responses (Patton, 1990; Patton 2005).

The participants shared “information, perspectives and experiences related to the topic of research” (Gay & Airasian, 2000). Since “much of the research about mentoring new teachers has been conducted using surveys” (Tillman, 2005, p. 616), the intent of our questionnaire was to capture the mentors’ authentic voices and to describe their thinking associated with mentoring so that the analytical, conceptual and theoretical explanations could be developed from the data (Marshall & Rossman, 1995).

Data analysis was completed using an inductive approach. “It is through careful scrutiny of data, line by line, that researchers are able to uncover new concepts and novel relationships and to systematically develop categories in terms of their properties and dimensions” (Strauss & Corbin, 1998, p. 71). Thus, each researcher independently examined participants’ written responses, beginning with open-coding to sift through the data analytically and to reduce further the concepts and to identify their properties (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). When the coding was complete, the data were grouped into categories; then through constant comparative analysis (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Strauss & Corbin, 1998) the categories were further reduced with descriptive statements taken from the questionnaires. Using constant comparative analysis and axial coding (Charmaz, 2006), the separate categories were sorted, and placed into subcategories. “Axial coding relates categories to subcategories, specifies the properties and dimensions of a category, and reassembles the data to give coherence to the emerging analysis (Charmaz, 2006, p. 60). To ensure inter-coder reliability the researchers reviewed, compared, and discussed initial coding and categories to determine the final themes and labels for each question.

6 Results and Discussion

This study examined 88 experienced teachers’ responses related to mentoring. Specifically, we identified participants’ motives for mentoring, and perceived unique characteristics and professional expertise they possessed to help them in the mentoring process. Major findings of mentors’ responses are presented as themes for each of the three questions.

The first question, *Why are you interested in becoming a mentor?* generated four dominant themes. Mentors were motivated by the opportunity

- a. to express an altruistic value,
- b. to provide affective support,
- c. to grow professionally through self-actualization, and
- d. to enhance a colleague’s growth and development.

The second question, *What characteristics do you possess that will enable you to help a first-year teacher through the year?* generated five primary themes. Mentors self-reported

- a. classroom experience,
- b. pedagogical knowledge,
- c. disposition,
- d. interpersonal proficiency, and
- e. conscientious listening as traits unique to their context.

The last question, *What skills did you possess that might help the first teacher?*, generated four key themes. Mentors perceived having professional expertise in

- a. classroom experience,
- b. human relations,
- c. instructional planning, and
- d. providing constructive feedback.

The following discussion describes each theme and expands with participants' comments.

7 Motivational Factors

This section discusses the themes that emerged in response to why mentors volunteer for an additional duty. The first theme, *to express an altruistic value*, refers to an intrinsic desire to assist a novice teacher within the school context. According to the data, mentors felt morally compelled to help new teachers. "A first year teacher needs guidance and support in order to be effective. I feel it is every teacher's duty to offer this guidance and support to newcomers. I enjoy working with new teachers," commented a mentor. To some mentors, this meant fulfilling a moral obligation to help a new teacher succeed. This finding, in concert with other studies (Carpenter & Meyers, 2007; Christensen, et. al., 1999; Clary et al., 1998; Mavropoulou, Nikolarazi, & Seremetidou, 2008; Schmiesing, Soder, & Russell, 2005; Souza & Dhami, 2008), suggests that experienced teachers embrace a collective sense of responsibility towards the success of novice teachers during their first year of teaching. This commitment to education (Globerman & Bogo, 2003) was also observed on a broader scope. For example, a mentor commented, "I know the teacher shortage in the area of mathematics, science, and special education is critical. We need to recruit and retain good teachers." This affiliation to the profession (Culp & Schwartz, 1999; Fritz, Karmazin, Barbuto, & Burrow, 2003) suggests that their moral obligation also embraced a professional context that went beyond the individual teacher.

Another aspect of this theme reflects the individual's desire to share with a novice teacher the same rewarding experiences from their own mentoring collaboration. Data revealed that mentors recognized the need to reciprocate what they gained from their own mentoring experiences. "Teaching for me has been a life passion. Nonetheless without the support of a special someone (co-worker) I might not be teaching today. I hope that in turn I can support someone to become a lifetime teacher," stated a mentor. Other research (Scheetz, Waters, Smeaton, & Lare, 2005; Thrivent Financial Services for Lutherans, 2005) also has identified giving back to the organization as a major reason for volunteering to mentor.

When teachers experience a productive, positive and encouraging mentor-teacher relationship, they feel that becoming a mentor provides them the opportunity to share the benefits. One mentor commented, "When I was a teacher, I was very fortunate to receive help from caring teachers at my campus. I greatly appreciated it and would like to do the same in helping other new teachers." Another mentor expressed, "Since I had a mentor when I went through the ACP (Alternative Certification Program), I feel that I need to give in return. I strongly believe that I would not have been able to have made it through without my mentor."

Returning the benefits of a mentoring relationship (Bowden, 2004; Yohon, 2005) is another important reason why experienced teachers were willing to engage in a mentor-teacher relationship. One mentor commented, "I am interested in becoming a mentor to help others and offer guidance the same way my mentor did for me." This supports the notion that, "mentoring offers multiple rewards, including the personal gains of renewal in working with a new practitioner, pride in contributing to a colleague's development and increased consciousness for mentors about their own instructional practice" (Lipton & Wellman, 2003, xii).

The second theme, *to provide affective support*, refers to an individual's espoused belief about providing assistance. In other words, the individual's value system (Clary, et. al., 1998) serves as a stimulus to assist another colleague. "I want to help make the novice teachers feel welcomed and supported" wrote one mentor, while another expressed, "I would like to provide assistance and ongoing support to that new teacher so that he/she can become a successful teacher." These comments convey a type of support (Bowden, 2004) that is conceived first as an abstract notion before it manifests into concrete behavior. Mentor support can be emotional, instructional and institutional (Bowden, 2004; Lipton & Wellman, 2003; Zachary, 2000). A mentor expressed, "I feel I can help new teachers into becoming confident teachers in the classroom. I enjoy making their life easier in the classroom by helping as much as I can and by making myself available whenever they need me." Affective support may be fueled by empathy for the beginning teacher. As a participant expressed,

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"I am interested in becoming a mentor because I still remember how difficult it is to be new teacher. I believe that the first year of teaching is the most difficult and this first year is also what makes or breaks a new teacher. I want to be able to help."

This desire to help motivated by a humanistic concern for the welfare of others seems to be a strong foundation for a productive mentoring process. This is similar to results reported by Schmiesing, Soder, and Russell, 2005.

The third theme, *to grow professionally through self-actualization*, communicates that participating in a mentoring initiative provides an opportunity for personal and professional benefits. Other research (Clary, et. al., 1998; Globerman & Bogo, 2003; Mavropoulou, Nikolarazi, & Seremetidou, 2008; Souza & Dhama, 2008; Zachary, 2000) support this notion. Likewise, the participants recognized that additional knowledge and insight associated with new developments in teaching and learning could be gained from working with a novice teacher. "I will be able to learn from the teacher the new aspects of teaching. This will allow the new teacher and myself the ability to grow professionally at the same time," commented one mentor. The acknowledgement that mentors also grow professionally supports the notion that effective mentoring becomes a two-way process, resulting in a mutual journey of learning. As another mentor stated, "I believe that we learn something new, and so what a better way than to learn from each other." This perception aligns with previous research that suggests,

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the mentoring relationship matures when it becomes reciprocal. The novice seeks advice from the mentor and the mentor seeks to transform the relationship from mentoring to collegueship by soliciting advice in return, by sharing problems, and by valuing the perspective of the new comer" (Sergiovanni & Starrat, 2003, p. 265).

While Bey and Holmes (1992) and Galvez-Hjornevik (1986) have identified self-actualization as an effective mentoring practice, others affirm that "mentoring relationships offer opportunities for reciprocal growth and learning" (Lipton & Wellman, 2003, p. xi). One participant acknowledged, "I believe we learn something new, and so what a better way than to learn from each other." According to Freiberg, Zbikowski, and Ganser (1997) the mentor involved in a mentoring relationship is in a good position to improve professionally as will the beginning educator, and working with a mentee provides an opportunity for self-reflection (Bowden, 2004).

The last theme, *to enhance a colleague's growth and development*, suggests that mentors are willing to commit time to help another person grow, contributing on a wider scope other than the self. It is critical that novice teachers have access to someone who can facilitate their growth and professional development (Hargreaves & Fullan, 2000). Data revealed that mentors were confident in their ability to assist novice teachers. "I am interested in staying as a mentor because I believe that I can make a difference in guiding new teachers in their first year of teaching," affirmed a mentor. This supports the notion that mentors must

genuinely desire to help new teachers, demonstrate care and compassion, and provide the support to make the mentee's first year of teaching successful (Holden, 1995; Odell et. al., 2000; Rowley, 1995; Schulz, 1995).

8 Contextual Uniqueness

This section discusses the themes that emerged in response to the characteristics mentors' perceived they possessed to guide a novice teacher. The first theme, *classroom experience*, refers to the instructional expertise gained from years of teaching. Engaging in "a specified number of years of successful teaching experience" (Steadman & Simmons, 2007, p. 364) is one aspect of effective mentoring. One mentor noted, "I have extensive experience instructing students at all levels and from special populations, and experience working with math teachers as math department head," while another added, "I have enough experience and patience to help a beginning teacher have a positive first year and become an effective teacher." Possessing a significant familiarity with student diversity and instruction was perceived as an important trait. Another mentor added, "I truly believe that novice teachers can benefit from my teaching experiences." Although the participants in this study valued experience as a worthy mentoring trait, this experience does not necessarily transpire to effective mentoring. Therefore, as Heller (2004) suggests, mentors need an understanding of "adult development and adult education" (p.71) in order to effectively guide a novice teacher. Similarly, Roehrig, Bohn, Turner, and Pressley (2008) suggest that mentors' practical knowledge needs to be accompanied by mentor training.

The second theme, *pedagogical knowledge*, indicates an understanding of the dynamics of teaching in various contexts. Mentors in this study perceived their educational expertise as a characteristic necessary to guide effectively a novice teacher. Demonstrating the pedagogical knowledge and skills is an important aspect of the mentoring process (Bowden, 2004; Bowers & Eberhart, 1988; Zachary, 2000). A participant reported, "I believe I can help the new teacher by modeling working with groups, dealing with parents, and teaching different modalities." Coupled with years of teaching experience, mentors were well-informed with the local and state curriculum, local school district procedures and policies, students' characteristics, diverse backgrounds, and behaviors at different developmental levels. "I believe that I possess knowledge of the curriculum, knowledge of effective classroom procedures, knowledge of expectations and student behaviors, and I have a basic understanding of young children," affirmed a mentor. Still another participant noted, "I feel I am knowledgeable in the procedures of lesson plans, discipline and classroom management." Providing cognitive guidance further supports the work of others (Bey & Holmes, 1992; Galvez-Hjornevik, 1986; Sanchez, Reyes, & Singh, 2006) who have identified this trait as important in the mentoring process. Experts acknowledge that "the mentor is presumed to know more not only about matters of teaching but also about the school's culture so that the novice teacher can navigate through this culture successfully" (Sergiovanni & Starratt, 2007, p. 264). In addition, Neal (1992) asserts that "only teachers – those who are masters of their craft, who can convey its subtleties and nuances to another, and who are willing to provide assistance for the sake of another's growth – can function as true mentors" (p. 38). While the pedagogical knowledge that mentors bring to the mentoring relationship is recognized as an important element of the mentoring process, some mentors, though excellent teachers, may not be able to communicate the nuances of teaching with developmentally appropriate terminology to the mentee (Feiman-Nemser, 2003).

The next theme, *disposition*, reflects the participants' conceptions related to their own attitude and nature. The participants in this study identified being "helpful, patient, friendly, understanding, respectful, open-minded, approachable, and ready to assist" as significant traits of a mentor. One mentor commented, "I also feel that my personality is helpful because I am friendly and respectful to all," and yet another added, "I believe that I am patient and understanding." The literature suggests that mentoring relationships cannot be forced, but rather, achieving a mentoring relationship has to develop out of cooperation, mutual respect and liking for each other. Reiman and Edelfelt (1990) echo this sentiment; therefore, a mentor's willingness to assist and a positive attitude towards the mentee are key for an effective relationship to develop.

Interpersonal proficiency indicates that an individual is people oriented and relates easily to others. As one mentor communicated, "Also, I have been a master teacher (department Chair) since 1997, which has allowed me to be a people's person." This perception of having an innate ability to relate well to others

suggests a trait conducive to working with a diverse group of individuals (Bey and Holmes, 1992; Galvez-Hjornevik, 1986). The data implied that mentor's believed relating to others positively and establishing a solid rapport was important in establishing an effective relationship. "I know that the teacher will not feel intimidated and will have good communication skills with me, and "I feel that I am a very social individual and therefore enjoy being around people all the time," reported participants. While previous research asserts that it is important for quality mentors to interact and communicate with a protégé on a professional level (Rowley, 1999) other studies (Gettys, Martin, Jinks, 2008; Rush, Blair, Chapman, Codner, & Pearce, 2008) also have identified communication as critical for the development of a mentoring relationship. "Great mentoring partnerships are filled with passion; they are guided by mentors with deep feelings and a willingness to communicate those feelings" (Bell, 1996, p. 28).

Another aspect of *interpersonal proficiency* involves conscientious or empathic listening. Being a focused listener also emerged from the data as a perceived characteristic of mentors. A mentor stated, "I will listen to concerns or present situations and will work with her to problem-solve the situations." If mentees perceive mentors to be open minded and accepting of their feelings and thoughts, this skill may inspire novice teachers to share concerns and experiences or ask candid questions related to instruction as well as other matters. Thus, listening without judging the mentee is an effective attribute of a strong mentoring initiative (McCann & Johannessen, 2004). Similarly, The National Education Association recommends "interpersonal skills" (2003, p.12) as an effective quality mentors should possess and an essential ingredient for selecting mentors. Another mentor shared, "I am a good listener and will appropriate any materials on hand that will facilitate the needs of a first year teacher." Similarly, Hansen and Batten (1995) identified "active listening" (p.10) as an attribute of genuinely interested mentors. Since active listening also reflects an important aspect of caring (Morganett, 1991), mentors need to be easy to talk to and sensitive to the mentee's needs (Arnold, 2006).

9 Professional Expertise

This section discusses the themes that emerged in response to the skills mentors' perceived as unique to the mentor role. The expertise experienced teachers can convey to another colleague can be a very effective professional development medium. This supports Heller's (2004) notion that "The best people to teach teachers are other teachers" (p.17).

First, *classroom management* emerged as a skill perceived as necessary to help novice teachers. A mentor identified this skill as a strength and commented, "My skills in classroom management; I find that management is an issue with most 1st year teachers." Another mentor reporting on her expertise used in past mentoring situations added, "I helped with classroom management, discipline, and survival skills." Given that managing a classroom is a concern of novice teachers (Chambers & Hardy, 2005), the mentors in this study are aware of this challenge, therefore considered their expertise in classroom management as a useful attribute to assist their protégé. Mentors need to possess the skills to effectively support and guide the novice educator.

The next theme, *human relations*, involves the dynamics of socialization that may occur in the classroom, the school, or the community. Since classroom management plays a key role for effective instruction (Marzano & Marzano, 2003) part of managing a classroom is responding to the unique characteristics of students. In addition, knowing how to respond and to interact appropriately with colleagues and parents in a manner that establishes positive outcomes is another aspect of this theme. Mentors were aware of this challenge and perceived possessing the expertise to assist their mentee with relating to others. As a mentor noted, "I help with motivating students with individual differences, parent relations, student personal problems, relations with team colleagues, and other co-workers." Since beginning teachers expect assistance with approaches in responding to parents (Mandel, 2006) an experienced and knowledgeable mentor can be instrumental in facilitating a positive outcome for all parties involved. A mentor expressed that "What to say and what not to say," during parent conferences was a skill she possessed. Making the transition to a professional linguistic code can be a difficult process for a beginning teacher. For example, how do you respond to an angry parent without making them angrier? How do you approach a veteran colleague to inform him/her to desist from a

certain behavior or language that is offensive or inappropriate? “Mentors must maintain a dual perspective in which they see the mentee as an individual as well as part of a larger social context” (Crutcher, 2007, pp. 22-23).

Instructional planning refers to the instructional process that requires making decisions prior to instruction, taking into account students’ characteristics and needs. According to Airasian & Russell, 2008, this process includes “identifying student learning outcomes, selecting materials to help students reach these outcomes, and organizing learning experiences into a coherent sequence that fosters student development (p. 57). A mentor commented, “I helped them (mentees) develop lesson plans, integrate Spanish lessons in the curriculum, testing, become familiar with TEKS objectives, etc.” This comment reflects an involved process that requires thought and time in order to address the academic needs of students. Novice teachers may benefit from a skilled mentor who knows how to plan for instruction, to obtain the necessary resources, and to effectively assess students. This is congruent with previous research that suggests that one of the most practical areas of need for a beginning teacher is lesson planning (Lipton & Wellman, 2003; Yohon, 2005). Thus, these experienced mentors perceived their ability to effectively plan as an important skill relevant to the mentoring process. One mentor expressed, “The skills that new teachers and student teachers need are management skills and planning.” Another mentor mentioned that “Modifying lessons to help students with special needs” was also important. This perceived ability parallels research that identifies what beginning teachers need (Mandel, 2006).

Finally, *providing constructive feedback* emerged in this study as the process of communicating written and oral comments to the novice teacher. Some mentors perceived their feedback as a way to offer words of encouragement and to affirm their efforts. As one mentor stated, “I allowed her to observe me for a few days. I observed her and made suggestions as well as praised her for a job well done. Confidence and self-esteem is very important for new teachers.” Another mentor provided suggestions that helped the novice teacher solve a problem. “I would also listen to any problems in the class and offer solutions or feedback on the situation.” In addition, some mentors viewed feedback as a reciprocal process. One mentor commented, “I provide positive feedback, advice, resources and make recommendations. I also allowed them to share ideas or recommendations to me. Very important for us to be partners.” This supports the role of constructive feedback advanced by prior research. For instance, feedback is referred to as “relevant information provided to those engaged in the learning-teaching process regarding their performance so that they may introduce modifications, correct errors or engage in professional development that will lead to enhanced teaching and learning” (Ovando, 2006, p.3). Others also affirm that “continuous, confident and caring feedback” from mentors (Hansen & Batten, 2003, p. 83) when provided immediately (Bowden, 2004) may motivate novice teachers to not only succeed during their first year but also to excel. This is particularly important when mentors work with new teachers because “understanding new concepts and adapting behaviors to operate effectively in new work environments requires practice, feedback and reflection” (Kochan & Trimble, 2000, p. 20).

10 Conclusion

The National Education Association Foundation affirms “mentoring helps to ensure that new teachers have access to the accumulated instructional knowledge and expertise of their colleagues in ways that contribute to student success” (2003, p. 3). Our study adds to the existing body of knowledge in several ways. First, identifying mentors’ motivation to willingly volunteer for an additional task, aids administrative and school leaders, teacher supervisors, and experienced teachers to understand the drive that inspires teachers to become mentors. Zachary (2000) acknowledges that

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motivation drives participation in a mentoring relationship and has a direct impact on behavior, attitude, and emotional resilience in mentoring relationships. Reflecting on motivation before engaging in the relationship can affect the quality of the interaction within it. Mentors who have a deep understanding of why they are

doing something end up more committed to it (p. 67).

With this in mind, mentors' voices could be used as a springboard to expand the dialogue about mentoring and induction programs. Furthermore, providing concrete examples of what mentors perceive as motivational can only enhance the dynamics of the mentoring process. "The way in which someone becomes a mentor influences how that person will work with a mentee" (Trubowitz, 2004, p. 59).

Second, describing the characteristics and skills perceived to be essential by the mentors in this investigation may inspire other teachers to reflect on their own abilities before committing to the preparation and development of novice teachers. While mentors are critical in the mentoring relationship (Zeek, Foote, & Walker, 2001), their human capital is the other component crucial to the success of the partnership. Therefore, identifying the traits and innate talents of teachers who volunteer to mentor has the potential for enhancing mentoring and induction programs. A more positive and successful learning experience for all stakeholders may result when schools recruit, select, and prepare experienced teachers (Brown, 2003) who express a genuine interest to serve, in view of the characteristics and skills they already possess.

Finally, this study supports previous research that highlights the value of possessing specific characteristics and skills of effective mentors and the mentoring process (Bey & Holmes, 1992; Fagan & Walter, 1982; Galvez-Hjornevik, 1986; Klausmeier, R. L. Jr., 1994; Odell et al., 2000; Reiman & Edelfelt, 1990). Specifically, the skills the mentors in this study reported as possessing may be a critical link in helping to develop novice teachers in specific pedagogical areas. This is in concert with findings suggested by Roehrig, Bohn, Turner, and Pressley (2008) that "mentor teachers' own knowledge base was vital in transferring such knowledge to their mentees" (p. 699).

This investigation identified the reasons experienced teachers volunteered their time, expertise, and energy to assist novice teachers. Our findings suggest mentors possess the willingness and expertise to enhance the professional development and growth of a beginning teacher. The mentors in this study perceived their classroom experience, pedagogical knowledge, disposition, interpersonal proficiency, and conscientious listening as traits that would enhance a mentoring relationship. In addition, the participants perceived having skill in managing a classroom, human relations, instructional planning, and providing constructive feedback as a means to effectively mentor. Our results also add to the extant body of research on mentoring by highlighting the participants' unique perspective. School leaders may take into account these authentic perceptions when inviting, selecting, training, and supporting mentors to increase the possibility of facilitating an effective mentoring initiative. Consequently, both parties may benefit and the collaborative effort may positively influence the academic achievement and success of all students.

As a final point, it is relevant to acknowledge that this qualitative study focused only on a single school district where the majority of the students come from a Latino background. As a result, some propositions were advanced; however, generalization of our findings is not possible. Thus, it is necessary for practitioners and researchers in different school communities and teaching levels to continue exploring the intrinsic motivation of experienced teachers who volunteer to mentor.

Understanding mentors' motivational factors for volunteering and what they contribute to the mentoring process can only enhance existing paradigms that may need changing. If school districts are to ensure that current induction and mentoring programs are aligned with the high expectations standards and accountability place on educators, beginning teacher assistance programs must be designed to meet actual teacher needs, rather than administrative requirements. Just as the mentors in this study reported on their own talents and abilities, school leaders and policy makers should invest time in identifying the human resources in their respective community to foster better and effective mentoring relationships. By tapping into mentors' talents, schools can truly respond to the academic needs of all students.

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