

Head Teachers' Perceptions about Mentoring Practices in Primary Schools

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to examine the perceptions of Head Teachers (HTs) of primary schools about the mentors' practices and reflections of TPSs (TPSs) regarding mentoring practices of mentors under the Continuous Professional Development (CPD) framework. The study was conducted in the district of Faisalabad, the most populated city and industrial hub of the country. Researchers used the mixed-methods approach to meet the purpose of the study. A sample of 565 HTs (281 male and 284 female) was drawn out of the total 2128 HTs using the random sampling technique in layers. A structured questionnaire was administered personally to get quantitative data. To explore the reflections of the TPSs about mentoring practices, qualitative data were generated through semi-structured interviews with 32 TPSs (16 male and 16 female) selected purposively. Descriptive statistics were used to analyze quantitative data and content analysis was used to analyze the qualitative data. The findings of the study revealed that most of the mentoring practices of the mentors were not up to the mark and needs improvement. The mentors' authoritative behavior, weak content knowledge, and training without need assessment were explored as the key negative aspects of mentoring. Furthermore, improvement in teachers' regularity, students' enrollment, and use of AV aids were the positive aspects of mentoring. It is recommended that the teachers' mentoring program should be reviewed in-depth and immediate corrective measures should be taken to address the issues explored in the study.

Keywords: Mentors' practices, continuous professional development, teachers of primary schools

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Introduction

Continuous Professional Development (CPD) in education is a well-planned, incessant, and long-lasting program of improving the professional and personal skills of teachers (Munir & Amin, 2018; Saeed & Akhtar, 2017). Participation in the CPD program enables teachers to increase their professional competence, teaching skills, technical knowledge, and classroom practices (Sasmal & Pande, 2018). It also helps teachers to improve the teaching and learning environment in the schools (Padwad & Dixit, 2011; Shehzad, 2014). These days' teachers' CPD is getting much attention from educational authorities, policymakers, and researchers across the world (DSD, 2015; Saeed & Akhtar, 2017).

In Pakistan, unfortunately, teachers professional development had been remained a neglected subject for years due to which quality of education suffered badly. Later in 2006, a comprehensive CPD framework has been developed and launched by the Directorate of Staff Development (DSD), Lahore in Punjab to enhance the professional competence of school teachers (DSD, 2015; Munir & Amin, 2018; Saeed & Akhtar, 2017; Shehzad, 2014). District teacher educators (DTEs) are the key characters of the CPD framework who are assigned major duties of assessing the professional needs of teachers at the school level and providing on-spot technical support and guidance to individual teachers mainly through mentoring (Shehzad, 2014). They act as coordinator, mentor, and guide to TPSs to enhance their professional capabilities by modernizing their pedagogical skills and teaching techniques (Akhlaq, Iqbal & Jumani, 2015; DSD, 2015; 2010; 2007a; Shehzad, 2014). The DTEs (Mentors) are selected from the in-service teachers based on their academic qualifications and teaching skills. After their selection, the mentors are called for training at DSD, Lahore, and then deputed to work at the assigned cluster training and support center (CTSCs) (DSD, 2010; Shehzad, 2014). Mentoring is the main strategy adopted for teachers' development under the CPD framework.

Mentoring has been appearing as a major strategy for the professional growth of teachers, doctors, engineers, program managers, lawyers, and other professionals (Akhlaq, Iqbal & Jumani, 2015; Anwar, 2014; Shehzad, 2014). Especially in the education sector, it is considered an essential component of all programs of teachers' professional development (Johnson, 2007; Munir & Amin, 2018; Shehzad, 2014). Mentoring refers to the procedure of developing a learning association where an experienced person with higher professional skills (mentor) provides information and updated knowledge to a junior person with a lesser level of professional skills (Malik, Mahmood, & Jumani, 2020). Mentoring provides a pathway for novice teachers to successfully move from the initial preparatory phase to an experienced teacher (Hairon et al., 2020). In many cases, mentoring has been proved as a key strategy of improving

teachers' professional knowledge and teaching skills (Akhlaq, Iqbal & Jumani, 2015; DSD, 2015; 2010; 2007a; Munir & Amin, 2018; Saeed & Akhtar, 2017; Shehzad, 2014). Mentoring may be formal where usually paid mentors (senior professionals) are assigned to the junior teachers by the department with pre-set goals and objectives while informal mentoring mostly established voluntarily between an expert and junior person at their own (Munir & Amin, 2018).

Good programs of teachers' mentoring are planned based on appropriate needs assessment and produce satisfactory results (DSD, 2015, 2014; Shehzad, 2014). An effective program of mentoring provides fruitful results in terms of improvement in classroom management skills of the teachers (Ingersoll & Strong, 2011), leading towards good student learning outcomes (SLO) (Munir & Amin, 2018). Therefore, teachers' training needs assessment is the key component of the mentors' duty under the CPD framework. In addition to providing school-based mentoring and guidance, the mentors have to plan and organize capacity-building sessions for TPSs at the CTSCs under the technical guidance of DSD, Lahore (Akhlaq, Iqbal & Jumani, 2015; DSD, 2007a, 2007b). They are also responsible to make regular assessments of the students learning achievement and improvement in teachers' professional skills through planned visits to the schools. Based on the findings of the assessment, they provide focused mentoring support to each teacher (DSD, 2010; Munir & Amin, 2018; Shehzad, 2014).

Although mentoring is an effective mode of teachers' professional development yet it can be failed to get the desired results if implemented without appropriate planning. Inappropriately planned mentoring programs usually failed to fulfill the learning needs of the mentees (Gagen and Bowie 2005 as in Hairon et al., 2020). Therefore, a good mentor needs to have a clear understanding of the gaps and deficiencies in the teaching skills of the teachers and the learning abilities of the students (Anwar, 2014; Shehzad, 2014). That is why mentors under the CPD framework of DSD, Lahore are required to do regular analysis of the data of monthly assessment tests of the students and direct observation of the classroom practices (Anwar, 2014; DSD, 2010 & 2007a). The key mentoring areas of the mentors under the CPD framework include teacher's diary, taleemi-calendar, lesson development, activities based teaching and learning, use of AV aids, interaction with students, classroom management, student's assessment, and homework (Anwar, 2014; DSD, 2007b; Munir & Amin, 2018; Shehzad, 2014).

The effectiveness of mentoring is based on the commitment, devotion, and dedication of mentors. To enhance the professional skills and knowledge of mentors, the DSD team provides regular support and guidance to all mentors about their mentoring duties (Shehzad, 2014). DSD has published a mentor guide book and coaching guide which provides simple and applicable tools on various aspects of roles and duties of mentors, particularly mentoring. All mentors have to prepare an activity plan following

the instructions given in these books and share reports of mentoring visits on the prescribed forms with DSD (Anwar, 2014; DSD, 2013, 2007a). Experts' team of DSD gives feedback on all reports for appropriate corrective measures. DSD updates the mentors' guidebooks when required, keeping in view the feedback and suggestions of the mentors, mentees, and other concerned officials (DSD, 2015, 2009, 2007a, 2007b).

The CPD Framework of DSD, Lahore ostensibly looks very rigorous and complex program where big human and other resources are invested in its application (Shehzad, 2014). Since the early years of implementation of the CPD framework, most of the concerned field of officials and educational experts have different opinions about the effectiveness of the program and the roles of mentors and other officials under the CPD framework. Some consider that the mentors are doing well to improve teachers' quality and SLOs while others are of the view that the mentors are not doing well to address the professional issues of the mentees. The current study was conducted to explore the perceptions of HTs on mentors' practices and to determine the reflections of the TPSs about the mentoring practices under the CPD framework of DSD, Lahore. Considering the objectives of the study following research questions were formulated:

Research Question 1: What are the perceptions of primary school heads about the mentors' practices under the CPD Framework?

Research Question 2: What are the reflections of Teachers of Primary Schools regarding the strengths and weakness of mentoring practices under the CPD Framework?

Conceptual Framework

Through this inquiry, the researcher attempted to evaluate the mentoring practices of DTEs under the "CPD framework" of the DSD, Lahore. To complete this inquiry, the researcher followed the procedures reflected in various documents of the DSD, Lahore (DSD, 2014; 2013; 2010; 2009; 2007a; 2007b; 2006). The practices of DTEs as mentor such as "preparation of teacher's diary, following the academic calendar, preparation of lesson plan, activity-based teaching & learning, use of audiovisual aids, the interaction of teachers with students, content knowledge, classroom management, assigning and checking of homework and student's assessment" as described in the CPD framework of DSD were focused during the study. So, the conceptual framework regarding the mentoring practices of DTEs was based on the roles and responsibilities which are described in the CPD Framework. The conceptual framework of this study is presented in figure 1 below. The conceptual framework presented in figure 1, is the cycle around which the CPD framework revolves, and this study since is aimed to evaluate the CPD, therefore, the current research followed it as a conceptual framework of the study to give a holistic picture. However, the measuring tools of the study are based on specific aspects laid down in the CPD framework of DSD. The tool-wise detail is presented in the next section.

Methodology

This study was conducted in the district Faisalabad of the Punjab Province, which is the cultural complex and industrial hub of Pakistan. The researchers used a mixed-methods approach to answer both research questions. The survey questionnaire was used to get data and descriptive statistics were used to analyze the data. Thematic analysis was used to analyze and interpret qualitative data. All ethical considerations were taken into account throughout the study.

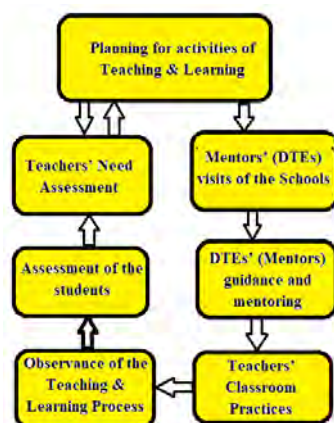


Figure 1. *Conceptual Framework*

Study Population and Study Sample

The total number of HTs in the district Faisalabad is 2128 (1037 male and 1091 female) that is the population of the study. The study sample was comprised of 565 HTs (281 boys and 284 girls) selected through random sampling in layers. At the first step, a list of all public primary schools of the study areas was taken from the respective department on request and computed separately for boys and girls schools. In the second step, 281 boys and 284 girls (Total=565) schools were selected separately from both lists through the random sampling technique. In the third step, separate lists of HTs of both girls' and boys' schools (565 in number) were prepared from the record of the school education department that was the actual sample of the study.

Instrument

A self-developed structured questionnaire was used to get the opinions of the HTs about the mentoring practices of the DTEs (QMPDTEs), while an open-ended semi-structured questionnaire was used to get the views of the school teachers about the strengths and weakness of the mentoring program. Both tools were developed in consultation with two experts in the relevant subject, considering "DTEs guide book" as a reference document. All response statements of QMPDTEs were developed keeping in view set duties of

DTEs as a mentor under the CPD framework. The QMPDTE was used to obtain views of HTs about the mentoring practices of the DTEs on the six-point Likert Scale from 0 to 5 (never, very rarely, rarely, sometimes, many times and always performed practices of DTEs). In the light of DSD guide books, 31 statements of response about 13 areas of mentoring were incorporated in QMPDTEs with the following breakup: Teacher's Diary (2-statements), Students' Homework (1-statement), Academic Calendar (3-statements), Activity-Based Teaching (1-statement), Use of AV Aids (2-statements), Students' Assessment (2-statements), Lesson Planning (2-statements), Interaction with Students (4-statements), Classroom Management (3-statements), Training of Teachers (3-statements), Teachers' Performance (4-statements), Visit of Schools (1-statement), and Behavior of Mentors with Teachers (1-statement).

Reliability and Validity of the Instrument

To determine the reliability and validity of the study instrument, QMPDTE was administered to 30 HTs. The data collected through the piloting QMPDTEs was analyzed through SPSS version 20 and the reliability of all items of the tool was found 0.86. Based on the feedback of the HTs, the instrument of the study was revised in consultation with relevant experts and re-tested on the same subjects. The reliability of the revised tool was found 0.93 for all items declaring it suitable to get the desired information. Both measuring tools were cross-checked by two experts in the relevant field. Both experts declared the instruments of the study valid for the collection of desired information.

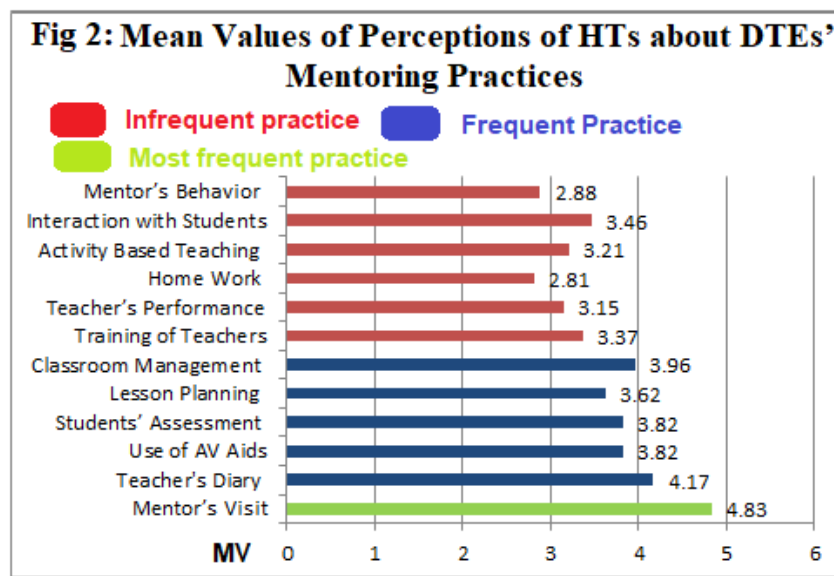
Data Collection and Analysis

After getting the approval of the concerned educational authority, the researcher visited all selected participants and administered QMPDTEs. Before the administration of the research instrument, the researcher briefly explained the purpose of the study, ethical considerations, and the contents of the instrument. Prior consent was taken from all subjects for participation in the study. TPSs were requested to give their opinion against different statements of response on six points Likert Scale as already explained above. Mean Values (MVs) of opinions of HTs were computed and weight was given per the following criteria: most frequent practice ($4.5 \leq MV \leq 5$), frequent practice ($3.5 \leq MV \leq 4.5$), infrequent practice ($2.5 \leq MV < 3.5$), rare practice ($1.5 \leq MV < 2.5$), very rare practice ($0.5 \leq MV < 1.5$) and never practiced ($0.0 \leq MV < 0.5$).

Interpretation of the Quantitative Data (Research Question 1)

The summary of responses of HTs against various statements regarding mentoring practices of DTEs is presented in Table 1 (Figure 2). The analysis of the data indicated that DTEs' practices about five areas of mentoring were at the frequent (average) level ($3.5 \leq MV \leq 4.5$) namely "Teacher's Diary (MV=4.17), Use of AV Aids (MV=3.82), Students' Assessment (MV=3.82), Lesson Planning (MV=3.62), Classroom Management

(MV=3.96)'' were at the frequent level. Preparation of the teacher's diary is very important in the teaching and learning process as all the activities to be executed in classrooms are noted in the teacher's diary. All these areas are very important to get fruitful results of teaching-learning activities in terms of teachers' career development and students' learning outcomes (SLOs) but DTEs were not paying less attention to these areas of mentoring.



The data further explored that DTEs' practices about seven areas of mentoring were at the infrequent (below average) level ($2.5 \leq MV < 3.5$) namely; Home Work (MV=2.81), Training of Teachers (MV=3.37), Teacher's Performance (MV=3.15), Academic Calendar (MV=3.22), Activity-Based Teaching (MV=3.21), Interaction with Students (MV=3.46), Mentor's Behavior (MV=2.88). The behavior of mentors and mentees is vital in the success of any mentoring program which helps to make confidence but the behavior of the DTEs with the teachers was neither friendly nor polite. Although assigning and checking students' homework is very important in the teaching-learning process, but the mentors were not guiding teachers on this aspect properly. Co-curricular activities provide opportunities for students to groom themselves. It is well known that the student's social, physical, and psychological development takes place through participation in co-curricular activities, but the mentors were not paying proper attention to this matter. Moreover, DTEs guidance about improving the pedagogical skills of the teachers was also at an infrequent level (MV=2.95).

The study also revealed that only one of the mentoring practices of the DTEs was at the most frequent (good level) namely Mentor's Visit of the School (MV=4.83) due to which all teachers were well aware of the mentoring and other roles of the DTEs at schools.

Table 1
HTs' Perceptions about DTEs' Mentoring Practices, N = 565

Statement about Practices of Mentors	Mean	SD
Teacher's Diary (MV=4.17)		
guide teachers in preparation of Teacher's Diary	4.30	0.93
check Teacher's Diary regularly	4.04	0.80
Home Work (MV=2.81)		
guide teachers to assign and check students' homework	2.81	0.77
Academic Calendar (MV=3.22)		
arrange curricular activities according to Academic Calendar	3.78	0.80
arrange co-curricular activities according to Academic Calendar	3.03	0.94
help teachers and HTs to achieve student's learning outcomes.	2.87	0.79
Activity-Based Teaching (MV=3.21)		
motivates teachers for Activity Based Teaching	3.21	0.73
Use of AV Aids (MV=3.82)		
guide teachers to use support material during teaching	4.27	1.04
guide teachers to prepare low cost no cost material for teaching	3.37	0.76
Students' Assessment (MV=3.82)		
ensure the conduct of students' monthly assessment/test	4.36	0.92
guide teachers to assess the student's performance	3.27	0.78
Lesson Planning (MV=3.62)		
ensure the use of Teacher Guides in the classroom	3.70	0.96
ensure that the teachers use appropriate teaching methods in the classroom	3.68	0.97
help teachers in preparation of lesson plan	3.47	0.79
Interaction with Students (MV=3.46)		
encourage teachers for students to participate during teaching	4.34	1.05
help teachers to identify the students; facing learning difficulties	3.35	0.98
help teachers to guide the students; facing learning difficulties	3.14	0.92
ensure that every student has the equal learning opportunities	3.02	0.95
Classroom Management (MV=3.96)		
assist teachers to understand their classroom problems during mentoring	4.17	1.06
motivate teachers to extend cooperation to solve classroom problems	3.86	1.00
help teachers to make classroom environment conducive	3.86	1.06
Training of Teachers (MV=3.37)		
organize monthly meetings of teachers and HTs to exchange professional experiences at the cluster level	4.26	1.04
organize training of teachers according to identified needs on PD day	3.19	0.73
Identify professional needs of the teachers during mentoring	3.06	0.99
provide pedagogical support to teachers during mentoring	2.95	0.93
Teacher's Performance (MV=3.15)		
assess the performance of the teachers according to set indicators	3.54	0.87
make a ranking of teachers according to performance indicators	3.07	0.57
assist teachers to achieve performance indicators	3.03	1.06
identify the best teachers for mentoring of other teachers	2.94	0.99
Mentor's Visit (MV=4.83)		
visit your school according to the plan	4.83	0.42
Mentor's Behavior (MV=2.88)		
behave with the teachers, friendly and politely	2.88	0.75

Qualitative Data Presentation and Interpretation

The demographic information of 32-TPSs who shared their views about strengths and weakness of the mentoring program, both male and female were 50%, All were Teachers of Primary Schools with more than 3 years of service. 64% of the subjects had postgraduate qualification (M.A./M.Sc.), 20 % BA/BSc, and 16 % FA/FSC/Matric. TPSs with professional qualifications of B.Ed. and PTC/CT was 60 and 40 percent respectively.

After getting the prior consent, all subjects (32-TPSs) were asked to share their views about the strengths and weaknesses of the mentoring program in practice. All views of the TPSs were types in the MS-word program. Positive and negative views about mentoring practices were separated after careful reading and themes are drawn from the set of data and presented as under:

Positive aspects of mentoring

Regularity of Teachers: Most of the teachers (27) were of the view that mentoring practices made them more regular and punctual. *Due to it [mentoring] teacher's attendance has improved (R12), due to mentoring teachers have become regular and they reach into the schools on time (R24).*

Students' Enrollment: A majority of the teachers (24) were of the view that enrollment of the students increased due to mentoring. *Participation [rate] of students increased in schools (R12), attendance of the students increased [improved] due to mentors' visits (R17).*

Discipline: A large number of teachers (19) were of the view that due to the mentoring, discipline of school and classroom had improved. *The discipline of school and classroom became better due to mentoring... teachers and HTs are paying more attention to school and classroom' discipline (R12).*

Training of teachers: The majority of the teachers (18) were of the view that teacher training was being arranged on regular basis. *The government is organizing regular training for teachers at cluster and tehsil headquarters, although these are not based on the teachers' need. (R23).*

Use of Teacher Guides: A reasonable number of the teachers (15) were of the view that teachers wereregularlyusing Teacher Guides to improve their classroom practices.*The use of Teacher Guides was ensured [by the mentors] in schools (R31).*

Healthy Competition: A considerable number of the teachers (14) were of the view that mentoring has created a competitive environment among the schools and teachers.*Due to mentoring, competition among [schools and] teachers has taken place [sic - started] to show better results (R1).*

Use of AV Aids: A small number of teachers (6) responded that due to mentoring teachers had started using AV Aids during teaching. *Teachers started using AV Aids... during a teaching in the classroom, however, there are very few AV aids available, and mentors don't share ideas to prepare low-cost AV aids (R1).*

Negative Aspects of Mentoring

Authoritative Behavior: Most of the teachers (28) were of the view that the behavior of mentors was authoritative and bossy during mentoring, which resulted in harassment and blackmailing. *Mentors' behavior was not good with teachers during mentoring, they [mentors] were impatient with mentees (R9); mentors did not give importance to the suggestions of the teachers for the improvement of the school environment (R 11); focus of the mentors was [on] monitoring rather mentoring during school visits, they mostly check the record of the activities for report writing to be sent to the authorities (R 24); [There is] severe communication gap between mentees and mentors due to authoritative behavior of mentors. The mentees don't feel easy to share [their] academic problems with them [mentors] (R30).*

Continuous Assessment: The majority of the teachers (26) responded that continuous assessment created problems for the teachers. *Mentors were not fair in the ranking of the teachers based on students' assessment results as it [ranking of the teachers] was not being reported fairly and transparently... to administration (R3); mentors blackmail the teachers based on students' results, they threat some teachers and oblige some teachers in ranking to prepare teachers and schools' ranking according to their own choice instead based on true students' results (16); unrealistic feedback of teachers' performance and favoritism disappoint the mentees and decrease their [teachers] performance (R32).*

Training without Need Assessment: A significant number of the teachers (23) responded that the mentors did not arrange training according to the professional needs of the teachers. *Mentors organize training without assessing the needs of the teachers...training require to be organized to help individuals in the areas where they don't have sufficient knowledge/skill, but they [mentors] do not consider this aspect (R4); [moreover] facilities are scarce at the training centers ... [so] effective training could not be ensured (R12).*

The traditional way of Teaching during Training: Most of the teachers (19) were of the view that mentors could not change the traditional way of teaching. *Mentors could not change the traditional way while teaching mentees. They [mentors] were unable to use effective and modern [teaching] techniques...most of them depend on the lecture method during the model lesson and professional training (R15); mentors were unable to convince the teachers to leave rote learning as they could not provide the alternative of it (R29).*

Lack of Content Knowledge: A reasonable number of the teachers (18) responded that the mentors did not have sufficient content knowledge which caused demotivation among teachers. *Mentors don't have sufficient subject knowledge ... especially they were weak in the subjects of science, mathematics, and English. Their [mentors'] content knowledge is very poor... most of the teachers are more qualified than mentors (R22).*

Lack of Confidence: Around half of the teachers (17) were of the view that the teachers lost their confidence due to the rude behavior of the mentors. *Due to the dictatorial behavior of mentors, teachers have lost their confidence in mentors (R21); mentors do not allow the teachers to discuss their problems, which results in a lack of confidence (R27).*

Traveling: Some of the teachers (14) responded that the extensive traveling of the mentors to reach the schools badly affected the mentoring process. The mentors had to travel in the whole cluster daily and mentees had to travel for a professional day and other training activities. *Due to long travelling, mentors and mentees cannot pay attention properly to their professional activities as they become exhausted (R7); traveling is very difficult for female teachers like me as the teachers have to arrange special conveyance to reach cluster centers... my cluster center is 18 kilometers away from my school. It has [also] increased the financial burden on the teachers (R23).*

Nontransferable Jobs: Some (10) of the teachers mentioned that non-transferable posts of mentors negatively affected the mentoring practices in schools. *Nontransferable jobs and cluster-based posting of mentors and posting of male [mentors] for female school teachers created lots of ethical and moral issues. This also affected the mentoring process negatively (R12).*

Lack of Ownership: Nine teachers were of the view that lack of ownership affected the mentoring negatively. *[There is] lack of ownership by heads of cluster training and support centers as they have to manage the activities of their institutions,... so they think it [mentoring] is a burden and additional work [being taken by the government] without any incentive. This situation results in a poor arrangement at training centers, which hamper the training (R32).*

Unrealistic Expectations: Seven (07) teachers were of the view that unrealistic expectations from the teachers badly affect the mentoring activities. *Unrealistic expectations from teachers in terms of performance like 100% results [of students, teachers & schools], 100 % enrollment [of students], and 100 % attendance [of students & teachers] affect the mentoring process (R23).*

Lack of Follow-up: Seven (07) teachers were of the view that lack of follow-up affected the mentoring negatively. *[There is] no proper follow-up of mentoring activities by the authorities resulted in poor mentoring (R6).*

No Reward: Few (05) teachers pointed out that a lack of appreciation and reward for good performance badly affected the mentoring activities. *There is no reward, no appreciation, and no incentive for best-performing teachers which demotivated the teachers and indirectly affect the mentoring activities (R20).*

Discussion

Perceptions of HTs about the mentors' practices under the CPD Framework

The above presented quantitative data highlight that the mentoring practices of mentors as perceived by the HTs are not up to the required standards. The study revealed that the mentoring activities of DTEs were at the level of below average (infrequent), average (frequent), and good (most frequent) in seven, five, and one area of assessment respectively. The areas in which DTEs' mentoring practices were found at the infrequent level were interaction with the students during teaching, training of the teachers, activity-based teaching, mentors' behavior, observing academic calendar, teachers' performance, and homework" (Munir & Amin, 2018). The deficiency in the mentors' skills to perform their mentoring responsibilities properly may add to the poor performance of the TPSs.

Akhlaq et al. (2015) examined the outcomes of the mentoring process in Punjab province. According to their findings, most of the TPSs were of the view that although mentoring was useful in reducing their academic stress, but was not useful in getting the pre-planned targets because mentors' practices are not up to the required standard. Authors were of the view that a mentoring program should be revised to make it more helpful for the TPSs to perform their teaching practices appropriately. These findings are in partial agreement with current study findings.

Ali, Nazir, Shaheen, and Burki (2016) explored the role of mentors in the performance assessment of TPSs. The study was conducted in district Vehari and Pakpattan of the Punjab province. They concluded that due to mentoring TPSs were properly maintained teachers' diaries, assigning and checking homework regularly, ensuring activity-based teaching in their classrooms, and were also maintaining proper discipline in the classroom. These findings are also in partial agreement with the present study findings. Tesema (2014) found that the mentors working under the CPD program were not committed and properly supporting the implementation of CPD strategies. These findings also support the findings of our study.

Reflections of TPSs regarding strengths and weakness of the mentoring program

The TPSs highlighted various negative aspects of mentors' practices during their reflections upon mentoring practices. These negative aspects are the major reasons for inappropriate mentoring practices of the mentors. These negative aspects include authoritative behavior of mentors, continuous assessment, training without need assessment, traditional way of

teaching during training, lack of content knowledge mentors, lack of confidence of teachers upon mentors, long traveling of the mentors, mentors' non-transferable jobs, lack of ownership by the cluster heads, unrealistic expectations from teachers and school heads, lack of follow up of mentoring activities by the authorities, and no reward for a good performance from teachers. This shows that the mentors are not appropriately selected and also not properly trained before assigning the mentoring duties. According to Mathew (2003), a mentor must be an experienced, knowledgeable, and influential person who is interested to share his/her experiences with the mentees. Heeralal (2014) concluded that mentors with authoritative behaviors are not liked by the mentees. According to Breeding and Whitworth (1999), the conventional teaching style of the mentors is one of the major factors that can negatively influence the professional growth of the mentees. Desta, Chalchisa, and Lemma (2013) also highlighted the lack of rewards and appreciation for good performing teachers as a negative aspect of mentoring. The findings of these studies are in agreement with the findings of the current study.

Apart from the negative aspects of mentoring practices, the researchers also explored positive aspects of mentoring as perceived by the TPSs. Key benefits of mentors' practices include the regularity of teachers, students' enrollment, discipline, the training of teachers, use of teacher guides, healthy competition, and use of AV aids. The findings of many educational researchers such as Bell and Goldsmith (2013), Shareef (2008), Shehzad (2014), and Wong and Premkumar (2007) explored similar benefits of mentoring practices. So, these studies support the findings of the current study.

Conclusion

The mentors' practices under the CPD framework are not up to the mark. It was explored that the mentors were paying more attention to the completion of the task of visiting the required number of schools instead of properly addressing teaching and learning issues of the mentees.

The study concludes that most of the DTEs (mentors) are incompetent in terms of mentoring skills and content knowledge, particularly in science subjects.

The study also concludes that the mentors are facing various administrative and logistic constraints in the execution of their mentoring work like non-transferable jobs, poor salaries, lack of transport facilities, and assignment of additional tasks other than mentoring work.

According to the authors' understanding based on their observations and experiences as teacher educators, the CPD framework was a good initiative and it contributed to the professional development of TPSs, however, there was a need to make it more rigorous and useful through developing the mentor's expertise and proper check

and balance of the mentors' practices by the higher authorities. In conclusion, the program seems useful and has potential benefits that could be further enhanced. However, its negative aspects are the main hurdles in the success of the CPD framework and the poor performance of mentors.

Recommendations

The reason behind these sub-standard mentoring practices as highlighted by the TPSs are mainly incompetence of mentors in the mentoring skills and lack of content knowledge which can be addressed through selecting the most suitable mentors by strict observance of merit. Mentors' professional skills and content knowledge can be further improved through the comprehensive capacity-building program of the mentors.

Aside from internal assessment, a system of third-party evaluation of the performance of the mentors should also be implemented to know the exact situation of the improvement. Poor performer DTEs should be removed from mentoring duty.

There is a dire need to address the negative aspects of mentoring and necessary corrective measures should be taken on a priority basis. The weaknesses and strengths of mentors' practices under the CPD framework might be used to reflect on current in-service professional development programs and any future CPD program for the teachers to make them more useful.

Future Implications

This research can be used as a baseline study in the local context for further detailed studies on teacher CPD especially mentoring method of CPD. The study was conducted in only one district while future studies can include more districts involving all provinces of the country. Regional studies can also be planned collaboratively.

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