Mentoring Relationships: Cooperating Teachers' Perspectives on Mentoring Student Interns

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Abstract

   Cooperating teachers play a vital role in the professional development of student interns. Although they serve as mentors, most cooperating teachers do not receive comprehensive or coordinated preparation for their role as effective mentors. This article presents findings from a qualitative research study exploring the perceptions of nine cooperating teachers about mentoring student interns and identifies the salient factors impacting their mentoring relationships: (a) role of the mentor, (b) expectations for the mentoring relationship, and (c) cooperating teachers' motivation for serving as a mentor. A formal mentoring preparation program was designed for cooperating teachers and implemented at our university. The Summer Mentor Teacher Support Program (SMTSP) consisted of a two-day, 6-hr-per-day workshop, which addressed strategies for effective mentoring and building positive relationships and served as the site for data collection. A brief description of this program is provided.

Introduction

   Mentoring is one of the major aspects of teacher education programs, often a collaborative effort between university supervisors, teacher educators, school administrators, supervising teachers, and preservice teachers (He, 2010; Schwille, 2008) to prepare better teachers for the increasingly challenging classroom environment. Studies demonstrate that mentors need to be more informed about the needs of the beginning and novice teachers they mentor (Feiman-Nemser, 2003; Iancu-Haddad & Oplatka, 2009). While much of the research on mentoring focuses on the beginning teacher, little research gives voice to the mentor teacher; yet there is growing research demonstrating that the mentor-protégé relationship enhances the growth and professional development of the mentor or more experienced teacher (Hastings, 2004; Howey, 1988; Iancu-Haddad & Oplatka, 2009; Tauer, 1998). Additional research has focused on the process of mentoring relative to the mentor and mentee (Achinstein & Villar, 2002, as cited in Iancu-Haddad & Oplatka, 2009).

   This study is in line with research that gives voice to mentor teachers, exploring their perspectives on the mentor-protégé relationship. According to He (2010), the mentee or preservice teacher needs significant guidance in both pedagogical and content knowledge throughout the mentoring process. In fact, He says, the mentoring experience is one of the primary factors that determine the success of the first-year or beginning teacher's experience.

Beginning teachers face numerous challenges during the first few years of teaching, including student motivation, planning and implementation of curriculum, instruction, and various other roles and responsibilities (Roehrig, Pressley, & Talotta, 2002). This complexity, coupled with the increasing pressure to ensure that students are excelling, can place a significant amount of stress on the new teacher (Roehrig, Bohn, Turner, & Pressley, 2007) and adversely impact his or her effectiveness in the classroom.

The internship field experience plays a significant role in shaping the beliefs and knowledge of the prospective teacher (Borko, Eisenhart, Brown, Underhill, Jones, & Agard, 1992; Eisenhart, Borko, Underhill, Brown, Jones, & Agard, 1993, as cited in Borko & Mayfield, 1995). The field experience is often considered the culminating capstone event for a teacher education program, as well as a critical milestone toward becoming an effective teacher (McIntyre, Byrd, & Foxx, 1996). According to Guyton and McIntyre (1990), surveys of practicing teachers indicate that they overwhelmingly rate their student teaching or internship experience as the most beneficial and critical component of their teacher education program.

The internship provides opportunities for interns (novice teachers) to collaborate and be actively mentored by cooperating teachers (veteran teachers). Typically, university teacher education programs select veteran or more experienced teachers to serve as cooperating teachers and mentors based on factors that may include prior collaboration, credentials, and teacher availability or willingness to work with an intern. Generally, the cooperating teachers are eager and willing to facilitate in this supervisory role, but oftentimes they are ill prepared to serve as effective mentors (Grimmett & Ratzlaff, 1986; He, 2010). The ideal setting for the mentee is one that is welcoming, accepting, and supportive (Abell, Dillon, Hopkins, McInerney, & O'Brien, 1995; Cain, 2009). Furthermore, mentors are often expected to function in multiple roles and meet an unrealistic standard envisioned by the beginning teacher (He, 2010). When the mentor is unable to meet this standard, the mentor-mentee relationship is often stressed (Bullough & Draper, 2004). Because the beginning teacher is impressionable and the internship experience is pivotal to his or her development, it is critical to investigate methods or strategies that better prepare the cooperating teacher to be an effective mentor.

According to Martin (2002), the most neglected characteristic of a mentoring relationship is the failure to adequately support the prospective mentor (cooperating teacher) with the skills necessary to be an effective mentor. In recent years, effectively designing, implementing, and evaluating mentoring programs specifically targeting beginning and novice teachers (who often serve as cooperating teachers) has become critical to the development of preservice teachers (He, 2010; Schwille, 2008). Unfortunately, there has been little attention focused on developing and implementing effective mentoring models for teacher education programs (Giebelhaus, Carmen, & Bowman, 2002). As a result, the mentoring that a preservice teacher encounters is often considered "hit or miss," and teacher education programs must rely on the schools or districts to provide professional development to prepare teachers to be effective mentors. Without adequate preparation for mentors, a number of preservice teachers or

interns may have experiences that do not adequately prepare them for the very challenging first years of teaching (He, 2010).

Research has shown that the more formal preparation the mentor receives, the more effective they become (Iancu-Haddad & Oplatka, 2009; Kennedy, 1991). Subsequently, promoting successful mentoring relationships is a very important step toward developing student interns into effective practitioners. Some researchers have proposed the development of practical mentoring models (Giebelhaus et al., 2002; He, 2010) that would include the primary tenets of traditional mentoring programs. These mentoring models would extend beyond teacher education programs and also serve as professional development for the mentor teachers (He, 2010). Any efforts toward teacher retention or reducing attrition rates must acknowledge and examine the impact effective mentoring during the internship experience may have on the longevity and effectiveness of a beginning or novice teacher.

The purpose of this article is to present findings from a qualitative research study exploring the perceptions of nine cooperating teachers about mentoring student interns. This research identifies three salient factors impacting the mentoring relationships of these cooperating teachers: (a) role of the mentor, (b) expectations for the mentoring relationship, and (c) cooperating teachers' motivation for serving as a mentor.

A formal mentoring preparation program, designed for cooperating teachers and implemented at our university, served as the data collection site. This program, the Summer Mentor Teacher Support Program (SMTSP), consisted of a two-day, 6-hr-per-day workshop, which addressed strategies for effective mentoring and building positive relationships. A brief description of this program is provided.

Review of the Related Literature

Mentoring Relationships

The art of mentoring dates back as far as Greek mythology (Harris, 2003) and can be considered informal or formal. The most prevailing theme regarding mentoring describes a relationship between an experienced person and someone who is not as experienced, or the process of nurturing and providing varying degrees of mental, emotional, and pedagogical support (Bierema, 1996; Iancu-Haddad & Oplatka, 2009). However, Kochan and Trimble (2000) assert that this view implies a relationship where the mentee is viewed as subservient to the mentor, implying a one-way relationship. In the classroom setting, the mentor is typically an experienced or veteran teacher who allows a preservice teacher in the classroom or actively facilitates a beginning teacher in becoming acclimated to the school setting (Cornell, 2003). A number of research studies on mentoring relationships have focused on higher education (Campbell & Campbell, 2002; Harris, 2003), people of color and women (Enomoto, Gardner, & Grogan, 2003; Mertz & Pfleeger, 2002; Wilcox, 2002), parents (Avani, 2002), school-age children (Watts, Erevelles, & King, 2003), and administrators and educators (Martin, 2002; Tauer, 2003; Zellner & Erlandson, 2002). Researchers have focused on all of these areas in hopes of studying and gaining insight into the effectiveness of mentoring.

There is a lack of consensus on one single or standard definition of *mentoring* (Halai, 2006; Wunsch, 1994). However, the literature on mentoring identifies a number of key roles of mentors, such as serving as a guide, offering support (Ganser, 1996), and acting as adviser, trainer, or partner (Jones, 2001), as well as nurturer to the mentee. *Mentoring* is also defined as a nurturing relationship that is based on mutual trust that leads to the development and professional growth of both the mentor and mentee (Halai, 2006). Simply put, mentoring provides benefits to both the mentor and the mentee, and there is a sense of satisfaction as the mentor watches the mentee grow (Reed, Phillips, Parrish, & Shaw, 2002).

Much of the research on mentoring has focused primarily on the perspectives and role of the mentor (Harris, 2003). More specifically, research has examined the type of support mentors provide, which can be characterized as emotional or psychological (Bruce, 1995; Haring, 1999; Iancu-Haddad & Oplatka, 2009). Research by Jacobi (1991) examined mentoring in the educational setting and defined three major categories of the mentor's role, which include personal support, role modeling, and professional development. Moreover, this relationship is often characterized by the mentor as providing guidance, support, and advice (Bierema, 1996; Harris, 2003). The word *mentor*, according to the Merriam-Webster online dictionary, is defined as "a trusted counselor or guide"; *mentee* is defined as "one who is being mentored" or "protégé." Reed et al. (2002) define *mentoring* as "a process of coaching a person both personally and professionally" (p. 103). Although there are multiple definitions for *mentoring*, there are commonalities when contemplating the necessary qualities for effective mentors and the types of activities that facilitate effective mentoring.

Knox and McGovern (1988) assert that there are six critical characteristics of mentors: (a) willingness to share knowledge, (b) competency, (c) willingness to facilitate growth, (d) honesty, (e) willingness to give critical, positive, and constructive feedback, and (f) ability to deal directly with the protégé. Some of the primary aspects of effective mentoring models include making observations, providing feedback, and having time for the mentor and mentee to discuss feedback and engage in reflection (Giebelhaus et al., 2002). According to Giebelhaus (1999), effective mentoring models should include a method for selection and preparation of mentors and their mentees that promote collaboration as well as opportunities for direct observation of their teaching. Moreover, factors such as personality, ability to communicate tenets of effective teaching, and similarities between grade level and content area facilitate effective mentoring (Giebelhaus et al., 2002).

Researchers and scholars in the field of mentoring agree that the primary role of the mentor is to provide guidance and emotional support to the novice teacher who is in need of significant support (Halai, 2006). According to Ganser (1996), the mentor should optimally have anywhere from 8–15 years of teaching experience, including several years in the school in which they are currently working. Additionally, they should exhibit the following characteristics: (a) willingness, commitment, and enthusiasm; (b) the ability to collaborate with adults; and (c) the perception of teaching as a job they enjoy. In 1978, Schein proposed that the mentor has eight roles: teacher, sponsor, confidant, door-opener, role model, talent-developer,

proctor, and leader. Regardless of the varying definitions and perspectives on what constitutes mentoring, it has been shown that the more experienced a mentor is, the more likely he or she is to be an effective mentor (Roehrig et al., 2007).

The Nature of the Field Experience

The internship or field experience is considered one of the most significant milestones of the teacher preparation program (Brimfield & Leonard, 1983). Careful consideration must be taken when assigning student interns to mentors or cooperating teachers to ensure that the field experience is productive for all involved. The most successful mentoring relationships are based on shared and common values, goals, and understandings (Tauer, 2002). It is important to gain the mentor's perspective on the mentoring relationship to fully understand the dynamics of mentoring.

Research investigating strategies for promoting effective mentoring relationships may facilitate positive internship experiences for cooperating teachers, student interns, and university supervisors. For example, research by Roehrig et al. (2007) demonstrates the importance of appropriate mentor modeling (e.g., effective instructional strategies for the mentee to observe), as well as the need for a clear and open line of communication throughout the mentoring experience between the mentor and mentee.

The development and implementation of formal mentoring programs and mentoring models in the context of teacher preparation programs can better prepare the prospective teacher for success during the challenging beginning years of teaching (He, 2010). It is critical that mentors get the experience and support they need to be effective mentors for beginning teachers. Organized, formal mentoring programs can provide both structure and rationale for the need for effective mentors for beginning or novice teachers. Research demonstrates that mentors who are considered "effective" tend to have more experience as mentors than those who are not (Roehrig et al., 2007). Some studies also show that quality mentors need to have both expertise and competence (Evertson & Smithey, 2000; Stallion & Zimpher, 1991; Wang & Odell, 2002) in the realm of mentoring if they are to help their beginning teachers be more effective. Mentors who have had adequate preparation, research shows, are better able to assist their mentees with classroom management, problem solving, and lesson planning expertise (Evertson & Smithey, 2000).

Significance of the Study

It is important to develop deeper understandings about how cooperating teachers perceive their important role as mentor to student interns and to explore the factors deemed necessary for effective mentoring to occur. This qualitative study included nine cooperating teachers who shared their perspectives and described their experiences as mentors to student interns. In an attempt to add to the existing literature base, conversing with this group of cooperating teachers provided a model for the further development and implementation of effective mentoring programs. Research questions guiding this investigation were:

1. What are cooperating teachers' perspectives on mentoring student interns during their internship experience?
2. What are cooperating teachers' perspectives on factors that impact the mentoring relationship?

Methods

This study investigated the role of cooperating teachers as mentors to student interns, including how the cooperating teachers can shed light on ways to enhance the student internship experience for both the student interns and themselves. A qualitative lens offered advantages and insights that were richer and more context-specific than what might have been possible with a quantitative study. As researchers, we believe the most appropriate qualitative approach for this investigation was to use a phenomenological perspective. We used patterns of various experiences, as expressed through the voices of the cooperating teachers, as a framework to provide insight and understanding into individual experiences while investigating the underlying meanings behind participants' experiences (Watson et al., 2002). Similarly, we looked at the phenomenon of cooperating teachers who have mentored student interns during their student teaching or field experiences as a framework to gain insight into their perspectives on the internship experience as well as the mentoring experience.

We thought it was more appropriate to understand the experiences and perspectives of cooperating teachers about mentoring in their own words as opposed to using quantitative measures (Kuh & Andreas, 1991). The intent of this study was not to generalize to all cooperating teachers, but to provide insight into how the teachers participating in this research viewed their role as mentor and described their experiences with student interns. Furthermore, we believe that insight into cooperating teachers' experiences and perspectives can better provide information on how to facilitate and enhance the internship experience for the cooperating teacher, mentor teacher, and even the university supervisor.

As described by Merriam (2002), all qualitative research is to some extent phenomenological since research from the qualitative paradigm focuses on the individual's experience; phenomenological studies are designed to gain an understanding into the essence of the experience. More specifically, qualitative research is designed to answer questions about lived or social experiences and gives meaning to these experiences (Merriam, 1998).

The primary sources of data in this study came from responses to a demographic survey and open-ended questionnaires designed to elicit participants' lived experiences. Another source of data included observations made during a summer workshop designed to identify cooperating teachers' perspectives on how to better prepare them to effectively mentor student interns. As part of this workshop, we asked cooperating teachers to give insights on how teacher education programs can better prepare student interns and cooperating teachers for the field experience. By collecting and then using these data, efforts will be made by the host teacher education program to make the student internship experience more rewarding and productive for all involved.

Summer Mentor Teacher Workshop

This study included observations collected during a two-day, 6-hr-per-day workshop designed to prepare cooperating teachers for their mentoring roles. The general topics and themes of the workshop were the role of the mentor, relationship building, and promoting cooperative and collaborative relationships. This workshop was considered a single-session training experience on mentoring, similar to the one described in research by Campbell and Campbell (2002). According to their research, extensive, multisession workshops often result in a loss of attendance over time; therefore, a "one-shot" model for the summer workshop was more practical than an ongoing workshop.

Incentives

A total of nine cooperating teachers completed the two-day workshop, and each received a stipend in the amount of $250.00 and a gift bag of educational supplies (i.e., pens, paper, notebooks, and a coffee mug) worth more than $25.00. During the two-day workshop, we provided meals and snacks, including a continental-style breakfast and a midday lunch. According to Campbell and Campbell (2002), these are essential elements of an effective workshop series; having food available encourages participation.

Participant Selection

Participants for this study were nine female, public schoolteachers who had served previous semesters as cooperating teachers for a Southern regional university. The participants had a range of discipline areas and teaching experience; participants included one grade 8 science teacher, two grade 8 math teachers, three grade 8 English/language arts teachers, and three high school English teachers (see Table 1). We used purposive sampling in this study. This sampling strategy involved selecting a population across grade levels and content areas that would provide "information rich" cases. This purposive sampling strategy allowed us to learn about the issues important to the purpose of the research and to gain insight into the phenomenon of interest (Merriam, 1998; Patton, 1990).

Table 1
Table Title ????

Name	Gender	Ethnicity	Years of Teaching	Content Area
Jessica	Female	Caucasian	15	English/language arts
Diane	Female	Caucasian	20	Science
Ashley	Female	Caucasian	25	Math
Mae	Female	African American	31	Math
Taylor	Female	Caucasian	8	Math
Wendy	Female	Caucasian	13	English/language arts
Kirsten	Female	Caucasian	5	English
Magnolia	Female	Caucasian	23	English/speech
Sara	Female	Caucasian	15	English/language arts

In the context of this study, criterion-based sampling was also used, which is, in essence, the same as purposive sampling (Goetz & LeCompte, 1984). Several researchers have discussed the use of criterion-based selection methods (Patton, 1990; Merriam, 2002). We chose to employ this method because all participants in this study had to meet a "predetermined criterion" (Patton, 1990). Ultimately, we selected the teachers in this study based on a list of recommendations from district administrators, school principals, and university supervisors who considered them suitable candidates (based on the criteria they were provided). The primary characteristics that were described as criteria included the following: (a) The candidates had to have previous experience mentoring student interns and/or practicum students; (b) they had to be tenured faculty; and (c) their previous mentoring experiences had to indicate a willingness to participate in a research study of this nature. We contacted the teachers who fit the criteria, and we selected for the study teachers who were eager to be a part of the study.

Unfortunately, although we contacted both males and females included on the list of potentially interested teachers, only female teachers showed continued interest in participating throughout the duration of the study. It is also important to note that we conducted this study during the summer, which may have impacted the availability of participants as many were likely on summer leave. Additionally, professional development projects may have been mandated by the school system, which could have conflicted with teachers' ability to participate in this research. All participants for the study met the following criteria:

- Teachers at the junior high or high school grade levels (grades 8–12)
- Between 3–15 years of teaching experience
- Prior experience as a cooperating teacher and/or mentor teacher
- Understood and consented to participate on a voluntary basis
- No prior professional development experience on mentoring student interns

We obtained participant information after approval from a university Institutional Review Board for the Use of Human Subjects office. We contacted participants via telephone or e-mail, and all signed consent forms at the onset of the workshop giving permission to be videotaped. Participants selected their own pseudonyms for the purposes of confidentiality.

Demographic Survey

All of the study participants were female public school teachers, and each had prior experience mentoring student interns. One of the participants had previously participated in a formal mentoring program.

We provided each participant an open-ended demographic questionnaire at the onset of the two-day workshop to provide insight and details into their background and school community. The demographic questionnaire (see Appendix A) addressed content area, years

of teaching experience, demographic information about participants' classes, number of years supervising interns, and number of interns they had mentored.

Open-ended Questionnaire

Additionally, we asked participants to complete open-ended questionnaires (see Appendix B, C, and D) to identify their teaching philosophy, experience as a cooperating teacher, formal preparation in mentoring, and expectations for the student internship experience. Participants also completed questionnaires addressing their perspectives of cooperating teachers mentoring student interns. Participants addressed the following questions in a focus group; responses were recorded as field notes.

- What is a mentor?
- What is the role of a mentor?
- What skills should an effective mentor exhibit?
- What are some benefits of mentoring?
- What does it mean to be mentored?
- What is the role of relationships in mentoring?

Data Analysis

Qualitative data analysis involves the systematic organization of data in an effort to make meaning and understand data so that it can be presented to others (Bogdan & Biklen, 1982). We analyzed the data obtained from the questionnaires and the demographic survey, and we organized significant units of open-ended responses to questionnaires into various categories and themes. Data analysis also included looking for similar themes and patterns that emerged between participants' responses in the study. Similar to research by Weasmer and Woods (2003), we analyzed data using the inductive method of analysis, reviewing data in an effort to identify words, phrases, patterns, and events that were noteworthy. Words and phrases that were identified within the data were "coding categories," and these served as a way of sorting the descriptive data while also making it easier to manage (Bogdan & Biklen, 1982).

The approach to data analysis involved the following: Initially, we analyzed the demographic questionnaire to determine the degree of teaching experience for each participant, content area, as well as additional demographic information. Subsequently, we analyzed participants' responses to open-ended questionnaires to determine common patterns through the use of various statements, while developing categories and themes. We used the Strauss and Corbin (1990) system for organizing data to classify themes from the textual evidence. This data analysis strategy examines commonalities between the participants' experiences or perspectives on mentoring. According to Davis, et al. (2004), findings of this nature are valid, and textual evidence is heuristic, allowing the reader to understand participants' experiences and often shedding new light on the research area under

investigation. Furthermore, quotations and questionnaire responses provide a certain degree of richness and depth to respondents' experiences and perspectives "in their own words."

We used triangulation to strengthen the design and rigor of this research study. Triangulation of data facilitates the ability of the qualitative researcher to enhance the "credibility" and "trust-worthiness" of data (Merriam, 2002; Patton, 1990). Triangulation was achieved through the combining of data from the demographic survey and questionnaires throughout the research study (Merriam, 1998). We also conducted peer reviews throughout the data analysis process to enhance the credibility of findings (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Results and Discussion

The following two themes emerged from the analysis of data:

1. Role of the mentor and expectations for the mentoring relationship
2. Cooperating teachers' motivation for mentoring

These findings were consistent with findings by Weasmer and Woods (2003) and Anderson and Shannon (1988) that suggest that the major components of mentoring in the field of education are role modeling, nurturing, support, sponsoring, and teaching.

Role of the Mentor and Expectations for the Mentoring Relationship

It is important for student interns to have "guided teaching" relationships with their cooperating teachers and university supervisors, because these relationships have a significant impact on learning how to teach (Borko & Mayfield, 1995). Research by Glickman and Bey (1990) suggests that the help and guidance provided by cooperating teachers is directly related to the effectiveness of student interns. Unfortunately, further research by Smith (1990) describes how the potential of guidance from cooperating teachers to facilitate the student internship experience is often unrealized.

The open-ended questionnaire responses offered insights into cooperating teachers' perspectives on providing guidance and support to the student intern. One participant, Jessica, discussed in the following statement how she viewed herself as a guide. She said, "I provide a stable, secure environment and allow my interns to begin to explore gradually first on an activity, then a class period, then more prolonged experience. I encourage interns to watch their teachers, too." Ashley, another participant, described how she could best facilitate the internship experience in a similar account: "I can best facilitate the student internship by providing opportunities for my intern to apply what he/she has learned with a net." Sara, another participant, said, "I will certainly do whatever I am told to do, as well as be a support system for the intern, and I will be cooperative and sensitive to his/her needs." In the following statement, Wendy described how her years of experience contributed to her perspectives on mentoring: "After 13 years of teaching and four earlier interns, I feel I have helpful guidance to offer a beginning teacher, and I relish the chance to learn from an individual who is eager to

try out the latest trends and practices." These statements demonstrate a sense of responsibility for providing guidance and support to interns. In addition, these participants allowed interns to gain autonomy in the classroom by gradually giving them an opportunity to build confidence in their own teaching.

Throughout the workshops, the participants defined the role of mentor and described their expectations for the mentoring relationship. Participant responses revealed that in-service teachers viewed their role in mentoring relationships as a resource person, guide, role model, friend, and experienced professional. These findings were consistent with research (Yost, 2002) that described the mentor teacher's role as effective expert, guide, and support system for the novice teacher. Each of these roles ultimately has an impact on student learning. Moreover, many participants discussed that mentoring student interns enhanced and "recharged" their teaching skills and promoted self-reflection.

Participants expected their mentees to be knowledgeable, professional, flexible, and reflective. In addition, participants discussed the importance of collaboration, patience, good communication skills, trust, honesty, and respect toward the nurturing of effective mentoring relationships. Lastly, participants discussed in great detail the importance of a "code of etiquette" for the intern as a guest in the cooperating teacher's classroom. This code included the following: respect for the mentor teacher's private desk space, appropriate dress code, and making sure that the intern's personal life did not overlap with his or her professional life.

Participants also discussed the significance of role modeling for student interns to facilitate and encourage their growth and success. One participant, Taylor, believed that she was a good role model because she was open-minded and flexible. In the following statement, she described her perspectives on role modeling: "I am willing to be flexible and receptive in working collaboratively. I am not too set in my ways, yet think I can be good for new teachers." Kirsten simply stated, "I want teachers to be as good as me." According to these statements, these two respondents believed that they were good models for student interns. Research demonstrates that modeling during the student internship experience can benefit both the cooperating teacher and the intern, and it is essential for novice and beginning teachers to have good models to imitate early on (Weasmer & Woods, 2003).

This theme asserts that mentors understand the critical role they play in the professional development of the prospective teacher and reiterates prior research that describes mentors as guides, support systems, and nurturers toward their mentees (Halai, 2006).

Cooperating Teachers' Motivation for Mentoring

Motivations for mentoring, as expressed by participants, included that they wanted to share their knowledge, gain knowledge on new trends in teaching, encourage new teachers, and collaborate with beginning teachers. Participants, through open-ended questionnaire responses, expressed their desire to be mentors in a variety of ways. The sincerity regarding their motivation for working with student interns was clear in most cases. For example, when asked to discuss reasons for being a mentor, Kirsten responded, "I want to share my passion

with others. I want to help train effective, efficient educators." In a similar statement, another participant, Mae, responded, "An opportunity to share my experiences and expertise in the classroom." She added that mentoring gave her "An opportunity to gain new knowledge and skills from the collaboration between university and student intern. An opportunity to team-teach with an intern, to share ideas, to share responsibilities."

Magnolia also expressed a desire to share her expertise and gain knowledge: "To share my expertise and gain more knowledge with new methods of teaching. I enjoy helping young adults have a positive experience." Wendy stated,

> Our profession needs well-trained teachers ready to fill teaching positions opening all around the country, and new teachers need to learn from those who enjoy their jobs. Education is precious and so important to me that I don't want it just left to others to prepare our teachers for tomorrow. I want to offer my help and expertise. I find a student intern rejuvenates me by bringing fresh ideas and fresh energy and fresh perspectives into the classroom. Sometimes he/she reaches the children I haven't reached as well as I have others.

Other participants identified the primary impetus for mentoring as the desire to encourage a new teacher in the profession. Diane discussed her willingness to collaborate and encourage her interns in the following statement:

> I am excited to have the opportunity to encourage and help a prospective teacher grow and develop love and respect for students and teaching. Using hands-on and inquiry learning will allow the intern to see that this is possible. Lots of lab-work in a classroom! I plan to learn from the intern as well—new ideas. Another take on what's happening in my room.

Other participants, like Jessica, expressed that they were excited to work with an intern: "I enjoy working with new preservice teachers. I want them to have quality experiences." Diane also stated that she wanted to "encourage a prospective teacher to be a better, more competent teacher." These statements reiterate the necessity of the cooperating teacher to be motivated and exhibit a desire to make the mentoring process beneficial to the mentee (preservice teacher).

This theme addressed the role that mentor and mentee motivation has on the mentoring relationship. The cooperating teachers all expressed that they were both eager to collaborate and desired to learn and share their knowledge with the student interns. This demonstrates that learning during the mentoring relationship is a two-way street, where both mentee and mentor learn from the collaborative relationship.

Conclusion

This project provides implications for both research and practice to encourage teacher education programs to initiate systemic initiatives in collaboration with local or area schools to provide more formal mentoring programs. These mentoring programs should not just focus on induction programs for new teachers; they should go back even further, preparing cooperating teachers during the internship experience. This research affirms findings in studies by Kyle, More, and Sanders (1999), that describes the importance of providing professional development for the cooperating or mentor teacher in preparation for hosting a student intern.

It is clear that the student intern must have a role model who is skilled and experienced in mentoring, and it is this type of modeling that can foster positive development toward becoming an effective teacher (Weasmer & Mays, 2003). The novice teacher is likely to model what his or her cooperating teacher does (Weasmer & Mays, 2003); if the mentor lacks adequate skills in mentoring, this can significantly impact the student intern's professional development. In an effort to enhance teacher retention, it is critical that teacher education programs continue to work collaboratively with area schools to develop and implement effective mentoring programs for the in-service teacher and for the student intern and beginning teacher.

Participants in this study expressed that mentoring workshops should be provided for cooperating teachers to better prepare them for the mentoring of their student interns. As mentioned earlier, the internship is a critical milestone for the preservice teacher and may well serve as a primary determinant of how effective the prospective teacher will be in the classroom during the first few years. Many participants in this study recommended that similar workshops on effective mentoring be a part of ongoing, mandatory professional development for cooperating mentor teachers who plan to host a student intern. According to participants, the two-day summer workshops gave them an opportunity to express their concerns about mentoring student interns, raised their awareness of the importance of mentoring relationships, and developed their mentoring skills.

While the findings from this research did not shed any new light on the nature and impact of mentoring on prospective teachers, it reiterated that mentor teachers understand their role in facilitating the internship experience. Specifically, the cooperating teachers in this study were able to describe their roles as guide, support, or critical friend similar to previous research studies (Halai, 2006; Iancu-Haddad & Oplatka, 2009). These mentor teachers understood how critical their roles were to the development of the student intern. This is important information to note when developing and implementing formal mentoring programs.

To extend this research, it is now important to determine if the cooperating teachers or mentor teachers understand their role and the expectations of the mentoring relationship. The acts of mentoring and modeling effective strategies to the prospective teacher are essential. This is important, because even though the teachers know what they are expected to do

relative to mentoring, this does not necessarily mean they know how to mentor or how to be an effective mentor. Therefore, teacher education programs need to ensure that mentor teachers are adequately prepared to model effective strategies to facilitate the internship experience. This will better prepare student interns and prospective teachers for the real world of teaching. Lastly, it is also important to find out student interns' perspectives on how well their mentor teachers actually mentor them throughout the internship experience.

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Appendix A
Demographic Questionnaire for Cooperating Teachers

Please provide the following information by checking a blank or writing an answer to the question.

Biographical Information

Gender: ❏ Female ❏ Male

Race/ethnicity: ❏ Asian ❏ African American ❏ Latino/a ❏ White/European ❏ American Indian

U.S. Citizenship: ❏ U.S. citizen ❏ non-U.S. citizen

1. Identify the town, city, or state you grew up in.

2. Describe the school where you currently teach.

3. How many years have you been teaching at this school?

4. How many years have you been teaching?

5. Are you teaching in your content area?

6. What is your content area?

Appendix B
Open-ended Questionnaire for Mentor Teacher Support Program

Questionnaire to be administered to cooperating teachers during the first workshop in the summer mentor program.

1. Briefly describe your teaching philosophy.

2. What are some of the characteristics of an effective teacher?

3. Briefly describe your prior experiences as a cooperating teacher?

4. How many times have you had an intern in your classroom?

5. What are qualities that you would like in a student intern?

6. How do you feel you can best facilitate the student internship experience?

7. Have you ever had any formal preparation in how to effectively mentor novice teachers or student interns?

8. How do you feel the university supervisor can better facilitate the student internship experience?

9. What are your expectations for the student internship experience?

Appendix C
Open-ended Questionnaire for Mentor Teacher Support Program

Post-questionnaire to be administered to cooperating teachers at the end of the workshop.

1. Briefly describe your views of the summer mentor workshops.

2. What would you do to make the workshops more effective?

3. Would you recommend the summer mentor support program to a colleague interested in becoming a mentor? Why or why not?

4. Do you think this program has better prepared you to become a mentor for your student intern? If so, how?

Appendix D
Open-ended Questionnaire for Mentor Teacher Support Program

Questionnaire to be administered to student interns during the last week of the internship.

1. How has your cooperating teacher helped to prepare you as a prospective teacher?

2. How has your university supervisor helped to prepare you as a prospective teacher?