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The Implementation of a Mentoring Strategy for Teachers' Professional Development in Elementary School

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Abstract

This study aims to discuss two important variables in teachers' role as educators in elementary school institutions, namely mentoring and professional development. Mentoring is believed to help teachers to enhance their teaching quality and students' involvement. Professional development refers to teachers' skills in implementing activities in their teaching-learning process. The method used in this study is literature review by identifying, selecting, analyzing and synthesizing relevant previous articles or data related to the topic. The result of the study confirms that there are five factors contribute to the implementations of a mentoring strategy for teachers' professional development in elementary school, such as: (1) Teamwork approach; (2) Teachers' attitude; (3) Exchange of information; (4) Continuous learning; and (5) Teaching skills improvement. The study concludes that a mentoring strategy plays significant role to

improve teachers' professional development during their educational services. The implementation of mentoring is not limited to novice teachers, but it should be applied for all teachers as a manifestation of lifelong learning.

Keywords: Competency, Learning experience, Lifelong learning system

Abstrak

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mendiskusikan dua variabel penting terkait dengan peran guru sebagai pendidik di sekolah dasar, yaitu mentoring dan pengembangan profesional. Mentoring dipercayai dapat membantu guru meningkatkan kualitas pengajaran dan penglibatan siswa. Pengembangan profesional mengacu pada keterampilan guru dalam melaksanakan kegiatan dalam proses belajar-mengajar mereka. Metode yang digunakan dalam penelitian ini adalah kajian literatur dengan mengidentifikasi, memilih, menganalisis dan mensintesis artikel atau data kajian-kajian sebelumnya yang relevan dengan topik penelitian. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa ada lima faktor yang berkontribusi terhadap pengimplementasian mentoring dalam pengembangan profesional guru di sekolah dasar, yaitu: (1) Pendekatan kerjasama tim; (2) Sikap guru; (3) Pertukaran informasi; (4) Pembelajaran berkelanjutan; dan (5) Peningkatan keterampilan mengajar. Kesimpulan penelitian ini adalah, strategi mentoring memainkan peran penting dalam meningkatkan pengembangan profesional guru selama tugas aktif mereka. Pelaksanaan mentoring tidak terbatas pada guru pemula, tetapi dapat diterapkan pada semua guru sebagai manifestasi pembelajaran sepanjang hayat.

Kata Kunci: Kompetensi, Pengalaman belajar, Sistem pembelajaran sepanjang hayat

INTRODUCTION

Various challenges such as solving complex problems, responding to changes, working in high performing teams and communicating effectively in the teaching-learning process demand teachers to really care about their quality improvement (Malik, 2018). Teachers have to be responsive with the development of digitalization in teaching-learning context and should have additional competencies like having skills to use technological devices, involving parents and understanding school characteristics to adapt with the new pedagogical approaches (Goh & Abdul-Wahab, 2020). The competencies may be obtained by joining mentoring sessions under supervision of senior teachers who have more experience and skills in terms of students' engagement, applying technology in teaching, and classroom management skill.



Mentoring is a kind of communication and close interaction which contains learning process between mentor and mentee (Barrett *et al.*, 2017; Garcia-Melgar *et al.*, 2021; Kumar & Johnson, 2017). There is a personal-professional relationship between mentor and mentee in educational process to build human capacity (Mullen & Klimaitis, 2021). Furthermore, Bressman *et al.* (2018) define mentoring as a way from experienced people to teach, support, guidance, advice and encourage the less experienced people in improving their abilities, skills and professional developments. The learning process in mentoring means transferring of knowledge, attitude, and skill from mentor to mentee but at the same time mentor also gets more learning experience by teaching. The two can grow together to become professionals in their field. The decision to participate in mentoring relationship is in essence a choice to engage in a developmental activity. Mentors' willingness to participate will influence the actual support behaviours provided. Serving as mentors to others can be viewed as a form of goal-directed behaviour. Individuals may mentor others because that action may satisfy certain needs or motives of the mentor (Rekha & Ganesh, 2019).

Mentors do not use formal assessment in mentoring because this thing may hinder mentees in their own learning experience (Daly & Milton, 2017; Rahman *et al.*, 2022). It means that mentors are non-formal teachers. They prefer to be the learning partners or friends. So, a mentee communicates comfortably with his or her mentor without thinking about the hierarchy between them. Sometimes mentor and mentee may collaborate in a project that they can work and help each other.

Daly and Milton (2017) argue that educative mentoring supports new teachers to develop an enquiry approach to the classroom and the development of deep understanding of learning and teaching, so that changes in practice are based on critical thinking rather than immediate solution-focused strategies. Educative mentoring has been asserted as a 'new mentoring stance', implying a deeply ingrained set of principles and practices for mentoring that are embedded in wider educational purposes. The novice teachers should participate in mentoring to improve their knowledge, skills, and attitude toward teaching and learning process in their current services. Teachers in their early career as novice members need mentoring to support their teaching learning in the classroom (Zafi *et al.*, 2021; Heikkinen *et al.*, 2018). They also should learn about the school climate, environment, students, and other teachers' perception toward them. Mentoring with the senior teachers helps



them to adapt with the school's structures and they learn from other experiences. The activities, actions, concepts, meanings and social relations are associated with mentoring also vary so that may look quite different from another setting (Mullen & Klimaitis, 2021). These differences have serious consequences for how mentoring of novice teachers is defined, conceptualized and theorized.

However, mentoring is not only for novice teachers, but it is also needed by all educators, because it is part of growing tools. Mentoring in education is a long learning process which mentor and mentee grow together and support each other. Mentors learn when they teach and mentee learn more when they are guided by mentors. It continues till both of them retire from teaching services. Rekha and Ganesh (2019) emphasized that mentoring in education could be beneficial either for others or themselves. Other-focused include, desire to pass on the wisdom to others, desire to help others and desire to build a competent workforce. Self-focused include the desire to increase personal learning and to feel satisfied.

Mena *et al.* (2017) classify three approaches in mentoring education, such as: knowledge transmission, theory and practice connection, and collaborative inquiry. Knowledge transmission approach means that mentor and mentee are the partners in discussion. They have their own knowledge to share and both sides can teach each other. Theory and practice connection approach ask to mentor and mentee to integrate their knowledge and professional skills in teaching. They transform to be teamwork to do a teaching-learning project (Zafi & Widayati, 2021). Finally, the collaborative inquiry approach uses constructed activities by mentors to improve practical knowledge and skills of mentee. They form new concepts in teaching and apply the skills in their classroom.

The competencies and skills of teachers are really needed these days to carry up effective teaching learning in digital era. Students have used technology as a means in their daily lives where they can learn many things from a huge resource in the internet (Rashid *et al.*, 2017; Utami *et al.*, 2021). Teachers need to have the skills to adapt with the new challenges. Teacher cannot be left alone with this situation. They need to interact and communicate to seniors or experts to help them solving their problems. Mentoring system should be designed for transferring the abilities to the teachers as educators to improve their professional development. Professional development is related to process that addresses a 'school-led self-



improving system' with coaching activities. It is categorized more specifically as 'efforts to improve teachers' capacity to function as effective professionals by having them learn new knowledge, attitudes and skills.

Teachers' professional development has been more discussed in 21st century because it is related to being a good teacher among students in digital learning era. A lot of problems in teaching-learning process in the classroom require a professional teacher to solve them (Jalaluddin, 2019; Ramadhani *et al.*, 2021). Being professional cannot be measured by graduating from a university with a degree in education, but it is a long process which requires some skills and competence for additional learning and experiences during practices. Osman and Warner (2020) defined professional development as teachers enhancing their teaching practices and outcomes for students. It can be concluded that the term professional development refers to any program, activity, or training aimed at improving instructional practice. Teacher professional development refers to teachers' activities to improve their skills and teaching performance during their educational services (Rutten, 2021). It means that the teachers develop inquiry learning to measure their competencies to teach students in their classes. The teachers maintain to learn from peers, school administrators, experts and community figures to collect information and knowledge regarding their professional learning. They also learn from students' views about their performance and try to create better approach for future teaching.

Several activities in formal and non-formal approaches have been initiated to improve teachers' professional development, such as designing in service training sessions, co-teaching, observations, book clubs, peer observations and instructional rounds, action research, and even discussion in mentoring with the fellow teachers (Osman & Warner, 2020). Some formal activities such as workshop model, lectures and structured discussion also can be applied for teachers' professional development. In this session, the teachers play a role as students and through this they will know what the students expect from their teachers (Hafnidar *et al.*, 2021; Jaafar *et al.*, 2019). The all activities are believed having greater effects not only for students' learning but also for administrators, policy measures, and accountability measures of school institutions (Kirsten, 2020).

According to Chu *et al.* (2016) some beneficial aspects are obtained from teachers' professional development, such as: (1) updating individuals' knowledge



of a subject in light of recent advances in the area; (2) updating individuals' skills, attitudes and approaches in light of the development of new teaching techniques and objectives, new circumstances and new educational research; (3) enabling individuals to apply changes made to curricula or other aspects of teaching practice; (4) helping schools to develop and apply new strategies concerning the curriculum and other aspects of teaching practice; (5) exchanging information and expertise among teachers and others, e.g. academics, industrialists; and (6) helping weaker teachers become more effective. The professional development also has positive changes for teachers, students, and schools. Teachers have more knowledge, skill, and motivation during teaching practices. The students have positive outcome because they enjoy and feel motivated in the class. The schools are more stable and have dynamically academic improvement (Osman & Warner, 2020).

The implementation of a mentoring strategy for novice teacher has been discussed by many literatures (Gholam, 2018; Schatz-Oppenheimer, 2017; Yirci, 2017), but few studies highlight it with teachers' professional development during their career services. Some factors regarding this matter need to identify in helping teachers to improve their teaching quality amid the new challenges for educators these days.

METHOD

The study used literature review approach by identifying, selecting, analyzing and synthesizing relevant previous articles or data related to mentoring strategies and teachers' professional development. According to (Chalkiadaki, 2018), using literature review study in primary education is appropriate to investigate the competencies of teachers that will contribute to synthesis based on academic area in reliable and accurate manner. In this study, the literature review was used to form the new concept and components of mentoring strategy for teacher's professional development. These components were important to help teachers to improve their competencies and professionalism during their teaching services in elementary schools.



FINDING AND DISCUSSION

Mentoring builds continuous learning by combination between social and educational practices (Heikkinen *et al.*, 2018). In larger scale, mentoring can be developed among students under teacher's supervision. The senior students may guide their juniors in certain courses and skills. In mentoring process, the seniors learn how to be a teacher and they feel what teachers think during teaching them in the class. They are more responsible when they are mentors because they have awareness as a role model for their juniors. Some studies found that mentoring can decrease bullying cases in schools (Azuine & Singh, 2019; Gowdy *et al.*, 2020; Herlina *et al.*, 2021; Tzani-Pepelasi *et al.*, 2019). Junior students are more respecting to their seniors because they learn from them (Gbollie & Keamu, 2017). In mentoring sessions, they have the opportunity to discuss many things to their senior that may the topics cannot be shared to their teachers in the class. This process creates a good relationship and believe each other. Daly and Milton (2017) said that mentoring can promote lack of conflicting roles and establish safe and trusting relationship between mentor and mentee. It is not only possible to combine assistance and assessment, but it is impossible to separate them and still take mentee seriously as learners. A mentoring strategy in education involves collaborative talks, mutual understanding, and reflective dialogue between mentor and mentee. They support each other in abiding the school norms and meeting teachers' needs in classroom teaching (Daly & Milton, 2017). The outcome of a mentoring strategy can be proven by improving personal learning experience and self-enhancement of mentors (Rekha & Ganesh, 2019).

Teachers` professional development may be deemed compulsory because the skills and knowledge gained from the development activities are considered important for teacher quality improvement (Bernardo *et al.*, 2020). In some cases, participation in such activities may even be required for teacher certification. It can also be important for teachers to exercise their own professional judgement by identifying and taking part in development activities which are most useful to them. A high degree of compulsory professional development may be indicative of a more highly managed professional development system with less discretion for teachers to choose the development they feel they need. The philosophy of teachers' professional development is to form personal identity of teachers as



educators. Teachers should have awareness about their roles by understanding, facilitating, servicing, and supporting their students in learning situation. They need to build learning concepts to reform their teaching performance. They cannot be single improve their professional experience on their own but they need help from experienced teachers in mentoring sessions (Crasborn & Hennissen, 2010).

Peer group mentoring known as model professional development was in order to support elementary school teachers in their early career and also for other teachers during their career services. It encourages cooperative learning between new and experienced teachers in broadly educative perspectives. This model has been disseminated and further developed for a long time related to teacher development (Heikkinen *et al.*, 2018). Based on literatures, there are five dominant factors identified that contribute to the implementations of a mentoring strategy for teachers' professional development, such as: teamwork approach (Garvey & Westlander, 2013; Aldeeb & Al-Samman, 2019; Rillotta *et al.*, 2022), teacher's attitude (Petrovska *et al.*, 2018; Rutten, 2021), exchange of information (Lee, 2018; Mena *et al.*, 2017; Rekha & Ganesh, 2019), continuous learning (Mena *et al.*, 2017; Rekha & Ganesh, 2019) and teaching skills improvement (Chu *et al.*, 2016; Prasetyo, 2019; Wong *et al.*, 2020).

Teamwork Approach

The relationship between mentor and mentee is synergized to build a good mentoring system. Mentoring is a communicative activity which involve teamwork, togetherness, and develop social tolerance among members and mentor. Teamwork approach contributes to teachers' professional development in the nature of mentoring (Garvey & Westlander, 2013) as moral movements. It is part of partnership activities in a circle for members to support each other. All mentee and mentor in their mentoring group have commitment to improve their professional development. The mentor will share his/her experience, knowledge, and skills during mentoring session and happy to get feedback from the mentee. Some activities are designed to promote togetherness among members in mentoring, such as classroom survey project, recreation, teaching practices, and problem-based learning. The teamwork approach encourages caring, trusting and strengthening among mentoring members.



Teachers' Attitude

In teachers' professional development, teachers' attitude is one of the important things because it has correlation with the instructional content and pedagogical approach of teachers (Rutten, 2021). Teachers' attitude influences the mentoring strategy because teachers have awareness to change knowledge and skills in teaching practices. They join the mentoring based on their needs to get more experience from the senior teachers or mentors. This attitude can change perspective of teachers about their students in the classroom. From the mentoring sessions, they get input in classroom management and how to control defiant factors in their teaching process. The attitude of teachers also related to their belief system or teacher-self efficacy and teaching competency in leaning situation. Teachers are more confident to develop their competencies by penetrating theories from university into teaching practices in reality.

Exchange of Information

As the interpersonal relationship, mentoring is part of organizational knowledge transfer from a senior teacher to junior teachers through interactive conversation (Rekha & Ganesh, 2019). In its development, mentoring entails an exchange of information between mentor and mentee, also among mentees in peer group mentoring. Senior teachers are rich with experiences from their service in schools, while novice teachers have concepts, theory, and literature from their current university. The best learning process is in what extent to the teachers combining the theory and practices in their instruction. The exchange of information system contributes to implement mentoring for teachers' professional development because both sides mentor and mentee take and give in the same situation. According to Mena *et al.* (2017), the exchange of information helps to construct teacher's professional knowledge to create meaningful learning. Meaningful learning in mentoring is when the mentor and mentee are actively involved in discussion, sharing information, and developing constructive criticism.



Continuous Learning

The idea of educative mentoring through continuous learning means to assist the new teachers' development (Mena *et al.*, 2017). Both mentor and mentee have to be aware that mentoring is part of their needs in growing, learning and developing together (Rekha & Ganesh, 2019). This effort is known as continuous learning to form a learning partnership to improve the quality of education. Novice teachers should not stop learning after graduating from university. They need to participate in school activities and learn more from experienced teachers. The senior teachers are ready to be the mentors to the new teachers and they also play roles as mentee to the experts or university lecturers. Continuous learning in mentoring serves as the crucial tool for problem solving because the teachers face more challenges in their school life. Learning does not stop once one become a senior teacher / mentor. Instead, senior teachers should practice continuous learning to become experts in their fields.

Teaching Skills Improvement

One of the most important advantages of mentoring strategies for teachers' professional development is to enhance teaching skills of 21st century teachers. Teachers should establish their personal and professional capacities to adapt with the students' learning environment (Chu *et al.*, 2016). Basic skills and professional knowledge have to be mastered by teachers in facing complexity of teaching practice (Mena *et al.*, 2017). Mentoring sessions involved discussing and practicing the skills that must be mastered in teaching and learning process, such as pedagogical content knowledge, classroom management, students' self-efficacy, and curriculum in general. These skills are used to develop students' academic and attitude achievements (Wong *et al.*, 2020). The development process of knowledge and skills of teachers in mentoring is not suddenly happened. It takes time and get more challenges for school to overcome.



CONCLUSION

The rapid growing of technology has evoked the new human connection system without borders, forming a new digital identity known as global citizenships. Students today cannot be separated from this situation and technology have influenced their daily activities and the way they get information to learn from and how they learn. Elementary school teachers should improve their knowledge, skills, and attitudes to survive in digital era. Mentoring strategy in school institutions helps teachers to promote their professional development. The essential value in mentoring is to build lifelong learning to help school community growing together. Mentoring is not limited for novice teachers as mentees but it is also applied for all teachers in all stages to be expert in their subject fields. This study highlighted five pedagogical factors which contribute to the implementations of a mentoring strategy for teachers' professional development in school institutions, namely: (1) Teamwork approach; (2) Teachers' attitude; (3) Exchange of information; (4) Continuous learning; and (5) Teaching skills improvement. The five factors are integrated to strengthening character building of mentor and mentee to improve their quality in educational services.



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